

**A composers' search for an African identity: The development of
Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional style**

by

Sibusiso Njeza

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Music by composition and research report

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Supervisor: Dr. Andile Khumalo

DECLARATION

I, Sibusiso Steven Njeza, student number 2605851, declare that this *dissertation* is my unaided work. It is submitted for the partial fulfilment of a Master of Music degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university. Ethics Clearance number: H23/06/31



Sibusiso Njeza

Date: 30 May 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Dr. Andile Khumalo, for his guidance and patience throughout this study. I am also deeply grateful for the amazing colleagues and kind individuals who granted me time to interview them, as well as the Salvation Army Church for allowing me to talk to the members of the church. I wish to express a special thank you to Mr Diliza Khumalo, the son of the late Professor Mzilikazi Khumalo— *ndiyabulela*, Mntungwa.

To my family: I am forever indebted to them for their undying support in all that I do.

ABSTRACT

Questions of identity have profoundly shaped art music in Africa, where the communal ethos of music-making contrasts with Western notions of individual authorship. Within this landscape, the contributions of Mzilikazi Khumalo were long marginalised under colonial and apartheid frameworks that restricted recognition of Black composers. His work, however, stands as a vital expression of cultural resilience and intellectual agency.

This study investigates Khumalo's compositional methodology to understand how his music reflects and reconstructs African identity within choral and theatrical traditions. It asks: How does Khumalo's compositional practice integrate African linguistic and cultural structures into Western art-music traditions, and how can this model inform contemporary practice-led composition?

Adopting a qualitative and practice-led methodology, the research analyses *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959) and *Izibongo zikaShaka* (1981) through score and recording study, while situating insights from Khumalo's approach within the author's own creative portfolio. The study is framed by Bhabha's theory of hybridity, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's decolonisation, and Mugovhani's cultural nationalism.

Findings show that Khumalo's music mirrors isiZulu speech prosody, employs call-and-response and cyclic forms, and incorporates non-functional harmonic idioms rooted in *amahubo* and bow music. Building on this legacy, the author's compositions—such as *The Tale of Somagwaza* and *Echoes in the Snow*—extend Khumalo's principles into orchestral and mixed-media contexts. In doing so, the study demonstrates that African linguistic and cultural logics can generate new compositional pathways within global art music, contributing to the decolonisation and transformation of South African composition.

Keywords: African choral music, African composition, African identity, Afrocentrism,
Amahubo, Amakhwaya, Black choralism, Mzilikazi Khumalo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem statement	7
1.3 Aim of the study	10
1.4 Overview of chapters	11
CHAPTER TWO	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Theoretical perspectives: African identity	13
2.3 Identity as expressed in Black choralism	20
2.4 Early Black South African composers	30
2.5 Mzilikazi Khumalo	36
2.5.1 Khumalo's compositional life.....	40
2.6 <i>Amahubo</i> in isiZulu culture	45

2.6.1	<i>Amahubo</i> as a link to history and identity.....	46
2.6.2	Musical and linguistic features of <i>amahubo</i>	46
2.6.3	The adaptation of <i>amahubo</i> in contemporary music.....	47
2.6.4	<i>Amahubo</i> as a cultural bridge.....	47
2.6.5	Performance styles within <i>amahubo</i>	48
2.7	Tonal sensitivity and linguistic integrity in Khumalo’s compositional approach	49
2.8	Research design and methods	52
2.8.1	Research design	54
2.8.2	Methods of data collection and analysis	56
2.9	Ethical considerations	59
2.10	Conclusion	59
Chapter Three - Analysis		61
3.1	Intonation	67
3.2	IsiZulu text rhythm in Khumalo’s music	84
3.3	Khumalo’s use of <i>amahubo</i> in his compositions	86
3.4	Conclusion	94
CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS		97

4.1	Introduction	97
4.2	Khumalo's influence on my compositional voice	97
4.3	IsiZulu and isiXhosa: Comparative Linguistic-Musical Frameworks	98
4.4	Positionality and Double Consciousness	99
4.5	Beyond Khumalo: Echoes in the Snow	100
4.6	Conclusion	103
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....		104
5.1	Addressing the research question	105
5.2	Discussion of findings	106
5.3	Significance of the study	107
5.4	Implications of the study	109
5.5	Limitations and conclusion	110
reference list		112

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This study explores Mzilikazi Khumalo's distinctive methodology in composing vocal music that is profoundly anchored in African cultural traditions. Khumalo, a renowned South African composer, pioneered a singular compositional style by harmoniously integrating Western and African musical idioms, a practice that was prevalent among his peers. While numerous Black composers of his era grounded their compositions in Western frameworks and incorporated African aspects to assert their identity (Mugovhani, 2010:60), Khumalo advanced beyond this paradigm. He transitioned from merely setting African text to Western-style music and allowed the African text—especially its cultural and linguistic intricacies—to inform and shape the music (Mugovhani, 2008:157). Drawing significantly from his rich isiZulu heritage, Khumalo cultivated a singular sound that set him apart from his predecessors and contemporaries, thereby reinterpreting the role of African identity within the realm of composition.

The method of notating music that Khumalo used was inherited from the education system that was brought to Africa by missionaries. According to Omojola and Sowande (1998:455) and Akrofi et al. (2007:145), formal music education in African states such as South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana was influenced by Christian missionaries who arrived during the 19th century. As a strategy to recruit African converts, missionaries emphasised the singing of hymns in their churches. The hymns were generally notated using tonic solfa notation. Olwage (2008:12) adds that Black composers wrote primarily in tonic solfa because it was prescribed in 'native' mission schools and under apartheid's Bantu Education policy. It was from singing the church hymns and studying the rudiments of music that African composers learned to notate their compositions. Little did they know that the greater part of their education at the missionary

schools sought to undermine and destroy their identity. According to Koapeng (2014:11), the colonial experience “permeated all aspects of Black South Africans’ lives with devastating effects on the cultural landscape and music practitioners, composers included, could not escape the aftermath”. Additionally, Akrofi et al. (2007:145) highlight that scholars like Nzewi (1999) and Agawu (2003) have criticized the colonial impact on music education, arguing that it has had detrimental effects on African music and culture.

One of the repercussions that emanated from the colonial experience brought by the missionaries was classism among Africans. Mission-educated Blacks were seen to be better than those without an education. Mpola (2007:13) supports this claim by saying that, as a result of missionary education, the Xhosa society was thus divided into two social strata: the ‘red ochre’ (*Amaqaba*) and the ‘civilised’ (*Amagqobhoka*). This divide granted the coloniser greater power, enabling the attainment of their objectives. According to Haecker (2012:10), choral music and music education in South Africa under colonialism were used to foster segregation and oppression rather than unity and freedom. Hansen (1968:2) supports this notion by quoting Professor Percival Kirby as he was describing how missionaries destroyed African identity and essential values of Africans:

the work of the missionaries did a vast amount of damage, the more insidious as they did not realise it to be such. They attempted to put down systematically what they regarded as merely heathen practices; practices they did not realise were essentially a part of the natural development of the native.

Consequently, our documentation of African composers predominantly centres on those who created music within the confines of the church. Their affiliation with the church significantly shaped their compositional approach.

Most choral music genres that emerged among Black people in South Africa were largely influenced by the education acquired from missionaries. *Isicathamiya*, an a cappella male musical form, is one of the choral music genres that emerged among Zulu migrants in the Johannesburg mines. The most famous *Isicathamiya* group, the *Ladysmith Black Mambazo*, is the well-known choral group to have emerged from South Africa. Akrofi et al. (2007:146) support this by saying that *Isicathamiya* was also influenced by Western hymnody, especially the four-part SATB harmony.

Not only *Isicathamiya* emerged as a sub-genre of choral music in South Africa, but other styles like *Mbaqanga* and *Maskhandla* also emerged with traces of Western music influences. These two genres involved the use of Western instruments such as the bass guitar, keyboard and concertina. According to Akrofi et al. (2007:147), the instrumental sections of these genres were often based on the primary chord progression of I–IV–V–I, which was very essential for the Victorian hymns introduced by the missionaries. This progression formed the framework for the compositional approach of earlier Black composers. Despite the use of Western harmony and instruments, these genres celebrated African identity in lyric content, dance and rhythm. This is what earlier Black composers also tried to do to assert their identity in music.

The earlier Black composers of the 19th and early 20th centuries who studied in missionary schools, including John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922), articulated their lived experiences, which were shaped by a binary outlook (dual identity—African and Western outlook). This perspective established a clear distinction between their practices and domestic experiences, significantly influenced by their African traditions, including the use of African languages among various cultural elements. Conversely, their socio-economic environments were shaped by the Western ideologies to which they were compelled to adapt. Consequently, from an early age, many Africans began to operate and conceptualize within dual systems encompassing both

African and Western ideologies. The coexistence of multiple identities and ideologies stemmed from decisions made at the Berlin Conference in 1884 (Wa Thiong'o, 1981:4). Wa Thiong'o refers to the European capitalist powers that partitioned the African continent—home to diverse peoples, cultures and languages—into separate colonies. He further explains that, as a consequence, African states continue to define themselves through European languages, categorizing themselves as English-, French- or Portuguese-speaking nations (Wa Thiong'o, 1981:5). This phenomenon was equally evident in musical compositions, where African composers began to create music that incorporated both African and Western elements, a process we now refer to as hybridity (Obijiaku, 2022:25).

African composers employed hybridity to address various realities of their lives. As these realities evolved, so did their methods of using hybridity in their compositions. Khumalo also embraced hybridity in his compositional approach. However, his method differed distinctly from previous composers. It highlighted African identity, by allowing certain aspects of African traditions to shape the music rather than relying on Western musical traditions as the core foundation—a practice prevalent among earlier African composers like John Knox Bokwe, Enoch Sontonga and many others.

The predominant emphasis on Western traditions as the foundation for music composition were necessitated by the specific musical expectations prevalent within the church, which constituted one of the few venues where African composers could engage with their newly created works. The church, as the primary patron of music education, compelled African composers to regard Western musical knowledge as essential in demonstrating their understanding of music and their ability to compose (Mugovhani and Oluranti, 2015:2). This influence was a significant factor among composers during Khumalo's era and remains relevant today, despite the church no longer functioning as the principal patron. Contemporary

music adherents remain profoundly influenced by Western operatic writing, and numerous emerging composers of the 21st century find themselves constrained by the compositional technique of assimilation. The compositional technique of assimilation can be equated to producing clones of earlier composers. This technique results in innovative yet reminiscent of previously established styles, as exemplified by the vocal writing styles of Verdi or Mozart, who were greatly influenced by earlier composers such as Bach and Haydn, among others. The quest for approaches that embrace African identity and essence and avoid assimilation has led to the development of what Mugovhani refers to as nationalism in black choral composition in South Africa.

According to Mugovhani (1998:14), the nationalist school of choral compositions originated with prominent composers such as Caluza (1895–1966) and Mohapeloa (1908–1982). These composers, in particular, sought to pursue their cultural identity by rediscovering lost isiZulu (Caluza) and Sesotho (Mohapeloa) musical traditions through their compositions. The Black nationalist idea inspired Caluza to compose a piece titled *I-Land Act*, protesting against the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1913 (Coplan and Jules-Rosette, 2005:287). Caluza contributed to the emergence of the national culture of the Nguni people during the late colonisation period when he openly criticised the government (as he does in the song *I-Land Act*) and also criticised the Black middle class who continued to follow Western culture over their own culture (Detterbeck, 2002:326). This offering by Caluza contributed to the socio-political landscape rather than to the compositional techniques. Several choral compositions by Black composers reflected a similar nationalist idea due to the oppressive regime ruling South Africa during the late 19th century through to the apartheid South Africa.

Black Nationalism in South African choral music compositions signifies a profound commitment to the preservation and celebration of an African identity, culture, and a resistance

to colonial oppression. According to Mugovhani (2010:60), South African composers of indigenous choral music have consistently sought to shape a choral tradition that affirms their own cultural identity — one that resonates with their heritage, traditions, and distinctive musical practices. Black Nationalism saw composers incorporating African musical elements, as demonstrated by Caluza and Mohapelo, into their works to assert cultural pride and resilience. Mzilikazi Khumalo epitomised this ethos by blending traditional African musical idioms with Western classical forms (hybridity), creating compositions that resonate with African heritage while challenging Eurocentric dominance.

Khumalo utilised this hybrid compositional ethos as the basis for his distinctive approach. His distinctive approach elevated the language above the music. In other words, the nuances and tonology of the language dictate the musical direction and the variety of sounds produced in Khumalo's compositional methodology. He meticulously notated each word in a way that the undulations of the language provided a guiding influence for the melody, rhythm and timbre. As an academic specialising in African languages, Khumalo studied the morphology, phonology and tonology of languages, particularly isiZulu (Mugovhani, 2008:157). His doctoral dissertation, *An Autosegmental Account of Zulu Phonology* (1987), was groundbreaking, marking the first major study of its kind in the field of Zulu phonology (Pooley, 2022:87). His profound appreciation for African languages and his expertise as a linguist facilitated the development and refinement of his compositional approach. By cultivating this unique methodology, Khumalo emerged as a leading composer renowned for creating music that celebrated African heritage and identity during a period when colonial powers sought to suppress it.

Furthermore, African heritage was not only marginalised in South Africa but cultural practitioners, such as African composers, were systematically excluded and undervalued. In

South Africa, Black composers were often not regarded as ‘real’ composers and, consequently, were not afforded the same status as their White counterparts. Scholars such as Huskisson (1969) referred to these composers as “Bantu composers”. This terminology was used not only for segregation purposes but also to imply that they were of inferior standard and quality, thereby rendering their compositions unworthy of serious scholarly consideration. One of Khumalo’s pursuits was to elevate the works of black composers, including his own, as integral to serious music scholarship in Africa and beyond.

Khumalo died in 2021, concluding his active compositional career in the 2010s due to health issues. Nonetheless, his music endures as revolutionary, advocating for an alternative approach to composition that does not conform to the principles of assimilation, particularly concerning Western traditions. His unique compositional approach, combined with a noticeable lack of studies on Black South African composers, underscores the necessity for research into both his life and music. Consequently, this study aims to contribute to the field of African music composition praxis and foster the development of new works that promote African music.

1.2 Problem statement

Colonialism institutionalised the ideology that Africans were an inferior race lacking the intellectual capacity to contribute to the development of society. In South Africa, this notion was notoriously implemented by the apartheid regime, which, in simple terms, divided different races into varying social statuses. Blacks occupied the lowest level of this racial hierarchy, which Mathabane (1986:4) called fourth-class citizens and “dregs of society”, who were often considered suitable only for non-intellectual labour and activities. Consequently, their education system was also structured accordingly. The education system for Black South Africans was called *Bantu Education*. According to Wills (2011:2), Bantu referred to over four

hundred ethnic groups in Africa, covering numerous nations from Cameroon to South Africa. The word *Bantu* in terms of Bantu Education is highly charged politically and has derogatory connotations. Anyone who was trained under Bantu Education was being prepared to become cheap labour for the government. Only Black people were meant to be educated under this limiting education system. Music education offered to Black South Africans was offered under the same system which compromised the quality of compositions by Black composers.

This racial division and discrimination meant that, for a very long time, Blacks could never be regarded as composers, as this was one of the most intellectual classifications within Western musical culture, sitting neatly alongside philosophers and similar figures. Olwage (2008:13) notes this issue of undermining Black composers and says that the misrepresentations of music by Black composers were laid down long before the National Party's victory in 1948 and continued to the post-apartheid era. This undermining of black intellectuals led to the marginalisation of blackness in musical composition, particularly in South Africa. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Mzilikazi Khumalo is seldom included in music education curricula in South Africa, just as it is not surprising that many other black composers, both before and after Khumalo, continue to experience cultural silencing in South Africa.

The recent publications of *The Music of Mzilikazi Khumalo* by Pooley et al. (2024) and Lucia's *The Times Do Not Permit: The Musical Life of Michael Mosoeu Moerane* (2024) focus on acknowledging and integrating the contributions of Black South African composers into the nation's cultural institutions, including university curricula, orchestral programming. These books provide additional insights that indicate a substantial intellectual contribution in the works of these Black composers. This calls for a comprehensive examination concerning social relevance, performance practices and the theories that underpin their approaches to musical composition.

Earlier composers such as John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922), Enoch Sontonga (1873–1905), Reuben Caluza (1896–1969), Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa (1908–1982) and Michael Mosoeu Moerane (1904–1980) predominantly concentrated on upholding the widely accepted and encouraged notion of a civilised form of music within the confines of their church patronage. Their compositions primarily adhered to four-part harmony and Westernised styles, while also striving to incorporate their African identity by utilising African languages. This methodology has been a defining characteristic of many early African composers in South Africa and throughout the continent (Akrofi et al., 2007:145). In contrast, Khumalo employs the African language to shape the essence of his music. Specifically, his mother tongue, isiZulu, functions as the foundational component upon which his musical concepts are developed and realised. Although he continues to utilise standardised Western forms, these structures are reformulated and adapted to resonate with the African sound.

Despite his revolutionary contributions, Khumalo's work and compositional methodology remain underexplored, particularly regarding their potential to address broader issues related to Afrocentric music composition. His innovative use of hybridity, which elevated African cultural elements while simultaneously challenging Eurocentric dominance, offers a valuable framework for reimagining African musical identity within contemporary works. However, limitations in notation systems, such as tonic solfa, have historically hindered the accurate representation of African musical elements, highlighting the need for new methodologies to authentically capture African traditions.

This study aims to bridge the gap in scholarship regarding Khumalo's compositional approach and its implications for African music. By examining Khumalo's compositional approach, this research aspires to provide insights into integrating African cultural identity within composition, thus contributing to the field's advancement.

1.3 Aim of the study

This study aspires to critically investigate and elucidate Mzilikazi Khumalo's distinctive methodology in the composition of vocal music, which is profoundly entrenched in African cultural traditions. The research intends to examine how Khumalo's compositions incorporate indigenous musical idioms, linguistic components and cultural themes to forge a uniquely African art form within the broader frameworks of classical and choral music. Through the analysis of Khumalo's compositional processes on two selected works, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of his innovative approach and its significance in the preservation, promotion and evolution of African cultural heritage through music. Due to the limitations of this study as it constitutes 50% of the overall submission, only a select few compositions will be analysed fully.

The objectives of this study will be accomplished by addressing the following overarching research question: How does Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional methodology integrate African cultural traditions and musical idioms to establish a distinctive approach to composing?

In examining the compositional methodology of Mzilikazi Khumalo, it is crucial to explore how he incorporates elements that are deeply rooted in African musical traditions. Specifically, one might consider how his works are imbued with characteristics that reflect the rhythms, structures and tonal qualities commonly associated with these traditions. Additionally, an inquiry into the evolution of Khumalo's compositional style over the decades is essential. From the 1960s to the 2000s, his music underwent significant transformations and understanding this development offers valuable insights into the broader trends of South African music during this period. Finally, it is important to investigate the influence of Khumalo on younger generations of South African composers, particularly in the realm of vocal music. By exploring

how his works have shaped contemporary approaches to composition, we can assess the lasting impact of his musical legacy on the artistic landscape of South Africa.

This study will address its research question through an analysis of two of Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositions: *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959) and *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981). According to Mugovhani (2008:166), *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* marks Khumalo's first composition, making it a crucial work for examining his initial compositional approach. Meanwhile, *Izibongo zika Shaka* served as the foundation for his first extended work, the cantata *UShaka kaSenzangakhona* (1996). This makes it a key piece for understanding how Khumalo's compositional techniques evolved and ultimately led to the creation of large-scale works.

1.4 Overview of chapters

Chapter One provides a comprehensive contextual background for the research, outlines the study's objectives, poses the central research questions and presents an overview of the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, the discussion engages deeply with existing scholarship on African traditions and practices that have influenced the music of African composers, highlighting the AmaZulu tradition and its musical heritage within colonised contexts. This chapter analyses the effect of displacement on the philosophical underpinnings of this heritage. Additionally, this chapter details the political and cultural contexts that have shaped Khumalo's work, while outlining the methodological framework employed in this study.

Chapter Three focuses on a detailed and nuanced analysis of two specific compositions, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka*. These works are rigorously examined and compared concerning the compositional techniques that Khumalo used.

Chapter Four reflects on the novel concepts developed through the researcher-composer's compositions and offers an analytical perspective on these works. Furthermore, it discusses the creative integration of the theoretical frameworks examined throughout the study.

Chapter Five offers concluding reflections, where the researcher-composer revisits the study's objectives and articulates how these objectives were met through the research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Mzilikazi Khumalo's distinctive approach to vocal composition, which is deeply rooted in African cultural traditions. The discussion engages with scholarly perspectives on African identity, musical heritage, and the cultural practices that influence the work of African composers. Special attention is given to the AmaZulu tradition, examining its musical legacy within the broader historical context of colonisation and displacement. The chapter concludes with a detailed overview of the methodological framework employed in this study, outlining the analytical approaches used to examine Khumalo's musical language and its cultural significance.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives: African identity

The term *African identity* has been widely debated among scholars. While it may initially appear clear and tangible, it is, in reality, a nuanced and multifaceted concept when examined within Africa's historical context. Africa is profoundly influenced by its past and ongoing interactions with colonialism. In elucidating this concept, Kalua (2009:23) discusses the postcolonial perspective of African identity as a celebration of dynamic spaces of cultural transformation, characterised by fluid identities.

Furthermore, Kalua (2009:29) utilises Derridean terminology to characterise Africa as a

shifting signifier that retains the ‘traces’ of others.¹ This notion considers Africa's existence within an increasingly globalised world. Although certain musical traditions exhibit similarities among specific African nations such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa (Akrofi et al., 2007), there is a notable lack of uniformity in the overarching African identity. This is a crucial perspective to contemplate: while the continent remains geographically consistent, the diverse populations residing within it, coupled with their engagement with globalization, create an ever-evolving landscape of social conditions that significantly influence fundamental concepts of identity. Therefore, the concept of African identity, one that surpasses geographical origins and skin colour, becomes profoundly intricate for Africans, primarily due to its historical contexts involving colonialism and migration.

Eze and Van der Wal (2020:189) contend that Africa's socio-political and cultural diversity challenges the concept of a singular, homogeneous African identity, thereby distinguishing it from European identity. The continent’s substantial differences in religion, language and history are primarily attributable to colonialism and historical conflicts (Nketia, 1982). During periods of conflict, dominant ethnic groups and leaders frequently expand their influence by conquering and assimilating smaller, weaker groups, as exemplified by the formation of large nations such as the AmaZulu in South Africa. Consequently, it is prevalent for ethnic groups to span multiple modern national borders. For instance, the Tswana people inhabit both Botswana and South Africa’s North-West Province, the BaSotho are located in both Lesotho

¹ The Derridean term that describes a shifting signifier retaining the ‘traces’ of others is *différance*.

Derrida (1967, cited in Rivkin and Ryan 2004: 300–331) explains that meaning is never fixed; instead, it is constantly deferred and shaped by its difference from other signifiers while carrying traces of past meanings. This process ensures that no word or concept has a self-contained or absolute meaning.

Différance involves both:

1. Deferral – Meaning is always postponed, never fully present.
2. Difference – Words gain meaning only concerning other words.

This concept challenges logocentrism, the idea that meaning can be fully stable and self-evident.

and South Africa and the Bantu people can be traced from Congo, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa. This intricate interplay of cultural and religious identities across African states is largely a consequence of colonial border divisions, which overlooked pre-existing ethnic and social structures.

While it is true that there are similarities among groups of people because of their shared ancestry, they also face divisions influenced by two main factors: First, people travelled across the continent for their agricultural and survival needs, which resulted in some families and groups splitting apart. Secondly, people were displaced by conflicts among different tribes and nations. Some members chose to stay behind while others ventured out, enhancing the reach of their specific group and fostering new relationships with those already living in these new areas. This movement was crucial for certain territories, sometimes leading to conflicts and the need to defend these lands against intruders. Consequently, this led either to confrontations or to collaborations between groups, as they aimed to create a stronger bond. The collaborations resulted in new cultural identities, religions and musics.

Furthermore, Nketia (1982:1) points out that colonialism significantly influenced the development of religious, cultural and musical diversity throughout Africa. He observes that in several Northern African nations, the music, culture and religion are profoundly shaped by traditions originating from the Arab world and from Europe. Morocco serves as a notable example, as it possesses a rich culture that integrates both Arabic and European influences because of its colonial past. Culturally, it resonates with Middle Eastern traditions—having been colonised by the Arabs in the seventh century—which is particularly evident in various styles of traditional music that feature Arabic lyrics and melodic contours associated with Middle Eastern music. In contrast, the younger generation tends to amalgamate Western influences—such as European rap and hip-hop music—with the French language, a remnant

of their colonisation by France in 1912, a country that also continues to serve as a key political ally. Their lyricism often reflects this linguistic blend, while their melodic lines echo those found in Middle Eastern music, even as they incorporate elements from both French and Arabic languages.

In support of Nketia's observation, Akrofi et al. (2007) identify similar trends in Southern African countries and West African nations such as South Africa, eSwatini, Botswana, Nigeria and Ghana, among others, which were primarily colonised by Europe. Their present cultural practices are strongly influenced by Europe, particularly following the period when Europeans successfully colonised these countries. During colonisation, they systematically altered the cultures of these regions to favour Western culture through religion, education and social behaviour. This enforced cultural change was also evident in music through a systemic disregard for African music and a foreshadowing of Western musical education. This missionary-driven musical education significantly reshaped African musical identity, especially in South Africa, by fostering a new dynamic between indigenous traditions and Western influences.

Education functioned as an imperceptible instrument for transforming the African populace to embrace Western educational paradigms, reinforced by the socio-economic advantages associated with being recognised as being educated. This transformation facilitated the emergence of a new middle class, thereby enriching the understanding of African identity, particularly within the South African context. In this middle class, Western classical music came to epitomise the enlightened and educated intellect. Mpola (2007:13) observes that this phenomenon led to social stratification, in which Western music was associated with the educated Black middle class, while traditional African music was relegated to a status of inferiority and insignificance. The burgeoning middle class predominantly comprised Christian

converts who had attained varying degrees of formal education and were engaged in professions such as teaching, nursing and social work. Class divisions within society were mirrored in cultural practices, encompassing musical preferences and attire, both of which acted as indicators of social identity. Within this paradigm, classical music was invariably linked to the middle class, thus reinforcing the perception of its superiority over traditional African music. The emergence of Black choralism, rooted in ecclesiastical and missionary education, served as a vehicle to encourage Africans to renounce their so-called 'heathen' and 'barbaric' traditions in favour of Western ideals (Mpola, 2007:14).

In his book, *Orientalism* (1979), Edward Said describes the undermining of African traditions in favour of Western ones as a critique of how the Western world perceives and represents the Orient. He argues that knowledge production about the East, including North-African countries such as Egypt, has been shaped by colonial and imperialist interests, which reinforced a power imbalance between the West (Occident) and the East (Orient). Said's work challenges the assumptions behind these representations, highlighting how they serve as tools of domination rather than objective accounts of Eastern societies. Similarly, just as the West *othered* the knowledge produced in the East, African culture and traditions were also alienated by the West.

In *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, Kofi Agawu (1992) notes that African music has often been portrayed as the *Other* in scholarly discourse, being depicted as fundamentally different from Western music. He challenges this dichotomy, arguing that it reinforces colonial power dynamics and hinders a genuine understanding of African musical practices. The power dynamics arise from the position of the observer, who assumes their own experiences and knowledge as the reference point for evaluating what they hear. When Eastern and African music significantly differ from their background, it is presented as the *other* music outside Western music. Meanwhile, Western music is not

presented as the *other* kind of music because the moment one uses the term *other*, it indirectly implies there is an original point of origin (superior), which in this case is Western music.

Western powers have historically employed Orientalist thought to justify imperialism. European nations, particularly Britain and France, framed their colonial rule as a "civilizing mission", depicting Eastern societies as incapable of self-governance and in need of Western intervention (Said, 1979:254). Said highlights how this knowledge was deeply embedded in power structures, reinforcing Western superiority by portraying the Orient as inferior. This perception legitimised policies of occupation, governance and economic exploitation. A similar dynamic can be observed in Africa's colonial experience, where Western European explorers, Christian missionaries and merchants played a central role in pursuing the colonial agenda (Akrofi et al., 2007:144). The missionaries' restrictive education system and the Christian message of salvation—with the church positioned as a refuge—functioned as tools of a "civilizing mission", echoing Orientalist justifications for imperial rule.

To this day, the challenges posed by colonialism, along with colonial systems such as imperialism and orientalism, persistently afflict African art music, defined as classical music produced in Africa by black Africans. Agawu (2011) articulates numerous challenges confronting African art music. According to Agawu (2011:49–50), African art music has been eclipsed by both traditional and popular music for an extended duration, frequently receiving minimal acknowledgment within the global musical discourse. This marginalization is illustrated by the largely overlooked recent publication of the anthology entitled *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora: The Complete Edition* (2009)—compiled and edited by William Nyaho—which serves as a notable anthology that underscores the compositional achievements of African composers. The insufficient attention accorded to this work reflects broader colonial and racial biases that have historically shaped perceptions of African music,

thereby perpetuating the misconception that Africa lacks a tradition of composed, written music characterised as educated music. Such assumptions have contributed to the exclusion of African art music from mainstream classical music narratives, notwithstanding its extensive and evolving tradition since the mid-19th century.

The marginalization of African art music in both scholarly discourse and global musical representation arises from historical and structural biases that have prioritised traditional (uneducated and not notated) forms over composed (written-down) music. Lucia (2007:167) highlights this bias, noting Huskisson's misrepresentation of Mohapeloa's composition *U ea kae?* (Where are you going?) by referring to it as a "choral arrangement of a traditional threshing song", instead of recognising it as a composition. While traditional African music has long dominated as the representation of African musical expression due to its deep-rooted connections to rituals and everyday life, composed music based on traditional African themes should also be acknowledged. Furthermore, Agawu (2011:50-51) states that ethnomusicologists, in their efforts to document and analyse African musical traditions, have largely focused on drumming, thus reinforcing a narrow perception of African music that overlooks its diversity and complexity. This emphasis on drumming, while valuable, has limited scholarly engagement with African art music, often framing it as secondary to more, so-called authentic indigenous traditions.

Simultaneously, the ascent of popular music, facilitated by mass media and commercial dissemination, has further marginalised African art music. Genres such as Afrobeat, Highlife and *Mbaqanga* have attained significant global recognition and have consequently influenced contemporary perceptions of African music, while leaving art music relatively unexplored. The predominance of both traditional and popular music in academic and public discourse has resulted in African art music being largely overlooked, notwithstanding its longstanding

presence and the contributions of African composers who have fused indigenous musical elements with Western classical traditions. Addressing this imbalance necessitates a re-evaluation of African music scholarship to encompass a more comprehensive understanding of art music as a legitimate and vital component of the continent's musical heritage and identity. Accordingly, this study aspires to contribute to the discourse on African art music by examining Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositions, which exemplify the exceptional talents of African composers who have been overlooked yet serve as critical foundations in comprehending African culture and identity during the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly in the realm of music.

The diverse perspectives articulated in this subsection strongly advocate for a more expansive comprehension of African identity. It provides both clarity in interpretation and insight into the complexity inherent within the historical context of Africa, which has been heavily influenced by the effects of colonialism. In elucidating the intricacies associated with understanding African identity, one can observe a perpetually shifting political environment that directly affects the evolution of identities. The notion of a singular African identity is effectively challenged by the continent's socio-political and cultural diversity, which has been shaped by historical conflicts and colonial experiences (Eze & Van der Wal, 2020).

2.3 Identity as expressed in Black choralism

Mzilikazi Khumalo descends from a lineage of composers shaped by the tradition of Black choralism. Academic literature often describes Black choralism as both a result of colonial influence and a vibrant expression of Africa's diverse cultural heritage (Erlmann 1991; Detterbeck 2002; Olwage, 2006, 2008; Lucia 2008; Mugovhani 2010; Mugovhani and Oluranti 2015; ;). More than just a musical genre, it serves as a powerful medium for communal

storytelling, cultural preservation and spiritual expression, highlighting the deep interconnection between African musical traditions and the socio-cultural framework of African communities.

In South Africa, choral music has played a significant and essential role within various societal hierarchies (Olwage, 2003:26). In religious settings, hymns accompany church services, while choral music is an integral part of daily rituals such as morning prayers in schools. Beyond these contexts, choral music continues to be a central element of social events, including funerals, weddings and community gatherings. Additionally, choral music has thrived in professional settings, providing a versatile and accessible musical form compared to instrumental ensembles, which often demand greater financial resources. This accessibility has fostered the growth of choirs across the nation, particularly in Black communities and townships.

Over the past century, the widespread development of choral traditions, commonly known as *Amakhwaya*, has fostered a generation of composers, many of whom received their musical training in missionary schools during the colonial era. Their contributions have shaped the evolution of South African choral music, laying the groundwork for composers like Mzilikazi Khumalo, who further expanded and redefined the genre.

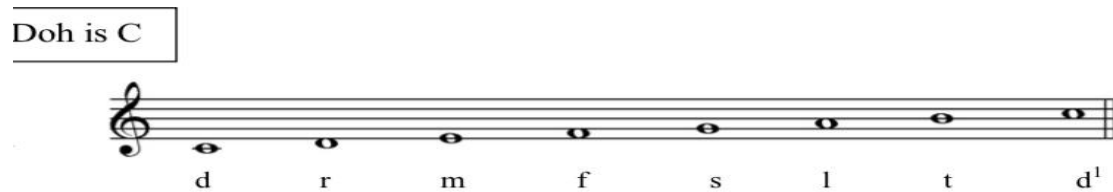
European missionaries infiltrated various countries on the African continent as part of their quest to expand territorial influence (Oliver & Oliver, 2017:1). On one hand, Africans were conquered at gunpoint; on the other hand, they were offered the church as a place of solace.

The ultimate aim was to compel Africans to abandon their cultural identity and to favour Western culture. Akrofi et al. (2007:146) illustrate how, in church, Africans had no choice but to sing the Western hymns imposed by the missionaries. The music incorporated new Western

instruments, replacing traditional African ones. This led to a new way of music-making for the Africans, which became significant in South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana and directly informed the organisation of choir music today. This influence persists regardless of whether the style is Eurocentric or Afrocentric, particularly in the use of the four-part SATB (Soprano–Alto–Tenor–Bass) ensemble and the structuring of the harmony to align with the harmonic progression of Western music as taught in mission schools.

Despite the influence of Western music and culture from the church, the quest for identity among African converts persisted. It was an initiative, led by those who could read music, to translate the church's English hymns into African languages. Mpola (2007:12) and Akrofi et al. (2007:145) assert that missionary schools taught the converts the basics of Western music, including staff notation, tonic solfa, basic tonal-function harmony and musical form. This limited musical education enabled the early composers to translate Western hymns into African languages and, later, to create new melodies using the harmonic progressions of Western music. The newly transcribed and composed hymns or songs in African languages were notated using the restrictive tonic solfa notation system, which was (and continues to be) the preferred notation system among Black choirs in South Africa.

Tonic solfa notation is a system that gained popularity through John Curwen and was later disseminated by missionaries. According to Raycroft (1991:7), this system was introduced in 1855 by London missionary Christopher Birkett. The tonic solfa system relies on note relationships within a specific key, with each key represented by a movable doh (the tonic of that key). Solfa employs the syllables (d, r, m, f, s, l, t—pronounced as doh–rey– me– fa–sol– lah–tee). The example below illustrates a major scale in the key of C in both staff and tonic solfa notation.



Example 1: C major scale written using both staff notation and tonic-solfa

South African choirs predominantly use the tonic solfa system with a movable *doh* (Akrofi et al., 2007:48). In contrast, some countries, such as France, employ a fixed *doh* system, where *doh* is always designated as middle C, regardless of key changes. Notably, this distinction aligns with colonial influences: African countries colonised by France tend to adopt the fixed *doh*, while those colonised by Britain favour the movable *doh*. This historical influence has shaped how choral music is taught and performed across various regions of the continent.

The Western-style hymnody and tonic solfa introduced by missionaries have greatly influenced black choral composers to this day. The calibre of early composers emerging from missionary training institutions resulted from a “religious-educational Western-oriented milieu” that evolved within the framework of Western songwriting principles, both religious and secular, utilising tonic solfa notation (Huskišson 1969:18). Furthermore, the hymnal music taught and performed in missionary schools, which subsequently influenced music-making in South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana in particular, was predominantly based on the harmonic structure of Victorian hymnody (I–IV–V–I) and its variations (Akrofi et al., 2007:147) (see Example 2 on the next page).

Victorian hymns primarily rely on diatonic chords within the major or minor key. The I (tonic), IV (subdominant) and V (dominant) chords form the backbone of their harmonic structure.

Chord progressions follow the principles of functional harmony, with a clear sense of tension and resolution. Common progressions include:

I–IV–V–I: a standard progression reflecting stability and resolution.

I–V–I: a simpler cadential movement.

I–vi–IV–V: a slight departure for variation.

I–IV–vi–V: adds emotional depth while maintaining simplicity.

269
A.H. 102
C.H. 651
Doh is D

Umsindisi Ongummangaliso
A WONDERFUL SAVIOUR—269 William J. Kirkpatrick

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} :s \\ :m \\ :s \\ :d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ s \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-f:m \\ :-r:d \\ :-s:s \\ :-d:d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} m \\ d \\ s \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :r \\ :d \\ :f \\ :d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :d \\ :d \\ :m \\ :d \end{array} \right\}$ I	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} l \\ f \\ d' \\ f_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-l:l \\ :-f:f \\ :-d':d' \\ :-f_1:f_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ d' \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :s \\ :m \\ :s \\ :d \end{array} \right\}$ IV	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ s \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-f:m \\ :-r:d \\ :-s:s \\ :-d:d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} m \\ d \\ s \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :r \\ :d \\ :f \\ :d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :d \\ :d \\ :m \\ :d \end{array} \right\}$ V		
$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} :m \\ :d \\ :s \\ :d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} r \\ t \\ s \\ s_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :s \\ :f \\ :t \\ :s_1 \end{array} \right\}$ V	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ d' \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-f:m \\ :-r:d \\ :-s:s \\ :-d:d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} m \\ d \\ s \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :r \\ :d \\ :f \\ :d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :d \\ :d \\ :m \\ :d \end{array} \right\}$ I	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} l \\ f \\ d' \\ f_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-l:l \\ :-f:f \\ :-d':d' \\ :-f_1:f_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ d' \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :s \\ :m \\ :s \\ :d \end{array} \right\}$ IV		
Chorus $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} :l \\ :f \\ :d' \\ :f_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ m \\ d' \\ s_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :-s:s \\ :-m:d \\ :-s:m \\ :-s_1:s_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ t_1 \\ r \\ s_1 \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :f:r \\ :t_1:t_1 \\ :r:f \\ :s_1:s_1 \end{array} \right\}$ V			$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} d \\ d \\ m \\ d \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :- \\ :- \\ :- \\ :- \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} :s \\ :s \\ :s \\ :s \end{array} \right\}$ I	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} s \\ s \\ s \\ s \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} t:-t:t \\ f:-f:f \\ r:-r:r \\ s:-s:s \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} t:- \\ f:- \\ r:- \\ s:- \end{array} \right\}$ Chorus

Example 2: A tonic solfa excerpt of *A Wonderful Saviour* by William J. Kirkpatrick in 1890 clearly shows the basic harmonic progression described earlier.

Another strong characteristic of those hymns was the frequent use of perfect and plagal cadences (V—I) and (IV—I) at phrase endings, which provided a robust sense of resolution. Secondary dominants were also occasionally utilised (e.g., V/V or V/vi) to add color and

variety without straying too far from diatonic harmony. Simple modulations, when employed, typically transition to closely related keys, such as the dominant (e.g., F major to C major) or relative minor (e.g., C major to A minor). This harmonic structure is prevalent in the works of many Black composers. Analysing Khumalo's compositions *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka* reveals that his compositional approach followed the same harmonic structure from when he began composing in the late 1950s.

The work of the missionaries in their schools produced several teachers who became choir conductors and some later became composers (Mpola, 2007:12). Most began by arranging songs to suit their choirs, a skill that developed into composing new pieces primarily performed by school choirs. It is important to note that not all early Black composers originated from missionary schools. Some had natural talents that blossomed from singing in choirs. Indeed, some of those naturally gifted composers may have interacted with composers or teachers who were direct products of missionary music education. All Black composers born before Khumalo and during his era shared a common context that was shaped by colonialism and, later, apartheid.

The apartheid regime in South Africa, which followed an era marked by *segregationist* policies, was introduced in 1948 when the National Party came into power. According to Olwage (2008:35), the segregation ideology, a British-led project in tune with the imperial policy, was meant to legitimise “social difference and economic inequality in every aspect of life”. Classifications were not only between Black and White but there were also further divisions within the Black community. For example, Daniel Marivate's music, which was recorded in Britain, was not sold or marketed as Black music, but as *Shangaan* music (Olwage, 2008:36). This further division discouraged unity among Black people. The segregationist era laid a good foundation for apartheid in entrenching Western culture over African culture. This

was to the extent that the government would at times imprison people who were found playing traditional African music or any type of music that celebrated Black identity and history in its lyric content.

To monitor what people could listen to, radio stations were divided by ethnic languages (Olwage, 2008:39). These radio stations had clear protocols on the type of music they should play. This may have influenced the music available to people and, in turn, impacted how they created music. Most choral music recordings were played on what was known as *Radio Bantu*, which derived its playlist from the old commercial recordings of the SABC from the 1930s and the collections from school choirs that the SABC compiled in the 1960s (Olwage, 2008:39). These recordings played an essential role in preserving and sustaining choral music for decades beyond the 1960s.

The 1970s marked a significant period during which corporate sponsors began to express interest in Black choralism. Notably, the Ford Motor Company played a pivotal role by sponsoring the National Choir Festival (NCF), which is recognised as the largest festival for Black choirs in South Africa (Detterbeck, 2002:228). At that juncture, this competition was referred to as the *Ford Choirs in Contest*. According to Detterbeck (2002:229), Professor Khabi Mngoma—in an interview with Ludumo Magangane—confirmed that Ford Motor Company established the competition as a marketing strategy aimed at penetrating Black communities. Subsequently, a year later, the marketing firm appointed by Ford requested the assistance of Professor Khabi Mngoma, a distinguished scholar of African music, conductor and mentor to numerous musicians, including Dr Sibongile Khumalo, who is recognised as one of South Africa's most renowned mezzo-sopranos, to aid in the development of the competition. The ultimate winning choir was awarded a bus during the Ford Choirs competition. The victorious

choir was the Soweto Teachers Choir, which was conducted by Jabulani Mazibuko, who later became a close ally of Mzilikazi Khumalo.

The introduction of monetary incentives for winning choirs has significantly influenced the expansion of the National Choir Festival and the variety of repertoire presented at such competitions. The impact of Ford Motor Company, a Western corporation, on various festivals and competitions has cultivated a robust competitive culture that provides monetary rewards in addition to trophies and certificates. This influence extends beyond the organisation of festivals and competitions to the repertoire prescribed for choirs. Although Ford, being a Western entity, favoured the inclusion of Western music in the competition, their desire to engage support from Black communities also prompted the promotion of African music as part of the event. The regulations of the competition, which mandated each choir to perform both a Western and an African composition, rendered this competition unique and established the framework on which subsequent choir competitions were developed. The tradition of prescribing music for two segments has endured from the era of Ford Choirs to the present day. These segments comprise the Western classical section, which may feature excerpts from oratorios, masses, or operas and the African section, which highlights compositions by Black composers in various languages. This practice has greatly contributed to the development of African composers, including Tyamzashe, Myathaza, Simelane, Mohapeloa, Moerane, Caluza, Alfred Khumalo, Motuba, Mzilikazi Khumalo and Khosa, as well as contemporary figures like Mnomiya and Sibisi.

The substantial influence of Western music in Black choral music events may have prompted Black composers to attempt the composition of music significantly inspired by Western operatic and oratorio traditions. A notable example of this influence is observed in the works of Qinisela Sibisi, who—during a speech at a singing symposium at Nelson Mandela

University in 2024, asserted that he has drawn inspiration from the music of Joseph Haydn. Furthermore, Western music often receives preferential treatment in terms of performance duration and attention during workshops, as compared to African music. This disparity suggests, to many observers, that music within the Western category is deemed as being superior in comparison to music in the African category. Supporting this viewpoint, Detterbeck (2002:274) posits that the emulation of Western musical models by Black middle-class communities was perceived as indicative of their dedication to progress and achievement. The adoption of musical structures and harmonies from Western composers may also be interpreted by many Black composers as a form of progress within their compositional practices, reflecting a degree of assimilation of Western musical influences.

The Ford Motor Company stopped sponsoring the NCF, which Old Mutual and Telkom subsequently took over. Under the new sponsors, the NCF continued to create opportunities for Black composers to compose new music for prescription or for choirs to use as choice pieces. The national finals always served as a testing ground to premiere the new pieces. Certain composers were associated with specific choirs and thus, their music would predominantly be presented by those choirs at the finals. A significant number of compositions were commissioned to celebrate milestones of the NCF. Additionally, many works were popularized as choice pieces within the NCF. Mzilikazi Khumalo's original compositions, such as *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959), *Ugqozi* (1969), *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981), *Kwadedangendlale* (1983) and *Inkondlo kaMnkabayi* (1984), have frequently been featured in the NCF and other competitions and festivals in South Africa. The NCF ran for over 40 years as the primary national festival for Black youth, adult, church and community choirs in Southern Africa.

Black Choralism in contemporary South Africa represents a vibrant and dynamic manifestation of cultural identity, resilience and creativity. It is rooted in a rich legacy established during the

tumultuous colonial and apartheid eras. Present Black choral music continues to embody a synthesis of traditional African musical idioms with modern influences characterised by eclecticism. Aiming to appeal to local and global audiences, composers and choirs frequently draw from African languages, rhythms and melodies, seamlessly integrating them into innovative contemporary arrangements designed to captivate listeners. By merging historical traditions with contemporary themes, current Black choralism preserves African heritage and addresses issues of social justice, identity and global connectivity.

Competitions such as the Old Mutual National Choir Festival, alongside other platforms, have played a pivotal role in nurturing talent and promoting choral excellence, leading to the emergence of international opera stars such as Pretty Yende and Pumeza Matshikiza, among others. Nonetheless, challenges persist, including the pressing need for heightened recognition of Black composers within academic and mainstream musical discourse, the development of a compositional framework that reflects Africanness and ongoing advocacy for resources and opportunities that sustain this essential cultural tradition.

The literature on Black choralism reflects the experiences of a group of people who negotiated their identity within a context of cultural dominance by external forces. It illustrates how Black individuals have persistently sought their identity through choral music. Composer Todd Matshikiza (1921–1968), as noted in Brukman (2019:262), uses the term *the claw* to describe the impact of a dominant Western culture that aimed to undermine his African heritage, which his now world-famous African musical theatre, *King Kong* (1959), successfully resisted within the context of African music histories. To establish their compositional identity, many Black composers, including Matshikiza and later Khumalo, had to contend with “the heavy white claw” that perpetually constrained them and they employed compositional techniques that

blended styles, genres and cultures to express their resistance within the overarching accepted cultural space.

The subsequent subsection introduces several early notable Black composers who preceded Mzilikazi Khumalo and engaged with the issue of African identity during an era when the presentation of Black culture could have led to imprisonment or both physical and eternal damnation. This examination discusses the methodologies these composers employed in their compositional techniques to address the issue of identity. Furthermore, the subsection analyses existing literature regarding the challenges encountered by these Black composers. The objective of the forthcoming section is to delineate the various influences of musical resilience that inspired Khumalo in developing his approach to African compositional identity, which is marked by a defiance against an oppressive system.

2.4 Early Black South African composers

The literature on Black choralism highlights that many Black composers began composing music in church due to their missionary education (Detterbeck 2002, Olwage 2003, Akrofi et al. 2007, Olwage 2008, Mugovhani 2010, and Mugovhani and Oluranti 2015). Over time, these composers created melodies for new hymns, incorporating original texts in African languages. Some remained closely affiliated with various churches, such as Reverend John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922), who continued to write church music until his passing. Others, after completing their college education, pursued careers in teaching while maintaining their church connections (Mpola, 2007). They established choirs in the schools where they taught, further fostering the tradition of Black choral music.

According to Mugovhani and Oluranti (2015:3), the first generation of Black composers included Tiyo Soga (1829–1871), Rev. John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922), Enoch Sontonga

(1873–1905) and Alfred Assegai Khumalo (1879–1966). However, Mugovhani’s list omits important figures such as Ntsikana Gaba (1780–1821), the composer of the renowned Xhosa hymn *Ulo Tixo Omkhulu* (The Great God; The Great Hymn), which was later transcribed and popularised by John Knox Bokwe. According to Hodgson (1980:37), Ntsikana’s hymn was commonly known as *Intsimbi ka Ntsikana* (Ntsikana’s bell), a title derived from the opening lines of that hymn which resembles the ringing bell. Following Bokwe’s publication of Gaba’s hymn, missionaries encouraged other converts to compose new hymns (Mpola, 2007:17). These composers were born during the rise of colonialism, a time when the church was seen as a refuge for Black people. They composed within the constraints of limited resources. Among them, Bokwe received significant recognition. A prominent South African composer, reverend and educator in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he is credited with composing the first known notated song by a Black composer in South Africa—*Msindisi wa boni* (Saviour of Sinners) (Olwage 2006:1).

Mpola (2007:5) notes that Bokwe began composing in 1875 and played a key role in both creating his works and publishing those of other Black composers. While Bokwe and his contemporaries sought to establish a presence for Black South Africans in an environment dominated by Western music, their efforts were hindered by colonial attitudes toward race and culture. Black composers frequently faced dismissal, misunderstanding, or inadequate scholarly attention due to the pervasive racial prejudices of the time; a “travesty of Western music” (Olwage, 2008:165). Olwage (2006:3) highlights that, despite Bokwe’s mastery of European harmonic language, his musical grammar was often criticized as flawed—an observation made by South African ethnomusicologist Percival Kirby. Such biases subjected Black composers to unfair criticism as they navigated their musical identities within a colonial framework. This resulted in their music not being regarded as art music.

Stevens (2007:48–49) implicitly distinguishes between art music and choral art music by describing European art music as highly individualistic, with an aesthetic and performance approach that may be considered to be “overly intellectualised”. In contrast, the tonic solfa approach to singing by Black choristers is seen as having a “comparatively less intellectual focus per se” Akrofi et al. (2007:146) explains that African choral art music emerged from the fusion of Western musical systems with indigenous African idioms and rhythms, leading to its classification as *syncretic music* due to its hybrid nature. This distinction has contributed to an uneven valuation of composers, where White composers are predominantly recognised as art music composers, while Black composers are categorised as choral art music composers. Such classifications reinforce hierarchical power relations that marginalise African music and composers in favour of Western traditions. The struggle for artistic identity persisted into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, affecting generations of Black composers striving for recognition within a Eurocentric musical framework.

South African Black choralism has its roots deeply intertwined with both the missionary movement and the quest for cultural and spiritual expression among Black communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mugovhani’s list also excludes a central figure who, according to Xulu (1992:285), was vital to the quest for cultural and spiritual expression among Black communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Reverend Langalibalele Dube (1871–1946). Dube was a prominent educator, journalist, and religious leader who is best known for founding the Ohlange Institute in 1901 in Inanda and was the first president of the National African Congress (ANC). The Ohlange Choir, associated with the institute, became a key vehicle for both religious and cultural expression, performing intricate harmonies that blended European hymnody with African melodic and rhythmic sensibilities. Under the guidance of figures like Caluza—an early choir conductor at Ohlange—the choir developed a

repertoire that was both spiritually uplifting and culturally affirming, embodying a distinctive South African Black choral aesthetic that would influence generations of composers and choirs (Nelani,2021:57).

Equally important in this narrative is Nokuthela Dube (1873–1917), Rev. Dube’s wife, who was herself a composer and cultural activist. According to Gabaitse and Khumalo (2014:107), Nokuthela was among the first Black women to qualify as a teacher. She was the author of the first Zulu Songbook alongside her husband. Nokuthela contributed to the Ohlange Choir’s repertoire, composing hymns and songs that drew from African musical idioms while serving the educational and spiritual mission of the institute. Together, the Dubes cultivated a space where choral music was not merely devotional but also a medium for cultural identity and empowerment. By the 1910s, the Ohlange Choir was already recognized for its disciplined performances and innovative harmonisations, laying the groundwork for the rich tradition of South African Black choralism that would flourish throughout the 20th century, influencing subsequent choral composers such as Mzilikazi Khumalo and others who sought to merge indigenous musical heritage with Western choral techniques.

The second generation of prominent composers preceding Mzilikazi Khumalo emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Reuben Caluza (1895–1969) and J.P. Mohapeloa (1908–1982). Their works mark a significant departure from those of their predecessors and are central to this study, as they laid the foundation for the musical innovations that Khumalo would later develop in his career. With the growing political consciousness and liberation movements among Africans, composers like Caluza and Mohapeloa increasingly explored indigenous African musical structures with greater artistic freedom. Erlmann (1991:118) notes that while Caluza was influenced by Western musical traditions—such as church organs, brass instruments and hymns—his musical environment in Edendale remained deeply connected to

traditional IsiZulu performance practices. As a result, his compositions reflect a synthesis of folk songs and traditional dance music from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This stylistic approach gained momentum among South African composers from the 1920s through the 1970s, shaping the evolution of choral and art music in the country. Caluza, in particular, remains one of South Africa's most significant composers, recognised for his role in bridging African and Western musical traditions. Mohapeloa, like Caluza, incorporated distinct African cultural elements into his compositions, drawing from traditional music, dance and the sonic qualities of the Sesotho language. Lucia (2016:xxvii) highlights Mohapeloa's deep connection to Sesotho culture, which he experienced through storytelling, dance, games and riddles. His compositions reflect this cultural immersion, particularly in his exploration of the sonorous nature of Sesotho vowels and the interplay between sound and language.

A notable example of Mohapeloa's deep connection to Sesotho culture is *Qeu! Qeu Majoana* (1935) (Lucia, 2016), a piece inspired by a traditional Sesotho pebble game, demonstrates his appreciation for Lesotho's cultural life. Similarly, his widely recognised composition *U Ea Kae?* (Where are you going?) is directly based on a traditional Sesotho threshing song (Lucia, 2007:166), which further showcases his ability to blend indigenous musical expressions with formal compositional techniques. Mohapeloa's work remains a testament to his commitment to preserve and celebrate Sesotho musical heritage.

Even though Caluza, Mohapeloa and their contemporaries—like Moerane—took a step forward in recognising the importance of drawing inspiration from African idiom, the Eurocentric music structures continued to enjoy equal expression in their compositions, to the extent that in some compositions the Eurocentric approach was rather dominant. This was in terms of melodic writing that reflected the Western style, harmonic approach and

structure/form that was drawn from Western music. It was evident, however, that these composers were beginning to suggest that the African music idiom has space for expression in the music they were writing.

Caluza died in 1969, during a decade that coincided with the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) ideology. That same year also marked the tenth anniversary of Mzilikazi Khumalo's first composition, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*. Mohapelo, died in 1982, in a decade that saw the intensification of mass resistance to apartheid, marked by widespread protests and global pressure for the South African government to release Nelson Mandela. During this period, cities like Glasgow granted Mandela honorary freedom, naming streets and buildings in his honour. Such events inspired a new generation of Black composers to explore musical structures that reflected their African identities more authentically.

The body of literature regarding early Black composers emphasises their essential contributions to the choral tradition, a phenomenon primarily shaped by church practices stemming from missionary education. Numerous composers crafted translated Western hymns, while others created original hymns in the style of Western church music, using African languages to effectively bridge cultural expressions through the medium of music (Detterbeck, 2002; Olwage, 2003). Among these prominent figures are Reverend John Knox Bokwe and Enoch Sontonga, who, despite facing systemic obstacles, laid the groundwork for future generations of composers.

The following subsection explores Khumalo's life and his significance as a leading composer who continued the legacy established by his predecessors by developing black choral music and creating an African identity within this genre.

2.5 Mzilikazi Khumalo

According to Mugovhani and Oluranti (2015:155), Mzilikazi Khumalo was born on June 20, 1932, in Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). He was the third son of Major Andreas M. Khumalo and Mrs Ntombizodwa J. Khumalo. Khumalo's parents were ordained ministers of the Salvation Army. They lived in a Salvation Army family in KwaNgwelu in the Vryheid area. Mzilikazi Khumalo was raised in various locations as his parents moved frequently due to their roles as officers of the Salvation Army. According to Pooley (2022:86), Khumalo grew up in Natal, Venda and, later, in the Witwatersrand. He participated in school and church choirs, where he developed his singing talent. In addition to singing in choirs, he also learned to play the euphonium within the Salvation Army. He later became the conductor of the Salvation Army church choirs, including the Peart Memorial Songsters and the Soweto Songsters, which he founded in 1972.

Through his involvement with church music and his role in conducting choirs within the Salvation Army, Khumalo developed skills in music arrangement and composition. His first known composition—which is a significant piece for this research—is *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959). It was set to a poem by B.W. Vilakazi. Following this piece, he continued composing and writing arrangements for the Salvation Army choirs for the church's annual events during his spare time. These arrangements became highlights of the church events and grew in scale, which encouraged him to write even more. The new compositions brought him fame beyond the Salvation Army Church and established him as a well-known figure in the South African choral music scene (Interview with Reverend Mabaso, 2023).

Khumalo became a well-known prolific composer and a professor of languages in South Africa. His background in church music and love for languages, particularly the isiZulu

language, played an essential role in his compositional life. For example, Khumalo arranged *Ungifanise Nawe*, which is a hymn sung in the Salvation Army. The use of bass and unison singing at the beginning of his arrangement of this hymn almost foreshadows what he writes in the cantata *UShaka kaSenzangakhona* (Soweto Songsters, 2010). Listening to his church arrangements, one can hear that Khumalo drew inspiration from isiZulu music.

Aside from his commitment to the church, Khumalo was also a devoted family man. He met his future wife, Litlhare Rose Masala, while still a high school student in Soweto (Pooley, 2022:86). They married in 1958 and had four children: Busisiwe, Diliza, Themba and Nonhlanhla (now a professor at the University of Cape Town). His son, Diliza Khumalo, remembers his father as an engaged parent who was dedicated to his family and always present in their lives as they grew up. In an interview with Diliza Khumalo (2024), he shared how his father and his father's colleagues, such as Professor Khabi Mngoma, would gather around a piano at night in their home to create and discuss music. He recalls that there was always music in their home, which led his father to encourage them to sing some of his compositions. This interaction inspired Diliza to pursue music at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where Khumalo was also a professor of African languages.

As he raised his family, Khumalo continued to hone his musical skills within the church while pursuing formal education at various institutions. Pooley (2022:86) indicates that Khumalo earned a teacher's diploma from Bantu Normal College in 1954. Due to the racial segregation policies of the time, he was unable to attend any of the country's residential universities. Instead, he enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) through distance learning, majoring in isiZulu and English. After completing his BA, Khumalo took a teaching position at Wallmansthal Secondary School in Pretoria (Pooley 2022, 86). He continued teaching isiZulu, English and mathematics in Pretoria and Mamelodi

throughout the 1960s and, from 1964 to 1968, he served as principal of Mamellong Nqabeni High School in Brakpan.

In 1969, Khumalo was appointed as a language tutor in the Department of Languages at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) (Pooley 2022:87). While at Wits, he pursued a BA Honours degree at UNISA, graduating in 1972. He then continued his studies with postgraduate research in linguistics, specialising in Zulu tonology at the master's level. In 1980, Khumalo was appointed to a lectureship position at Wits. His doctoral dissertation, *An Autosegmental Account of Zulu Phonology* (1987), was groundbreaking, marking the first significant study of its kind in the field of Zulu phonology (Pooley 2022:87). This work earned him recognition and awards for his contributions to Zulu tonology. He became acting head of the department at Wits in 1983, then head of the department and associate professor in 1988. In 1989, he made history as the first Black full professor of languages at Wits. After retiring in 1998, he was granted the title of Professor Emeritus, leaving behind a lasting legacy in linguistics.

Khumalo's dedication to the isiZulu language is intricately connected to his musical career, as he adeptly incorporated his linguistic proficiency into his compositions. In addition to his scholarly endeavours, he emerged as a significant figure in the choral music domain, exerting a considerable influence on school, church and community choirs, particularly within the Salvation Army. His choirs, notably the Peart Memorial Songsters and the Soweto Songsters, embarked on international tours, performing in the United States, Europe and the Caribbean (interview with Diliza Khumalo, 2024). These tours contributed to the cultivation of cultural connections with the African diaspora during and after the apartheid era in South Africa.

Domestically, Khumalo played a pivotal role in the Sowetan Nation Building Massed Choir Festival, co-directing the event with Maestro Richard Cock in 1989 (Mugovhani, 2008). The

festival aimed to promote racial reconciliation through music, uniting black and white singers in a shared effort towards dialogue and social integration in post-apartheid South Africa (Pooley,2022:87). The festival evolved into a national institution, featuring annual concerts with thousands of singers, providing a platform for emerging talent and collaborating with the National Symphony Orchestra.

Khumalo also revolutionized choral practice in South Africa by promoting *dual notation*, a combination of tonic solfa and staff notation, which facilitated collaboration between choirs and orchestras or opera companies. His innovative approach to notation, informed by his background in linguistics, introduced new symbols and performance techniques that enhanced the representation of African tonal systems in choral music. This development opened up new possibilities for composers working within African idioms, thereby shaping the future of South African choral music.

AKHALA AMAQHUDE AMABILI

Two Cocks Crowing
(SATB)

35

Traditional *Andante* ♩ = 76 *arr. Mzilikazi Khumalo*

Doh is A^b S : | : 1, 1, 1 | 1 m : -, m | - : | : 1, 1, 1 | 1 m : -, m | - : {

S : | : d, d, d | d : -, l, | - : | : d, d, d | d : -, l, | - : {

A : | : : | : m, m, m | m : -, d | - : | : m, m, m | m : -, d | - : {

T : | : : | : d, d, d | d : -, l, | - : | : d, d, d | d : -, l, | - : {

B : | : : | : m, m, m | m : -, d | - : | : m, m, m | m : -, d | - : {

Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li -

Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li -

Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li -

Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li - ki - gi! Ki-ki-li -

Vu - ka - ni, ma-do - da! Vu -

Example 3: An excerpt showing dual notation from the SAMRO scores, *South Africa Sings Vol. 1, African Choral Repertoire in Dual Notation* edited by Mzilikazi Khumalo.

2.5.1 Khumalo's compositional life

The compositions of Khumalo can be categorized into three distinct periods.

- The early years: 1959 to 1980.
- The middle period: early 1980s to the early 1990s.
- The late period/final years: early 1990s until his retirement after 2005.

Significant developments can be observed throughout the various periods of Khumalo's composing career. In his early years, he crafted hybrid compositions that combined Western and African musical idioms, with the Western style predominating in these works—as discussed in the analysis in Chapter Three. During the middle years, Khumalo began challenging creative boundaries as he sought to establish his African identity through his music. This phase marked a transition toward compositions that relied more heavily on African musical elements, moving away from the Western idiom. In the later years of his compositional life, Khumalo experimented with large-scale works, building upon the foundations established in the previous period. Notably, this is when he composed the epic cantata, *UShaka kaSenzangakhona*, and the opera, *Princess Magogo kaDinizulu*.

The early years (1959–1980)

During this period, a Eurocentric approach to composition largely influenced Khumalo's works. However, his commitment to the isiZulu language and culture is evident from his first composition, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959)—well before he became a language professor. This piece incorporates text from a poem by Benedict Vilakazi. Notably, Vilakazi and Robert Sobukwe (also a political icon in the struggle against apartheid), preceded Khumalo in the Department of African Languages at Wits (Pooley, 2022:87). Vilakazi wrote many poems that inspired Khumalo to compose music. *Ugqozi and Kwadedangendlale* is an example of

compositions based on Vilakazi's poems. These poems by Vilakazi, which addressed the political situation, also consciously celebrated African culture and idioms, forming a critical foundation and shift in how Khumalo approached the use of African languages in his works compared to his predecessors in composition. Khumalo emerged as one of the few Black composers of his time who deliberately integrated traditional African idioms into his music. As Mugovhani and Oluranti (2015:5) point out: in nearly all of Khumalo's compositions before 1980, he included sections in the traditional isiZulu style—an intentional and significant feature of his work. In the 1980s, Khumalo focused on studying isiZulu tonology at an advanced level. The following notable compositions were created during this period: *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959) and *Ugqozi* (1969).

The middle years (1980–1995)

A notable transformation in the musical compositions of Mzilikazi Khumalo is evident from the 1980s, as he intentionally endeavoured to create works deeply rooted in African traditions. His postgraduate studies in linguistics appear to have significantly influenced the creations from this period. During this time, Khumalo employed his vocal writing skills to establish a new identity for his music, which became closely associated with African musical identity. Although Khumalo continued to draw upon Western musical frameworks and methodologies, he adapted them to allow his compositions to resonate with a distinctly African sound. The exploration of *Amahubo esiZulu* (a unique style of singing that characterises a particular genre of music from the amaZulu people) was central to his music during this period and constituted a rich cultural foundation that informed many of his works. The analysis of *Izibongo zika Shaka* presented in Chapter Three will further illustrate how Khumalo integrated this African idiom.

Notable works from the 1980s, where Khumalo drew more from African traditions than from Western ones, include the female voice compositions *Inkondlo ka Mnkabayi*, *Ibhangela lama Afrika* and *Yith' omanqoba, yith' ushikishi*, among others. All these pieces were composed after *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981), marking a clear shift in Khumalo's compositional style during this decade. This evolution laid the foundation for the large-scale works he would compose in the 1990s.

A list of pieces from the 1980s to early 1990s includes:

- *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981)
- *Izulu Elisha* (1981)
- *Koze Kube Nini?* (1981)
- *Halleluya Mdumiseni Nonke* (1982)
- *Kwaze Kwamnand'ekhaya* (1982)
- *Vukani Madoda* (1983)
- *KwaDedangendlale* (1983)
- *Imvukuzane- Lala Ngokuthula* (1983)
- *Halala Yunisa* (1983)
- *Lala Mntwana Wami* (1983)
- *S'khala Kini Makhos'ohlangu* (1983)
- *Inhliziyo Kayideli* (1984)
- *Inkondlo kaMnkabayi* (1984)
- *Ibhangela Lama-Afrika* (1985)
- *Xola Hleziphi* (1986)
- *Bantu Be-Afrika Hlanganani* (1992)

- *Ivukil' iMvana* (1995)
- *Insizw' endala* (1995)

The final years (1996–death)

Khumalo's final phase of composition transpired during the 1990s to 2000s, a period in which he began to Africanize Western compositional styles, including opera and oratorio. He produced significant works that reflect this transformation, such as the cantata *UShaka kaSenzangakhona* (1996), derived from *Izibongo zika Shaka* and the opera, *Princess Magogo KaDinizulu* (2002), which was inspired by the song cycle of Princess Magogo's compositions titled *Haya Mntwan' Omkhulu*. This marked a substantial shift in compositional methodology—one with a pronounced objective of establishing an African identity. The large-scale works *UShaka kaSenzangakhona* and *Princess Magogo KaDinizulu* drew upon traditional African musical idioms. Among these idioms are antiphony—an idiom characterised by an interplay of rhythmic fragments that results in polyrhythmic-like structures; the integration of African speech tones with melody; cyclical structures representative of traditional African songs; traditional praises (*izibongo*); and isiZulu singing styles and dances originating from *amahubo*.

Compositions of the final years include:

- *Ushaka Ka Senzangakhona* (1996): an epic cantata
- *Haya Mntwan' omkhulu song cycle* (1999): transcriptions/ arrangement
- *Princess Magogo KaDinuzulu* (2002): opera
- *Siyajabula Kwa* (2011): commissioned by SAMRO

In addition to his compositions and commissions, Khumalo specialised in arranging and documenting traditional folk songs. Among his most notable arrangements is the renowned IsiXhosa folk song *Bawo, Thixo, Somandla*. According to Mpola (2007:9), this song was composed by Mxolisi Archibald Matyila (1938–1985) as a response to the adversities faced by Black South Africans during the apartheid era. The composition is included in *SAMRO Scores, South Africa Sings African Choral Repertoire in Dual Notation*, a compilation edited by Khumalo. Khumalo's arrangements rendered numerous traditional folk songs more accessible to choirs, facilitating their learning of these works. These scores proved advantageous to Eurocentric choirs, who often lacked musical style and language familiarity.

49

BAWO, THIXO SOMANDLA

Father, God Omnipotent
(SATB)

Traditional *arr. Mzilikazi Khumalo*

Moderato $\text{♩} = 92$

Doh is F#

B { : d | s : - | s . s : s . s - . d : - | - : s . s | m : d . d }

Ba - wo, Thi - xo So - ma - ndla, Bu - yi - nto - n'u - bu -

For rehearsal only

Example 4: *Bawo, Thixo Somandla* arranged by Mzilikazi Khumalo

Arrangements like those found in South Africa, such as *Sings African Choral Repertoire in Dual Notation*, are part of Khumalo's legacy and contributes to African choral music in the country. Although the notation presents challenges, it allows different choirs in the country to perform this repertoire of action songs, known as *izitibili*.

Khumalo passed away on 22 June 2021, two days after his 89th birthday. He left behind a rich legacy of musical compositions, collections of traditional folk songs and recordings of his works and arrangements. In an unfortunate turn of events, Khumalo's wife, Rose Khumalo, also passed away two days after her husband. As is often seen in many African traditions, this simultaneous passing, while tragic, symbolises the profound love and inseparability that characterised their relationship, as noted by Sidwell Mhlongo, a family friend and protégé of Professor Khumalo. Mhlongo holds the position of conductor and director of the esteemed Gauteng Choristers. This ensemble has distinguished itself in Black choral music in South Africa for numerous years, presenting a significant body of Khumalo's works with the highest standards of excellence and commitment, thereby perpetuating the Khumalo legacy and that of other African composers.

2.6 *Amahubo* in isiZulu culture

Amahubo, the traditional war chants and praise songs of the AmaZulu people hold deep cultural, historical and spiritual significance. Scholars such as Xulu (1992) and Yende (2024) emphasise the crucial role of *amahubo* in preserving AmaZulu identity, strengthening oral tradition and influencing contemporary music. These songs are not merely historical relics but remain embedded as living traditions that evolve while maintaining their core purpose. Practitioners such as Mbuso Khoza continue to promote the culture of *amahubo* in South Africa and beyond. Furthermore, the study by Yende and Ngema (2022) extends this discourse by analysing *Ingoma* (dance songs) within the broader framework of AmaZulu musical traditions, emphasising their adaptability and transformation over time (Yende & Ngema, 2022:1).

2.6.1 *Amahubo* as a link to history and identity

According to Yende (2024:3), *amahubo* are more than just songs. They are potent expressions of cultural heritage connecting past and present generations. Traditionally, they were performed during warfare, funerals and other communal gatherings, reinforcing collective memory and social unity (Yende, 2024:6). Similarly, Xulu (1992:331) explains that *amahubo* dates back to the mythological origins of the AmaZulu people and are at the heart of AmaZulu cultural, religious and political life. He argues that *amahubo* are not just musical pieces but symbolic expressions of ancestral reverence. They play a key role in how the AmaZulu people understand and preserve their identity.

Xulu (1992:167) further emphasises that viewing *amahubo* as mere songs is too limiting. Instead, he suggests that *amahubo* should be understood as a broader concept that represents the ideas, values and historical consciousness of the AmaZulu people. This perspective helps explain why *amahubo* remains essential to AmaZulu life and traditions, even as society changes. Yende and Ngema (2022:2) expand on this by linking *amahubo* to *Ingoma*, demonstrating how both musical traditions evolved in response to sociopolitical changes, particularly during the era of industrialisation and urban migration.

2.6.2 Musical and linguistic features of *amahubo*

Musically, *amahubo* is deeply rooted in oral tradition, meaning it has been passed down by word of mouth rather than written notation. It features call-and-response singing, polyrhythms and unique tonal patterns, which distinguish it from Western musical forms (Yende, 2024:10). These features allow *amahubo* to serve as a form of oral literature, encoding historical events, communal values and shared experiences in a way that is easy to remember and pass down to future generations.

In addition to their musical elements, *amahubo* have historically been used as resistance and cultural affirmation tools. During colonial rule and apartheid, they provided a way for AmaZulu communities to express their identity, defy oppression and maintain their traditions (Yende, 2024:12). This function of *amahubo* demonstrates their role as both cultural and political statements throughout AmaZulu history. Yende and Ngema (2022:5) observe a similar dynamic in *Ingoma*, particularly between 1929 and 1939, when dance-song traditions became symbols of both cultural resilience and adaptation under the pressures of urbanization and missionary influences.

2.6.3 The adaptation of *amahubo* in contemporary music

As South African music has evolved, *amahubo* have remained a key influence on modern genres such as maskandi and choral music (Yende, 2024:14). Rather than disappearing, these traditional songs have been adapted into new musical contexts, demonstrating their continued relevance in shaping contemporary AmaZulu identity. Yende (2024:15) argues that *amahubo* are not relics of the past but living cultural expressions that evolve alongside social changes.

Yende and Ngema (2022:6) further assert that similar adaptation processes took place with *Ingoma*, where traditional elements were retained while incorporating modern influences. The study argues that these evolutions are not compromises but strategic efforts to preserve indigenous music in new and meaningful ways.

2.6.4 *Amahubo* as a cultural bridge

Khumalo's approach aligns with Xulu's (1992:346) claim that composers can "borrow from the warehouse of *amahubo* performance" to create music that reflects historical roots and modern innovation. This highlights the flexibility and adaptability of *amahubo*, demonstrating that they are not static traditions but evolving cultural expressions. Ultimately, the work of

Yende (2024), Xulu (1992) and Yende and Ngema (2022) demonstrates that *amahubo* function as a bridge between past and present, preserving AmaZulu heritage while continuing to influence contemporary music. These songs remain at the heart of AmaZulu musical culture, reinforcing identity, storytelling and artistic expression in deeply rooted and continuously evolving ways.

According to Xulu (1992:2), the term *ukuHuba* denotes singing with a deep, roaring sound, akin to that of a flooding river, a thunderstorm, a waterfall, or a roaring lion. Within isiZulu culture, *amahubo* are frequently associated with the tribe's ancestors (*abantu abadala*) and are performed in various cultural contexts. The term *abantu abadala* (old people) is commonly employed by both the Zulu and Xhosa peoples to refer to their ancestors (*amadlozi/izinyanya*). Ancestors occupy a pivotal role in the spirituality of the Zulu nation. Thus, it is reasonable to deduce that *amahubo* songs qualify as religious or sacred music (Xulu, 1992:2). Moreover, Xulu (1992:2) posits that King Shaka, during the years of his consolidation, designated at least one *ihubo* song to each regiment, which would thus be identified by its *ihubo* song, alongside the distinctive colours of its shields and *amabheshu* (the skin buttock coverings).

2.6.5 Performance styles within *amahubo*

There are various performance styles within the broader context of *amahubo*. These additional styles enhance the overall experience of *amahubo*, depending on the context in which they are performed. *Indlamu*, a dance often performed by young men (the king's regiment) is one style that can enhance *ihubo* for war. Although *Indlamu* originated as a war dance, Yende and Ngema (2022: 5) suggest that, from 1929 to 1939, *Indlamu* became a prominent dance in the *Ingoma* competitions of the AmaZulu. The second dance style is *Giya*. Xulu (1992:187) points out that *ukuGiya* is a style that showcases the performers' skills. It typically involves singing

and dancing, arising from inspiration generated by another performance. *UkuGiya* usually occurs following an inspiring *ihubo* performance and sometimes serves as part of the build-up to such a performance. The third style is *Bonga*, which is derived from *izibongo* (praise poetry).

More performance styles can be mentioned in the context of *amahubo*. However, this study will focus on the three styles previously mentioned. These three styles were primarily utilised by Mzilikazi Khumalo in his compositions, especially the two pieces analysed in this study. Khumalo aimed to influence a new trajectory in composing African music, leaning towards traditional African elements. Through this writing style, Khumalo intentionally sought to diverge from the practices of his predecessors. His predecessors mainly employed Western composition styles alongside African text without carefully structuring the text to direct the music.

Writing music that conformed to the language was essential to Khumalo. Xulu (1992:324) points out that, before Khumalo's time, the mission-educated elite tolerated the distortion of normal speech rhythms in isiXhosa and isiZulu in the *Amakhwaya* music of the 19th century. Instead, symbols of Western civilisation, such as four-part choral harmony, became more critical to those converts than ethnic cultural expressions, such as isiZulu poetic rhythms. In this sense, isiZulu speech modes have been subordinated to Western sound structures in those compositions. By exploring the rich *amahubo* performance styles, Khumalo aimed to influence a change from what was happening with the mission-educated elite of the 19th century so that African music elements could hold greater significance when writing African music.

2.7 Tonal sensitivity and linguistic integrity in Khumalo's compositional approach

Mzilikazi Khumalo's deep understanding of isiZulu tonology fundamentally shaped his approach to musical composition, particularly in the setting of text in his choral works. In

isiZulu, tone is closely tied to morphemes—the smallest meaningful units of language—where each morpheme carries a distinct tonal pattern that contributes to the overall meaning of a word (Khumalo, 1981:3). These tonal structures, while generally predictable, are subject to modification by phonetic rules. Bosch and Pretorius (2017:156) similarly point out how tone patterns in isiZulu verb roots are dynamic and shift depending on morphological and phonetic environments.

Khumalo's compositions exhibit a profound sensitivity to these tonal dynamics. His melodic writing meticulously preserves the rising and falling patterns inherent to isiZulu speech and ensures that the musical setting enhances rather than distorts the natural linguistic flow. This is evident in *Izibongo zika Shaka*, where repetitive praise phrases like *Ndabezitha* are carefully set to mirror the speech rhythms and tonal contours of isiZulu, as it will be demonstrated in Chapter Three. Even within the framework of Western harmonic progressions, Khumalo maintains the integrity of isiZulu prosody, affirming the primacy of language in his musical structures.

A crucial element of Khumalo's work is his handling of surface tones and their phonetic realisation. IsiZulu distinguishes between level, rising and falling tones (Khumalo, 1981:47–51), which are subject to phonological processes, such as the up-gliding of high tones when adjacent to specific sounds. Khumalo's melodic phrasing reflects an acute awareness of these tone shifts, aligning high and low musical pitches with their linguistic counterparts. Bosch and Pretorius (2017:161) emphasise that, in isiZulu, tonal variation can change grammatical meaning and Khumalo's compositions leverage this nuance to communicate both textual meaning and emotional depth, creating a musical experience that resonates naturally with isiZulu speakers.

Moreover, Khumalo demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the impact of depressor consonants—phonetic features that lower the tone of the following syllable. Traditionally attributed to specific consonants, Khumalo (1981:19) refines this understanding by explaining their association with slack vocal cords. In his musical settings, he accounts for the tonal shifts caused by these depressor consonants, carefully shaping melodies to reflect the authentic pronunciation and tone realisation of isiZulu words. This attention to detail ensures linguistic clarity and prevents the distortion of meaning, a critical concern when adapting spoken language into musical form.

Tonal structure in isiZulu also plays a central role in shaping musical form in Khumalo's compositions. Morphemes adhere to tonal hierarchies that ensure linguistic coherence (Khumalo, 1981:4) and features, such as penultimate syllable prominence—where the second-to-last syllable often receives stress—are key to both language and music. Khumalo integrates this principle by aligning musical phrasing with natural speech emphasis, particularly in verb structures where tonal patterns determine grammatical and semantic distinctions (Bosch & Pretorius, 2017:156). His sensitivity to this linguistic feature results in melodies that not only sound natural but also reinforce the expressive power of the text.

Khumalo's academic research into isiZulu tonology provided a rigorous theoretical foundation for his compositional practice. His ability to bridge the intricate rules of linguistic tone with musical expressiveness allowed him to create works that are both authentic to isiZulu and artistically innovative. Bosch and Pretorius (2017:161) affirm that computational models of isiZulu morphology and tonology validate the importance of these interactions, reinforcing the significance of Khumalo's meticulous approach.

Ultimately, Khumalo's compositions exemplify how African languages can be fully integrated into art music without sacrificing linguistic authenticity. By respecting the tonal and phonological structures of isiZulu, he preserved cultural identity while engaging with global musical traditions, setting a powerful precedent for future African composers seeking to balance heritage and innovation. Now that the literature behind Khumalo's compositional approach has been discussed, the next subsections will discuss the research design for this

2.8 Research design and methods

This study employed a combination of qualitative methodology to analyse two selected musical scores by Khumalo as insightful case studies. Additionally, interviews were conducted to gain further insights into the aspects of Khumalo's work that were passed orally. The creation of new works, which accompany this study, was achieved using a practice-led research approach. Practice-led research is especially relevant in artistic fields, as it establishes an interactive relationship between creative practice and academic inquiry. Hamilton and Hansen (2024:1757) describe practice-led research as a creative arts methodology that places practice at the centre of research activity. In this approach, researchers are deeply immersed in the process, with knowledge emerging through the creation of artefacts, languages, environments, systems, techniques, and processes. It promotes a deeper understanding of the compositional process while generating new knowledge that informs and advances the discipline (Candy, 2006:1, Ross, 2022:110).

According to Candy (2006:1), practice-led research focuses on understanding the nature of practice itself, emphasising how creative processes contribute to the development of new knowledge. Ross (2022:111) further elaborates that practice-based research integrates both the process and the outcomes of original inquiry, generating new insights into professional

practice. In doing so, it advances knowledge about and within the practice itself, with its creative outputs serving as tangible evidence of that research. Rather than being purely theoretical, this approach is grounded in practical engagement, where artistic creation serves as both a method of inquiry and a means of discovery. Similarly, Smith and Dean (2009:2) argue that practice can yield research insights, mainly through making creative work and the subsequent documentation and theorization of that work.

Furthermore, Smith and Dean (2009:2) highlight the reciprocal relationship between practice-led research and research-led practice—where academic research informs creative practice and, conversely, creative practice generates new academic insights. Smith and Dean (2009:7) derived the term *research-led practice* from the *modus operandi* of science, engineering, technology and medical research—in which research work is directed not only towards elucidating ideas but also towards the production of practical outcomes. This dual approach recognises that:

- Creative work constitutes research, producing unique insights that contribute to the body of knowledge in the field.
- The creative practice process, including the specialised training, methodologies and decision-making involved in music composition, can lead to specialised research findings that can be formalized and documented (Smith & Dean, 2009:5).

By integrating these perspectives, this study illustrates how Mzilikazi Khumalo's African music compositions function as artistic expressions and scholarly inquiries, reinforcing the interdependence of theory and practice. Through this practice-led research approach, the study seeks to broaden the discourse on African music, ensuring that indigenous traditions and

contemporary innovations are critically examined, preserved and advanced within academic and creative contexts.

More specifically, this research combines a critical analysis of Khumalo's existing works, with the researcher-composer developing new compositions. It demonstrates how Khumalo's music is a source of inspiration and a framework for innovative compositional practices. By examining the tonal structures, harmonic and thematic elements of Khumalo's works, this study aims to identify compositional strategies that emerging composers can adapt and upon which they can expand, thereby contributing to the ongoing evolution of African art music.

2.8.1 Research design

A practice-led research is structured into three complementary phases: analysis (academic research), composition (creative process) and reflection (on both). Each phase integrates theoretical and practical inquiries into African music traditions and compositional practices.

Analysis phase

This phase focused on analysing selected music compositions by Mzilikazi Khumalo to uncover their structural, rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, cultural and aesthetic principles. The analysis focused on two key compositions: *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959) and *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981). The process comprised the following components:

- Score and audio analysis: A detailed examination of Khumalo's compositions, focusing on rhythm, melody, harmony, instrumentation and form. Particular attention was given to how these elements interact to create the distinctive qualities of each piece and how Khumalo approached these elements to inform his compositional approach.

- Contextual research: Exploration of the cultural, historical and social contexts underpinning the selected compositions.
- Fieldwork and interviews: We engaged with African choral music practitioners, including composers, conductors, singers and individuals with intimate knowledge of Khumalo's works. We conducted semi-structured interviews to gather insights into their creative processes, interpretations and personal experiences with Khumalo's music.

The findings from this phase provided a robust theoretical and stylistic foundation for the subsequent compositional phase, ensuring that the creative work was both informed by and responsive to African music.

Composition phase (Creative process)

The second phase involved creating new music compositions that were informed by the insights gained from the analysis. This process was iterative, with experimentation, critique and refinement cycles. The process included:

- Integration of traditional music elements: Establishing the traditional relationship between spoken language in terms of speech and tonal fluctuations supported by a particular pitch organization model, closely related to traditional instruments and vocal melodic contours modelled after the spoken speech.
- Combining traditional African music elements with contemporary harmonic frameworks to create sounds appealing to a local and global audience.

Reflection phase

The reflection phase linked the analysis and composition phases, enabling a deeper understanding of the creative outcomes with African music traditions as employed by Mzilikazi Khumalo in his works. This phase involved:

- Comparative analysis: Evaluating how the newly created compositions resonate with or diverge from the analysed works.
- Reflective journaling: Maintaining detailed records of compositional decisions, challenges and insights.
- Audience and peer feedback: Presenting the compositions in performances, workshops, or discussions to assess their impact and cultural relevance.

Documentation phase

Systematic recording of the creative process, including sketches, drafts and audio recordings of rehearsals and performances where possible. According to Nimkulrat (2007:5), documenting the process is vital in a practice-led research approach. Documentation plays a crucial role in enabling the researcher-composer to trace the development of the artwork throughout the iterative process. Beyond documenting the composition process, a workshop was conducted with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra to rehearse and record sections of the compositions. This collaborative process provided valuable insights and facilitated the refinement of the compositions.

2.8.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

This study employed a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the research's analytical and creative dimensions. Integrating

qualitative analysis, reflective documentation and practitioner feedback systematically investigated Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional techniques while, simultaneously, developing new creative compositions inspired by these insights.

2.8.2.1 Qualitative analysis

A thematic coding approach was applied to musical scores, audio recordings and field notes that were gathered during the analysis phase. This method allowed for a systematic examination of recurring patterns and themes within the musical material, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of both its structural and cultural elements.

Through this process, key musical and cultural features were identified, including the harmonic language, rhythmic structures and melodic contours that define the composition. Additionally, linguistic and stylistic influences rooted in African traditions were examined, highlighting how indigenous musical practices and oral traditions shape the work's overall character. This analytical approach provided deeper insight into the fusion of traditional African idioms with contemporary compositional techniques, reinforcing the broader thematic and cultural significance of the music.

2.8.2.2 Reflective documentation

Throughout the composition phase, journals, musical sketches and audio recordings were systematically documented and analysed. This reflective process provided valuable insights into the evolution of compositional ideas, tracing how themes and structures developed over time.

By closely examining these materials, the analysis highlighted the creative strategies employed in integrating African musical idioms with contemporary compositional approaches. This

process not only captured the progression of musical thought but also revealed the intricate ways in which traditional elements were reimagined within a modern framework.

2.8.2.3 Audience and practitioner feedback

Qualitative feedback from performers, conductors and other collaborators was gathered through workshops and consultations, providing valuable perspectives on the composition. As part of this process, the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra workshopped, rehearsed and recorded sections of *The Tale of Somagwaza* in a session facilitated by the research supervisor.

The orchestra's conductor and musicians played a crucial role in refining the composition, offering insights into orchestration, balance, phrasing and interpretative possibilities. Their feedback helped shape the final version of the piece, ensuring that the integration of African musical idioms within the orchestral framework was both effective and expressive.

2.8.2.4 Compositional analysis

The produced compositions by the author were analysed as artifacts, examining their structural coherence, cultural authenticity and creative innovation. This analysis is presented in Chapter Four of this *dissertation* and investigates how the compositions encapsulate African musical traditions, with a specific emphasis on constructing melodic contours, harmonic language, rhythmic patterns and their interrelation with the spoken African languages wherever possible, which serve as symbolic and philosophical representations of the African culture.

By integrating the research-led practice approach and the qualitative research, the study ensured a holistic examination of both existing African choral compositions (by Khumalo) and newly created works, reinforcing the interplay between research and practice in African music composition research.

2.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in practice-led research encompass artistic integrity, participant consent, intellectual property rights and cultural sensitivity. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure the responsible conduct of research and the respectful treatment of participants and collaborators involved in the research process.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher-composer provided a comprehensive outlook on the social context within which choral music in South Africa evolved. This context significantly questions African identity's artistic and cultural existence in music composition. The case study focuses on the works *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka* by Mzilikazi Khumalo, offering a profound exploration of the fusion between African and Western musical elements, which demonstrates the complexities of identity and cultural expression in South African music. Khumalo's integration of Western classical techniques with traditional African idioms engages listeners in a unique auditory experience. Central to his approach is the use of anhemitonic pentatonic scales, which enrich the melodic and harmonic landscape of the compositions, aligning with the nuanced tonal aspects of isiZulu speech.

Khumalo's incorporation of *amahubo* underscores the cultural significance of his work, as he intricately interlaces traditional Zulu musical styles into the core of his compositions, resulting in a resonance that articulates the historical narrative of the African experience. His innovative compositional techniques facilitate seamless transitions and dynamic interplay of styles, exemplifying a sophisticated negotiation of cultural identities.

Khumalo's compositions, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka*, do not merely constitute musical works; rather, they represent a vital testament to the inherent richness of

South African choral music. These compositions offer a framework for future composers to navigate and assert their cultural identities while integrating the diverse influences shaping their artistic expression. Through these two compositions, Khumalo has established a significant presence within the contemporary music landscape, encouraging continuous exploration and appreciation of the interrelationship between culture and creativity.

In conclusion, the chapter provided an examination of the practice-led research methodology, underscoring its integration of artistic practice with scholarly investigation. It delineated the systematic process involved in conducting practice-led research, encompassing research design, selection of methodology, data collection, analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter underscored the significance of artistic inquiry as a legitimate means of knowledge generation, particularly in domains where creative expression intersects with academic research. The next chapter will focus on analysing these two works, abstracting some topics and demonstrating compositional strategies that Khumalo used—strategies directly influenced by isiZulu tonology, an area that formed the core of his academic and artistic research.

CHAPTER THREE - ANALYSIS

Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional approach exemplifies his deep commitment to celebrating African culture and fostering pride in African heritage. His focus on advancing African identity was significantly shaped by his upbringing and professional experiences, particularly during his formative academic years. He had the opportunity to study and work at the University of the Witwatersrand, in a time when many Africans were predominantly excluded from institutions that served mainly white populations. However, his contributions to the instruction of African languages, particularly isiZulu, often went unrecognised.

An unpublished interview reveals Dr Khumalo, the author's supervisor, discussing with Mr. Sidney Mavundla, a distinguished jazz trumpeter whose father served in the Salvation Army during Mzilikazi Khumalo's time as the conductor of the church's regional choir. Their conversation centred around Mr Cyril Khumalo, a highly esteemed musician and relative of Mzilikazi, who humorously questioned Mzilikazi Khumalo's professional credibility. Cyril was known for mastering the most challenging musical compositions within the Salvation Army in Southern Africa and was respected beyond the ecclesiastical community. This assertion is corroborated by Sidney Mavundla and Prince Lengoasa, both influenced by Cyril and who have become respected South African musicians in their own right. Cyril Khumalo had performed with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and had played the piccolo trumpet in Handel's *Messiah*—an impressive accomplishment—asserted that the trumpet demands in this composition exceeded Mzilikazi Khumalo's contributions. His statement is based on the belief that Mzilikazi Khumalo supported his research in a 'home language' (*ulimi aluncela ebeleni*). He humorously indicated that those worthy of his musical esteem did not include figures such as Professor Khumalo, suggesting that individuals who earned their

doctoral degrees in their native languages lacked the extraordinary musical abilities needed at the highest levels.

While intended to be humorous, this remark highlights two critical aspects of understanding Khumalo's situation. Some individuals in his community recognised his academic achievements, while others questioned the legitimacy of his accolades due to deeply ingrained beliefs and biases. Many Black individuals were conditioned to underestimate their self-worth, often measuring themselves against Western standards. This issue originates from the oppressive educational systems established by the colonisers. During apartheid, Black individuals were compelled to reject their cultural identities and faced repercussions for resisting conformity.

African culture was seen as barbaric and inferior compared to the civilized world, facing significant discouragement. Churches and missionaries offered little support for African culture, either in practice or in education. Society glorified those who spoke European languages, viewing them as more intelligent and granting them better job prospects, thus significantly improving their circumstances. Scholars like Frantz Fanon have explored this phenomenon, particularly in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which analyses the social repercussions of colonialism and imperialism on the identities and experiences of Black individuals. This oppression and discrimination of Africans culminates in what the Kenyan scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls the "colonised mind". Cyril Khumalo's jest regarding Mzilikazi Khumalo's work, focused on celebrating African identity, is not merely a slip but a reflection of an oppressed mindset.

The concept of a colonised mind posits that individuals confronted with oppression frequently internalise their subjugation. Consequently, they may perceive the oppressive system as their

exclusive pathway to freedom and survival. This predicament underscores a troubling disregard for their identity, particularly in recognising the essential role of their native language in the formation of their African identity. Ngugi characterises this struggle as emblematic of a colonised mentality that evaluates identity solely concerning the endorsement of Western authorities, which are deemed the ultimate standard of intelligence.

Khumalo faced not only this type of value judgment from his community but also significant opposition from students, colleagues and an academic system that marginalised indigenous knowledge and Black intellectuals. Drawing inspiration from earlier scholars such as Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, the first Black scholar in South Africa to earn a PhD in literature—who intended to revitalise and affirm African knowledge under comparable circumstances at the same institution—Mzilikazi aimed to utilise language to emphasise the intricate richness of African culture as conveyed through poetry and music.

Khumalo's musical works from the late 1950s exhibit a profound appreciation for pride in one's identity. These works resonated with the principles of Black Consciousness—advocated by Steve Biko—and emphasised the importance of his non-confrontational strategies. This approach reflects a deliberate commitment to embrace his identity, one that is deeply rooted in African heritage and is influenced by his Christian values. Through his formative experiences, he learned valuable lessons in patience, humility and courteous interaction, particularly in situations where self-worth might be challenged. These insights informed his development of non-confrontational strategies for addressing issues, guiding his work and contributing to preserving African culture through music.

The resurgence of efforts to celebrate one's identity and Africanness, which had long been overshadowed by Western culture due to decades of oppression, marked a significant shift

towards embracing African identity as many African nations achieved independence. At the forefront of this transformation was Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, whose country gained independence in 1957. The new generation of African leaders and scholars firmly believed that, for Africans to attain true freedom and liberty, it was essential to liberate themselves intellectually from the confines of colonialism, which later morphed into imperialism. Language emerged as a fundamental starting point on the journey towards this freedom. Brown (1988) aptly captures the profound relationship between language, culture, and identity when she states: "Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going." This quote underscores the deep connection between language and cultural identity, highlighting how language shapes our understanding of a community's past and future. Through language, Khumalo was determined to make a lasting contribution to preserving his identity, even in environments that did not adequately value or recognise him.

As a linguist, Khumalo focused on the intricate musical qualities of the isiZulu language, recognising its essential role in understanding amaZulu culture and the deep nuances of verbal communication. This connection between spoken language and auditory elements sparked his musical journey, becoming a central theme in his later compositions. The framework of isiZulu serves as the foundation for his musical development, distinguishing his contributions from those of his predecessors.

This chapter examines how prosody influenced his compositional approach, particularly in the 1959 piece *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka*, which were crucial to the creation of his renowned cantata, *U-Shaka kaSenzangakhona*. This methodology, which uses research as a basis for creative expression, is vital as it underpins the evaluation of this submission, which includes an exploration of the theoretical framework behind the researcher-composer's

composition portfolio. It expands on several concepts analysed by Khumalo regarding the relationship between art-making and the theories that guide the development of artwork.

While this chapter aims to explore various aspects of prosody, the research is limited in scope. The primary focus will be on pitch and rhythm, investigating how Khumalo employs these elements of speech to develop a musical syntax that fosters a compositional language encapsulating African identity. However, to cultivate a musical syntax that encapsulates African identity, exploring the intersection of language and culture is essential. Frantz Fanon famously stated: "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture", highlighting the deep-seated connection between language, cultural understanding and identity. In his writings, Fanon argues that, for Africans to attain authentic liberation, they must first free themselves from the constraints of imperialism, which manifests in behavioural patterns and spoken language. Scholars like Khumalo recognise the pivotal role of language, stemming from his own experiences of discrimination in a system that marginalised his language and culture, thereby undermining his cultural identity. His native tongue, isiZulu, is a vital medium through which he asserts his identity as a scholar and composer.

In light of the specialised focus of this research, the researcher-composer has chosen to concentrate on prosody (rhythm and tonality) as a crucial element for understanding Khumalo's compositional style. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this represents only one aspect of Khumalo's artistry. His works are intricately interwoven with the historical performance traditions of singing within the amaZulu culture, such as genres like *amahubo*, which will only be briefly examined in this study. The researcher-composer recognises the complexity and significance of *amahubo*, underscoring its uniqueness and value within amaZulu culture. Nonetheless, due to the limitations of this study, the focus will remain solely on prosody and its relationship to Khumalo's musical compositions. Emphasising Zulu

tonology part is integral to this analysis and its musical implications, an area that earlier composers seldom explored when incorporating isiZulu into their works.

3.1 Intonation

Tonal languages facilitate a singular word to convey multiple meanings contingent upon its pronunciation, while the written form remains visually unchanged. Numerous African languages function under this principle, with isiZulu exemplifying this characteristic prominently. It is essential to recognise the tonal variations inherent in isiZulu, as the neglect of these nuances can considerably alter the intended meaning. For instance, the term *umufundisi* can signify both 1) a reverend and 2) a teacher. Likewise, *ithanga* may denote 1) a pumpkin and 2) a thigh.



Figure 1: Illustrating how the variability of pitch in pronunciation can alter meaning.

The figure presented above illustrates the variability of pitch associated in the different pronunciations of words that share identical spellings, which can subsequently alter their meanings. Khumalo identified this phenomenon in his research—a finding corroborated by other scholars, such as Dave Dargie, who analysed amaXhosa bow music and underscored the close relationship between language and music. Nonetheless, Khumalo’s investigation transcended the dimension of pitch alone; he discovered that timbre also plays a significant role in influencing pitch variations. One of the primary aspects the author seeks to underline is the *glissando*, defined as the smooth transitions between pitch changes. Khumalo (2014) observed that the isiZulu language utilises ‘Zulu glides,’ a technique in which speech smoothly transitions to the next pitch, either ascending or descending.

Khumalo, upon studying the Zulu glide phenomenon, realised that the glide from a low tone to a higher one (upwards glide) often affects how the rhythm of the music is sung. He also discovered that the upward glide was mostly overlooked by many composers and hence incorrectly notated. Upon analysing this phenomenon, Khumalo realised that the second tone of the two tones in the upward glide is always the longer tone of the two, which is the tone mostly notated inaccurately to represent both tones (Khumalo, 2014). He believes this way of notating the Zulu glide falls short. Khumalo (2014) states that he became aware of the presence of the glide when he first encountered a traditional gospel song titled *Woza Mmeli Wami* (Come my Redeemer).

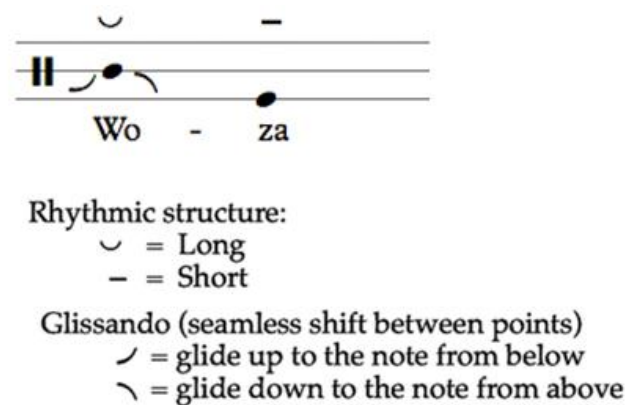


Figure 2: Illustration of the pronunciation of *woza* in isiZulu

The figure above shows how the word *woza* is pronounced in isiZulu. Pronouncing the syllable *wo* correctly involves adding an upward glide (gliding from a lower tone to a higher one). The next example illustrates how Khumalo first notated the song *Woza Mmeli wami* without an upward glide in the first syllable:

Doh is Ab

Sop Solo || m : -.s₁ | -. d : d . d | - .t₁ : l₁ . s₁ | - : - |
 Wo - za M - me - li wa - mi,

Example 5: An excerpt from Khumalo's arrangement of the isiZulu gospel song *Woza Mmeli Wami*, bars 1–2

The example on the previous page shows an extract from Khumalo's arrangement of a Zulu gospel traditional song, *Woza Mmeli Wami* (Come my Redeemer). In the tonic solfa excerpt on the previous page, the note |m| assigned to the syllable *wo* makes it sound straight when it is sung on pitch. It eliminates the upward gliding tone that is found in the spoken word. This glaring shortcoming bothered Khumalo so much that he had to find a way to address it. Initially, he asked the choir to sing the syllable in the best way that represents the isiZulu language, by adding the glide. Later, he realised that when notating this sound, a lower tone needed to be accounted for before the |m|, particularly when the piece was sung in isiZulu. The following example shows how Khumalo noted the Zulu glide on the syllable *wo*:



Example 6: The first three bars of *Woza Mmeli Wami* in dual notation

Khumalo starts the music with an upbeat leading into bar 1, which beautifully captures the handling of the syllable *wo*. This syllable should be performed with a lovely grace note, incorporating a *glissando* that connects the two notes on *wo*, just like in example 6, from the upbeat to bar 1.

Khumalo primarily employed the tonic solfa notation system to compose his musical pieces and arrangements for the choir, a system predominantly utilised by black South African choirs. This notation effectively facilitated the presentation of his music in a readily comprehensible format for individuals who supported and promoted his work through performance. However, it also posed significant challenges in conveying his compositional ideas, which—due to its inherent limitations—were influenced by tonology. This included the presentation of a Zulu

glide, which has been addressed. The differences and limitations of the tonic solfa notation are evident when one compares the visual transformation of the notation in Examples 5 and 6. Because the tonic solfa, articulation, dynamics, text for the song and performance instructions utilise the exact visual representation in writing, the scores generally avoid including many symbols on the page for the sake of maintaining clarity for the performers. However, this is not to say that Khumalo used predominantly tonic solfa notation because he lacked knowledge of the staff notation, which has been the claim—particularly when it comes to works that include orchestration.

As the son of a Salvation Army minister, he was raised in an environment where he participated in the choir and played a brass instrument. All brass band musicians were expected to proficiently interpret staff notation, the only notation used in the church's brass bands. Khumalo was a competitive euphonium player in the brass band, an instrument known for its versatility and frequent incorporation of intricate parts, similar to the trumpet. To play the euphonium in the Salvation Army brass band, one has to possess well-rounded skills on the instrument, as its role within the ensemble continually oscillates between prominence and support. Consequently, the band leaders of such ensembles were typically trumpet players or euphonium players who demonstrated their skills in leading and assisting other sections of the ensemble with great expertise. In later works, Khumalo resolved to integrate both notation systems to achieve a broader expression of his compositional approach, as is evident in Example 6.

Transcribing the *Woza Mmeli Wami* excerpt from tonic solfa to staff notation would recognise the first pitch as a quaver that must be given a half-beat value. On paper, this approach looks like a normal slur. After working with Khumalo's music and arrangements as a conductor and performer, the researcher would suggest that this kind of Zulu glide should be notated in staff

notation with a grace note rather than a note that occupies its beat and then add the words Zulu glide on top. In this way, it is much easier to see that the first note is a decorative pitch that must be sung as a *glissando* that represents a Zulu glide, hence:



Example 7: Zulu glide (*glissando*)

Khumalo not only added the preceding strategy when notating the Zulu glide. In his first composition, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*, he used a slightly upward-looking line at approximately a 45-degree angle (/). He placed this line before or after the note, which must accommodate a glide. In his first composition, the upward glide line appears more often. The first time the (/) appears is on the word *duze* (near). When that word is spoken, the syllable *du* begins with a slightly low pitch and glides upwards before falling to a lower-pitched *ze*, hence:

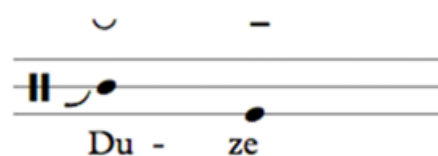


Figure 3: Zulu glide on the word *duze*

Khumalo correctly indicated that the word *duze* begins with an upward glide on *du* before falling to *ze*. However, the challenge that can be observed in Example 8 on the next page is that of the notation, tonic solfa. The line that represents the Zulu glide is placed on top of each note, which could be confused with gliding from the written note upwards instead of gliding before the written note. In the case of the example below, sopranos on bar 3 are supposed to sing *lah*, which is note D in the key of F major. The line on top of *lah* may seem like it means

glide from lah (D) to a pitch above D, when in fact the intended interpretation is that sopranos must glide from a tone below lah (D) and stop at D.

Andante tranquillo

Doh is F

Ngi - mbe - le - ni pha - nsi ko - tsha - ni, Du - - ze ne - - zi - hla - hla zo - mnye - za - ne,

Ngi - mbe - le - ni pha - nsi ko - tsha - ni, Du - ze ne - zi - hla - hla zo - mnye - za - ne,

Ngi - mbe - le - ni pha - nsi ko - tsha - ni, Du - ze ne - zi - hla - hla zo - mnye - za - ne,

Ngi - mbe - le - ni pha - nsi ko - tsha - ni, Du - - ze ne - - zi - hla - hla zo - mnye - za - ne,

Example 8: Zulu glide in all the voices

The same line is represented correctly in staff notation. One can observe that the glide begins before the written pitch and moves upwards to it. As much as the Zulu glide seems more understandable in the staff notation version of the song, the starting pitch for the glide is left to the interpretation of the choir. It would be much easier for non-Zulu speakers if the composer were to notate the starting notes for each part so that the intended sounds can be easily achieved.

The line described above was a strategy used in *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*. At the time, Khumalo believed it to be the most effective approach. He relied on orally transmitting some of the finer details of music by explaining and teaching it to the choirs to which he had access and those who attended his choir workshops and coaching sessions. Five individuals interviewed in this study highlighted this teaching strategy for certain aspects of the language. Nomthandazo Mkhize-Solomon (mezzo-soprano), Reverend Timothy Mabaso (tenor), Diliza Khumalo (bass) and Prince Lengoasa all sang in Khumalo's Salvation Army choirs.

Sidwell Mhlongo, who sang in community choirs conducted by Khumalo in Soweto and who also toured with him as a performer and choir assistant during the world tour of *UShaka kaSenzangakhona*, supports this observation that Khumalo placed significant emphasis on correctly presenting these finer intonation differences, which are not easy to indicate in the score but form an integral part of the music. All of these individuals noted that Khumalo was very particular and thorough when teaching a choir to sing the Zulu glide and other elements of the language. However, he could not reach all choirs performing his music, so he needed to enhance his writing skills to accommodate them.

In his later works, such as *Izibongo zika Shaka*, Khumalo enhanced notation to closely reflect the intonation of the text. There are words that he notated such that the natural pitch and colour of the word are represented correctly in the music. For example, in the first word, *Ndabezitha*, the syllable *Nda* possesses a darker and heavier quality due to its production at the back of the throat with a lowered tongue. This results in a sound that resonates with a greater presence of lower overtones, thereby enhancing its dark character. Khumalo accentuates this quality by foregrounding the lower voices. While female voices are present, they are utilised in their softer register, ensuring they do not overshadow the male voices. As a result, they are seen as complementing the male voices, further emphasising the darker timbre of the syllable and the word *Ndabezitha*. Figure 4 below shows how the word *Ndabezitha* is pronounced.

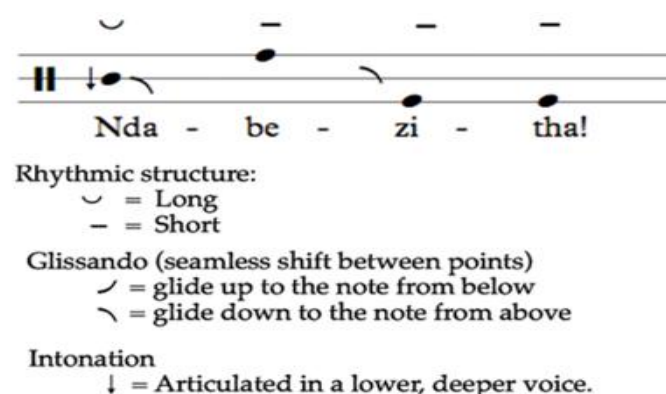


Figure 4: Pronunciation of *Ndabezitha*

The example given shows that *Ndabezitha* follows a distinctive tonal contour: *Nda* begins dark and low. After *Nda*, the pitch glides downward, then rises again on *be*, before falling once more on *zitha*. In the first bar of his musical setting of *Izibongo zika Shaka*, Khumalo notates *Nda* on the pitch G and then adds a slur on F# (semitone below G) to reflect the initial downward glide, then places *be* back on G to represent the rising intonation and, finally sets *zitha* on D below the G, reinforcing the final descent. The same approach is maintained throughout the first four bars. By aligning the melodic line with the natural tonal flow of the spoken word, Khumalo ensures that the sung version closely resembles its pronunciation in everyday speech, maintaining both linguistic authenticity and musical integrity. Therefore, the F#, G# and C# are decorative tones that represent a Zulu glide (*glissando*) rather than melodic tones.



Example 9: Decorative tones that represent a Zulu glide

So far, we have addressed the tonal fluctuations of the word *Ndabezitha*. The downward-pointing arrow placed on the syllable *Nda* has not been addressed yet. The lower, deep voice indicates how the word is spoken and sung when the choir sings the music. In the music, Khumalo places the phrase *Ndabezitha* at a pitch where the lower, dark voices are stronger than the higher voices. Because of the registers in which the first four bars are written, the timbre of the opening four bars is dark. The first beat is almost scooped due to the lower, deep sound that accompanies the word *Ndabezitha*. It is sung as if there is a preceding tone that the singers sing before the one that is written in the score. Khumalo's challenge was to notate this lower, deep sound using tonic solfa. The following two examples show the tonic solfa version, which

was then transcribed to staff notation (Example 10) and the staff notation representation of the sung version (Example 11).

Mzilikazi Khumalo

Doh is G | d :- :- | - :t₁ :d | s₁:- :- | s₁:- :- | r :- :- | - :de :r | s₁:- :- | s₁:- :- | d :- :- | - :t₁ :d | s₁:- :- | s₁:- :-

Nda - be-zi - tha! Nda - be-zi - tha! Nda - be-zi - tha!

Example 10

Mzilikazi Khumalo

Nda - be-zi - tha! Nda - be-zi - tha! Nda - be-zi - tha!

Example 11

As seen in example 10, the original tonic solfa version of the piece does not fully represent how this word should sound when sung. Without these little extra notes before the written pitch (in example 11), the preceding glides are not accommodated adequately. This is important to show how Khumalo considered the colour of the spoken word and how that was transferred into a musical context, not only in terms of melodic pitch but also in the way it is orchestrated. This means that the voicing is not just an afterthought but a critical part of the musical composition process that focuses on sound colour as its foundation, much like the original spoken voice.

It was mentioned in the earlier chapters that most African composers used their native languages to represent themselves in the music that followed the Western hymnody approach. However, their setting of the intonation of words to music was not as meticulous as that of Khumalo. Let us compare Khumalo's setting of the word *Ndabezitha* in *Izibongo zika Shaka*

(saluting King Shaka) to how one of his predecessors, Benjamin Tyamzashe (1890–1978), approached a similar word in his 1947 composition. Tyamzashe was commissioned to conduct a mass choir of 3 000 schoolchildren for the welcoming ceremony of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England during their tour of South Africa (Hansen, 1968:21; Mpola, 2007:99). For this occasion, he composed a piece titled *Zweliyaduduma* (The World is Thundering), a piece intended as a salute and praise to the British monarchy.

In *Zweliyaduduma*, Tyamzashe opens with the word *Zweliyaduduma* to honour the king and his people. In his setting, the word *Zweliyaduduma* serves the same function as Ndabezitha in Khumalo's *Izibongo zika Shaka*. Tyamzashe employs a call-and-response structure to enhance the grandeur of the piece, setting the opening word in unison to create a powerful and commanding effect. The sopranos and altos introduce the call in unison, while the tenors and basses also respond in unison, reinforcing the ceremonial and celebratory nature of the composition. Even though the unison approach is similar to Khumalo's, designed to project a sense of unity and strength, the setting of the word differs from Khumalo's more nuanced handling of *Ndabezitha*, where linguistic tonality and speech rhythm play a more central role in shaping the melodic contour.

The intonation of the word *Zweliyaduduma* in isiXhosa speech follows a specific pattern. The first three syllables, *Zwe-li-ya*, are spoken in nearly the same pitch, with a lower deep voice in *Zwe*, a slight downward glide on *ya*, and a slight upward glide on the first *du* before gradually descending across the second *du* and the final syllable, *ma*. These tonal variations are very important in Nguni languages as they aid the meaning of different words that sometimes are spelled the same.

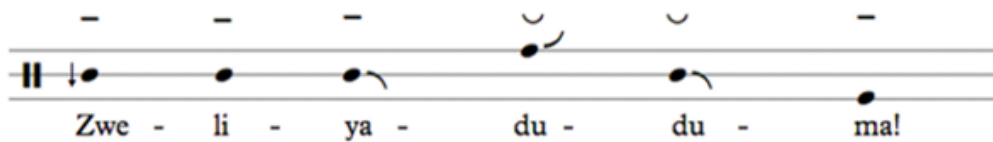


Figure 5: Illustration of tonal variations in isiXhosa

Despite these tonal variations in spoken isiXhosa, as illustrated above, Tyamzashe chose to set the entire word to a single pitch in his musical composition. He placed the word *Zweliyaduduma* on the note F (soh in the key of Bb), simplifying its melodic contour. This decision, while diverging from the word's natural tonal inflections, was likely made to create a strong, unified choral statement, reinforcing the piece's grand and declarative nature while sacrificing the word's natural intonation.

KEY = Bb major
♩ = 100 *Allegretto*

B. Tyamzashe

S
Zwe- li- ya- du - du - ma Zwe- li- ya-

A
Zwe- li- ya- du - du - ma Zwe- li- ya-

T
Zwe- li- ya- du - ma Zwe- li- ya-

B
Zwe- li- ya- du - ma Zwe- li- ya-

Example 12: Bars 1–2 of Tyamzashe's *Zweliyaduduma*

As noted by authors such as Detterbeck (2002), Olwage (2003, 2006), Mpola (2007), Lucia (2008), Mugovhani (2010) and Mugovhani and Oluranti (2015), mission-educated composers like Bokwe and Tyamzashe set African text to music of which the structure was predominantly Western. Chapter Two also noted that the second group of Black composers included

composers such as Caluza and Mohapeloa who incorporated traditional music structures into their compositions. However, their compositions were still dominated by Western structures rather than African ones.

When Mzilikazi Khumalo emerged on the composition scene in 1959 with *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*, he adopted a compositional approach akin to that of his immediate predecessors, creating works primarily influenced by Western musical idioms, albeit with subtle incorporations of African elements. In *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*, the majority of the piece is characterised by Western harmonic and structural conventions, with only Section B adhering to the traditional isiZulu musical and dance forms. However, as Khumalo refined his compositional style throughout the 1980s, there was a marked shift in his approach, with the text assuming a more central and dominant role in the creative process. This evolution signalled a significant transformation in how Khumalo balanced the relationship between text and music, positioning language as the central driving force that shaped and informed the other musical elements within his works.

Additionally, there is another important aspect of the traditional singing styles of AmaZulu that has to be discussed when discussing the intonation of words. It is not always the case that singers sing accurate pitches (to a Western-trained ear); sometimes pitches sound flat and that is what makes the singing unique. Xulu (1992:176) discusses what he calls “the pitch lowering effect”, which mostly happens on voiced consonants, more especially on depressor consonants—as discussed in Chapter Two. Depressor consonants tend to slightly lower the pitch of the syllable (Khumalo, 1981:19). Xulu goes on to say that the pitch-lowering effect is what, among others, characteristically gives Zulu music—especially *amahubo* songs—a somewhat heavy tone colour. The pitch-lowering effect was viewed by many practitioners as part of the *ukuhuba* technique (Xulu, 1992:176). Singing slightly lower than the expected pitch, when it is necessary to do so, gives the music an authentic traditional sound.

Let us examine this concept of lowering the pitch or singing slightly lower than the expected pitch. The example below presents the melody of a traditional *ihubo*, titled *Uyamazi uZulu*. In the recording that was used for this transcription, the song is sung by a modern traditional group called the African Heritage Ensemble. The leader of the group is a well-known isiZulu traditional music practitioner, Mbuso Khoza.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of four staves: Treble, Bass, Tr. (Tenor), and B. (Bass). The lyrics are: 'Ya - ma - z'u - Zu - lu Ya - ma - z'u Zu - lu Ya - ma - z'u - Zu - lu Ya - ma - z'u Zu - lu Ya -'. The word 'glide' is written above the notes on the Treble and Bass staves, indicating a pitch glide. The Tr. and B. staves also have 'glide' markings above the notes. The lyrics are written below the notes on each staff.

Example 13: Excerpt from *Uyamazi uZulu*

The pitch in this style of singing cannot be defined in terms of Western piano tuning. To such an ear, the pitch will sound flat. The *appoggiatura* that the researcher placed before the first syllable accounts for the lower pitch. Khumalo (1981) refers to this effect as [+ slack vocal cords]. He goes on to say that the feature [+ slack vocal cords] typifies segments that are breathy voiced. In a practical sense, when the [+ slack] feature is used, there is a depressor consonant effect that can be heard. For example, the word *umama* (mother) may be pronounced *um(h)ama* with the (h) making the first *ma* deeper than the second *ma*.

The first two syllables of *Uyamazi uZulu* carry the effect explained above. The singers sing *y(h)a-m(ha)-z' uZulu* instead of *ya-ma-z' uZulu*. This may be misinterpreted as scooping in a different context, especially the Western music context.

Listen to *Uyamaz' uZulu* melody



1 - Mbuso Khoza- Uyamazi UZulu excerpt

Recording 1: *Uyamaz' uZulu* excerpt performed by the African Heritage Ensemble

Even though the focus of the transcription is on the group singing, the leader also glides and sings slightly below pitches, which is part of *amahubo* singing technique. Therefore, it should not be frowned upon when singers employ some of these techniques, including the pitch-lowering effect, when singing Khumalo's music, especially the music that incorporates *amahubo*. It is highly recommended, though, that choir conductors should research the correct approach that would best suit the context of each piece because adding a glide or lowering the pitch where it is not necessary to do so may compromise the music and the entire performance as this lowering of pitch also affects harmony in the context of Western music approach.

Furthermore, Khumalo's use of pitch and harmony was also intentional. His approach embraced both the Western and African cultures. The analysis of the first part of the song *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* revealed that Khumalo was a competent composer who understood the principles of Western functional harmony. His approach to harmony in the very first song defies any claim that Khumalo was an illiterate composer in terms of music theory. The

analysis showed that Khumalo was well aware of the choices and strategies he was using to compose. He made deliberate choices that would support his compositional approach.

Generally, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* follows the I–IV–V–I Western harmonic progression. However, Khumalo uses different approaches/techniques to achieve this. He does not always write the chords in an obvious manner that follows the I–IV–V–I progression, as is commonly found in church hymns. At times, he steps into the prolongation of the tonic technique. This gives him room to extend the tonic by using chords that function as an embellishment of the tonic. An example is bars 1–6, which presents a multi-layered analysis of the opening section of the song.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Ma Ngificwa Ukufa" in 4/4 time, marked "Andante tranquillo". The score is presented in three layers of analysis across six bars. The top layer shows the original notation with lyrics: "Ngi - mbe - le - ni pha - ntsi ko - tsha - ni. Du - ze ne - zi -". The middle layer shows the chords as they appear in the score. The bottom layer shows the functions of the chords, with brackets indicating the broader overall musical progression. The functions are: I, vi, I⁶, V, vi, vii⁷, vi, V, V⁷, I, IV, I⁶, I, vii, vii⁷, iii, vii⁷, I.

Example 14: Bars 1–6 of *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*

Example 14 shows the three layers that can be observed in the opening section of *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*. The first layer comprises chords as they appear in the score. The second layer shows the functions of the chords and the third layer shows the broader overall musical progression intended by the composer. The whole opening section (section A) of *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* is

28 Traditional Zulu dance rhythm

thi. Zi - ya - gi - ya, z'ya - gi - ya - zi - qe - thu - ke, zi - ya -

gi - ya zo - nke, Zi - ya - gi - ya, z'ya -

F Gm F

Gm F Gm

Example 17: Alternating chords in *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*

Further examination of the two chords in all the voices of this subsection (bars 28–36) results in a six-note scale as depicted in the example below.

F g

Major hexatonic

Example 18: Six-note scale in bars 28–36 in *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*

The bass 2 voice line introduces B $\flat$ at bar 29, which is not part of the pentatonic mode used to construct the melody. Hexatonic scales are not foreign to Nguni music (Xhosa and Zulu). The traditional bow music of the Nguni people uses a similar progression based on two fundamentals and the resulting overtones. Khumalo strengthens the modal idea at the climax of the section.

This analysis shows that Khumalo was an intentional composer from the time he started composing. When his inspiration was the Western idiom, his writing showed depth in the understanding of Western harmony. Similarly, when he switched to the African dance movement, the music did not only change in rhythm to accommodate Africanness, but the harmonic framework also changed. The next subsection will explore his meticulous approach to rhythm.

3.2 IsiZulu text rhythm in Khumalo's music

Sidwell Mhlongo, the conductor of Gauteng Choristers—a choir based in the Johannesburg area in the Gauteng Province—believes that Khumalo's compositions closely follow the natural undulations and speech rhythm of the isiZulu language. He goes on to say that, rather than forcing the text to conform to the music, Khumalo shaped the music around the linguistic structure, ensuring that his melodies mirrored the speech patterns and tonal inflections of the language. This approach reinforced the authenticity of his work, making his compositions deeply resonant with African musical and linguistic traditions (an interview with Sidwell Mhlongo, 2024). Nomthandazo Mkhize-Solomon echoed this notion by claiming that “everything that uBaba *Ndabezitha* Mzilikazi wrote was influenced greatly by text. He allowed the text to define everything in his music” (interview with Nomthandazo Mkhize-Solomon, 2024).

In *Izibongo zika Shaka*, a choral work based on the traditional praise poetry (izibongo) of King Shaka, Khumalo opens the piece with the word *Ndabezitha*—a deliberate and powerful choice that immediately establishes the ceremonial and reverential tone of the composition. According to Xulu (1993:331), *Ndabezitha* is a formal and highly respectful salutation reserved exclusively for the Zulu monarch, signifying deep honour, reverence and allegiance.

Historically, this term was used by Zulu subjects and warriors when addressing their king, reinforcing his supreme status, authority and leadership. By incorporating this salutation at the beginning of the composition, Khumalo not only stays true to the traditional oral performance of *izibongo* but also underscores the cultural weight and historical significance of the praises dedicated to King Shaka.

Furthermore, the use of *Ndabezitha* serves as a musical invocation, setting the stage for the unfolding narrative of King Shaka's legacy, conquests and impact on the Zulu nation. It reflects Khumalo's commitment to authenticity and cultural preservation while simultaneously elevating the praise poem into a grand choral and orchestral setting. This strategic choice reinforces the historical depth and traditional significance embedded within *Izibongo zika Shaka*, making it not just a musical composition but also a cultural artifact that connects past and present. Below is a tonal and rhythmic representation of the word *Ndabezitha*. The tonality of the word was dealt with earlier. This section will focus on the rhythmic structure of the word.

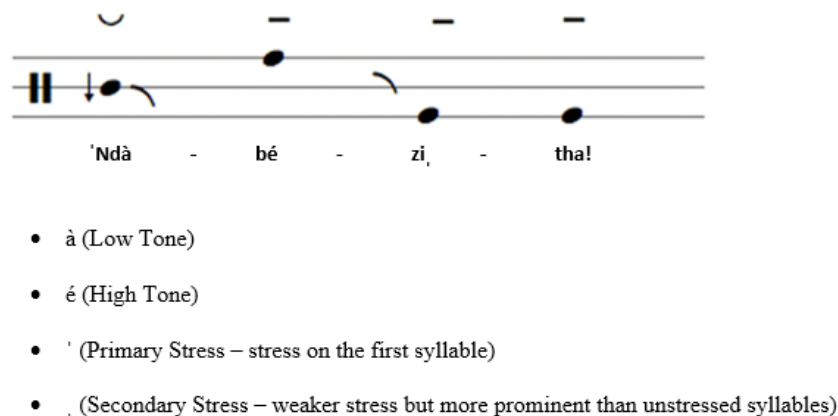


Figure 6: Pronunciation of *Ndabezitha*

The correct pronunciation of *Ndabezitha*, as shown in Figure 6 above, follows a specific rhythmic and tonal structure, in which syllables vary in length and emphasis. The first syllable,

Nda, gets the accent and is elongated, while the following syllable, *be*, is short with no accent and *zi* is also emphasised but not as much as *nda* and the concluding *tha* is lighter. This results in a natural phrasing pattern: *Nda-be-zi- tha*. Khumalo’s prosodic approach carefully preserves this linguistic structure in his musical setting.

To understand how Khumalo achieves a clear prosodic feel of the word *Ndabezitha* it is essential to first examine how he treats the stress patterns and the phrasing of the word in the music. In the 12/8 time signature from bars 1–4, *Nda* gets the first beat (strong beat) and *zi* gets the third beat, which is relatively strong; *be* and *tha* both get the weak beats (2 and 4 respectively) hence:



Example 19: Stress patterns and phrasing of *Ndabezida*

Khumalo uses a dotted crotchet, tied to a quaver, to elongate the syllable *Nda*, precisely aligning it with its natural pronunciation. The quaver is assigned to ensure that *bezi* is articulated in close succession, with *zi* more emphasised than *be*, mirroring the natural flow of isiZulu speech. Additionally, the dotted crotchet on *zi* slightly extends the syllable before resolving on weak *tha*, maintaining the word’s inherent rhythmic structure.

3.3 Khumalo’s use of *amahubo* in his compositions

Khumalo (1991, cited in Xulu, 1992:331) explains:

This is an attempt to rediscover ourselves. Our whole identity is embedded in *amahubo* songs. In this case, I am taking the whole idiom of *amahubo*, combining it with orchestras and making it available for choirs. *Amahubo*, I must say, is the future of all our music.

Khumalo made this statement during the period he was already working on his epic cantata *U-Shaka ka Senzangakhona*. He was reflecting on the fact that Zulus had been robbed off their cultural identity by colonialism and apartheid, and hence he felt that *amahubo* were not regarded as important as they should be. This statement indicates that even at that time, Khumalo felt that indigenous isiZulu music had a place in the global music scene—hence his belief to “[combine] it with orchestras” (Khumalo 1991, cited in Xulu, 1992:331). In this sense, *amahubo* are not an accessory in his music but an important feature alongside language tonology. *Amahubo* songs hold a central place in traditional Zulu cultural, religious, and political life. Their origins are often traced back to the very beginnings of the AmaZulu people, symbolically linked to their emergence from the bed of reeds.

In the AmaZulu culture, *amahubo* are not just songs—they are often associated with the reverence of the ancestors. Elaborating on this notion, Xulu (1992:167) contests the view that *amahubo* are just song artifacts. He says this view has a smaller and more static scope than viewing *amahubo* as a concept. He proposes that *amahubo* as a concept encompasses all issues and ideas that combine to form the world of *amahubo*. Therefore, it makes sense that Khumalo “borrows from the warehouse of *amahubo* performance” (Xulu:1992:346) to enhance his compositional approach.

Khumalo’s known first attempt at incorporating or exploration of the rich bank of *amahubo* was in his first composition *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*, set to BW Vilakazi’s poem. Khumalo

employed the first two verses of Vilakazi's poem and then added his own text to it as a 3rd verse. The additional text by Khumalo cannot be found in Vilakazi's original poem *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (When Death Catches Up with Me). The added text is:

Added text in 3rd verse:

English translation:

Akukho mlungu, akukho pasi,

There is no white man, no passport,

Kulele izinkulungwane zakithi.

Thousands of our people are sleeping.

Ziyagiya, ziyagiya ziqethuke,

Everyone is dancing and rejoicing,

ziyagiya zonke.

they are all dancing

English translation:

Khumalo sets the *ziyagiya ziqethuke zonke* part into a dance rhythm and then adds a directive for performers that the section must be performed in a traditional Zulu dance rhythm. This is the first time that Khumalo employs one of the *amahubo* dance styles called *Giya*. According to Xulu (1992:187), *Giya*, as a dance style, is a performance meant to display the physical poise of the performers. The rhythm for the *Giya*'s performance must be well crafted to inspire the performers to *giya* (to dance) (see Example 20 on the next page).



Example 20: Excerpt from *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*

The rhythm takes precedence in this section. Not only does the melodic line carry syncopation, which requires precision to master, but the accompanying parts are also given significant rhythmic motifs to interact with the main melody and to provide a sense of a complete dance movement. The complete structure of the dance movement is antiphonal and cyclic, which points out that the inspiration for this section is drawn from an African music idiom. To reinforce the points made above, Xulu (1992:341) points out that, although choral songs may have been notated in four-part harmony—as in Khumalo’s *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa*—an *ihubo* image/feeling may be created through melody as depicted above (bass 1/tenor 2 melody, or through the rhythmic pattern, such as the syncopated rhythms above.

Additionally, in *Izibongo zika Shaka*, Khumalo explores two more substyles of *amahubo*: *Bonga* and *Indlamu*. *Bonga* style relies heavily upon speech rhythm and language tonology to give meaning to the words. It is adopted from traditional poetry (*izibongo*). According to Xulu (1993:327), poetry on new choral songs composed by amaZulu composers was related to

amahubo in the form of *izibongo*. Khumalo utilises the *Bonga* style in the opening and closing subsections of *Izibongo zika Shaka*. This strategy protects the integrity of Msimang's poetic text that was used as the libretto for *Izibongo zika Shaka*.

The music of the opening subsection and the closing subsections is inspired by how praise poets articulate *izibongo*. *Izibongo* relies on speech rhythm and intonation. The Zulu glide and speech rhythm that were discussed earlier play a crucial role in *izibongo*. The recording excerpt below seeks to illustrate this point.



4- Gauteng Choristers - Izibongo :

Recording 2: *Imbongi* excerpt from Gauteng Chorister's rendition of *Izibongo zika Shaka*

This excerpt demonstrates the speech inflections and rhythm that makeup *izibongo*. One can clearly hear the Zulu glide in the recording. Another important aspect to listen for is the falling pattern that the poet is following in reciting the poetry. The last aspect to listen for is how the poet paces himself as he articulates words according to the speech rhythm. The above-mentioned aspects combined provide a full performance style of *Bonga*. Khumalo's duty was to utilise his linguistic expertise to set the poet's words, with the aspects mentioned above, into music. The specific subsections that use this performance style are: (a) the opening subsection from bars 1–20 and (b) from bars 117–125.

Furthermore, in the middle section of *Izibongo zika Shaka*, Khumalo employs the *Indlamu* dance style. In its original context, the *Indlamu* dance was a warrior dance accompanied by singing, clapping and strong drumming—all intended to invite the ancestors for their

intervention and support during the war. *Indlamu* is one of the most powerful *amahubo* dances that AmaZulu used to assert their power during the war. Usually, they begin with what is called *ukukhuza isaga*, which Tracey (1952:4) and Xulu (1992:172) describe as a preparatory song that the warriors recite to assert their power before they start *ihubo*. It, therefore, makes sense that Khumalo chose to use *Indlamu* dance as the foundation for this section of the piece. The text *Waqed' aqed' izizw' uyakuhlasela phi na?* speaks to King Shaka's vicious attacks on different nations, conquering them and seizing them during the wars that he fought. The section is introduced and driven by men (tenors and basses), which could be interpreted as depicting *Amabutho* (Zulu warriors).

The main melody introduced by the basses

Wa - qe - da - qe - d'i - zi - zw'u - ya - ku -

hla - se - la phi na? He He He u - ya - ku -

hla - se - la phi na?

Example 21: The main melody introduced by the basses

Example 21 shows the primary melody, initially introduced by the basses. Khumalo writes this melody as an ostinato, structuring it within a rhythmic pattern that gradually expands as the piece progresses. Over time, this melodic motif is adopted by the other vocal parts (sopranos and altos), creating a layered and immersive choral texture. The strategic use of ostinato in this context is deeply significant, as it reflects one of the central organizing principles of African musical thought: the cyclical and accumulative nature of musical development.

In traditional Zulu warrior songs and dances (*Indlamu*), ostinato serves not only as a musical foundation but also as a catalyst for physical movement, communal participation and emotional

intensification. Repeated melodic and rhythmic figures sustain the energy required for prolonged dancing and ritual performance, while simultaneously fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose among participants. Khumalo's adoption of this technique mirrors these traditional functions, using repetition as a way to generate momentum, reinforce group cohesion and invite an intuitive, embodied response from both performers and listeners.

Furthermore, the cyclical layering of voices around the initial bass ostinato echoes broader African musical aesthetics, where progression is often achieved not through linear development but through the gradual accumulation and transformation of repeated material. In doing so, Khumalo remains rooted in indigenous performance practices while adapting them for the choral concert stage. His use of ostinato thus becomes more than a compositional device; it is a profound statement of African musical philosophy—emphasising continuity, renewal and the dynamic interplay between individual and collective expression. This approach aligns closely with the broader argument of this dissertation: that African compositional identity thrives through the innovative reimagining of cultural and traditional forms within contemporary artistic frameworks

Once the sopranos and altos complete their *harmonisation* of the stated melody, Khumalo introduces a contrasting melodic line in bar 81 on the text *umlilo wothathe ka Mjokwane*. At this point, the initial melody transitions into an accompaniment, allowing space for the development of the new idea to include a soprano soloist.

Bars 80 - 89

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The lyrics are in isiZulu.

System 1:

Vocal: hla - se - la phi na? U - mli - lo wo - tha - the ka Mjo -

Piano: hla - se - la phi na? Wa qe - da - qe - d'i - zi - zw'u - ya - ku -

System 2:

Vocal: kwa - ne, u - mli lo wo tha the wo - bu ha ngu ha ngu o - shi - s'i - zi kho - va za - se

Piano: hla - se - la phi na? He He He u - ya ku - hla se - la phi na? Wa qe da qe d'i - zi - zw'u ya ku

System 3:

Vocal: Dle - be, kwa ye kwa - sha ne za se Ma be - dla - na. U - mli lo wo tha - the ka Mjo

Piano: hla - se la phi na? He He He u - ya - ku - hla se la phi na? Wa qe da qe - d'i - zi - zw'u ya - ku -

Example 22: Excerpt from *Izibongo zika Shaka*

Example 22 demonstrates the antiphonal structure that Khumalo introduces from bar 81—a technique closely associated with *amahubo* and in the wider context of African traditional music. As Mugovhani (2010:69) notes, antiphony is a common feature in isiZulu music, promoting communal interaction through call-and-response patterns. In this section, Khumalo combines antiphony with rhythmic layering that draws inspiration from the *Indlamu* dance tradition, where rhythm—derived from synchronized singing, drumming and dancing—drives the energy of the performance.

The gradual expansion of rhythmic motifs across different vocal parts mirrors the dynamic build-up typical of *Indlamu*, evoking the spirit of traditional Zulu warrior dances. Crucially,

Khumalo's approach remains rooted in isiZulu tonology; the prosodic features of the language shape both the melodic phrasing and rhythmic placement, ensuring that the musical expression aligns naturally with the linguistic meaning. In this way, Khumalo *synthesises* indigenous rhythmic vitality, communal musical structures and linguistic sensitivity to create a choral texture that is distinctly and authentically African.

Lastly, this study highlights that Khumalo did not simply rearrange or 'sample' an existing traditional tune within the traditional sections of his music. Instead, he took the innovative initiative to compose completely new pieces while still respecting the performance practices and stylistic norms of *amahubo* esiZulu, a unique choral tradition of the AmaZulu people. By doing this, Khumalo honoured and reinterpreted the rich cultural legacy of AmaZulu music, ensuring that his creations remained deeply rooted in the African musical tradition. This pivotal choice marked the start of his significant and lasting impact on the evolution of African choral music and connected the traditional with the modern. His methodology not only helped to maintain but also to rejuvenate African musical expressions, shaping the work of generations of musicians and composers and creating a legacy that would echo throughout the wider and global landscape of African music.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has elucidated the essential features of Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional approach by analysing two of his significant choral works: *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* (1959) and *Izibongo zika Shaka* (1981). Through a close study of these compositions, it became clear that Khumalo's music is deeply informed by his scholarly understanding of isiZulu tonology and linguistic structures. His commitment to preserving the natural tonal contours, morpheme-

based meanings and phonological nuances of isiZulu speech ensured that his musical settings remain authentic to the language's inherent musical and expressive character.

Khumalo's ability to integrate complex tonal systems into his compositions highlights not only his academic rigour but also his creative ingenuity. His works serve as a powerful model for how indigenous African languages can be authentically and artistically integrated into the Western choral tradition, without sacrificing cultural identity.

Ultimately, this chapter affirms that Khumalo's choral compositions exemplify how African music can act as a dynamic vehicle for heritage preservation as well as artistic innovation. His synthesis of tradition and modernity sets a significant precedent for future African composers, providing a framework for maintaining linguistic authenticity while engaging meaningfully with global musical languages.

Moreover, the chapter has highlighted a critical performance-related issue: the over-reliance on tonic solfa notation among many choirs performing Khumalo's music. While tonic solfa holds an important place in Black South African choral practice, it presents significant limitations in capturing the detailed articulation, phrasing, tonal inflections and rhythmic nuances essential to Khumalo's vision. Although Khumalo was mindful of accessibility and sometimes simplified his scores for performers, the inherent imprecision of solfa risks flattening the expressive and linguistic richness of his compositions. Staff notation, by contrast, provides a more effective medium for conveying the full range of Khumalo's detailed musical intentions, particularly those tied to the tonal sensitivity of the isiZulu language.

Ultimately, this chapter affirms that Khumalo's choral music stands as a dynamic vehicle for both the preservation of African heritage and the pursuit of artistic innovation. His ability to balance tradition and modernity and to bridge linguistic authenticity with creative expression,

sets an important precedent for future African composers seeking to navigate the complex relationship between indigenous identity and global musical discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on my compositional portfolio, focusing primarily on two compositions that are part of my portfolio: *The Tale of Somagwaza* and *Echoes in the Snow*. Building from the theoretical and analytical foundation of Chapters One to Three, I position my own creative practice as both a continuation and a reimagining of Mzilikazi Khumalo's methodology. As established in Chapter One, Khumalo's work demonstrates what Bhabha (1994) terms *hybridity*: the negotiation of African and Western musical epistemologies. My practice extends this hybridity into orchestral writing, where isiXhosa linguistic and ritual structures shape musical form in dialogue with global art-music traditions.

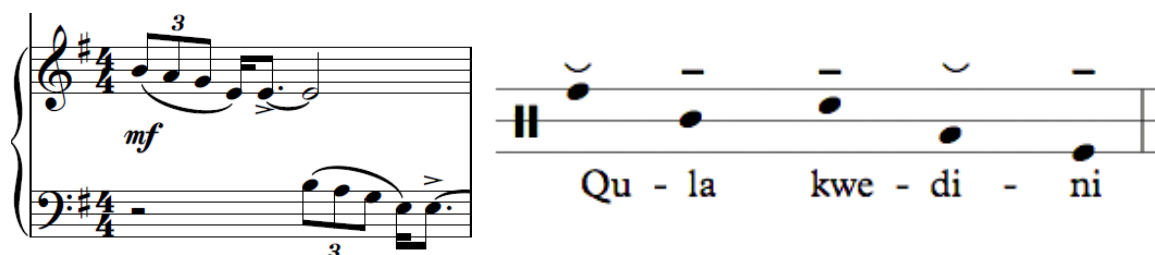
In line with the central research question—How does Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional methodology integrate African cultural traditions and musical idioms to establish a distinctive approach to composition within a postcolonial framework? This chapter illustrates how my portfolio both draws on and transforms Khumalo's compositional strategies. Like Khumalo, I turn to language, rhythm, and ritual as primary creative resources. Yet my orchestral reimagining demonstrates that African epistemologies need not be confined to choral idioms but can generate new modes of expression in orchestral and mixed-media contexts.

4.2 Khumalo's influence on my compositional voice

Khumalo's treatment of isiZulu tonology in works such as *uShaka kaSenzangakhona* (1981) and *Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu* (2002) demonstrates how language can structure melody, rhythm, and harmony. As discussed in Chapter One, this approach challenges colonial

hierarchies in which African elements functioned only as “ornamentation” (Obijiaku, 2022). By contrast, Khumalo allowed African linguistic logic to dictate form itself.

In *The Tale of Somagwaza*, I extend this principle by grounding melodic and rhythmic design in isiXhosa speech patterns. The opening theme of *Umguyo*, for instance, derives directly from the tonal contour of the spoken phrase *qula kwedini*.



Example 23: Main theme of *Umguyo* alongside isiXhosa tonal inflection

Here, instruments “speak” prosodically, echoing Khumalo’s insistence that African languages provide not only text but musical architecture. My portfolio thus adapts his choral-linguistic methodology for orchestral forces, affirming the decolonial potential of language-rooted composition (Ngũgĩ, 1981).

4.3 IsiZulu and isiXhosa: Comparative Linguistic-Musical Frameworks

As noted in Chapter One, Khumalo’s privileging of isiZulu over Western tonal structures inverted colonial hierarchies of knowledge. My work follows this logic but in isiXhosa. IsiZulu and isiXhosa share Nguni origins, yet isiXhosa is distinguished by click consonants, extended vowel sustains, and sharper rhythmic delivery. These traits invite additive rhythms and

asymmetrical phrase structures. For instance, in *Umphumo* the alternating 9/8 and 2/8 metre reflects isiXhosa speech groupings, which sometimes resist Western metrical regularity.



Example 24: Excerpt from the final movement showing asymmetrical rhythm

Where Khumalo often shaped cadences on isiZulu speech, my approach emphasises rhythmic asymmetry rooted in isiXhosa phonology. This comparative framework demonstrates both continuity with and divergence from Khumalo’s model, situating my work within a broader African compositional discourse (Agawu, 2003).

4.4 Positionality and Double Consciousness

As discussed in the previous chapters, Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness illuminates the tensions of cultural negotiation. Khumalo embodied this in his navigation of missionary legacies and African traditions. My own positionality resonates with this duality: I compose as an insider rooted in isiXhosa culture, yet also as a participant in the global orchestral tradition.

In *Isikhalo Somzalikazi (The Silent Cry of a Mother)*, grief is articulated not through traditional *amahubo* but via string clusters and modal harmonies.

The musical score for Example 25, titled "Lamenting strings in *Isikhalo Somzalikazi* (3rd movement)", features five staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Db. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The score begins at measure 25. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts play a melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic, marked with a *div.* (divisi) instruction. The Vla. part plays a sustained chord with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Vc. and Db. parts play a sustained chord with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts transition to a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the final measures, marked with a *div.* instruction. The overall texture is a lamenting string texture, characterized by sustained chords and melodic lines.

Example 25: Lamenting strings in *Isikhalo Somzalikazi* (3rd movement)

This illustrates what Bhabha (1994) calls the “third space” of hybridity, where African idioms and Western sonorities intersect to produce new expressive forms. Rather than collapsing into binaries of “African” and “Western,” my compositional identity inhabits this liminal terrain, simultaneously preserving, adapting, and transforming heritage.

4.5 Beyond Khumalo: Echoes in the Snow

Echoes in the Snow departs from ritual-based subject matter but continues the African-centred ethos that underpins my compositional voice. Just as Khumalo fused *amahubo* and oratorio, I

sought to merge isiXhosa-inflected rhythmic sensibilities with a neo-expressionist harmonic palette.

Harmonically, the piece avoids functional tonal progressions. Instead, it is built on quartal and quintal sonorities, modal inflections, and cluster formations, producing fields of resonance rather than cadential goal-directedness. For example, the recurring use of quartal voicings in the strings creates a sense of suspended time, evoking the stillness of falling snow (Example 26). By contrast, chromatic clusters and dissonant polychords fracture this calm, mirroring the unpredictability and violence of the storm (Example 27).

The musical score for Example 26 is a four-staff excerpt. The top staff is for Clarinet (Cl.) in treble clef, with a key signature of two flats and a measure rest. The second staff is for Violin I (Vln. I) in treble clef, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a slur over a series of eighth notes. The third staff is for Viola (Vla.) in alto clef, also starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a slur over eighth notes. The bottom staff is for Violoncello (Vc.) in bass clef, with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a slur over eighth notes. Above the Vc. staff, the instruction "Sul pont. arco" is written. The music is in a key of two flats and features a consistent eighth-note rhythmic pattern across the strings, creating a fluid and legato texture.

Example 26: Fluid and legato passage (snowfall)

Example 27: Chaotic storm moment

This harmonic language resonates with African musical epistemologies. African traditions often privilege cyclical time and tonal centres that are fluid rather than fixed. In *Echoes in the Snow*, shifting harmonic fields function analogously: they resist Western teleology, instead producing a sense of continuous unfolding, rupture, and return. Thus, while the sonorities themselves may recall twentieth-century European modernism, their structural logic aligns with African conceptions of time and rhythm (Agawu, 2003).

Crucially, this move expands Khumalo’s legacy. His innovations lay primarily in vocal and text-driven contexts, where isiZulu tonology structured melodic and harmonic choices. My portfolio demonstrates that African epistemologies can also govern orchestral harmonic design, even when not mediated by language. In this sense, *Echoes in the Snow* enacts Bhabha’s (1994) “third space” of hybridity: it is simultaneously situated in global idioms of modernist harmony and in African epistemological frameworks of rhythm, cycle, and continuity.

Through this, my compositional practice moves beyond Khumalo's achievements. While Khumalo established a decolonial framework by centering African languages in choral music, I extend that framework into the orchestra, using harmonic as well as rhythmic structures to embed African epistemologies in global art-music discourse, something that Black South African composers could not achieve due to the unfavourable political circumstances under which they composed.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how my compositional practice extends Khumalo's methodology by transposing African linguistic, rhythmic, and cultural logics into orchestral frameworks. In line with the research question, my portfolio demonstrates that Khumalo's African-centred approach to composition can inspire new strategies of cultural sovereignty and resistance.

By grounding *The Tale of Somagwaza* in isiXhosa speech rhythms and ritual symbolism, and by situating *Echoes in the Snow* within a hybrid postcolonial aesthetic, my work illustrates that African idioms need not be confined to choral genres but can reshape orchestral practice itself. This affirms Bhabha's concept of hybridity, Du Bois's double consciousness, and Ngũgĩ's decolonial imperative as living frameworks for contemporary African composition.

Ultimately, my portfolio proposes a model of postcolonial creativity where African languages and rituals are not subsumed into Western forms but act as primary agents in generating new musical identities. This process honours Khumalo's legacy while opening new pathways for African orchestral music within global discourse.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study explored Mzilikazi Khumalo's compositional style, highlighting his efforts to express African identity through music. Rooted in traditionally marginalised black African practices, Khumalo provides a contemporary lens on African identity, enriched by his interactions with Western music and a deeper investigation into the isiZulu language and its cultural context.

The concluding chapter reviews the intricate links between isiZulu culture, language and Khumalo's musical methods. A key finding is that melody and text are inextricably linked in his compositions, with musical meaning emerging from rhythmic and tonal nuances in the spoken language. Khumalo carefully designs musical phrases to mimic the natural flow of isiZulu speech.

Moreover, the study revealed his critical engagement with text, shaping melodic contours while considering the timbral aspects of spoken language in his compositions. He adheres to traditional church hymnody, employing soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices according to established roles, where the soprano typically carries the main melody supported by the others. His focus on "orchestration of timbre" emphasises the relationship between text and music, allowing the unique phonetic attributes of isiZulu to influence how voices are arranged over and above the traditional roles found in church hymnody. This meticulous attention not only maintains the linguistic integrity of the original materials but also enriches the sonic landscape of his works.

Additionally, the research underscored the impact of traditional *amahubo* singing styles on Khumalo's musical language, demonstrating how he preserves and reinterprets these traditions

within a modern artistic framework. This approach fosters a connection to indigenous musical practices while transforming them into new creative expressions.

Ultimately, Khumalo is positioned not simply as a custodian of African traditions but as a transformative figure who reinvents them within contemporary music. His work exemplifies a powerful reinstatement of African cultural and linguistic identity in modern compositions, paving the way for future generations of African composers to navigate similar paths and uphold the legacy of African music.

5.1 Addressing the research question

This study explored the unique compositional methodology of Mzilikazi Khumalo, highlighting his significant contributions to the field of composition. Khumalo's work integrates African oral traditions and musical idioms, emphasising the role of the isiZulu language in conveying cultural heritage. By examining how sound creates meaning in isiZulu, he developed a distinctive approach prioritizing sound in vocal music composition.

The study focused on two key compositions that illustrate Khumalo's evolving African identity and his response to South Africa's changing political and cultural landscape. It also emphasised his influence on younger South African composers and the development of vocal music in the country.

Khumalo's music embodies a profound engagement with African identity, incorporating linguistic, rhythmic, harmonic and structural elements deeply rooted in traditional African practices. His melodic phrasing closely mirrors the natural prosody of isiZulu, creating an authentic rhythm and conveying expressive text. Furthermore, his use of musical structural organization, such as cyclic patterns and call-and-response, enhances the African cultural authenticity of his work.

In terms of harmony, Khumalo employs non-functional harmonies that evoke African sonorities associated with bow music and the amaZulu sacred genre called *amahubo*, distinguishing his music from Western classical traditions. As South Africa moved toward the birth of democracy and the intensified movement against the apartheid system, Khumalo's compositional approach increasingly embraced an African-centered perspective, particularly evident in his music of the 1980s.

Khumalo maps out melodic structures that simulate the spoken word in isiZulu and incorporates theatrical musical structures that embody African traditions. As he does this, his work demonstrates a conscious shift away from the typical choral writing influenced by Westernized church hymnody, which is prominent in many of his contemporaries. This evolution reflects his commitment to African heritage and contributes to the ongoing transformation of South African choral music.

5.2 Discussion of findings

This study investigated African identity in music through Mzilikazi Khumalo's work, analysing his compositional strategies from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. It reveals Khumalo's distinctive approach to merging African heritage with contemporary techniques, particularly the isiZulu language. The key elements discovered through this study were his practice, which included sensitivity to isiZulu tonology, a fusion of African and Western structures and innovative large musical forms reflecting both cultures.

Khumalo's unique method shapes linguistic material's musical significance, aligning with Euba's notion that text should embody cultural identity. Works like *Izibongo zika Shaka* demonstrate how linguistic authenticity enhances emotional expressiveness, serving as a model for future African compositions that harmonise music and language.

The research also emphasised Khumalo's later works, which blend African and Western musical elements without allowing the latter to dominate. Although initially influenced by Western hymnody, he evolved his style to incorporate African modalism and rhythmic structures, establishing a hybrid approach that reflects African modernity.

Khumalo's engagement with *amahubo*, particularly in its reinterpretation for contemporary formats, underscores his commitment to indigenization. In *Izibongo zika Shaka*, he innovatively incorporates a female soloist in a traditional setting that reflects the historical context that foregrounds the importance of the marginalised female voices in African history, infusing his music with dynamic energy rooted in African traditions.

Overall, Khumalo's work preserves African musical heritage while integrating it into contemporary contexts, highlighting its fundamental significance. His legacy illustrates that art music can undergo substantial evolution while retaining its relevance within Africa, particularly when it mirrors its cultural importance. His compositions embody the hybrid nature of African identity in the 20th and 21st centuries, honouring and celebrating African culture while acknowledging its newly established connections with the global community. His music promotes unity, which is vital for the progress of modern society—especially in South Africa, a nation characterised by its rich diversity of cultures. His contributions play a pivotal role in reimagining African compositional practices. This study provides valuable insights for composers, scholars and performers dedicated to the future of African art music.

5.3 Significance of the study

This study engages with the ongoing discourse surrounding contemporary African composition and artistic identity, particularly in relation to African composers. It revisits the legacy of Mzilikazi Khumalo and examines its implications for 21st-century creative practices. While

previous research has acknowledged Khumalo's significant contributions to African choral music (Erlmann, 1991; Mugovhani, 2010; Yende, 2023), much of the existing literature has primarily focused on his role within the tradition of African vocal composition. This includes his efforts to develop the sector and reimagine social unity through choral music amid the socio-political contexts of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

Recent scholarship, including Obijiaku's (2024) call to reevaluate hybridity in African art music, emphasises the need to view Khumalo's legacy beyond simplistic dichotomies of social contributions. It encourages us to consider Khumalo as a craftsman who, through artistic means and a theoretical approach to composition, developed an African language for vocal music in particular. Khumalo's work not only impacted cultural exchange and provided a platform for multicultural music-making in a context where diverse cultures were treated with dignity, but it also fostered a renewed approach to thinking about creative practices, especially in light of the evolving landscape of African music.

The *dissertation* reinforces previous insights into Khumalo's sensitivity to language, cultural heritage and African musical forms. It challenges the narrow perspective that confines his contributions solely to the development of choral music. By re-examining Khumalo's unique compositional methodology—characterised by his attention to isiZulu prosody, integration of *amahubo* traditions and the negotiation between African and Western musical structures—this study positions Khumalo as a foundational figure. His work offers strategies for a broader understanding of African composition beyond the choral genre. Additionally, it creates a critical space for recognising African cultural heritage as a legitimate and innovative force within global compositional knowledge systems, an area from which Africans have historically been marginalised.

Khumalo's primary medium was vocal music. However, this study emphasises that the core principles of his approach—particularly the focus on indigenous linguistic and musical systems—can be applied to a broader range of musical expressions beyond vocal compositions. This perspective aligns with recent transformative efforts in African music education, as highlighted by Bruinders (2023) in her analysis of curriculum reform at the University of Cape Town. These initiatives aim to reclaim African music as a central element of knowledge systems and echo the sentiments expressed during the 2015 student revolution, which followed the 1976 student uprising that advocated against the marginalisation of African knowledge systems.

Khumalo's work is examined within these contexts that define the study of music education and composition in South Africa. He championed the expansion of music education beyond Western frameworks and the discipline of music itself. His approach forges connections between music and literature, embodying knowledge systems that reflect the African way of music-making, which is inherently multidisciplinary. As a result, this research reaffirms Khumalo's significant role in shaping African musical identity and positions his legacy as a foundational basis for innovation in contemporary African composition practices.

5.4 Implications of the study

The study presents a framework for comprehending contemporary African composition that transcends mere adaptations of Western musical styles. It underscores the idea that true innovation can arise from prioritising African musical identity. This perspective enables composers to produce works that resonate globally while maintaining cultural authenticity.

The research serves as a guide for contemporary African composers, showcasing how traditional elements can be integrated into various forms, including chamber and orchestral

music. Chapter Four highlights works like *The Tale of Somagwaza* and *Echoes in the Snow*, reinforcing the importance of maintaining Indigenous musical identities.

The research combines the developments achieved by Khumalo with the researcher-composer's experiments, which encompass both vocal and instrumental music. It challenges the notion that Westernised knowledge systems are used as the foundation in composition studies within South Africa and looks beyond the Western canon in music education. Bongani Ndodana-Breen, Justinian Tamusuza, Ezra Abate, Montathi Masebe and Mokale Koapeng demonstrate that African composition can preserve an African identity while influencing and shaping global music. The *dissertation* celebrates African cultural heritage in music and envisions a future where African traditions drive global artistic innovation.

5.5 Limitations and conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into African identity as explored through the works of composer Mzilikazi Khumalo, while also acknowledging its limitations. The primary focus is on two notable works, *Ma Ngificwa Ukufa* and *Izibongo zika Shaka*, which, despite their influence, represent only one perspective within the broader musical landscape of South Africa and Africa as a whole. A more comprehensive understanding could be achieved through a comparative analysis that includes a wider variety of composers and styles.

The research examines Khumalo's choral and vocal compositions, emphasising their importance in African musical heritage. However, this focus limits the exploration of contemporary instrumental music and other vital forms shaping African identity. Khumalo's works, rooted in a pre-digital era, contrast with modern composers who utilise electronic media and cross-genre fusions, highlighting new opportunities for research in the intersection of technology and indigenous music.

This study, while focused, suggests a broader doctoral project could investigate current trends and a wider repertoire in African music. Concluding this dissertation, I reflect on my personal journey through Khumalo's life and music, which deepened my understanding of African choral traditions and reinforced my identity as a composer.

This dissertation underscores the importance of reclaiming and celebrating our cultural roots in a world that frequently neglects the Global South. Khumalo's incorporation of African traditions inspires me to forge my own path, honouring our heritage while confidently embracing the future. I aspire for this research to empower young African composers to assert their voices and challenge artistic boundaries. Ultimately, this work highlights the transformative power of music to promote growth and foster connections across cultures and generations.

REFERENCE LIST

- Agawu, K. (1992). *Representing African Music*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
- Agawu, K. (1995). 'The invention of "African rhythm"'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48(3):380–395. Available at:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3519832>
- Agawu, K. (2003). *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Agawu, K. (2011). 'The challenge of African art music', *Circuit* 21(2): 49–64. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1005272ar>.
- Akrofi, E., Smit, M., and Thorsén, S. (eds). (2007). *Music and Identity*. Stellenbosch: African SUN Media.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge
- Bosch, S.E., & Pretorius, L. (2017). 'A computational approach to Zulu verb morphology within the context of lexical semantics', *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 35(2):153–166. Available at:
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/salals/article/view/162824> [Accessed 17 February 2025].
- Brenner, R. (2006). *What is and what is not, imperialism?* Leiden: Brill.
- Briggs, C.A. (1894). 'The Salvation Army', *The North American Review* 159(457):697–710.

- Brown, R.M. (1988). *Starting from Scratch: A Different Kind of Writer's Manual*, Bantam Books: New York.
- Bruckman, J. (2019). 'The White Claw Grabbing the Black Man's Creative Work': Dominant Culture and African Expression, One Festival and Two World Premieres. *South African Music Studies* 38:261–288.
- Bruinders, S. (2023). 'Transforming African Musics at a South African University', *British Journal of Music Education* 40(3):381–394.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051723000274>
- Candy, L. (2006). *Practice-Based Research: A Guide*. Sydney: *Creative & Cognitive Studios*.
- Chapman Nyaho, W.H. (2009). *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora: The Complete Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coplan, D.B., & Jules-Rosette, B. (2005). 'Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika and the liberation of the spirit of South Africa, *African Studies* 64(2):285–308.
- Dargie, D. (1988). *Xhosa Music: Its Techniques and Instruments, with a Collection of Songs*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.
- Derrida, J. (1967). 'Of Grammatology', in J. Rivkin and M. Ryan, (eds). *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (2nd ed). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers:300–331.
- Insert Detterbeck here
- Detterbeck, M. (2002). *South African Choral Music (Amakhwaya): Song, Contest, and the Formation of Identity*. (PhD thesis). University of Natal.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago, Ill: A.C. McClurg & Co.
- Ekwueme, L.E.N. (1974). 'Concepts of African musical theory', *Journal of Black Studies* 5(1):35–64. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2783621>
- Erlmann, V. (1991). *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
- Euba, A., 1975. Criteria for the evaluation of new African art music. *Transition*, (49), pp.46–50. [online] Indiana University Press on behalf of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2934893> [Accessed 14 February 2025].
- Eze, M.O., & Van Der Wal, K. (2020). 'Beyond sovereign reason: Issues and contestations in contemporary African identity', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 58(1):189–205.
- Gabaitse, R; & Kumalo, S. (2014). "Singing from beyond the grave: Nokuthela Linderely Dube returned to memory". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40(2): 107–118.
- Haecker, A.A. (2012). *Post-Apartheid South African Choral Music: An Analysis of Integrated Musical Styles with Specific Examples by Contemporary South African Composers*. (DMA thesis). University of Iowa.
- Hansen, D.D. (1968). *The Life and Work of Benjamin Tyamzashe: A Contemporary Xhosa Composer*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

- Hamilton, D; and Hansen, L. “An artful becoming: the case for practice-led research approach to open educational practice research”. *Teaching in Higher Education* 29(7): 1757–1774.
- Hodgson, J. (1980). ‘The “Great Hymn” of the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana: An African Expression of Christianity, 1815–1821’, *Religion in Southern Africa* 1(2):33–58. [Accessed 23 Nov. 2024]. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/24763716
- Huskisson, Y. (1969). *Music of the Bantu*. Pietersburg: University College of the North.
- Kalua, F. (2009). ‘Homi Bhabha’s third space and African identity’, *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 21(1):23–32.
- Khumalo, J.S.M. (1981). *Zulu Tonology*. (PhD thesis). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Khumalo, J.S.M. (2014). *Izingoma zikaMzilikazi Khumalo*. Shuter & Shooter: Johannesburg
- Koapeng, A.M. (2014). *I Compose What I Like: Challenges Facing a Black Composer in the South African Choral Field*. (MA thesis). University of the Witwatersrand.
- Lucia, C. (2007). ‘Mapping the field: A preliminary survey of South African composition and performance as research’, *South African Music Studies* 25(1):83–107.
- Lucia, C. (2016). *General Introduction to the J.P. Mohapelo Critical Edition*. [Accessed 23 Nov. 2024]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23642.80326>
- Lucia, C. (2024). *The Times Do Not Permit: The Musical Life of Michael Mosoeu Moerane*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

- Mathabane, M. (1986). *Kaffir boy: The true story of a Black youth's coming of age in Apartheid South Africa*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Mpola, N.M. (2007). *An Analysis of Oral Literary Music Texts in isiXhosa*. (PhD thesis). Rhodes University.
- Mugovhani, G.N. (1998). *The manifestations of 'African style' in the works of Mzilikazi Khumalo*. (MMus dissertation). University of the Witwatersrand.
- Mugovhani, G.N. (2008). 'Interview with Mzilikazi Khumalo', *South African Society for Research in Music* 28.
- Mugovhani, G.N. (2010). 'The role of Indigenous African choral music in the search for identity: With special reference to Mzilikazi Khumalo's music', *Muziki* 7(1):60–75.
- Mugovhani, G.N., & Oluranti, A. (2015). 'Symbiosis or integration: A study of the tonal elements in the choral works of Mzilikazi Khumalo and Phelelani Mnomiya', *Muziki* 12(2):1–21.
- Nketia, J.H.K. (1982). *The Music of Africa*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Nelani, A. (2021). *The prominence of choral music in the search for, and preservation of, an African identity: A study focusing on the role of choral composers in the formation of black nationalism during and after the colonial era in South Africa*. (Master of Music Thesis). Rhodes University.
- Nimkulrat, N. (2007). The role of documentation in practice-led research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 3(1), Article M6. Retrieved [14 December 2023], from

<http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/58/83>

- Nzewi, M. (1999). 'Strategies for music education in Africa: Towards a meaningful progression from tradition to modern', *International Journal of Music Education* 33(1):72–87.
- Obijiaku, C. (2022). 'Hybridity in modern Nigerian music: The case of Igbo choral art music', *Journal of International Library of African Music* 11(4):25–42.
- Obijiaku, C. (2024). 'Reframing the hybridity discourse in twenty-first century African art music: A composer's perspective', *South African Music Studies* 44(1):139–157.
<https://doi.org/10.69684/samus.2024.44.1.09>
- Oliver, E., & Oliver, W.H. (2017). 'The colonisation of South Africa: A unique case', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 73(3), a4498.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4498>
- Olwage, G. (2002). 'Scriptures of the choral: The historiography of black South African choralism', *South African Music Studies* 22: 29–45
- Olwage, G. (2003). *Music and (Post)Colonialism: The Dialectics of Choral Culture on a South African Frontier*. (PhD thesis). Rhodes University.
- Olwage, G. (2006). 'John Knox Bokwe, colonial composer: Tales about race and music', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131(1):1–37.
- Olwage, G. ed. (2008). *Composing Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Omojola, B., & Sowande, F. (1998). 'Style in modern Nigerian art music: The pioneering works of Fela Sowande. Africa', *Journal of the International African Institute*

- 68(4):455–483. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1161162> [Accessed 2 February 2025].
- Pooley, T.M. (2022). ‘James Steven Mzilikazi Khumalo (1932–2021)’, *Muziki* 19(2):86–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2023.2221066> [Accessed 2 March 2025].
- Pooley, T., André, N., Mhlambi, I., and Somma, D. (2024). *The Music of Mzilikazi Khumalo: Language, Culture, and Song in South Africa*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Raycroft, D.K. (1991). ‘Black South African urban music since the 1890s: Some reminiscences of Alfred Assegai Khumalo (1879–1966)’, *African Music* 7(1):5–32.
- Rose, V. (2022). Practice-based methodology design for performance-composition and interdisciplinary music research. *Malaysian Journal of Music* 11(1): 109–125.
- Said, E.W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Smith, H. and Dean, R.T. (eds.). 2009. *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Stevens, Robin. 2007. “Tonic Sol-fa: an exogenous aspect of South African musical identity.” In *Music and identity: transformation and negotiation*, edited by Akrofi, Eric, Maria Smit, And Stig-Magnus Thorsén, 37-51. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- Tracey, H. (1952). *African dances of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines*. Johannesburg: African Music Society.
- Wa Thiong’o, N. (1981). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.

Xulu, M.K. (1992). *The re-emergence of Amahubo song styles and ideas in some modern Zulu musical styles*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Natal.

Yende, S.J., & Ngema, V. (2022). 'Examining the autonomy of Zulu Ingoma from the 1930s to present: Image or authentic experience?', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78(3), a7610. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.7610>

Yende, S.J. (2024). 'Exploring Amahubo AkwaZulu: Bridging past, present, and future through Indigenous Zulu music', *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.