

Creating Themba Mkhize's Jazz Learning Biography

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work that has been done in this academic dissertation is my own original work and has not previously been used or submitted for degree purposes at any other institution of higher learning. References have been listed and acknowledged.

Signature: 

Date: March 2022

ABSTRACT

Themba Mkhize, born on the 9th of April 1957 in Durban, is recognised as a seminal figure in South African jazz, known for pioneering a distinctive jazz style, characterised by blending traditional Zulu music such as *mbhaqanga*, *isicathamiya*, *amahubo* and *maskandi* with jazz elements. Although there is a rich body of research on South African jazz and jazz musicians, including several biographies, little attention has been paid to jazz music education in South Africa. This thesis is thus a study of how Themba Mkhize learnt jazz from early childhood to the present day. It explores the contexts and modes of Mkhize's jazz learning, focusing on his musical learning practices and processes; and the biographical factors that influenced his music education.

The research takes the form of a music learning biography - a narrative account of Mkhize's jazz music education. It is designed as a life-narrative that interweaves biography with an account of Mkhize's music learning and education. It explores his learning history by drawing on narratives gathered through interviews with Themba Mkhize himself, Khaya Mahlangu (a fellow professional jazz musician, band mate and one of Mkhize's contemporaries), and his son Afrika Mkhize (who is also a professional recording jazz musician). I draw also on journalistic accounts of Mkhize's musical output; as well as my own perspectives as a professional performing jazz musician. The research uses Lucy Green's concept of "informal musical learning" (2008) as a lens through which to view how Mkhize learnt music.

Through creating Mkhize's jazz learning biography, the thesis provides glimpses of South African jazz history, particularly South African jazz pianism. The research contributes to an understanding of how life history and musical learning are connected. The findings emphasise the significance of family, community, church, culture, bands, Internet, homes of musicians, jam sessions, and school contexts as spaces where jazz learning takes place. It argues that it is in these informal community contexts where many jazz musicians learnt their craft, rather than in formal education; and proposes further research that examines informal musical learning practices in South Africa.

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Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CoP	Communities of Practice
CoMP	Communities of Musical Practice
CM	Community Music
FUBA	Federated Union of Black Artists Arts Centre
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MA	Masters
PhD	Doctorate
UDF	United Democratic Front
USA	United States of America
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
Sub A	Sub-standard A

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Jazz plays a significant role in South Africa, historically, socially, politically, culturally and in the contemporary music context. Historically, jazz became a crucial component of the social and civic movements in South Africa (pre-1994) and became the soundtrack for socio-political awareness; hence, it became difficult to separate it from the anti-apartheid struggle (Mapaya, Malinga and Thobejane 2014: 60). It is important to contextualise Mkhize's contribution historically – he learnt jazz after the exile of the major mid-century exponents of the music and came to the fore professionally in the last decade of the struggle against apartheid. While many jazz musicians went into exile under apartheid, some, like pianist Themba Mkhize, remained in the country and developed successful performing and recording careers.

I chose to focus on Themba Mkhize as the subject of this research, for several important reasons. Akin to celebrated jazz pianists like Abdullah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor, Tete Mbambisa, Pat Matshikiza, Bheki Mseleku, and others, Themba Mkhize is recognised for his contribution to South African jazz pianism (see Dlamini 2019). Furthermore, his music is a unique combination of traditional Zulu music with strong jazz elements with distinct harmonic arrangements, for example in “*Shosholoz*a” from the album *Hands On* (2004). He is a pianist, composer, and a prolific producer, who employs his traditional musical roots to produce a distinct jazz style. Mkhize is also recognised for his musical and performance contributions as part of the bands *Bayethe* and *Sakhile*.

There is a considerable body of erudite literature on South African jazz (Allen 2003, 2008; Ballantine 1991, 1993; Dalamba 2006, 2008; Muller 2001, 2008). The research and writing about South African jazz pianists is largely historical and political, tending to focus on concepts of African jazz pianism, performance, style and composition (see Dalamba 2006, 2008; Dlamini 2019; Lucia 2005; Makhathini 2018; Mojabelo 2008; Muller 2007; Sepuru 2019 and Ramanna 2004).

Further research is biographical, usually from a historical perspective (see Dalamba 2006 & 2008). Several recent biographies of South African jazz musicians include “Encountering Bheki Mseleku: a biographical - analytical consideration of his life and music” by Makhathini (2018); and “Post-apartheid jazz pianism: a biographic profile of Matshawandile Yenana” by Dlamini (2019). These consider musicians’ performance styles and composition in the context of their life stories.

There is some literature that partially considers aspects of South African jazz musicians’ music education. These include Phuti Sepuru’s study (2019), in which she explores the conceptualisation of a South African jazz style through narratives of ten South African pianists (including Mkhize). Music learning emerges as a sub-theme in her thesis. Yonela Mnana’s thesis (2018) investigates South African jazz pianism and the learning of Abdullah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor and Bheki Mseleku and is therefore the closest to mine.

There is still, however, a significant gap in research focusing on the education or learning processes of South African jazz musicians. This aspect has not received sufficient attention in jazz scholarship. Therefore, research is needed to explore how South African jazz musicians developed their musicianship and musical skills, connected with personal biographies or life stories, which in turn influence their music education. Many of the South African jazz pianists who are the subject of the research cited above do not necessarily have formal music education, but acquired their music skills and knowledge in community music contexts. Exploring their informal learning methods may enrich jazz education. Biographical, life-history studies suggest that many South African jazz musicians (particularly during apartheid era) did not necessarily learn their craft in formal institutions, either school or university. For example, community arts centres such as Funda in Soweto, Dorkay House¹ and Federated Union of Black Artists Arts Centre (FUBA) in central Johannesburg played a significant role (see Gordon 1997;

¹ Dorkay House was the home of the Union of South African Artists, a non-racial body tasked to facilitate black arts development. Numerous jazz artists such as Chris McGregor, Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim, Miriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa, Kippie Moeketsi and many others honed their musical skills there in the early 1960s (see Davie 2018, Dalamba 2019).

Davie 2004). Dorkay House was especially important for jazz musicians; the cream of South African jazz talent passed through Dorkay House, which was one of the only institutions offering musical tuition and rehearsal space for black performers (Gordon 1997: 11).

In terms of academic research on Mkhize, researchers such as Dlamini (2019), Makhathini (2018), and Mojapelo (2008); and journalists Hawkins (2005) and Mathe (2021) provide general biographical information about his life and music. Sepuru's (2019) study has resonance with mine, in a sense that it highlights some aspects of Mkhize's music learning, although her focus is largely exploring elements of Mkhize's musical style. In the South African jazz literature, Mkhize tends to be narrowly referred to as "Themba Mkhize of *Sakhile*", thus failing to recognise his distinct individual contribution to South African jazz aesthetics. These are gaps in research that my study fills. I contend that by creating a narrative of Mkhize's jazz learning journey could serve as a pathway to understanding South African jazz musicians' music education and ways of learning in South African jazz more broadly.

In addressing why it is important to study how, and, where South African jazz musicians learnt, I list the following reasons:

(i) Educational exclusion under apartheid, and the absence of formal music education for blacks in South Africa historically, immediately raises a question: How did black South Africans learn music? It also necessitates the importance of understanding how South African jazz musicians (like Themba Mkhize) learn their craft.

(ii) Jazz performance demands musical instrument mastery, virtuosity, skilfulness in improvisation, great technique, creativity, sophistication and dexterity. Consequently, jazz musicians spend a lot of time practising on their instruments in order to acquire all the necessary skills. Research by Lucy Green (2001) reveals that jazz and popular musicians normally acquire these varying skills and knowledge in an informal learning environment. Therefore, a study like mine, which investigates the acquisition of music skills, knowledge, attitudes in an informal learning context is necessary.

(iii) This study is important because it investigates an aspect of jazz practice in South Africa that is under researched. The findings about Themba Mkhize's jazz learning hopes to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of why he is one of the seminal figures in South African jazz lineage, and has influenced many younger jazz musicians.

(iv) Last, there are many international studies that have focused on informal music learning in jazz and popular music, namely: Folkestad (2005, 2006), Green (2001), Jaffurs (2004), Louth (2006) Mark (1996), and Virkkula (2016). In South Africa, Rina Francis' master's thesis investigates "informal musical learning practices" in the classroom (2019). However, no study that I am aware of documents the musical learning biography of a South African jazz musician. This is the first research that places a larger lens on Mkhize's learning, in order to create his learning biography.

The purpose of documenting Mkhize's musical learning from a biographical perspective, is because this approach enables an investigation of the interrelationships between learning and life. Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson (2005: 28) argue that learning is contextually situated (the learner interacting with and participating in the social and cultural milieu) and as having a history (both the individual's life history and the history of the practices and institutions in and through which learning takes place). This means that learning does not occur in a vacuum, but in a socio-cultural context. Therefore, as a researcher, I needed to consider what and how Mkhize learnt through an understanding of the contexts, and, more significantly, practices through which he learnt (see Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson 2005: 28). This resonates with the social constructionist underpinnings of Wenger's theory, and thus my study.

Employing a "learning biography" approach enables insights into "how jazz musicians learn", specifically in a South African context. It is my hope that Mkhize's learning biography will reveal glimpses of informal music learning, and share the light on how other jazz musicians learnt. The research also hopes to contribute to the current body of work in music education and South African jazz history.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The research is located within South African jazz education, and seeks to document Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography in a range of learning and performance contexts. I explore the main biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning, investigating and identifying his jazz music learning practices and processes. The research explores the contexts and modes of musical learning as they articulate with his life story, to create a narrative account of Mkhize's jazz education (see Dominicé 2000).

The research employs the concepts of biographical and life-long learning (Smilde 2008). It takes the form of a "learning biography", which is a biography that "focuses on the subject's learning throughout the subject's life in a wide range of educational, musical and social contexts" (see Biesta, Goodson and Hadkinson (2005: 28). The research is an account of an individual's biography of learning and includes his development and learning ways (see Johansen 2007: 440).

I have chosen a learning biography because it enables a focus on the relationships between a musician's biography – their life history – and their learning. This approach promises to enhance our understanding of how, when and why musical learning happens; what factors influence musical learning, whether they be personal, family, cultural or political. This approach to studying musical learning acknowledges the interconnection between learning and life (learning biography) (Biesta, Goodson and Hadkinson (2005: 28); that life circumstances and history cannot be separated from learning opportunities (or lack thereof), modes and contexts for developing musicianship in a specific domain (Ibid.), in this case, South African jazz.

The difference between the "learning biography" and "biographical learning" is that the latter is a "conceptual tool for investigating learning in life transitions" (Hallqvist, Ellstrom and Hyden 2012: 70), while the former is a type of biography that focuses on the subject's life history and learning. This study investigates Mkhize's jazz learning

biography and as such employs the former approach. Biesta, Goodson and Hadkinson (2005: 28) describe the learning biography as “interrelationships between learning and life”. This implies that the learning biography considers the contexts in and through which people learn. In this context, learning should be treated as a response to a learner’s life events, often in order to gain control over parts of the learner’s life (see Alheit 1994; Antikainen et al. 1996; Ranson et al. 1996).

I also investigate how Mkhize’s encounters with other jazz musicians and his involvement in bands such as *Bayethe* and *Sakhile* contributed to his musical development. My view is that bands constitute “musical learning communities” – or “communities of musical practice” (drawing on Lave and Wenger’s theory of situated learning in communities of practice) (Lave 2009; Wenger 1998). My study explores Mkhize’s learning in jazz and popular music bands that he joined throughout his career. I investigate his musical development and learning in shared musical experiences and developing jazz practices in these communities. The assumption here is that we learn in “communities of practice” - in groups - rather than individually (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Research questions

The central research question is: How, and in what contexts, did Themba Mkhize learn jazz, to become a well-recognised professional jazz pianist in South Africa?

Sub questions are:

- What are the main learning biographical factors that influenced Mkhize’s lifelong learning in jazz music?
- What were the social and musical contexts for Mkhize’s musical learning?
- What learning practices and processes did he follow to learn jazz music in his various educational contexts?
- Who were Mkhize’s teachers and mentors who influenced his learning, and how did they influence his jazz learning?
- How did Themba Mkhize’s involvement in various bands (for example, *Bayethe* and *Sakhile*) contribute in the development of his musical learning life story?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature relevant to this research covers the following areas of study: the learning biography and biographical learning; musical learning in music education; how popular and jazz musicians learn; communities of practice; music education in community contexts and South African jazz studies.

2.1 The learning biography and biographical learning

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines biography as "a story of a person's life written by somebody else" (1989: 107). Therefore, in this research, the learning biography implies a biography that focuses on Mkhize's jazz learning. According to Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson (2005: 28), the learning biography can be defined as the "interrelationships between learning and life". In this context

learning is more than just a cognitive process happening inside the mind, it is rather defined as a response to life events, it is seen as contextually situated (the learner interacting with and participating in the social and cultural milieu) and having a history (both the individual's life history and the history of the practices and institutions in and through which learning takes place) (Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson 2005: 28).

The learning biography is sometimes referred to as "educational biography", in the field of adult learning. Lawrence Cremin, cited in Weiland (1997: 189), defines an educational biography as a "narrative interpretation of life which represents an individual's learning experiences". An educational biography focuses on the lifelong experience of education from the perspective of the individual (Ibid.).

"Learning biography" should not be confused with "biographical learning". Alheit and Dausien (2002: 11) describe biographical learning as "education in the life span ... and is embedded within societal structures and cultural contexts of interpretation". This resonates with Jarvis (2009: 27) who also argues that the social context within which learning takes place, has a direct influence on learning. Therefore, in this study, the term "biographical learning" refers to learning that spans throughout Mkhize's life, taking

into account the social context that influenced what and how he learnt. A key factor to consider when exploring a learning biography, is that “biographical learning refers to the ways in which a person’s biography (or life history) both structures and is structured by that person’s learning processes” (Christensen 2014: 207). However, it is important to emphasise that my study seeks to create a learning biography rather than employing biographical learning.

Although there are many biographies of South African jazz musicians, few focus specifically on the connection between biography and learning. Examples of South African jazz biographies include Muller and Benjamin (2011), Makhathini (2018), and Dlamini (2019). In this study, I use Makhathini’s (2018) and Dlamini’s (2019) jazz biographies as a guide for my thesis, though these do not focus on education per se.

2.2 Musical learning in music education

In the field of music education, several scholars (Folkestad 2005, 2006; Green 2001, 2006, 2008; Jarvis 2009; Mak 2006; Mans 2009 and Mark 1996) recognise the necessity to broaden the scope of the kinds of musical learning we study, and the spaces where musical learning takes place. Mark (1996: 119) argues that studying informal music learning may enable us to learn new things that the study of formal music learning in schools cannot teach us.

In the international music education literature, most research tends to deal with music training that takes place in institutional settings such as schools, and is further based on the assumption that musical learning results from a sequenced, methodical exposure to music teaching within a formal setting (Folkestad 2005).

Howe and Sloboda (1991) highlight that research exploring musical talent development focuses on musicians trained in formalised, classically-oriented environments. Patrick et al. (1999: 741-63) concur, adding that popular music musicians, whose musical education is often acquired in an unstructured, non-systematic manner, represent a

significant, but overlooked segment of the overall population of musical performers. Cox (2002: 697) and Louth (2006: 2) propose that the definition of music education should encompass any act of teaching or learning that takes place in informal contexts.

Louth (2006: 1) states:

Music education historians have lagged behind general historians in adopting a perspective that recognizes and values the contributions of learning that has taken place outside of formal institutional settings.

Louth (2006: 2) points out the lack of learning biographies for individual jazz musicians within the music education. Furthermore, he calls for more research studies that document informal music education² and produce learning biographies that analytically explore jazz musicians' music learning over the course of their lives (Ibid.). The research mentioned above demonstrates that attention needs to be paid to how both popular and jazz musicians learn through informal musical learning strategies (Green 2002; Louth 2006; Smilde 2008; Virkkula 2016). Therefore, this necessitates a dedicated literature review on this topic in relation to Mkhize's informal music learning.

2.3 Formal, non-formal and informal music learning

There is a debate about definitions of the terms: formal, informal and non-formal musical learning. Mak (2006:4) defines informal musical learning as "learning that is active, voluntary, self-discovering, self-determined, open-ended, non-threatening, enjoyable and explorative." He argues that learning in informal learning contexts occurs without any kind of educational authority (Ibid.). In other words, such learning is learner-driven. Similarly, Folkestad (2006:136) provides an interesting argument that highlights a paradigm shift from teaching to learning, and consequently from teacher to learner. This means that there is a shift from focusing on how to teach (teaching methods), to how to learn (learning methods).

² Informal music education in this study refers to music learning or teaching that occurs outside a formal music school environment.

Mans (2009) distinguishes further between informal and formal environments; and formal and informal *modes of learning*. According to Mans (2009: 84) informal ways of learning occur through musical enculturation – “the immersion in the musical world of a society ... beginning shortly after birth and continuing throughout a lifetime”. This means that enculturation is the gradual process by which an individual learns music in culture by living in it, observing it, assimilating its practices and values, and being taught things by members of that musical culture.

Not all learning in formal environments is formal, and could be informal. In her MA thesis, Helena Francis (2019: 14) argues that within the formal environment teachers may create an environment for informal learning processes. Francis implemented aspects of Green’s “informal musical learning practices” (2008) in a South African classroom, exploring how to incorporate informal ways of learning in formal music education. She states that in the formal school environment, learners should learn how to play instead of learning knowledge about music (Ibid.).

The literature cited above justifies the necessity to explore the nature of jazz learning for different musicians. It indicates that there is much work to be done in contributing to studies of informal learning in music education, particularly in South Africa.

In South Africa, the lack of attention paid to informal modes of musical learning is more critical. There are few studies that I am aware of that focus on informal learning in music and more specifically on how jazz musicians learn in South Africa. Notably, Sepuru’s (2015) master’s thesis is the closest to my research, as it addresses the question, how do South African jazz musicians acquire improvisation skills? While Sepuru’s study provides valuable insight on the improvisational aspect of jazz learning, it omits several other important skills needed by a jazz musician, such as jazz composition and performance. Sepuru’s (2019) study, which explores musical styles of ten South African jazz pianists, is important in a sense that it presents some sites of informal musical learning within a South African context. These learning contexts are echoed in my study. Mnana’s (2018) master’s thesis, is also significant, because it investigates how

South African jazz musicians learn in both formal and informal settings. However, his research only focuses on Abdullah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor and Bheki Mseleku.

Different forms of learning in informal contexts need to be acknowledged as sites of learning. My study analyses learning in its socio-cultural contexts and through a lifelong learning process. It also takes into consideration learning that takes place in informal contexts (such as home, church, community, band, and stage), and informal modes of learning that are seldom recognised as valid forms of learning in formal music education in South Africa (see Harrop-Allin 2010; 2011).

Most studies about musical learning in and out of schools, including “informal music learning” have been conducted in Western societies and cultures (Folkestad 2006: 140). Folkestad contends that in order to have cultural diversity in music education, “there must be an integration of world music and indigenous music in the music curriculum, and in the studies of musical learning” (2006: 140).

Despite the fact that music learning in Africa takes place in informal settings (see Sanga 2009; Duran 2015) and that Africa has its own indigenous ways and methods of transmitting knowledge and skills (Nzewi 2019: 82), there is not sufficient attention paid to informal modes of learning music in Africa. This includes the ways that children learn on their own in their musical play (Harrop-Allin 2010; 2011), and ways of learning in traditional musical practices such as those studied in Mali, West Africa (Duran 2015).

In South African jazz education, specifically a jazz curriculum context, Makhathini (2021: 17) advocates for “the informal to be fundamental in learning the art form”. He argues that jazz curriculum should incorporate and accommodate local knowledge which is normally obtained aurally (by ear) or orally (by mouth) in informal learning settings such as community art centres, homes of jazz musicians, community music schools run by jazz musicians, community ceremonies, bands, jam sessions, rehearsals, among others (Ibid.: 16). He posits that informal jazz knowledge is advanced, and it gave birth to

distinctly South African styles such as *kwela*, *marabi* and *mbhqaqanga*, from which South African jazz aesthetic and epistemology was crafted (Ibid.).

The politics of formal and informal in the South African music education system, has led to the exclusion of the informally trained musicians such as Bheki Mseleku, Abdullah Ibrahim, Themba Mkhize, and many others. Despite their jazz virtuosity and acuity, they could not teach in formal music institutions, because they did not have formal music qualifications. Subsequently, opportunities to learn from these masters were missed.

In apartheid South Africa, formal music education was only offered in white schools while black children did not have any access to formal music education; rather, music education tended to be informal usually in community or school choirs (Herbst 2007; Primos 2001). Consequently, most black musicians had no choice but to learn music in informal contexts. It is this kind of musical learning, in informal settings, that remains under-researched in South Africa, and which this study (in part) aims to address.

2.4 How popular and jazz musicians learn

There is a considerable body of erudite literature on how popular and jazz musicians learn (Berliner 1994; Gaten 2009; Green 2001, 2002; Jaffurs 2004; Louth 2006; Prouty 2002; Rizzi 2000 and Virkkula 2016). Green (2001) explores how popular musicians learn, and then proposes that the ways in which popular musicians learn can improve learning in formal contexts. She argues that popular musicians learn through “musical enculturation” including listening, observing and imitating within a given musical culture (2001).

Green (2001) studied the learning strategies of popular musicians and discovered several key features, which may be true for jazz musicians. These include:

- (i) Learner initiated choice of music.
- (ii) Copying recordings by ear.
- (iii) Collaborative work in friendship groups.

- (iv) Holistic immersion in projects rather than sequential step-by-step approaches.
- (v) Simultaneous involvement in creating, performing, improvising, and listening from the start, rather than a progression from basic technique to broader musical concerns.

Based on her study of how popular musicians learn, Green developed the “informal musical learning pedagogy³”, which has been incorporated into music curricula internationally. Green (2002: 5) explains:

Informal music learning involves a set of practices in which musicians teach themselves or pick up skills and knowledge, usually with the help or encouragement of their family or peers, by watching and imitating musicians around them and by making reference to recordings.

Green’s research is influential in music education worldwide. Many countries such as the United Kingdom, Brazil, Canada, Singapore, Ireland and Australia have implemented Green’s recommendations and introduced “informal musical learning practices” in formal music education. The influence of Green’s work highlights how important it is to study how popular and jazz musicians learn.

Green’s (2001) study is an impetus for my research - although it does not explicitly study how jazz musicians learn, her study resonates with mine, because popular and jazz musicians are likely to follow similar processes and practices in learning music, acquiring music knowledge and skills mainly in informal ways.

I use aspects of Green’s work to frame the kinds of musical learning Mkhize experienced. Green’s research provides a vocabulary for identifying features of musical learning that may be present in Mkhize’s learning biography – such as how Mkhize controlled and self-directed his learning, learning by ear (through imitation) and peer learning (see Green 2001, 2002).

³ It is important to clarify that the term “informal musical learning practices” refers specifically to Lucy Green’s pedagogy, and needs to be distinguished from broader terms in education such as informal, or non-formal learning.

2.4.1 How jazz musicians learn

Similar to the ways in which popular musicians learn, research on how jazz musicians learn regards aural learning as the cornerstone of traditional jazz learning. Research postulates that jazz musicians learn primarily by listening to records. Prouty (2002: 303) argues that the tendency of learning from written materials prior to gaining aural understanding is “at odds with the historically constructed oral traditions of jazz”. In relation to learning by ear, Louth’s study (2006: 4) reveals that jazz musicians preferred an act of “lifting”, which means transferring music aurally from a recording to the musical instrument, as opposed to transcribing. Similarly, Berliner (1994: 13) also emphasises the importance of “cultivating an aural grasp of a solo” prior to its performance on a musical instrument. This highlights the significance of aural acuity in learning jazz.

According to Berliner (1994: 13), Rizzi (2000: 97-105), and Louth (2006: 13), social learning and networking are crucial phenomena in the development of a jazz musician. To demonstrate the importance of social learning, Berliner (1994) dedicates an entire chapter to social learning, subtitled “The Jazz Community as an Educational System”. Learning in jazz communities is termed “community learning” (Louth 2006: 6-7), and it is characterised by personal interactions with other musicians. Louth (2006: 6-13) argues that “collaborations, personal interactions and networking with other musicians lead to serendipitous and intentional ways of learning”. Rizzi (2000: 121) argues that learning through musical interaction is a necessary part of jazz education, adding that “private practicing is necessary, but not sufficient for the making of a jazz player”.

Virkkula (2016: 31) argues that popular and jazz music have traditionally been learnt in interaction with other experienced jazz musicians and peer musicians, by discussing, listening, observing and imitating. This tradition is commonly seen during jam sessions, which are important occasions for young developing jazz musicians to become influenced, inspired and be taught by more experienced musicians (Green 2008; Knowles 1997: 211-12). This view finds resonance in Berliner (1994), Cope (2002, 2005), and Gridley (2003) who also contend that jazz musicians learn through the tradition of jam sessions. As a jazz musician myself, my experience is that jam sessions

are critical ways of learning; they operate as a non-formal platform where jazz musicians come together to play, learn from one another, exchange knowledge and skills.

Prouty (2002: 207) argues that learning through performance is acknowledged as a crucial component of traditional (informal) jazz education. The inclusion of performing ensembles within jazz and popular music curriculums are obvious attempts to emulate the “real life” performance context within the confines of academia. The significance of learning through various performance contexts is also echoed by Berliner (1994: 37-42) who argues that “sitting in” at concerts, jazz clubs, and jam sessions form a congenial atmosphere in which learning can take place. Many key aspects of jazz can be learnt by participating in ensemble music-making with more experienced musicians. This way of learning is consistent with how popular musicians learn from watching professionals or more experienced players from a distance, and perhaps more so from watching peers in close collaboration (Green 2006: 9).

Furthermore, research emphasises the importance of building learning environments which centre on ‘making music’ as opposed to teaching music (Folkestad 2006; Virkkula 2016: 176). Here, the musicians guide the learner through their playing towards the musically relevant performance. Virkkula’s research findings (2016) show that from a learner’s point of view the work-life oriented way of learning makes learning more meaningful and interesting. As a jazz musician, I concur with the view that learning from a master is a common practice among jazz musicians, who pride themselves by imitating their masters.

Virkkula conducted a study in Finland to examine the socio-cultural learning of popular and jazz music in communities of practice (2016). The study examined the music workshops that were conducted with professional musicians. His findings reveal that learning through workshops enhances musicianship and it occurs when an individual participates in “community action”. This resonates with my study that also seeks to examine how Mkhize’s participation in numerous bands impacted his learning and development.

An important precedent for my study is “Lifelong learning and the informally trained jazz artist” by (Louth 2006). The study involved four prominent Canadian jazz musicians who gained their knowledge of jazz performance and training exclusively through informal music learning, and communal processes rather than the normal academia. The study examines jazz musicians’ perceptions of how they learned to perform in the jazz idiom. Louth primarily employed ethnographic approach and collected narratives from the four professional jazz musicians. Narratives were analysed, and several themes that diverge from standard descriptions of formal music instructions emerged. Louth identified five characteristics that relate to music learning as a lifelong process, namely:

(i) The tendency of aural learning to precede visual

Louth engages in a contentious debate of aural learning versus visual learning. He argues that aural learning is historically a cornerstone of traditional jazz learning (Louth 2006: 4-5).

(ii) The growth model of learning

Most learning was initiated by the participants themselves and was embedded in broad social contexts; it was not as systematized or as linear as one would expect formal learning to be (Louth 2006: 5-7).

(iii) Self-motivation

Louth (2006: 13-16) argues that self-motivation is an integral part of adult learning. All participants in Louth’s study expressed that learning to perform and to improvise in a jazz context was a process initiated by themselves and it arose out of self-motivation and passion.

(iv) Holistic issues

All four jazz musicians had a holistic approach to performing and conceptualizing jazz. The author highlights this view by listing three sub-themes: (a) the tendency of practising, performing, listening and learning to be treated as interdependent activities;

(b) instruments as means rather than ends, and (c) the importance of musical and social contexts to learning (Louth 2006: 16).

(v) Revelations

“Revelations and sudden moments of intense insight” were cited as very crucial to learning and development (Louth 2006: 22). Participants described experiences that suddenly caused them to understand how to apply previously known technical skills and knowledge in stylistically appropriate ways. A further important finding in Louth’s study is how significant the jazz community is for learning. One participant, Clarke, said, “Learning jazz got to be done in a communal way. Everybody got to get together! You can’t learn it over here by yourself” (2006: 7).

The commonality between my study and Louth’s is that we both examine how jazz musicians learn. Our studies differ in research methods: he used an ethnographic approach, and I employ a learning biography approach. Though there are methodological differences, Louth’s study remains significant and serves as a guide on how to analyse narratives, classify themes and how to discuss and express key biographical factors that influence learning in jazz. In conclusion, it is evident throughout this literature review on jazz education, that the research remains in the West and that very little research focuses on how South African (or even African) jazz musicians learn.

2.5 Communities of practice

The concept of “community of practice” is a theory of how learning happens, developed by anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991, while studying apprenticeship as a learning model. Their main finding is that “learning is a situated activity” (1991: 29). Lave (1991: 65) argues that learning is not only a matter of acquiring knowledge or developing new skills, but it is also a process of becoming a member of the community of practice. Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in collective learning, as opposed to individual learning and “are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it

better as they interact regularly” (Wenger 2015: 01). Communities develop their practice through a variety of activities (Wenger 2015: 03). Wenger identifies and discusses three characteristics that constitute a community of practice: domain, community and practice (Ibid.: 02). In this study, I trace these characteristics by looking at Mkhize’s learning in and through jazz bands, which can be considered as communities of practice, in Wenger’s conceptualisation. Mkhize’s learning within various communities of practice (such as family, community, church and bands) that he belonged to, clearly links with Wenger’s theorisation of communities of practice. These learning settings provided learning that led to Mkhize becoming a professional jazz musician. This draws Wenger’s idea of “learning as becoming”, which is productively related to music education researcher, Kari Veblen’s ideas about “belonging” (2010). In other words, both Wenger and Veblen’s ideas resonates with Mkhize’s learning through communities of practice.

CoP has been applied to learning in jazz ensembles (Kenny 2012) and called a community of *musical* practice. The study focuses on the concept of “situated learning” within an adult jazz band based in Ireland. In this study, Kenny examines individual and collective meaning making, experiences, learning processes, interactions, relationships, and development of “practices” within the jazz ensemble (2012: 07). The CoP theoretical framework in particular underpinned the research in order to shape the interpretation and analysis of the data findings (Kenny 2012: 07).

Similarly, my study explores Mkhize’s learning in the context of various jazz and popular music bands he participated in throughout his career, as they form CoMP. Furthermore, the study also investigates the links between Mkhize (as an individual) and many other communities of practice (such as the family, school, church, and encounter with other jazz musicians) as it is mediated through learning music. I highlight Mkhize’s participation, interactions, shared learning, identity formation, diversity and sustained relationships as mirrored through his membership with various communities of practice.

Using a socio-cultural lens, I employ the conceptual tools in the CoP model to examine Mkhize’s participation, membership, shared expertise, and the roles that spanned from

his active interactions with other musicians and mentors. Similarly, Berliner (1994: 20) highlights the emphasis jazz communities in the United States of America place on apprenticeship and “sitting in” with more experienced jazz players.

Wenger’s learning theory has often been applied in music education, to investigate communities of *musical* practices. For example, in her research of four musicians as lifelong learners, Smilde (2008: 245) concurs that “a community of practice integrates Wenger’s four components”. She argues that:

Within legitimate peripheral participation the learner learns through participation in a community of practice, starting in a peripheral position and gradually participating in the community’s activities, learning cognitively, emotionally and socially and slowly reaching a more central position, finally achieving full membership in the community (2008: 245).

This study also explores the relevance of Wenger’s theory in relation to Mkhize’s learning through multiple musical communities. Therefore, Wenger’s “community of practice” theory resonates with Mkhize’s learning, as demonstrated in this study.

2.6 Community music

The field of community music relates directly to this research, and to the theory of CoP described above as it focuses on social and participatory learning. Community Music (CM) is a field within music education that focuses on musical participation outside formal learning contexts. Lee Higgins describes it as a “distinctive approach through which people are given opportunities to engage with active music making” (2008: 391).

CM describes a wide range of music education programmes that take place outside the boundaries and schedules of ordinary school music programmes (Veblen 2008: 5). Furthermore, community music refers to “active music-making that focuses on participation, inclusivity and access, rather than musical standards and qualification”. Veblen (2008: 3). In CM, ‘community’ suggests Veblen’s idea of ‘belonging’. She observes that numerous studies have investigated the notions of belonging through community music activities (2010: 94). This resonates with my study as it also explores

Mkhize's learning within the context of belonging to various groups such as family, community, bands, church, and culture, among others.

Historically, for black South Africans, learning music informally in various community contexts was the only option they had, because of the lack of opportunities in formal music education. Therefore, for many black musicians, CM became the only context for learning music by default. Community music groups played a critical role in Mkhize's music education (explored in chapters four and five), and therefore it is necessary to review and discuss South African jazz education in community contexts.

2.6.1 South African jazz education in community contexts

Under apartheid education legislation, black children gained an inferior education compared to white children and there were limited opportunities for black children to study music (Durbach 2016: 34). Es'Kia Mphahlele (1990) highlights that education was one of the social institutions manipulated by the apartheid government to develop and maintain an unequal society (1990: 36), thus forcing blacks to seek alternative learning through informal education. The lack of formal music education especially in previous Bantu Education schools, meant that most musical learning happened, and continues to happen, outside formal education environments (see Harrop-Allin 2010).

In the absence of formal music education, black children and adults who wanted to study music had to pursue learning in community music contexts. This saw the emergence of important community arts centres: Funda Centre in Soweto, Dorkay House and Federated Union of Black Artists Arts Centre (FUBA) in central Johannesburg, and Ionian Youth Music Programme under the tutelage of Prof Khabi Mngoma (Gordon 1997; Mojapelo 2008; Mahlangu 2020). It is pertinent to mention that private music tutors (such as Mkhize's aunt, Audrey) also played an important role in providing alternative music education in black communities. In the early twentieth century, pioneers of music education within black communities included Marie Dube, Emily Motsieloa, Mark Radebe, Wilfred Sentso, among others (Ballantine 1993, ch. 2).

Private music tutors continue to form an integral part of South African music education. In the post-apartheid South Africa, jazz musicians such as, Johnny Meko, Zim Ngqawana, Brian Thusi, Sy Ntuli, among others, have also established their own music academies in their communities.

In *Beyond the blues: township jazz in the 60s and 70s* (1997), Steve Gordon highlights the significance of Dorkay House in educating well known jazz artists. It was initially an operating base for the Union of South African Artists, a non-racial body geared to facilitating the development of black arts. The cream of South African jazz talent passed through Dorkay House, which was one of the only institutions offering musical tuition and rehearsal space for black performers (Gordon 1997: 11). These included: Mongezi Feza, Dudu Pukwana, Johnny Dyani, Early Mabuza and Louis Moholo of the internationally acclaimed Blue Notes (Ibid.). Lucille Davie (2018) also demonstrates that prominent South African jazz artists such as Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba honed their musical skills at Dorkay House. It is remembered as the place where King Kong was created (Davie 2018). Well-known musician, Sipho “Hotstix” Mabuse remembers going to Dorkay House for drumming lessons, as a youngster (Ibid.). Dorkay House was thus a crucible for interactions between musicians from diverse sections of South African society (Ibid.).

An important music educator, Prof Khabi Mngoma, ran the Ionian Youth Music Programme in Soweto in the 1970s, later moving to Vulindlela Township in KwaDlangezwa, where he became the head of the music department of the University of Zululand. Mngoma’s role in South African music education is well documented in *Beyond the blues: township jazz in the 60s and 70s* (Gordon 1997) and Mojapelo’s *Beyond memory: recording the history, moments and memories of South African music* (2008).

A further important site of music education in South Africa was the Christian Church. Beginning with missionaries who introduced Western classical musical instruments, churches also introduced learning how to read and write staff notation (Ansell 2005: 9).

By the 1950s, missionaries' establishments played a major role in music education for black South Africans. Father Trevor Huddleston, the head of the Anglican St. Peters College, initiated the jazz band that became the training ground for prominent South African musicians such as Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa and others who later worked with Mkhize (Ansell 2005: 96 – 213; Masekela and Cheers 2005: 63).

2.6.2 Jazz appreciation societies as sites of learning

Jazz societies - *stokvels*⁴, in South Africa - can be considered as forms of community music in the South African context as they operate as sites of performance, collaboration and learning. Historically, there is an important culture of jazz listening groups in South Africa, popularly known as “jazz appreciation societies” or “jazz listening clubs” (Coplan 2007; Mapaya, Malinga and Thobejane 2014; Pyper 2011). In Coplan (2007: 123) and Pyper’s (2011: 203-204, 2014: 68-77) research, *stokvels* are described as social clubs with a limited number of members who meet regularly (normally monthly) to collect money. Each member of the *stokvel* contributes a predetermined amount of money and the money collected is given to the host to organize the social event where music plays an integral role.

Brett Pyper’s PhD thesis (2014), entitled “You can’t listen alone: jazz listening and sociality in transitioning South Africa” reveals that the main aim of the jazz appreciation societies is to listen to jazz music together with other members of the jazz club. The jazz *stokvel* is “deployed as a mode of sociability not only through, but also for the promotion of jazz music and culture” (Pyper 2014: 69). Other objectives revealed by Pyper’s study include “to enthuse the township public with music; bringing jazz to the people; and advancing the love of jazz” (Ibid.).

⁴ The term *stokvel* is derived from “stock fairs” (Coplan 2007: 123; Pyper 2011: 203). *Stokvels* were popular gatherings in the 1940s by black South African people living in the townships (see Pyper 2013).

Just like the process of creating jazz music is communal, jazz appreciators prefer to listen together. Jazz listening clubs are also used for learning and sharing jazz knowledge. Though Pyper does not explicitly state it in his study, it is my view (based on my personal experience as a jazz musician who has attended many jazz *stokvels*) that jazz listening clubs are also used for learning and sharing jazz knowledge. Jazz club members are introduced to new jazz music and new jazz artists. Members are also encouraged to support jazz musicians by buying their music, merchandise, and attending their live performances. According to Mapaya, Malinga and Thobejane's (2014: 64) article titled "The anatomy of the South African jazz appreciation societies", jazz appreciation societies fulfil a socio-economic function while also serving the development of jazz. Societies serve as social clubs, but most importantly, their listening sessions ensure the sustenance of jazz as an elitist brand of music (Mapaya, Malinga and Thobejane 2014: 59).

The purpose of discussing jazz appreciation societies in the context of my study, is to establish how they contribute to jazz learning, its promotion and aesthetic culture. I conclude this subsection by stating that the literature reveals that jazz learning occurs in different kinds of communities: religious, community centres, *stokvels*, in bands, homes of musicians, and within families. These can be considered as different forms of community music, wherein different modes of learning such as enculturation and collaboration occur. In the next section, I explore South African jazz studies, preceding it with a short historical background that emphasises how jazz and politics are intertwined.

2.7 South African jazz studies

The aim of this short historical background is to provide a context of what was happening educationally, politically, socially and economically in South Africa when Mkhize was growing up, and how these factors might have influenced his music education. Biographies, by nature, are a narration of history.

Research on South African jazz is mostly historical. Researchers such as Ansell (2004); Ballantine (2012a); Coplan (2007); Dalamba (2006); Ramanna (2004, 2013, 2016) have written insightful literature in this field. Ansell (2004), Dalamba (2006) and Makhathini (2018) argue that politics in South Africa had a direct influence on musicians. Hence, this literature provides a context for creating Mkhize's learning biography, which is necessarily influenced by historical, social and political factors.

South African jazz studies by authors such as Lara Allen, Christopher Ballantine, David Coplan, Lindelwa Dalamba, Carol Muller, and Nishlyn Ramanna emphasise that politics and jazz are inseparable. Apartheid was, and thematically remains, a dominant trajectory and the master context of jazz studies and discourses. Dalamba (in Ballantine 2012b: 114) identifies the same master context: (i) South Africa that was leading to apartheid (pre-apartheid era), (ii) apartheid South Africa (apartheid era), and (iii) South Africa that has emerged from apartheid (post-apartheid era). She argues that such focus has yielded rich findings, particularly for the school of thought that holds Gramscian's notion of the interconnection between culture and politics (Ibid.). However, Dalamba quickly points out that the overreliance on the master context of apartheid is problematic, and she proposes that alternative contexts must be pursued (Ibid.).

Carina Venter (in Ballantine 2012b: 126) poses an important question: "How do we write about music without being driven or crushed by apartheid?" This question requires an answer from every scholar that pursues research in jazz studies. There are proposals to break away from the politics of yesterday as the primary impetus for music research and explore new alternatives. Another observation is that South African jazz studies tend to consider jazz with its resonances of black struggle, but we have yet to read studies that consider South African jazz in its non-racial totality (Dalamba in Ballantine 2012b: 115). The tendency to focus on black struggle may make us miss the contribution of other races in jazz.

Chris McGregor of the internationally acclaimed Blue Notes jazz band is an exception.⁵ McGregor is counted among the few white South African jazz musicians who have received well-deserved attention from scholars. But, again the attention that McGregor enjoys might be linked to the fact that he performed mostly with black musicians. Ironically and interestingly, at the 1962 Moroka-Jabavu Cold Castle jazz festival, McGregor had to hide his whiteness, and disguised himself to look “coloured” (see Dalamba 2019: 222). Dalamba’s (2019) article provides an insightful account of Blue Notes, a South African jazz ensemble that was based in Britain in the 1960s. The article encourages scholars to investigate how South African jazz “articulates with the exiles’ adopted country’s jazzing traditions, and the resulting new jazz forms” (Dalamba 2019: 214).

Another important study by Dalamba (2006) is her MA thesis that critically analyses the autobiographies of Miriam Makeba, Joe Mogotsi, and Hugh Masekela. All are formerly exiled prominent South African jazz musicians. Its narrative and music historiographic approaches provide insightful guidance on how to use musicians’ narrative accounts and anecdotes to construct meaningful academic writing.

Dalamba’s (2009) article entitled “Storing and storying lives: The biographical illusion in three musician’s autobiographies” relates to her 2006 study. She cautions that we should guard against what she terms “biographical illusion”, because “the resultant economy of the biographical illusions undermines the musician’s modes of remembering and self-representations” (Dalamba 2009: 69). In other words, biographical illusion creates misrepresentation of the musicians’ truth, narratives and accounts about their lives, and give rise to the emergence of new stories. Dalamba also argues that the dominance of what she terms “hegemonic national biography” influences the autobiographies of the three jazz musicians (Dalamba 2006: Ch. 2 and

⁵ Blue Notes is a South African jazz ensemble that comprised Chris McGregor on piano, Mongezi Feza on trumpet, Dudu Pukwana on alto-saxophone, Johnny Dyani on double bass and Louis Moholo on drums. They arrived in London, via continental Europe, in 1965, and were received as refugees of apartheid (Dalamba 2019: 215).

Ch. 3; Dalamba 2009: 55). This “hegemonic national biography” (Dalamba 2009: 55) entanglement, particularly the apartheid context, continues to entrap South African jazz research; even post-apartheid research remains locked with the past.

In his PhD thesis, Michael Drewett (2004) provides a perspective on how the apartheid government utilized laws and regulations to censor both black and white musicians. The significance of Drewett’s study to mine is that it focuses on the 1980s, which is the same time that Mkhize became a professional musician, and may have been directly affected by censorship. The political repression in South Africa had a profound impact on musicians. Music was regarded as the mode of political activism by the apartheid regime, hence musicians were targeted, suppressed and censored. Many laws that prevented gatherings and movements of black people were enforced, live music venues were closed, and curfew was implemented (see Drewett 2004). In the South African jazz history trajectory, it is clear that jazz was not only for social entertainment, but played a role in fighting the apartheid regime and advocating reconciliation in the post-apartheid era (see Drewett 2004; Dalamba 2006, 2008; Muller 2008).

Gwen Ansell’s (2004) *Soweto blues: jazz, popular music and politics in South Africa* is another important work. Though she does not specifically discuss Mkhize, she provides relevant historical background and socio-political context within which Mkhize’s learning can be better understood. Ansell incisively traces the origins of South African jazz and unpacks how musical genres such as *marabi*, *kwela*, and *mbhaqanga* helped to shape what is now known as South African jazz. She discusses the impact of apartheid on the musicians, the development of jazz, and on music education. Her inclusion of the Durban jazz history is relevant to my research, because Mkhize hails from Durban.

Though Ansell does not research how jazz musicians learnt music, there are important glimpses about the role of missionaries in music education. She points out that the musical skills that missionaries taught had a broad reach (Ansell 2004: 9). According to Ansell (2004: 8) and Coplan (1979: 137) the church was responsible for the blooming of brass-bands particularly in the Transvaal in the late nineteenth century and played a

major role in music learning. German Lutherans and the British Salvation Army are said to have been the most active churches in teaching and training urban youth. Ansell expounds that the contribution of the Salvation Army brass bands in training jazz players has been constant until today (Ibid.). The Salvation Army had musical instruments, and jazz musicians such as Lulu Gontsana went there to learn drums, but he was given a trumpet, because they already had a drummer (Ansell 2004: 9). Both Ansell (2004) and Coplan (2007) identify the 1960s as the most difficult decade for jazz musicians, due to the closure of jazz venues and the intensification of apartheid through law enforcement agencies, which led to many jazz musicians fleeing to exile.

Another important work by Gwen Ansell (2016), “Who’s got the map? Scholarship, journalism and essentialism in writing on South African Jazz” borrows its title from pianist Andile Yenana’s 2005 album of the same name. Ansell (2016: 125) reviews South African jazz writing and discusses the role of creative fiction and journalism to current music scholarship. She identifies a gap when it comes to the jazz histories of smaller towns, cities, and gender in South African jazz, and argues that these areas remain largely un-mapped (Ibid.). Furthermore, she argues that in South Africa, institutional or ideological factors have excluded and muffled key role players in the enterprise of ‘musicking’ and music research (Ansell 2016: 127). For example, black scholars were discouraged by admission restrictions (Ibid.).

Another interesting argument emanating from Ansell’s book is that some musicians carry the wealth of music knowledge so that their death is metaphorically likened to the “burning of the library” (Ansell 2004: vii). Indeed, musicians are like walking libraries or encyclopaedias of music and social history. Therefore, musicians’ memories, recollections, narratives, anecdotes and stories must be told and preserved before they die. Ansell argues that through censorship, apartheid South Africa muted and buried the stories of black musicians, resulting in a “double great loss”. Sadly, “many societies undervalue the insight of their musicians” (2004: vii).

David Coplan's (2007) *In township tonight!* carries important stories of the development of black music in South Africa. He traces the origins of South African jazz and a wide spectrum of musical styles, and discusses its pioneers, and development. He also discusses the recording industry. In "The African musician and the development of the Johannesburg entertainment industry 1900-1960", Coplan (1979) traces the origins of a wide spectrum of black music such as protest songs, *marabi*, *kwela*, *mbhaqanga*, and choral music. Coplan's detailed musical history of black South African musicians is significant in creating a deeper understanding of social context.

Christopher Ballantine's (1993) "Marabi Nights" combines extensive interviews with musicians, as well as research that draws from journalism and literary sources of the past. Like Coplan, Ballantine also provides an important socio-political context of his accounts, which deepens our understanding.

Nishlyn Ramanna's (2013) article, "Shifting fortunes: jazz in post-apartheid South Africa", resonates with my study as it gives an account of the jazz scene in Durban as well as jazz education in the 1980s. Ramanna argues that "apartheid has found expression and continues to find expression in the form of various dramas of acquiescence and resistance that take place on innumerable South African stages" (2013: 154). This view suggests that apartheid refuses to die. Furthermore, it renders the rhetoric of "the rainbow nation" (which is linked to multiculturalism and "the new South Africa") as nothing, but a mere political illusion and fallacy.

2.7.1 South African jazz pianism

Here, I briefly review South African jazz pianism literature, in order to locate and credit Mkhize for his unique contribution to jazz pianism, and to trace earlier pioneers of jazz pianism. The notion of South African pianism was conceived from the concept of African pianism, coined by Nigerian, Akin Euba, in article entitled "Traditional elements as the basis of new African art music" (see Boamah 2012). African pianism is a "style of piano music which employs techniques and styles used in the performance of African

instrumental traditional songs and African popular music” (Boamah 2012: 141). Boamah adds that “the idea is to let the piano act like an African instrument” (2012: 143). Composers whose works exemplify African pianism are West African, with lesser known pianists like Victor Kasawu and Edward Ninna from South Africa also mentioned (Boamah 2012: 143-144). Boamah omits popular South African exponents for African jazz pianism such as Abdullah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor, Tete Mbambisa, Todd Matshikiza, Bheki Mseleku and Themba Mkhize. In “Is African Pianism possible?”, Kofi Agawu (1999) examines the concept of “African Pianism” and concludes that if the notion of “African Piano music” exists, the concept of “African Pianism” also exists.

South African pianism originated in early South African music styles such as *marabi* and *kwela*, which formed the foundation of South African jazz. Ballantine (1993) traces South African jazz pianism back to the 1920s where pianists such as Hope Khumalo were early pioneers. In the 1930s and 1940s piano exponents and music educators such as Emily Motsieloa, Marie Dube and Wilfred Sentso emerged, while the innovative Gideon Nxumalo was popular in the 1950s and 1960s (see Ballantine 1993). These are important early pioneers of South African jazz pianism who laid the early foundation. Tracing South African jazz pianism as far back as possible, is pertinent, because there is a tendency to focus on the 1960s and glorifying only the popular exiled musicians, thus omitting the contribution of the lesser-known earlier pioneers.

Over the years, South African pianism has evolved from one generation to another. Located after the generation of Abdullah Ibrahim and Chris McGregor who went into exile in the mid-1960s, Mkhize started playing professionally in the 1980s, and rose to prominence with *Sakhile* and *Bayethe*. His solo projects came 18 years later and effectively fall within the post-apartheid era. Mkhize’s distinct idiolect, characterised by his fusion of American jazz with traditional Zulu music, has contributed to South African pianism and is highlighted throughout this study.

Christine Lucia (2005) unpacks South African pianism through examining the works of Ibrahim, and reflects on ‘sounding home’ through Ibrahim’s canon (2002). In “Abdullah

Ibrahim and 'African Pianism' in South Africa", Lucia writes about his music as 'African Pianism', but argues that the phrase "hints at a post-colonial discourse about art music in Africa that has yet to have much resonance in South Africa" (2005: 53). Lucia further identifies the tradition of South African jazz pianists, "who composed piano pieces, but are not chiefly remembered for their compositions" (2005: 54). These include Todd Matshikiza, Emily Motsieloa and Gideon Nxumalo (Ibid.). Lucia (2005: 54 & 61) contends that Ibrahim's solo album *African Piano* (1969) encapsulates his pianism and is the most pertinent to an ongoing African pianism discourse.

South African jazz pianism traits may be understood through a prism of three major influences: external (i.e. black American jazz), internal (i.e. social or cultural factors) and individual artistry. This is a variation of what Yonela Mnana (2018: Ch. 3) terms "jazz triangle". In other words, South African jazz pianism represents multiple soundscapes in one distinct South African jazz voice (see Mnana 2018). He argues that South African jazz pianism mirrors socio-political factors and should be understood as an "audiography" or "sonic biography" of the South African society (Mnana 2018: Ch. 3). The notion of "audiography", has the undertone of the "voice", which may effectively be the voice of South Africa. Mnana's assertion resonates with Dalamba's (2008) idea of a national biography, and how musicians' biographies are influenced and precariously balanced against the South African national biography.

I conclude this section by arguing that South Africa has its own unique and recognisable jazz pianism style, basing my argument on the works of Ballantine (1993), Lucia (2005), Mnana (2018), Dlamini (2018), Makhathini (2019), and Sepuru (2019). These scholars argue that South Africa has its own distinct jazz pianism style fashioned through the amalgamation of external, internal and individual artistic influences.

2.7.2 South African jazz artist biographies

Recent research such as "Encountering Bheki Mseleku" by Nduduzo Makhathini (2018) represents an insightful biographical and analytical consideration of Mseleku's life and

music. Together with “Post-apartheid jazz pianism – a biographic profile of Matshandile Yenana” by Sibusiso Dlamini (2019), it serves as a guide in sketching Mkhize’s learning biography. Both studies employ a narrative research method and were constructed by assembling narratives from different sources.

Makhathini (2018) documents the life and the music of Bheki Mseleku by using sources such as print media, recordings, documentaries, and personal interviews. I highlight the fact that Makhathini constructed Mseleku’s biography in 2018, a decade after Mseleku’s death in 2008. This means he could not interview Mseleku.

Dlamini’s (2019) study documents the life and the music of Andile Yenana, one of the exponents of South African jazz piano, by drawing on the sources such as music analysis (Yenana’s first and second albums), print media, academic literature, previous unpublished research and video documentaries. According to Dlamini (2019: iii), the main aim of his study is to create Andile Yenana’s ‘biographic profile’, that highlights glimpses of South African jazz through Yenana. He explores Yenana’s solo album recordings, collaborations with other musicians, and his multifaceted specialties as the performer, composer, music producer, lecturer, and mentor (2019: iii).

A similarity between Makhathini and Dlamini’s studies is that in constructing biographies of their subjects, both scholars did not personally interview their subjects, thus relying solely on secondary sources. This resulted in the absence of the subject’s voice. Despite this limitation, both scholars have succeeded to produce insightful, valuable and authentic jazz biographies that contribute to South African jazz scholarship.

Another commonality between these two scholars, is that they are both professional jazz musicians, pianists and composers in their own right. Gary Giddins (cited in Dlamini 2019: 14) highlights that “many accounts of autobiographies were unsatisfactory and filled with false information, and non-musician critics were lambasted for criticizing an art form they know nothing about”. This view suggests that jazz biographies must be

researched by musicians who know and understand jazz, and not by non-musician researchers.

Dlamini (2019: iii) points out the paucity of South African musicians' biographies from which common foundation for critique and theorisation can be formulated, adding that the biographic information for jazz musicians is scattered. Therefore, biographical studies are pertinent in gathering and preserving musicians' information and stories.

However, as the rationale for this research suggests, the gap in the literature on South African jazz musicians' biographies is that information regarding their music education is often omitted. The biographies of South African jazz musicians provide insightful biographical information, but seldom focus on musicians' music education. Makhathini (2019) only mentions in passing that Bheki Mseleku was self-taught (2018: 24). However, Dlamini dedicates an entire chapter "Education and new jazz knowledge" in discussing Andile Yenana's music education. This makes Dlamini's study to be the closest to mine.

In chapter two, entitled "First encounters: the piano and singing in formative years" Dlamini (2019) provides historical background of South African jazz, focusing on the early black music styles such as *kwela*, *marabi*, and *jive*; arguing how these early music styles influenced a typical South African jazz pianism aesthetic and jazz culture in general. Dlamini provides biographical details about Andile Yenana's birthplace, immediate family, and geographical location relying solely on secondary sources such as print media. In my research, I employ a similar approach, where I document Mkhize's formative years, concentrating on music learning. Dlamini contends that Mkhize contributed towards shaping a unique South African jazz pianism (2019: 11). He speaks to Mkhize influencing and shaping Yenana's pianistic and compositional style. Dlamini locates Mkhize among influential South African jazz pianists such as Pat Matshikiza, Abdulah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor, Tete Mbambisa, and Bheki Mseleku, who form the South African jazz pianism discourse from the apartheid to post-apartheid era. Dlamini

(2019: 12) also emphasises the importance of jazz clubs and jam sessions as learning sites where musicians can learn from one another.

I conclude this chapter by borrowing Dalamba's (2009: 55 & 69) words of "storying and storing lives". Earlier the death of a South Africa jazz musician is likened to "burning down a library" (Ansell 2004: vii). Therefore, there is an urgent need to "story" and "store" musician's stories (see Dalamba 2008) while they are still alive, by constructing their biographies. These biographies (like the one I am constructing for Themba Mkhize) are significant, because they "story" (tell) and "store" (preserve) stories about the lives and the music of the documented musicians (see Dalamba 2008), thus forming an important contribution to academic literature.

Chapter Three: Research design and methods

3.1 Research design: the learning biography

This study follows a qualitative methodology in the form of narrative research, which is “the study of how human beings experience the world” (Gudmundsdottir quoted in Moen 2006: 2). “Narrative researchers collect these stories and write narratives of experience” (ibid.). The research takes the form of collating stories that focus on Themba Mkhize’s jazz education and learning, to create a “learning biography” - “a narrative interpretation of a life which represents an individual’s learning experiences” (Weiland 1997: 189).

The learning biography was the most suitable research design for this study, because it enabled me to formulate a narrative of Mkhize’s jazz education and the nature of his learning in the context of his life history and experiences. Furthermore, this research approach enabled me to understand the learning processes, practices and experiences of Mkhize from his perspective, and the perspective of those that have worked with him.

In terms of music learning biographies, Smilde’s “Musicians as life-long learners: discovery through biography” serves as a precedent for this study (2009). Smilde studied musicians’ learning biographies, using “explorative biographical research”; she focused on “the relationship between [musicians’] life, educational and career span and their learning styles” (2009: 3). Her study resulted in a collection of narrative learning biographies, similar to the form this research takes.

The learning biography is retrospective by nature, hence its construction through the narratives and recollections of participants, obtained through interviews. Mkhize was able to personally provide recollections and accounts of his own life-stories to help me construct his learning biography. The fact that my research subject is still alive enabled me to create a learning biography that is credible and verifiable. Mkhize’s presence throughout this study gives it an immediacy, in terms of the presence of his voice.

3.2 Data collection

The research comprises the collection, analysis and the interpretation of data in order to address the research questions. I used both primary and secondary data: primary data comprises personal interviews with Mkhize, a family member, and a fellow band member and contemporary; personal communication such as emails, telephone calls, and WhatsApp; and the collection of his released jazz albums, which form part of Mkhize's life records. The secondary data includes media articles, video documentaries, and academic literature.

3.2.1 Interview method

I used the interview method to collect the primary data. Merriam (1998: 72) argues that "the decision to use interviewing as the primary mode of data collection should be based on the kind of information needed and whether interviewing is the best way to get it." Interviews enabled me to access information and insights directly from Mkhize and other participants, and such information is not in the texts. They enabled access to Mkhize's personal views, thoughts, perspectives, attitudes, and feelings on various issues as guided by research questions. This view is supported by Merriam who highlights that:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (1998: 72).

I could not observe how Mkhize learnt, because past events are impossible to replicate, therefore, interviewing was the most suitable method to gain access to past events. Merriam affirms this view when she states that "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (1998: 72).

The advantage of using face-to-face interviews is that it captured not only stories and anecdotes, but also non-verbal cues expressed through feelings, emotions and the body language. Heather Fraser (2004: 186) suggests that the researcher must register

emotions of interviewees, because they often provide clues about what interviewees intend to communicate. All participants were available, and I conducted face-to-face interviews with them, which allowed me to identify “hidden themes” through “non-verbal cues”, such as body language (O’Leary 2004: 196-7).

The disadvantages of using interviews are that participants may not necessarily reveal information and may avoid answering certain questions. I acknowledge my own position in interpreting what interviewees said and my own possible bias. When participants have to reflect on the past, they rely on memory, which can be selective. To mitigate these challenges, I interviewed three participants in order to improve reliability, validity, and verification of information.

3.2.2 Interviewees

I interviewed Mkhize as the main subject of the study. For verification and credibility of information I also interviewed Mkhize’s family member (his son Afrika Mkhize), and his band member and contemporary (Khaya Mahlangu). Mahlangu’s participation in this study is in line with what Dilthey refers to as “double-focus” – “the principle which includes assessing the subject by what his contemporaries thought about him, as well as how the individual saw himself” (quoted in Stephens 1998: 9).

The criteria for identifying additional interviewees was twofold: first, a participant had to be a professional recording South African jazz musician; second, because the research focuses on Themba Mkhize, other participants had to have worked with Mkhize, and be able to provide insights into his life, musical background, and experience. All three participants - Themba Mkhize (61), Khaya Mahlangu (66) and Afrika Mkhize (38) - are professional recording South African jazz musicians with extensive jazz performance experience both nationally and internationally. They are all adults and above 18 years old.

Khaya Mahlangu is a professional recording South African jazz musician who has worked with Themba Mkhize in a professional band, *Sakhile*, and was interviewed to provide his perspective regarding Mkhize's musical influence, development and experience in a band context. Afrika Mkhize, is a professional recording jazz musician and the son of Themba Mkhize, who is influenced by his father. He was interviewed regarding Mkhize's music education, ways of learning, influences and experience in a home environment and other social contexts. All participants were contacted telephonically in advance, and asked if they would like to participate in the study. All of them agreed with a keen interest. Then, face-to-face interviews were formally scheduled, and conducted in November 2020. The duration of Mkhize's interview was 143.26 minutes, Khaya Mahlangu's interview was 111.55 minutes, and Afrika Mkhize's interview was 44.32 minutes.

3.2.3 Use of semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, in order to allow an interview to take the form of a conversation and because I wanted participants to be comfortable and express themselves freely. Another reason for choosing conversational-style interviews, was to avoid interviewees feeling like they were being cross examined or mined for information (Fraser 2004: 8). The importance of open-ended questions is that they allow the participant freedom to express and elaborate their views, as opposed to giving one word answers, such as yes or no. Therefore, it enabled me, as a researcher to probe deeper and attain insights into the participants' views, feelings and recollections.

I aimed to adhere to the predetermined interview questions, using them to stimulate the direction of the conversation. However, in some instances due to the enthusiasm shown by participants, I allowed the conversation to flow to other interesting concepts, which led to interesting unanticipated discussions. This is consistent with O'Leary's (2004: 164) assertion that though a researcher may start a semi-structured interview with fixed questions, there is flexibility to explore new concepts that may emerge.

Follow-up interviews with participants were done telephonically following a structured interview manner with predetermined questions in order to address gaps or any missing information or to clarify any matters as the need arose. Personal communication was used primarily to arrange personal interviews and logistics, seek clarity, verification, and to fill any gaps as identified in the interviews.

I prepared interview questions (see Appendix A & B). Appendix A comprised questions that were directed to the main subject (Themba Mkhize), while Appendix B comprised questions directed to other participants (Khaya Mahlangu and Afrika Mkhize). Mkhize's interview questions were divided into four sections, namely: processes and practices of learning; educational context; early development; and influences. Other participants' interview questions comprised questions about their own jazz learning and their views on how Mkhize learnt jazz. The interviews were conducted predominantly in English, however some participants expressed themselves in *Zulu*. This proved to be an advantage for what may be missed when interviewees do not communicate in their mother language. I have provided translation for all expressions that are in *Zulu*, where necessary.

I used video recording devices (camera and mobile phone) to record the main interviews, which enabled me to replay the video recordings during data analysis. The main interviews were conducted face-to-face. Only follow-up interviews were conducted telephonically and were recorded in audio format. I used personal communication, specifically emails, to send documents such as Consent Forms and Participant Information Sheets to the participants.

3.2.4 Secondary data

Mkhize's jazz albums constitute a significant part of his life records and function as an important link between Mkhize and society. They are an illustration of life situations, thoughts, opinions, attitudes, experiences, and commentary on social, cultural and political aspects. I analysed and referenced his albums mainly to create an informed

narrative opinion on his style of jazz, performance, improvisation, pianistic virtuosity, and compositional approach.

Media articles, such as magazines, newspapers, and social media were used to supplement my data collection. Most of the information derived from these secondary data articles is in the public domain and provides general and basic biographical background about Mkhize, but lacks specific information and details about his music learning. Notably, these media articles were published at a particular time of Mkhize's life and career, subsequently, it only affords a partial view of Mkhize's life and career as captured at the time of writing. This is likely to have changed, because the subject's life is on-going. However, I used media articles primarily for verification and cross-checking general factual information.

Video documentaries played a major role in supplementing my primary data collection. The advantage of video documentaries is that it extends beyond biographical inquiries and it enables me to read body language such as facial expressions of the participants. The careful reading of body language on visuals can help the researcher to note the subjects' points of interest that brightens their face, and equally those with less interest. It also allows me to pause, rewind, and fast-forward or to listen to a specific part repeatedly as desired. Its audio-visual nature provides a sense of face-to-face interview, and enables verifiable and credible conclusions.

3.3 Transforming life stories to life history in the learning biography

To construct Mkhize's learning biography I collected his life stories including personal recollections, narratives, memories and anecdotes. In this context, the learning biography represents Mkhize's life-history that highlights the links between the two. I emphasize that the use of the term "life-history" in this study does not suggest a deviation from a narrative research into a life-history research. Therefore, in this study "life-history" has a similar meaning to "biography".

According to Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson (2005: 03) transforming life-stories into life-history (biography) is the most critical stage in life-history research. Indeed, my biggest challenge in writing this thesis has been to assemble different accounts and narratives from a wide range of sources and transform them into one learning biography. The construction of Mkhize's learning biography is an attempt to demonstrate how his life stories (as the personal voice) dovetail the cultural, religious, political, economic and social imperatives within the society (see Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson 2005: 04).

Throughout this study I have attempted to maintain and sustain Mkhize's voice through my own interpretation of his life stories gathered from various sources. I avoided considering Mkhize in isolation, but rather through the lens of socio-cultural theory, which explains how learning and development occurs through active participation in socially and culturally shaped contexts (Vygotsky 1978; Moen 2006: 2). Throughout this study Mkhize's learning is considered within the context of his life, taking into consideration social, cultural, political, economic and religious factors.

3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

In this study, I employed a narrative analysis strategy. Writing the biography of Andile Yenana, Dlamini (2019) also used narrative analysis. O'Leary (2004: 196) describes narrative analysis as the "iterative process of interpreting the stories of individuals with the focus on story building". I chose narrative analysis as the most appropriate data analysis strategy for this study, because my study is mainly constructed by narrative accounts and life stories about Mkhize's life history, learning, and music.

Bruner (1991) argues that narrative analysis draws from the social constructionist notion that narratives and life stories are always part of the constitution of the social, cultural, and political world. Because narrative analysis takes into account the context in which the life stories occurred, its utilization helped me to scrutinise the life stories not in isolation, but within their socio-cultural context.

According to Hollyway and Jefferson (2000: 32), narrative analysis must focus on both the narrative (the story itself) and narrator (the individual who narrates the story). Based on this assertion, I had to consider the interconnection between Mkhize's stories, his life and learning. After collecting the data mainly through interviews, video documentaries, albums, and journalistic media articles, analysis took place in four phases:

(i) The first phase of analysis as suggested by Heather Fraser (2004: 186), involved thorough listening to the collected data and going through emotions of participants and interviewers. I used a journal and wrote notes to describe the feelings that emerged, as these would subsequently affect the interpretation.

(ii) Phase two was dedicated to the process of transcribing the material. The importance of transcription is that it provides an accurate record of what was said by the participants during the interviews, as opposed to relying on memory alone (see Fraser 2004: 187). I personally transcribed the interview material and grouped the results according to the emergent categories (for example: formative learning experiences; later learning experiences; encounters with other musicians; learning contexts, practices and processes; and biographical factors that influenced his learning). Similar themes that emerged during data analysis were scrutinised and categorised. From these themes, the deduction that informs Mkhize's learning biography was drawn.

(iii) In the third phase, I interpreted the individual transcripts, with an aim to note specificities of each transcript (Fraser 2004: 189). This process involved identifying the types and directions of the stories, and possible contradictions.

I thoroughly examined collected data in order to gain understanding, and to identify common themes. As suggested by O'Leary (2004: 196 – 197), the raw data was grouped according to the emergent themes: thereafter, I explored the relationship between them. I organised themes into smaller systematic units. Based on the research questions, I created five key categories: (i) biographical factors that influenced Mkhize; (ii) social and musical contexts; (iii) practices and processes; (iv) teachers and mentors, and (v) bands. The difference between phase two and phase three categorisation is that

in phase three I sought specific answers for specific research questions. I classified the themes into five applicable categories, (focusing on those emerging from Mkhize, because he is the main subject), and synthesised the data – which means creating an interpretation of my findings for the reader. Furthermore, I looked for “hidden themes” that were expressed through what O’Leary (2004) calls “non-verbal cues, concepts and words”.

(iv) In phase four, I re-examined transcripts in order to identify similarities and differences among the accounts of participants. This involved checking emergent themes or patterns across transcripts, and how the stories align with the initial assumptions of my research. This phase also involved a process of relating the themes or findings to the literature in order to establish the links.

In order to construct a coherent overall narrative of Mkhize’s learning biography, I selected those accounts and life stories that responded to the research questions. This is in line with Bruner’s (1991: 11) assertion that some happenings, accounts, or life stories do not warrant communication, and accounts of them are said to be “pointless” rather than story-like.

3.5 Quality criteria

To ensure credibility, reliability and trustworthiness of this study, three participants were interviewed in order to identify common concepts and narratives. Furthermore, to ensure that participants were not misunderstood, they were allowed to review their interview transcripts. Data source triangulation was employed to identify multiplicity of views, perspectives and data validation. In this context, I mean that various types of data sources such as interviews, video documentaries, literature, music recordings, general biography of Mkhize, and personal communication were used. Furthermore, I cross-checked and compared the information in order to ensure trustworthiness of the results. This finds credence in Lauri (2011) and Carter et al. (2014) who argue that data triangulation enhances reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

To ensure validity of the study, I ensured consistency when analysing data, and avoided bias and generalisation. All participants who were interviewed are credible professional South African jazz musicians, and experts in jazz performance. The main subject of the study, Themba Mkhize gave a personal account of how he learnt jazz music, and to ensure validity and credibility, two other jazz musicians who are very close to Mkhize (his son, Afrika Mkhize, and his contemporary and bandmate, Khaya Mahlangu) also provided their own perspectives on Mkhize's life, music and learning.

3.6 Position of the researcher

My position in this study as a researcher and a jazz musician posed challenges that may have influenced the interviews. A positive influence was that participants trusted me and answered questions freely. On two occasions, the estimated 45 minutes interviews ended up taking much longer. However, as a jazz musician, and researching a jazz phenomenon, I may have been subjective. Therefore, remaining reflexive was crucial, and I consistently reminded myself to refrain from making assumptions.

3.7 Suitability of the research design

I am aware of the possible disadvantages of the learning biography as research design. The fact that participants may tell imagined stories poses questions about the reliability of their accounts. To mitigate these challenges: additional data supplemented participants' accounts; I paid attention to both the content of the stories and the manner in which stories are narrated and structured; checked if the stories are coherent, smooth and consistent; identified common themes among the participants; and I also cross-checked with other sources in order to verify information. In conclusion, the learning biography proved most suitable for investigating the relationships between Mkhize's life story and musical learning. This is in keeping with the methodological argument that a biographical approach is "a thoroughly contextual method that contains an answer to the question of how we can investigate contexts of learning and living" (Biesta, Hodkinson and Goodson 2005: 04).

3.8 Ethics

Adherence to ethics was important and compulsory, as my study involved human participants whose safety and dignity had to be ensured. Before embarking on formal research, I received ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand's ethics Committee and conducted the research in an ethical manner according to the university's ethics guidelines. The ethics clearance number for this research is: H20/10/23.

I ensured that all participants received a participant information sheet letter with detailed information about the study. The rights of the participants throughout the study were clearly described in the participant information sheet (see Appendix C). Participants had a choice to accept or decline the offer to participate in this study. Participants were required to sign participant information sheets and consent forms to confirm their participation in the study, prior to the interviews. Regarding confidentiality, all information collected was only used for the purposes of this study, and participants had the right not to answer questions that they felt uncomfortable to answer. Participants could withdraw at any point, if they felt uncomfortable.

Any information they wished should remain confidential, was not published or communicated in any form. Due to the nature of the study, anonymity could not be guaranteed to all three participants, namely: Themba Mkhize, Khaya Mahlangu and Afrika Mkhize. Therefore, I requested all participants to sign the consent form in order to give me permission for use and disclosure of their names.

Chapter Four: Mkhize's formative learning experiences

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces Themba Mkhize through his general biography focusing on his formative learning from childhood to early youth period, covering the first twenty-one years of his life. I have constructed the majority of his learning biography by narratives assembled through sources such as personal interviews I conducted with Mkhize, his family, his peers; and his general biography (received from him); public domain articles written by entertainment journalists; and video interviews retrieved from YouTube as topics to his biography. This chapter examines Mkhize's learning experiences during his childhood and youth, highlighting learning contexts such as family, neighbours, community, church and formative schooling for the first 21 years of his life.

4.2 Historical biographical background

Themba Mkhize was born on the 09th of April 1957 in Umlazi Township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, at the height of the apartheid period in South Africa. The apartheid era in South African history refers to the period that the National Party led the country's white minority government, from 1948 to 1994. It is a political system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed in South Africa and lasted for 46 years. This means that the first 37 years of Mkhize's life and music education must be seen in the context of apartheid laws that discriminated and oppressed black people in South Africa.

Under apartheid, an inferior education system known as "Bantu Education" was designed specifically for black South Africans, while White South Africans enjoyed a much better and superior education system (see Kros 1996; Moore 2015). The political environment throughout Mkhize's upbringing cannot be ignored by this study, because his learning biography must account for the political, social, economic, and cultural context. This view lends credence from Emile Durkheim, a French social theorist, who was the first to theorize that "the individual cannot be considered outside the society

where he lives” (quoted in Emielu 2011: 379). Later on, I will discuss how these factors influenced Mkhize’s learning.

4.3 Early music learning from family

Mkhize’s father, Mandlakayise Ernest Mkhize, hails from Mbumbulu on the outskirts of Durban, situated just a few kilometres from the city. Like many black African men, Mkhize’s father had to leave his rural place of birth and migrated into the urban area of Durban in pursuit of a better life (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020). He was a choir master with a music certificate in sight singing obtained from the University of South Africa in 1946. Surprisingly, Themba Mkhize’s father did not talk much with his family about his knowledge of music. Themba Mkhize’s son, Afrika recalls how his grandfather, shouted “F#” as he walked passed the practice room where Afrika was busy practising the G major scale, but wrongly playing F natural instead of F#. Afrika recalls that the family members were surprised that their grandfather had such formal musical knowledge of staff notation (Afrika Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020). Mkhize’s father could sing very well, and he was influenced by a wide range of different music styles. He would sing the music of Brook Benton, Frank Sinatra and *Amahubo* (traditional Zulu music made popular by Princess Magogo) while taking a cold shower in the morning (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020).

Mkhize’s mother, Nodumo Otilia Mkhize, was a professional nurse who worked at King Edward Hospital in Durban. Mkhulisi was her father’s surname. It is a common practice among the Zulus to call *umakoti* (the bride) by her father’s surname, by just adding a prefix ‘Ma’ to the father’s surname; hence she was known as *MaMkhulisi*. Mkhize’s father would ask her to brew traditional beer known as *umqombothi*. During weekends, Mkhize’s father would invite his friends to his Umlazi Township, GG section home, and they would drink and sing *ingoma zesintu* (traditional Zulu songs). The young Mkhize would hear these songs, including *amahubo* (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020).

Mkhize has five siblings - two brothers, two sisters, and an older sister born out of wedlock. While his siblings were not actively involved in music, his older sister was a good singer in a Catholic Church choir under the tutelage of Mr Willbard Majola. Mr Majola was a prolific organist who also played a significant influential role during Mkhize's formative music learning period. His virtuosity on the organ and his music directing skills motivated Mkhize to take piano lessons from his aunt Audrey Mkhize, and Mkhize would later become a celebrated music director in his own right. The Mkhize family sets the first context in which Themba Mkhize, as a child, is introduced to learning, not only of music, but including learning Zulu language, culture, and Christian religion. This is what Green (2001) refers to as 'enculturation'.

Mkhize grew up in a musical home. His father had an extensive music collection and regularly played a wide variety of musical styles ranging from blues, jazz, choral, gospel to traditional Zulu music (such as *isicathamiya*⁶, *mbhaqanga*⁷, *mgqashiyo*⁸ and *maskanda*⁹). The pervasive presence of music at home introduced Mkhize to a wide range of music, and provided formative music learning opportunities, initially learnt through listening and imitation. At a young age, though his learning was tacit it laid a significant foundation for his music education and future career. The early music enculturation from home played a significant role in laying formative music foundations for Mkhize. The music lingered in his mind forever and served as a reference for his earlier music compositions and improvisation.

Mkhize received music lessons early on; these teachers provided the grounding for his music education and professional career. His aunt, Audrey Mkhize, became Mkhize's first piano teacher in an informal learning environment. Mkhize recounts that, as an

⁶ *Isicathamiya* is an *a cappella* music style originally performed by Zulu migrant workers (see Mkhize 2021).

⁷ *Mbhaqanga* is a South African music style developed in the 1950s and 60s. It blends various musical styles of that time such as *kwela*, *marabi* and American jazz (see Ntaka 1997; Mkhize 2021).

⁸ *Mgqashiyo* is an offshoot of *mbhaqanga* characterised by the call-and-response interchange between the vocals, lead and bass guitars. It was popularized by Mahlathini and Mahotella Queens (see Ntaka 1997; Mkhize 2021).

⁹ *Maskanda* is a traditional Zulu music style driven by the lead guitar, vocals and the melodic bass guitar which often imitates the vocals (see Mkhize 2021).

eight-year-old boy, he would travel a long distance from his home to attend classical piano lessons at his aunt's place. Mkhize recounts how he looked forward to every lesson with eagerness (Author's interview, November 2020).

Mkhize then developed the desire to learn jazz piano. His desire to learn jazz music was inspired by the ubiquitous exposure to jazz music from home and his neighbourhood. He approached a white Portuguese private tutor (name not disclosed) in Durban, whom he heard playing jazz. Mkhize recalls that he specifically wanted to learn jazz chords and improvisation. However, the white jazz tutor refused to teach Mkhize; instead, he referred him to a white female private tutor. The disappointed young Mkhize reluctantly attended private lessons with a white female private tutor who taught him classical music - not jazz. He attended classical piano lessons for six months under the tutelage of a white private tutor, and his mother paid for the lessons (Mkhize interview, Africappela, YouTube, accessed on 15 December 2020). Mkhize eventually dropped out, out of frustration, because he was not learning what he had desired. His desire had been to learn jazz piano, but due to racism, the white Portuguese private tutor refused to teach him (Author's interview, November 2020). This incident paints a clear picture of how South African politics influenced and affected learning.

Furthermore, I argue that Mkhize's parents played a significant supportive role in his music learning and career, by encouraging him and creating a conducive environment for him to learn and grow as a musician. They bought the piano, so that he could practise at home; purchased a radio from which he learnt a wide range of music; paid for his piano lessons; and attended his performances. Mkhize recalls one of the gigs attended by his late parents, in which he performed *Amankwebevu* – a song inspired by his parents' teachings and warnings about alcohol abuse. It was a special and fascinating moment (for both Mkhize and his parents) and a gesture that made his parents proud of him (Authors interview, November 2020).

4.4 Early music learning from the community

Umlazi in the 1960s was characterised by a diverse range of cultures and groups such as the Mpondos, Zulus and Xhosas (see Mkhize 2021). Durban had Indians and whites who added to the cultural diversity. My intention in mentioning different groups, cultures, and ethnicities is to demonstrate the wide range of musical and educational influences that Mkhize had. Such cultural and racial diversity mirrors a heterogeneous society where people borrow from one another and have mixed heritages, across languages, ethnicity and race. Mkhize's early exposure to multi-culturalism is significant in that it later reflected in his music.

Mkhize narrates how he was introduced to Mpondo and Xhosa traditional music and dance through listening and sometimes watching live music performances by his father's neighbours, who were Zulus, Mpondos and Xhosas from the Eastern Cape Province, staying in Umlazi Township, GG section, in 1960s. The neighbours ran *stokvels*, where the host would sell alcohol, and there were live music performances by a band or attendees. The *stokvel* host normally charged an entrance fee. Once inside, you could also take part in the bet game, where you could ask a woman or a man to dance by betting with your money. "*Qhu jiki*¹⁰, ngo 5 cent wami, ndithi uMafotrini makasidansele¹¹..." (with my 5 cents, I am saying Mafotrini must dance) (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). "*Qhu jiki*" was a popular phrase used by Mpondo and Xhosa people to get attention in order to place an order for traditional beer. The term "*jiki*" means alcohol in *Xhosa* and *Mpondo*. "*Qhu*" is a Nguni palatal click that makes a click noise to attract attention (it is usually accompanied by a clicking sound produced by snapping one's fingers). *Stokvels* provided a unique setting for informal learning. Mkhize's band mate, Khaya Mahlangu, gives an account of how the music ranged from live performances to playing jazz music collections in the *stokvels* held in Soweto (Author's interview, November 2020).

¹⁰ *Qhu jiki* (a Xhosa way of calling a waiter to place an order of an alcoholic drink in a *stokvel*).

¹¹ Translation: "With my 5 cents I am saying Mafotrini must dance for us". It was a common practise in a *stokvel* to play games where anyone may ask someone to dance by placing a bet. Another person may come with a counter-bet to say a person must sit down and not dance.

The MaGwaza family, who came from KwaZulu, were Mkhize's neighbours. They were staying in the houses that are known as "*imihubhe*" (long train-like connected houses, shared by different families, only divided by one wall block, allowing them to easily hear everything happening next door). Jack Magwaza used to play his guitar after work, as his close neighbours, they often heard him play. As a little boy, Mkhize was drawn to his neighbour's guitar playing. This kind of listening, what Lucy Green (2001) terms "unintentional listening", became a way of "unconscious learning". Mkhize's decision to make and teach himself on a home-made guitar, may have been influenced by his neighbour, Jack Magwaza. It is significant to mention that Magwaza later gave his guitar to Mkhize. I discuss Mkhize's guitar learning in details later on.

More music making in his community included Mfino (another dexterous *maskanda* guitarist), and the Gasa family (who had a *mbhaqanga* band). Mkhize used to walk pass the Gasa family when he was going to attend piano lessons, and would stop and listen to their rehearsals. "It was very different from the stuff that I was doing with my aunt, and I found it very, very interesting" (Author's interview, November 2020). Eventually, Mkhize would abandon his piano lessons in pursuit of this interesting "street music". He later remarked, "I would say the streets were calling me..." (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020). Mkhize's exposure to *mbhaqanga* is significant, because he would later pioneer a distinct jazz style that is characteristically influenced by *mbhaqanga*.

In his early childhood, Mkhize felt the connection with the streets and his immediate community. He deems himself fortunate to have grown up in a musical neighbourhood where music was heard daily. He recalls that no one bothered to complain or call the police to report when a neighbour played the music loudly. Instead, they would visit and enquire about the music they had been playing, with an aim of buying similar records. Mkhize's early introduction to jazz and other genres came through his immediate family and community. He asserts this view by stating:

If you ask a question, who introduced me to jazz, jazz was very much part and parcel of the township life. *Ama-grootman* you know, they would go out and buy

the LPs and share the music around.¹² And I remember that when you go to sleep and you hear, you know, these songs, instead of going to the police station to complain about noise, you would rather go to that household, and ask: hey I heard something that was beautiful, which I never heard before, please show me the LP, who is playing? That's how we got introduced to the music. I remember each and every household would have a Jimmy Smith, a Brook Benton, and later I was introduced to the greats like Herbie Hancock. (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020).

Mkhize was exposed to South African jazz, township music and American jazz. He lists Abdullah Ibrahim and Count Basie as some of the early pianists he listened to during his childhood. It is this exposure to jazz music that inspired him to take jazz piano lessons. "I was lucky to grow up in a setting that had different things, as a young musician" (Author's interview, November 2020). Mkhize repeatedly expresses his gratitude for growing up in a very musical community. This formative exposure to music helped him to learn different cultures and styles of music.

There were also Mpondos and Xhosas, from the Eastern Cape Province living in Umlazi who ran *stokvels*, where the entertainment was provided by the *stokvel* members. Mkhize's first encounter with "*umngqokolo*" (overtone/throat singing popular among traditional Xhosa speaking people) (see Dargie 1991), was at these *stokvel* events.

The multi-lingual, multicultural social context where Mkhize grew up shaped his distinct jazz style and identity. The Indian community is one of many communities that Mkhize encountered as he grew up in Durban. He recalls that "the Indians who owned the music stores in Durban, knew the music that black people liked, and even if you did not know the title of the song and the performer, if you sing it to them, they would recognize it, and help you find it" (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). This resonates with Mngoma's (1990: 121) assertion that music teaching and learning must consider the culture and the heterogeneous nature of South African society.

¹² *Ama-grootman* is a township lingo, derived from Afrikaans, it means "older brothers". It is used as an expression of respect to any person old enough to be your brother. *Grootman* (singular) mean older brother, *Ama-Grootman* (plural) means older brothers.

4.5 Early musical learning from church

The church is another learning context in which Mkhize learnt music. Sepuru's study reveals that many popular and jazz musicians credit church as one of the most significant learning environments for their formative music learning and development (2015: 44-46). As a young boy, Mkhize regularly attended the Roman Catholic Church in Umlazi with his family. He credits church as the first institution that made him fall in love with music. "That was my first love for music" (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). His Roman Catholic Church had a brilliant music director, Mr Majola, who was also a talented organ player. Though Mkhize was not a member of the church choir, his older sister was a vocalist and a member of the church choir.

Mkhize narrates that they referred to the church as "*ekhaya*" (home). They used to say "*Ekhaya ema Romeni*" (My home, at Roman Catholic church). He recalls that people would ask "*uyiliphi wena?*" (What denomination are you?), and he would respond "*ngiyi Roma*" (I am Roman Catholic). Interestingly, Mkhize's son, Afrika Mkhize recalls that he grew up knowing that 'he was Roman Catholic', and he only knew years later that he was Zulu (Afrika Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). At this point, his religious identity superseded his ethnic identity. Mkhize's grandmother, MaNgcobo, and his cousins attended the African Zionist Church, under the leadership of *mfundisi* (pastor) Mxokozeli Ngcobo. Though Mkhize was not a member of the African Zionist Church, he listened to their music from a distance. He recalls that the music was quite different from the Roman Catholic Church hymns and liturgy. The key sonic difference was that the African Zionist Church music harmony was not in the common hymnody block style (see Mkhize 2021: 39). It was characterised by polyphonic singing, counter vocal improvisation around the main melody, and the use of *isigubhu* (Zulu drum). *Shembe* Church (Nazareth Baptist Church) music was meditative and characterised by the influences of indigenous Zulu music such as *amahubo*, traditional Zulu dances, the use of *isigubhu* (Zulu drum), blowing of horns and whistles (see Sithole 2015).

His Zulu neighbours went to *Shembe Church*, while his Mpondo neighbours went to Assemblies of God Church. Mkhize became aware of the different religions and denominations within his community and their varying music. Each denomination had its unique music style. Interestingly, though Mkhize was very young, his memory registered all these different church music styles. Like a sponge, he absorbed all these varying church music styles that he grew up listening to as a young boy. The influence of the various church music styles would later be evident in his music composition and vocal harmonic arrangements.

4.6 Learning to play the guitar and piano

Mkhize's earliest and first musical instrument was a three-stringed home-made guitar. At the age of seven, he taught himself how to play the guitar by figuring chords and melodies by ear. The homemade guitar was a popular musical instrument in black townships such as Umlazi, in Durban. The homemade guitar was commonly made from a four-cornered oil tin, and lengths of fishing-line were used as strings. Mkhize preferred three strings instead of the usual six strings. Asked about this, he said, "Perhaps it's because of the triad" (Author's interview, November 2020).

Mkhize's narrative about the homemade guitar resonates with me. I was born later than him and grew up in KwaDapha village in rural Northern KwaZulu-Natal, whereas Mkhize grew up in Umlazi Township in an urban area. Similar to Mkhize, my first musical instrument was a homemade guitar, made exactly in the same way as he has described. I also played with three-strings instead of six. Now that I understand music theory, I can attest that the reason for choosing three instead of six strings was indeed linked to the triad in the guitar's tuning. The guitar was tuned in a major triad, for example: C – E – G, thus producing a major triad when one plays the open strings. In tonic-sol-fa the notes would be represented as: ||d: m: s||.

Mkhize highlights Durban musicians' affinity with the guitar: "You know, there's a thing about Durban musicians and the guitar. You know, when I was about six or seven I could play a chord or two on the guitar" (Author's interview, November 2020). He adds

that almost every Durban musician can play the guitar a little bit, and suggests that the reason for this, is because most township boys grew up playing homemade guitars. Similarly, in KwaDapha village, Manguzi, most boys that I grew up with could play the guitar. I credit the availability of the musical instrument itself (as every township boy could make his own guitar), as the main reason why most Durban musicians could play the guitar. Interestingly, in my own village boys played the guitar, while most girls preferred to sing instead of playing a musical instrument.

The affinity with homemade ‘tin’ guitars can be traced throughout KwaZulu-Natal, and is linked to the popularity of *maskanda* tradition. Angela Impey credits Portuguese traders for the popularity of the guitar not only in their colonial countries such as Mozambique and Angola, but even in Central and East African countries (2000: 121). Like other instruments of Western origin, the guitar was imported, appropriated and indigenised into African popular musical styles.

Mkhize contends that, while the guitar was the most prominent musical instrument in KwaZulu-Natal, the piano was more prominent in the Eastern Cape. This may be attributed to missionaries who used to identify a prominent person in an area and deliver a piano so that they could teach others. The missionaries did this in order to encourage and motivate communities to sing and play church music, particularly hymns (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020).

After learning the guitar, Mkhize’s second musical instrument was the piano. After his father heard him playing some tunes on a homemade guitar, he took him to his aunt for piano lessons. Mkhize’s aunt, Audrey, was married to the Ngubane family, and used to teach piano and voice to kids in Umlazi Township. She also taught vocal lessons to Mkhize’s older sister. Mkhize recalls that his aunt taught him classical piano and music theory, including how to read staff notation. She always emphasised playing by reading the score, as opposed to playing by ear. A few months after starting piano lessons with his aunt, his parents bought a piano for him (Author’s interview, November 2020).

From Mkhize's narrative it is clear that his early music learning cannot be pinned to one form of music education, but many. His early process of music learning includes a combination of: daily exposure to music in a home environment; taking piano lessons; picking up the guitar and teaching himself how to play it (self-learning); having access to musical instruments (guitar and piano). His family, neighbours, community, and church played a critical role of exposing him to a wide range of musical styles, which he absorbed and learnt through listening, akin to "informal musical learning" as described in *How popular musicians learn* (Green 2001).

4.7 Early formal school education

4.7.1 Primary school education

Mkhize began his schooling at Sandakahle Lower Primary School in 1964, in Umlazi Township, V Section (previously known as GG Section) in Durban (Mkhize, 2021: 38). He later moved to Zwelethu Primary School in the same township. Though Mkhize's informal learning began at his home with family members as his first teachers, lower primary education marked the beginning of his formal learning. He started learning music as a singer in Sub A (Grade 1) in 1964, singing in a school of approximately 300 learners.

Learners used to assemble at a designated place, usually outside the classrooms, to sing and pray before starting or ending the school day. Mkhize recalls that during morning and afternoon assemblies, they sang "*umculo wasemasontweni*" (church music), predominantly Christian hymns (Author's interview, November 2020). He adds that though his community belonged to different denominations, which included *Shembe*¹³ church, only Christian music, religion, values and ideologies were promoted at school. Grant Olwage (2003) highlights that hymns were part of "the evangelizing machinery used by missionaries" (2003: 46). Olwage implies that singing hymns in

¹³ *Shembe* refers to the Nazareth Baptist Church (also known as *Ibandla LamaNazaretha*). It is the second biggest African initiated church, founded by South African evangelist, Isaiah Mloyiswa Mdlwamafa Shembe in 1910. Shembe was born in KwaZulu-Natal on 03 April 1865, and died on 02 May 1935. The church is known for embracing African culture (see Muller 2008; Sithole 2015).

black schools was a continuation of missionary work to evangelize and instil Christian values. Mkhize joined the school choir where the teachers taught through imitation and listening. It is interesting that this method of learning music by listening and imitating would later become an imperative method of music learning by Mkhize throughout his music learning journey. Mkhize remembers one of the most fascinating moments at school, when children learnt to sing “*Nans’ inswempe*” (here’s a quail). The music teacher divided learners into four groups (bass, tenor, alto and soprano) to sing this canon. He later learnt that “*Nans’ inswempe*” was appropriated from the English song “London’s burning”. He still wonders why the Zulu and English version have contrasting messages. The Zulu version “*Nans’ inswempe*” is a hunting song, while the Xhosa version “*Umzi Washa*” (the home is burning) is closer to the English version. My point here is to highlight the evidence of music appropriation and indigenisation resulting from influences of colonialism.

Notably, there are similarities in the way learners were taught in Mkhize’s primary school, church and community. The learning took place aurally, orally and through imitation. They used tonic sol-fa notation instead of staff notation. The use of tonic sol-fa is not accidental, but part of the way that choral music education happens in South Africa. Sol-fa’s special relationship and interconnectedness to choralism is well documented by Olwage (2003) in his PhD study. He writes that tonic sol-fa was developed in about 1850 in England by Rev. John Curwen, and brought to South Africa with the “missionary” Christopher Birkett in 1855 (see Olwage 2003: 30). To this day, tonic sol-fa remains the predominant mechanism of music reading in South African choirs.

The principal of Mkhize’s Lower Primary school was Mrs. Nxumalo, from uMzimkhulu, in the Eastern Cape. The presence of people from the Eastern Cape at Mkhize’s primary school helped to introduce him to other musical cultures and languages, such as Xhosa and Mpondo. I discuss Mkhize’s musical influences at a later stage in Chapter Seven.

4.7.2 Secondary and high school education

In higher primary school, Mkhize joined the school choir under the tutorship of Mr Hlatshwayo. He recalls that one of the songs they sang was “*Uponi*” written by the South African choral music composer, Mr B.B. Myataza. When he started singing this song (during the interview held in his home recording studio on 18 November 2020), I recognized it as a popular choral song sung by black school choirs in the 70s and 80s. It featured in choral music schools’ competitions (in which I also participated in the late 80s as a choir member of Malangeni Primary School and later Shayina High School, in Manguzi, KwaZulu-Natal).

Choral music was the most dominant genre and central to music education in black schools at the time, and continues to be dominant in many (see Olwage 2003). Similarly, Dlamini states that choral music had a very strong tradition amongst black and white schools in the 1980s (2019: 35). He argues that one of the reasons that increased the popularity of choral music was the fact that many school choirs were involved in annual competitions, which take place at local, regional, provincial and ultimately national level (Dlamini 2019: 35).

Mkhize’s early choir experiences influenced the way he collaborated later with other musicians, particularly his music production and vocal arrangement skills. I discuss Mkhize’s collaborations and encounters with other musicians, and his role as a music director and producer in detail in the following chapter.

4.8 Early band experience

4.8.1 The Comrades

After completing his primary education, in 1970 Mkhize was taken to a Catholic boarding school, at Ntshange High School, where he had his first band experience. Mkhize’s teachers selected learners that could play musical instruments and formed a school band. It was however the teachers’, not the learner’s choice, to decide who they

wanted to be paired with. The learners called the band “*Comrades*”, suggesting their political consciousness and awareness at the time and it served as a symbol of social unity behind the purpose of learning and playing music together. Mkhize describes his first school band experience as “nothing serious ... it was a matter of learners who could play musical instruments a little, coming together to play”. (Author’s interview, November 2020). He likens his first school band experience as “kids in a candy store” adding that all kids like to eat sweets; he implies that learners were excited to play in a band for the first time. It was ‘sweet’ and they enjoyed it.

The school band played popular music of that time, by listening to records and imitating. This is consistent with Lucy Green’s study (2001: 59-96) where learning by copying songs is associated with informal music learning. This suggests that though Mkhize was learning music in a formal learning environment, the method of learning music in a school band context was informal.

4.8.2 The Black Bees

In the 1970s, while still in high school and playing for the *Comrades*, Mkhize helped to establish another band called *Black Bees*. The band’s members were: guitarist Vusi Thusi (who left South Africa in the 1980s, now lives in Germany and still performs); drummer Mpumelelo Thusi (who studied music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal); bassist Thami Magalela Mtshali; Erasmus Mtshali, a percussionist and Themba Mkhize on piano. Unlike the school band, the formation of the *Black Bees* band was learner-, and not teacher-driven. Mkhize points out that the *Black Bees* played on lousy musical instruments, because they could not afford decent musical instruments. To this day, economic factors in South Africa continue to hinder music education and artist development, particularly in black townships and rural areas.

Mkhize confirms the political connotations of the band’s names: “So you can see from those names...” (Referring to the names *Comrades* and *Black Bees*) (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020). He did not finish the sentence, but it became clear to me

that he meant that they were politically conscious of what was happening in South Africa at the time. He adds that the band was formed during the time of The Black Panthers and Muhammad Ali, who were seen as black heroes and represented black pride and excellence. Thus, *Black Bees*, references Muhammad Ali's famous quote: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). The success of black political icons in America inspired Mkhize and many other black South Africans to be courageous, have a sense of pride, and fight injustice. Parallels between African Americans and black South Africans were found in the music and because they both suffered political injustices such as racism, police brutality and discrimination.

Mkhize's first experience of jazz was playing with the *Black Bees*. His introduction to jazz was met with excitement and enjoyment, that he was finally playing jazz, the genre he had always wanted to play. Playing with the *Black Bees* marked the beginning of his jazz journey. He quickly highlights that in South Africa the term "jazz" is used loosely to encompass music that is not necessarily jazz. He adds that Chris Taylor from the United States of America started a record label that recorded crossover music that was easier on the ear. By crossover music in this context, Mkhize suggests that jazz was fused with other styles such as funk and RnB, to form smooth jazz or fusion. Mkhize posits that artists such as George Benson, Booga Jones, and Jimmy Smith's *Respect* album were found in almost every black household in Umlazi Township. "*I Got My Mojo Working*" by Jimmy Smith is an example of the songs the *Black Bees* band played (Author's interview, November 2020).

4.8.3 Multiracial bands

After Mkhize's introduction to jazz performance with the *Black Bees* he moved on to join multiracial bands. "I had to find something better", Mkhize relates (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, and accessed 15 December 2020). The phrase "something better" can be interpreted in many ways: first, it may mean a move from an amateur band to a semi-professional

band; second, it may suggest a move from playing music for fun to playing for commercial gain; and third, it may mean playing on better musical instruments.

In the 1970s while still in high school, Mkhize joined two semi-professional bands - *The Rebels* and *Dukes Combo* - both from the Indian township of Chatsworth in Durban. According to Mkhize, *Dukes Combo* was the most popular band in Durban at the time. *The Rebels* and *Dukes Combo* comprised mainly of Indian musicians, thus marking Mkhize's first encounters with musicians of a different race than his. Around the same time, he also joined another semi-professional band, from the Coloured township of Wentworth, in Durban. He collaborated with Coloured musicians, thus marking Mkhize's third experience with multiracial bands.

These bands marked Mkhize's significant formative development from amateur to a semi-professional musician. They presented new learning contexts, learning environments and learning opportunities. It is in this context that Mkhize first learnt how to interact with musicians of different races, perform for audiences of different races, and learned about different cultures.

I argue that Mkhize's decision to join multiracial bands constituted a form of protest against the apartheid laws that prevented multiracial interactions. My argument finds resonance in Durbach (2015: 15), who also argues that South African musicians played a pivotal role in fighting apartheid regime and they constantly manoeuvred ways of overcoming repression. Durbach mentions that crossover music (resulting from multiracial bands), lyrical messages, and innovative resistance (by disregarding apartheid laws) became tools for protest (2015: 15). Durbach concurs with my assertion that Mkhize's decision to join multiracial bands can be viewed as a form of protest against apartheid laws that prohibited him to do so. Symbolically, music became a bridge and a uniting force between three South African races namely: blacks, coloureds and Indians.

Furthermore, Durbach, argues that while apartheid laws prevented multiracial interactions, there are several multiracial bands that were formed during the apartheid era (2015: 154). These include Zia, Mango Groove and Juluka, among others. These multiracial bands faced various challenges posed by apartheid laws, regulations and restrictions. According to Durbach (2015: 154), apartheid did not only affect black musicians. He points out that white musicians were also affected by apartheid differently (Ibid.). He adds that while black artists within South Africa had more restrictions compared to their white counterparts, outside the country white artists were disadvantaged compared to their contemporaries of other races.

I briefly discuss the significance of multiracial bands within the context of Mkhize's learning experiences, in order to highlight the interconnection between music and the socio-political context, as to highlight the diverse band settings in which Mkhize learnt music. Shedding light on the effects of apartheid on musicians (both black and white) enables an understanding of the links and crossover between music, diverse cultures and politics.

I conclude this sub-section by citing Mngoma (1990) who emphasises the interconnectedness between music and the socio-political context: "In South Africa the politicization of musical aesthetics is inevitable – and in fact essential – in order for music to be seen as mirroring the nature of South African society" (1990: 121). Thus, Mkhize's formative musical learning experiences, and music education were always intertwined with his social and political context and circumstances, and remained so throughout his career.

In this chapter I have discussed how amateur and semi-professional bands prepared Mkhize for his new chapter as a professional musician. In the following Chapter Five, I discuss in detail the important role of *Sakhile* and *Bayethe* in Mkhize's music learning and development.

Chapter Five: Mkhize's later learning experiences and musical encounters

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Mkhize's learning as an adult from 21 years to his early 60s. It considers various contexts within which Mkhize learnt music as an adult and a professional musician. I also discuss his self-initiated learning, and learning through encountering other musicians. A significant part of Mkhize's educational experience are his encounters with other musicians. He credits a wide range of his peers and predecessors for having contributed to his learning during the adulthood and his professional career. Learning opportunities were presented to him through various musical occupations as a music director, producer, performer, composer and session musician. In this chapter I examine how he explored each discipline as a learning opportunity.

5.2 The *Sakhile* period

Mkhize joined an Afro-fusion band, *Sakhile* in 1981, at the age of 24. *Sakhile* means “we have built it” in Zulu. The founding members were Sipho Gumede (bass), Khaya Mahlangu (saxophone), Menyatso Mathole (guitar), Mabi Thobejane (percussion), Madoda Mathunjwa (drums), and Don Laka (keyboards), later replaced by Themba Mkhize (keyboards) (Mathe 2021: 557). Through the years, *Sakhile* evolved into a remarkable band and the *alma mater* of many South Africa's finest musicians (see Gordon 2004; Mathe 2021: 557). *Sakhile* crafted a unique sound by blending jazz with African music elements. Their music expresses socio-political commentary, for example, *Isililo* laments the political killings that occurred on the 16th of June 1976 in Soweto. Joining *Sakhile* marked the beginning of Mkhize's professional music career.

Seton Hawkins (2005), who is the Director of Education Resources and Public Programming at Jazz at Lincoln Center, in New York, writes that Themba Mkhize's

career can be divided into the *Sakhile* period and the post-*Sakhile* period. Hawkins' assertion credits *Sakhile* as a significant contributor to Mkhize's musical learning journey. Therefore, a narrative of Mkhize's music career would be incomplete without a discussion of his time with *Sakhile*.

According to Mahlangu (Author's interview, November 2020), in 1980 Mkhize was working in Durban doing a non-musical job. Khaya Mahlangu and the late Sipho Gumede had just formed a band called *Sakhile*, and needed a new pianist, after Don Laka, the band's first pianist, had left. *Sakhile*'s producer, Koloyi Lebone, recommended that Themba Mkhize should be approached to join the band as its new pianist. Mahlangu was tasked to negotiate with Themba Mkhize and his parents. Mkhize seized the opportunity and immediately resigned from his job, and followed his heart to pursue his music career. Fortunately, his parents also gave him their blessings. In 1981, Mkhize left Durban and relocated to Johannesburg, leaving his family and formative community behind to start his professional music career as a member of *Sakhile*.

Sakhile released their self-titled debut album in 1982. They became the beacon of hope during a time of repression and cultural stagnation orchestrated by apartheid regime. *Sakhile*'s creativity and passion for cultural expression through music is what gained them popularity. They released their sophomore album titled *A New Life* in 1984, but South African entertainment journalist, Sam Mathe, felt this album lacked the stature of its predecessor in terms of artistic depth and popularity (2021: 557).

Sakhile performed in South African community halls, theatres, nightclubs, schools, and political rallies in the early 1980s. Mahlangu recalls that immediately after *Sakhile*'s formation, the band took residency at Star Point Five nightclub in Umlazi, Durban (Author's interview, November 2020). Nightclub residency provided the band with an opportunity to sharpen their musical skills through regular extensive rehearsals, regular performances and jam sessions. *Sakhile*'s process for music composition followed a collective approach – this means that the band preferred working together to develop ideas into fully fledged songs. These experiences introduced Mkhize to a professional

band environment where he learnt the art of working as a collective, networking with other musicians, travelling and performing for larger audiences. Mkhize remained with *Sakhile* for three years, learning and developing himself into a professional keyboard player and composer. *Sakhile* was more than just an Afro-fusion band, it was an institution that groomed and produced the finest instrumentalists (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020).

Like other black South Africans, Mkhize and his fellow band members were directly affected by the politics of that time. They experienced discrimination and oppression perpetrated by the apartheid regime. Gordon (2004) mentions several incidences where *Sakhile* band members faced teargas from the police. Gordon's narrative provides evidence of how black South African musicians suffered under apartheid era.

Through music, *Sakhile* became a link between exiled musicians and those who remained in South Africa. Their regular collaborations with exiled musicians such as Hugh Masekela and Caiphus Semenya helped to keep the relationship alive. Mkhize's encounters with exiled jazz musicians later led to personal collaborations with Masekela, Semenya and Miriam Makeba (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). The music of exiles was banned, while the music of inxiles also did not receive airplay (see Drewett 2004; Durbach 2015: 47 – 54). Censorship created a musical blackout for protest songs. Due to censorship, the South African audience was starved of their musical heritage, which was systematically concealed by the apartheid regime.

In reviewing Mkhize's *Hands On* album, released in 2004 by Sony Music, Hawkins (2005) writes that the *Sakhile* influence is obvious in compositions such as "Walk the Talk", "Sweet Home", and "All Seasons". He adds that these songs sound as if they came straight off a *Sakhile* album. Perhaps the lingering of the *Sakhile* sound may be attributed to the presence of fellow alumni Khaya Mahlangu and Fana Zulu in Mkhize's album. It may also be a confirmation of Mkhize's personal influence in the making of the *Sakhile* sound, akin Mahlangu's assertion that Mkhize helped to shape the *Sakhile* sound. This implies that he has kept and sustained the *Sakhile* trend into his own

personal jazz style. Mahlangu states that *Sakhile* disbanded in 1985. He adds that he was heart-wrenched, because he loved the band (Mahlangu: Author's interview, November 2020).

5.3 The *Bayethe* period

The building blocks and professional foundation laid by *Sakhile* in Mkhize's musical journey, propelled him to his second professional band destination. In 1984, he joined another popular Afro-fusion band known as *Bayethe*. In Zulu, *bayethe* is a royal salutation exclusively used for the king. Mkhize's move from *Sakhile* to *Bayethe* can be seen as symbolizing stepping into kingship or royalty, for it was in *Bayethe* where his musicianship grew, and he cemented his stature as one of the country's musical luminaries.

According to Sam Mathe (2021: 558) in 1986, *Bayethe* recorded their ground-breaking album, *Mbombela*. The song *Mbombela* became a big hit in South Africa, and the band's popularity and demand grew tremendously. Mkhize's contribution to *Bayethe*'s success drew attention and gained him respect and recognition from other fellow South African musicians, including those who were living in exile, such as Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, Letta Mbulu, and Miriam Makeba, who would later collaborate and work with him (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020).

In 1986, Mkhize started working as a session musician for various artists including South African exiled musicians such as Miriam Makeba, Caiphus Semenya and his wife, Letta Mbulu (Mkhize 2020: 2; Mathe 2021: 558). He joined Semenya's musical called *Buwa*, which featured exiled South African musicians (Mkhize 2020: 2; Mathe 2021: 558). Being part of *Buwa* gave him a chance to encounter and work with other exiled South African jazz musicians, such as Jonas Gwangwa, Hugh Masekela, Tony Cedras and Dennis Mpale (Mathe 2021: 558). His subsequent travels to Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Ethiopia and neighbouring Zimbabwe enabled Mkhize's first encounters with fellow African musicians from diverse cultures (Mathe 2021: 558).

These travelling opportunities gave him a chance to meet, work, learn from and network with musicians. Mkhize recalls that the encounter with various musicians was a valuable learning experience: “For musicians who were not formally trained, the interaction with these artists was a valuable learning experience” (Mathe 2021: 558).

Following a successful working relationship with Semanya, Mkhize worked with Hugh Masekela and became a music director of Masekela’s homecoming *Sekunjalo (This Is It)* national tour in 1991 (Mathe 2021: 558). Mkhize directed the music of *Sekunjalo* tour, featuring Masekela, *Bayethe* and *Sankomota*. The appointment of Mkhize as the music director of Masekela’s *Sekunjalo* national tour marks a significant part in his musical journey. Firstly, it confirms the recognition of his exceptional musical abilities both as a pianist and as the music director. Secondly, it confirms acceptance, endorsement and respect of his musical genius by both his peers and predecessors. Mkhize’s affirmation and recognition by peers and predecessors bestowed a befitting crown to him as one of South African’s jazz luminaries.

After the *Sekunjalo* tour, Mkhize continued on his new path as the pianist and music director of Hugh Masekela’s live shows. Subsequently, he also became a music director for yet another celebrated exiled South African jazz musician, Miriam Makeba (Mkhize 2020: 3). He toured several countries in Europe and United States of America as the music director and pianist of Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba (Mathe 2021: 558). Perhaps one of Mkhize’s music career highlights include being part of Masekela’s live recording of *Hope*, in Washington DC’s Blues Alley in 1993 (Mkhize 2020: 2). He also features on Miriam Makeba’s world-renowned *Sing Me a Song* (1993) and *Eyes on Tomorrow* (2006) (Ibid.).

Encountering and working with the South African exiles such as Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, Letta Mbulu, and Miriam Makeba earned Mkhize so much respect among his peers and his predecessors. It also cemented him as one of the respected and influential jazz musicians whose musical expertise were exceptional.

Mkhize's process of learning within the professional bands setting is centred on learning from other band members. The process included:

- (i) learning by playing a variety of repertoire – here, Mkhize learnt jazz by playing it (learning by doing);
- (ii) learning during band rehearsals – here, Mkhize learnt through discussions, memorisation, sharing of ideas and demonstrations by band members, playing songs repeatedly until they were perfect;
- (iii) learning on stage during live performances – this included playing from memory the arrangements of all songs as rehearsed, learning to improvise, sometimes songs arrangements would be changed on stage and the band members had to play or follow the band leader intuitively; and
- (iv) learning during recordings – this included learning how to compose, arrange and craft raw musical ideas into fully fledged songs for recording purposes.

5.4 Mkhize as music producer

In 1991, Mkhize worked in Mothobi Mutloatse's musical called *Baby Come Duze*, where he met Sibongile Khumalo (see Mathe 2021: 558). This was the beginning of a relationship that would later see the two musicians working together on Khumalo's highly acclaimed debut album, *Ancient Evenings* (1996). In 1996, Lindelani Mkhize, who worked as the manager at Sony Music South Africa, approached Themba Mkhize to produce Sibongile Khumalo's jazz album. Khumalo was already known as a classical music and opera singer, which meant that Mkhize's biggest task was to encourage her transition to jazz (Mkhize: author's interview, November 2020). Mkhize produced, played piano, composed and programmed *Ancient Evenings*. It became the bestselling jazz album in South Africa in 1996 and won numerous musical awards for Khumalo (Ibid.). The success of Khumalo's debut album demonstrates her versatility as a singer, as well as Mkhize's versatility as a music producer.

Mkhize and Khumalo's singer and producer relationship continued, and saw the two working together to release two more albums: *Live at The Market Theatre* (1998) and

Immortal Secrets (2000). They also worked together on Hugh Masekela and Mandla Langa's musical, *Milestones* (see Mathe 2021: 558). His efforts won him a South African Music Award for producing the best play's soundtrack (Mkhize 2020).

Mkhize also produced Nokukhanya Dlamini's album, *Tribute to You*; Pat Matshikiza's album, *Seasons, Masks and Keys*; and Jeff Mapaya's album, *Statements*. He also produced the album of the late Andile Mseleku, who hails from Durban, and is related to the late Bheki Mseleku (Mkhize 2020). Producing albums for various artists, helped Mkhize to gain music production experience. In this instance, he learnt by doing.

Mkhize's music career extends from being a pianist, to a performer, music director, music producer, composer, arranger, and film music scorer. As a multi-skilled musician, he demonstrates considerable flexibility, being able to shift from performer, to producer and composer, without any formal training in any of these. He learnt music performance, producing, and composing informally, mainly by teaching himself (self-learning) and learning from other musicians. He owns a music production studio (known as Mavovo) in Malvern, Johannesburg, where he regularly hones his music performance, production and composition skills (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). His contribution in the film industry includes writing original music and producing the soundtrack for the film, *Zulu Love Letter*. He also wrote and co-produced the soundtrack of *Soweto Green* with Jonas Gwangwa, another celebrated exiled South African jazz musician. He also created music for popular TV programmes such as *People of The South*, presented by Dali Tambo (the son of the ANC leader, Oliver Tambo) and he also created music for commercials (Mathe 2021: 559; Mkhize 2020).

Mkhize composed and arranged music for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Confederations Cup 2009 and Soccer World Cup 2010, which were held in South Africa, thus historically becoming the first soccer world cup to be staged in Africa (Mathe 2021: 559). Mkhize credits Hugh Masekela for encouraging him to become a music producer.

5.5 Mkhize as a solo jazz artist

The pedigree of jazz musicians is measured by their virtuosity on a musical instrument performance and their improvisational skills and abilities. Hawkins (2005) describes Mkhize's jazz improvisation skills on the piano as "effortlessly fluid solos", and likens him to Herbie Hancock. Perhaps the comparison of Mkhize to Herbie Hancock is not far-fetched, as he is highly influenced by him, notably his remarkable use of synths for colour and contrapuntal keyboard work is similar to Hancock's. Mkhize forms part of the South African pianism lineage, and he rightfully occupies his seat among the most noted pianists such as Chris McGregor, Abdullah Ibrahim, Tete Mbambisa, Bheki Mseleku and Moses Taiwa Molelekwa (see Dlamini 2019). However, it is significant to point out that Mkhize does not belong to the generation that developed an earlier distinctly South African style of jazz pianism. He learnt jazz after the exile of the major mid twentieth-century exponents of South African jazz pianism and came to the fore professionally in the heated last decade of struggle against apartheid. As discussed elsewhere, Mkhize's distinct individual contribution to South African jazz aesthetics is that he brings forth a style that combines jazz with traditional Zulu genres such as *amahubo*, *maskanda*, *mbhaqanga*, and *isicathamiya*.

As a solo jazz artist, Mkhize is a product of two music worlds brought together. He is a fusion of African and American worlds in one musical melting pot. This notion is not surprising, because he grew up listening to African and American music, and these are two music worlds that influence him. Mkhize's career as a solo jazz artist started in 1999. After performing with *Sakhile* and *Bayethe*, and having contributed in helping numerous artists to establish their solo music careers (notably Sibongile Khumalo), he focused his attention on producing and releasing his own solo albums. He had been in the music industry for approximately 18 years, before he released his debut solo jazz album titled, *Tales from the South* in 1999. Sam Mathe (2021), reviews the album as "a brilliant fusion of traditional rhythms and contemporary sounds in the piano jazz tradition" (2021: 559). Mathe adds that the album earned Mkhize a South African Music

Award in the Best Traditional Jazz Album and Best Producer categories, as well as the Daimler Chrysler Award for Best South African Jazz (Ibid.).

Mkhize's album, *Lost and Found*, released in 2001 by Sony Music, "celebrates the rich South African heritage using the jazz idiom" (Mathe 2021: 559). The album is a tribute to Moses Taiwa Molelekwa, a well-known South African jazz piano virtuoso, who though he was young, commanded respect and was regarded as a musical genius. As Khaya Mahlangu sums it, "Geniuses like that come along once in 100 years" (Mahlangu: Author's interview, November 2020). It is significant to mention that Mkhize featured one of Molelekwa's popular compositions, *Mountain Shade*, in Sibongile Khumalo's debut album, *Ancient Evenings* (1996). Though Molelekwa was younger than Mkhize, he released his debut solo jazz album earlier than Mkhize. Some interesting parallels between the two jazz pianists is that they both worked and played with Miriam Makeba, Jonas Gwangwa, and Khaya Mahlangu, among others.

5.6 Flirtations with popular music

After leaving *Sakhile*, in 1985, Mkhize flirted with various popular music styles. In 1985, when *Sakhile* disbanded, he had to do a lot of sessions in order to make money. *Sakhile* was a big and popular band, however, when the band disbanded in 1985, performing opportunities dried out. His wife was pregnant with their youngest son at the time, and he, "had to find a way to keep the fire burning" (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). He joined *Bayethe*, simultaneously continuing session work as a keyboard player and vocalist. He expanded his musical experience into South African popular music, performing and recording with acts such as Ali Kat, PJ Powers and Letta Mbulu. He adds that the studio fascinated him (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). Working with popular musicians expanded Mkhize's music knowledge. In this environment, he learnt by interacting with popular musicians and playing their repertoire, which enhanced the development of his musicality.

Mkhize states that there was still a lot of session work available at that time. However, with the advent of digital equipment, technology, particularly home studios, meant that many musicians had to lose gigs, as music producers could substitute live musical instruments with digital synth sounds. “This took away work from musicians...” (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020).

Mkhize expresses that having his own home studio has been a good decision. When working on music arrangements, the studio enables him to check what works and what does not work, because he is able to try and test ideas in studio, so that by the time he goes to the rehearsal, he already knows what works (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2021).

5.7 Later teachers, mentors and influencers

Mkhize credits Tete Mbambisa and Victor Ntoni as his two most prominent jazz teachers and mentors. Both are respected seminal figures of South African jazz scene. Tete Mbambisa is credited for his tremendous contribution in shaping South African jazz pianism (see Dlamini 2019), while bass player Victor Ntoni and music graduate from Berklee College, is respected for his immense music directorship pedigree.

In 1986, when Ntoni came back from the United States of America after graduating from Berklee College of Music, both Mkhize and Mahlangu became regular learners of Ntoni, who taught them a lot about music, and helped them to understand music theory. “Victor Ntoni opened our eyes...” (Mahlangu: Author’s interview, November 2020). This noted collaborative learning among jazz peers served as motivation and self-efficacy for Mkhize and his peers. Mkhize recalls that it was Ntoni who taught him jazz harmony, scales, modes, as well as their relationship and their use in melody construction and jazz improvisation (Mkhize: author’s interview, November 2020). Learning music theory, and learning how to apply it in performance proved to be significant to Mkhize. He also reflects on how Mbambisa showed and taught him jazz piano techniques. Mbambisa would take a popular song or jazz standard and demonstrate how to apply advanced

jazz harmony by substituting the original chords with more advanced jazz chords. He also taught him the voicing of jazz chords. Mkhize expresses how fascinated he was, and how he enjoyed jazz piano lessons with Mbambisa, who always taught him something new and advanced (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020).

It is interesting that in his formative years, Mkhize had Mpondo speaking neighbours in Durban from whom he learnt about the Xhosa culture, dance, songs, and singing styles. Coincidentally, in his later years he was taught by Xhosa-speaking jazz musicians, Mbambisa and Ntoni, from whom he learnt jazz harmony, scales, modes, and the application of these in jazz performance. This suggests that learning transcends culture and ethnicity. This can also be viewed as an act of defiance against tribalism and geographic divide that keeps Zulus in KwaZulu-Natal, and Xhosas in Eastern Cape and Western Cape.

Mkhize is mainly influenced by South African traditional music and American jazz music. Compositionally, his style of jazz is characterized by combining various traditional Zulu music genres such as *maskandi*, *mbhaqanga*, *amahubo*, and *iscathamiya* (particularly his vocal arrangements) with strong jazz elements. Combining the two influences, he successfully coined a style of jazz that is uniquely his. He is influenced by *amahubo*, the music made popular by Princess Magogo, the mother of Prince Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. In his jazz performance and improvisation, the influences of Herbie Hancock, Bheki Mseleku, Abdullah Ibrahim, Tete Mbambisa and traditional Zulu music stand out (Dlamini 2019: 50; Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020).

While Mkhize has been influenced by other jazz musicians, he has also influenced a number of younger South African jazz musicians who emerged in the post-apartheid era: Nduduzo Makhathini, Andile Yenana, Sibusiso Mashiloane, Mbuso Khoza, Sy Ntuli, Concord Nkabinde, his son Afrika Mkhize, among others. "I am being a musical father, who is trying to help them" (Mathe 2021: 559).

Afrika Mkhize's piano playing and performance mirrors his father's. Mbuso Khoza is a vocalist from KwaZulu-Natal whose singing style and approach reflects Mkhize's influence. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that Mkhize was involved in the recording of Mbuso Khoza's debut album, which was recorded at Mavovo Studio, owned by Mkhize. Khoza received vocal coaching from Mkhize during the recording of his debut album. Another link between Khoza and Mkhize is that both musicians are influenced by *amahubo*, and they employ such influences in their music. Khoza is also featured as a vocalist in Mkhize's album titled *Hands On*, which was released in 2004, and won the Metro FM Music Award for Best Jazz Album in 2004.

It is significant to point out that as I was writing this thesis, Mkhize was studying towards the Master of Music degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. Though Mkhize did not have an undergraduate music degree, he was accepted based on the recognition of prior learning (RPL). His music knowledge and experience accumulated over a long-term period as a professional recording jazz artist and performer was sufficient to qualify him for registration. He successfully completed his MA degree and graduated on the 13th of December 2021, at the age of 64. He is currently pursuing his PhD studies on the research topic "Zulu tonality in pre-colonial times: Reimagining polyphony through melodies informed by Zulu bow instruments" (Personal communication with Mkhize, 13 February 2022).

Chapter Six: Mkhize's musical learning contexts, practices and processes

6.1 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses a wide range of various contexts within which Mkhize learnt, and highlights the key practices and processes that he followed to learn jazz. The chapter therefore addresses a key research question, which is: How did Mkhize learn jazz music?

In her study of rock musicians who ranged between the ages of 15 to 50, Green reveals that they all learnt music in an informal, non-traditional manner by imitating other musicians, studying recordings and performances (2002). Green adds that popular musicians learn through “musical enculturation” which has been the case with Mkhize. Furthermore, her study analyses different ways, practices, theories and approaches in which popular and jazz musicians learn music through informal musical learning. Similarly, Mkhize learnt music primarily in a wide range of informal learning contexts such as family, relatives, neighbours, community, church, peers, friends, predecessors, and nature. His adulthood learning was more self-driven and self-initiated compared to his childhood and youth learning that was mostly mandatory and would either be parent-driven or teacher-driven.

6.2 Learning by listening

Mkhize learnt music primarily by listening (Author's interview, November 2020). Mathe (2021: 557) also writes that Mkhize learnt to play by ear especially in his involvement with bands. Mkhize's peer and band mate, Mahlangu adds that when Mkhize joined *Sakhile* in 1981, they continued learning music by listening (Author's interview, November 2020).

I have identified seven varying objectives for listening to music as associated with Mkhize's learning. In different stages of his musical life, Mkhize would listen to music for varying reasons such as:

- i. Listen to music in order to memorize the song. Attentive listening with an aim of memorizing the entire song.
- ii. Listen to records in order to imitate or play back. Attentive listening with an aim of imitating or playing back what is heard immediately.
- iii. Listen in order to transcribe music. Conscious listening with an aim of writing down what is heard.
- iv. Listen in order to familiarize himself with the music. Casual listening for orientation purposes. Storing the music at the back of his mind (leaving a lasting impression) for future reference. Here, music is listened to casually and leisurely with no intention to play back what is heard immediately. In this variant, though the learners do not play back what they hear immediately, they consume and absorb the music in order to enrich their music vocabulary. The more music the learners absorb, the more musical they become.
- v. Listen for pleasure. Casual or leisure listening for entertainment.
- vi. Unintended listening. Unintended listening refers to being exposed to music that is played in the background or your environment.
- vii. Listen in order to analyze the compositional structure of the song. Critical listening with an aim of learning about all compositional aspects of a song, such as melody, solo, chords and form structures (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020).

Listening is an important way that jazz musicians learn. Berliner (1994: 58) asserts that "young jazz learners do not perceive listening to records merely as a means for enjoyment, but as 'educational tools'. They learn by listening to both live music performances and recorded music. Similarly, Green (2002: 37) emphasises that listening is crucial for all musicians.

As a professional jazz musician, my view is that "you are what you listen to". I am influenced by the music of Themba Mkhize, Jabu Khanyile, McCoy Tyner and Keith

Jarrett. There is thus a direct connection between the music that jazz musicians regularly listen to; musicians that inspire and influence them; and their distinct jazz style (see Sepuru 2019: iv). Listening to the music of fellow musicians influences how jazz musicians create their own musical identity. For example, the South African jazz pianist Nduduzo Makhathini reflects influences of Bheki Mseleku, Andile Yenana and McCoy Tyner, as three masters who influence his piano playing and compositional style (Dlamini 2019: 50). Makhathini (2018: 16) confirms Mseleku's influence in his playing. While many pianists, including Mkhize are influenced by Mseleku, even Mseleku himself is influenced by McCoy Tyner and Alice Coltrane, whom Makhathini refers to as Mseleku's "idols" (2018: 42). Similarly, Mkhize's musical identity, especially his distinct pianistic style is created from a combination of Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner and Bheki Mseleku.

Learning music by listening to records is one of the most significant methods of learning that Mkhize followed. In this way of learning, jazz musicians listen to a song, normally from a recording, and try to 'play back' what they hear on their chosen musical instrument (see Green 2001). Mkhize mentions that he used to listen and copy the music of the Crusaders, Bob James, Oscar Petersen, Herbie Hancock and Pat Matshikiza. "I would try to figure out the chords, and if I couldn't I would just play something as close as possible to what I hear..." (Author's interview, November 2020).

Green (2001: 73) regards copying recordings by ear as the overriding learning practice for popular musicians. Similarly, Muller (2008: 188) contends that the Cape Town jazz singer, Sathima Bea Benjamin learnt jazz music by listening to the recordings of African American jazz singers. Listening and copying is one of the most important processes of learning that Mkhize followed and he still uses to this day. When we took a short break after the interview on the 18th of November 2020, he began using the same method of learning as he was listening to, and imitating a song by Herbie Hancock.

6.3 Learning by observation

Green (2001) argues that musicians do not only learn from listening to one another, but also from watching and observing one another. In Umlazi, Mkhize used to watch many live performances particularly by different ethnic groups such as the Mpondos, Xhosas and Zulus (Author's interview, November 2020). He recalls that he learnt the traditional Xhosa way of singing at a *stokvel* event that was organized by his Mpondo neighbours. This exposure to various cultures helped to broaden and enrich his musicality.

Mkhize also mentions that he learnt music by watching and observing local *isicathamiya* groups and church groups such as *Shembe* Nazareth Church and *Amazayoni* (see Mkhize 2021: 38-41). Through attending *isicathamiya* concerts Mkhize learnt to love this music. He has just completed his master's research on *isicathamiya* music entitled "Transcribing and Notating *Isicathamiya* – A Transcription of the *Impi Yemikhonto* Album by Mtuba Thulisa Brothers" (Mkhize 2021).

Jazz musicians often attend jam sessions where they learn by watching other musicians perform. Jam sessions are important sites of learning how to be a jazz musician, where they prove themselves and earn respect from other musicians. Berliner (1994: 47) demonstrates how musicians learn from live performance settings, such as festivals, concerts, jazz clubs, and jam sessions. Learning in this environment occurs through social interactions, watching, observing, and participating. Mkhize learnt through a similar process.

Lipsitz (2004) argues that junior jazz musicians must prove themselves first before they are accepted in musical communities, and jam sessions are perfect platforms where jazz musicians prove themselves. Similarly, Makhathini (2018: 29) indicates that Bheki Mseleku actively participated in jam sessions, interacted with other musicians and earned their respect. Similarly, Mkhize learnt a great deal by watching other professional jazz musicians such as Tete Mbambisa, Victor Ntoni and Khaya Mahlangu (Author's interview, November 2020).

YouTube is another platform where Mkhize learned by watching. Many jazz musicians, especially the contemporary, 'self-taught' generation, learn music informally by watching YouTube videos. Since its inception in 2005, YouTube has grown exponentially and became one of the most used online platforms for music learning and teaching. Kruse & Veblen (2012: 2) regard YouTube as a cultural force and a catalyst for social, educational and musical change that has altered how individuals interact. Similarly, Salavuo (2008) and Waldron (2012) contend that YouTube plays a major role in teaching and learning online. Online music communities 'learn by watching' videos through YouTube and other social media platforms. Mkhize attests that the internet has provided him with new possibilities to learn and share expertise with other musicians.

6.4 Learning from covers and jazz standards

There is a saying that 'originality is born of imitation'. Though doing covers may be seen as imitating or mimicking other musicians, it is essential for individual musical development. Many musicians have developed their own distinctive styles and voices out of playing covers. Mkhize affirms that he also learnt by playing covers and jazz standards. His high school bands, the *Comrades* and the *Black Bees* played pop and jazz covers, while the multiracial bands Mkhize joined as a semi-professional musician, played covers of popular music of that time. He mentions music by Boogaloo Joe Jones and "Got My Mojo Working", a blues song written by Preston "Red" Foster and performed by Jimmy Smith as examples of the covers they played (Author's interview, November 2020). Lilliestam (1996: 203-4 and 211-13) contends that playing covers does not only enhance performance skills, it forms fundamental building-blocks in compositional skills. Musicians normally borrow from what they learnt from playing covers to enhance their own original works.

Playing jazz standards is another common practice among jazz musicians. Tete Mbambisa and Victor Ntoni are Mkhize's jazz teachers who emphasized the significance of playing jazz standards and demonstrated most of their teachings by using jazz standards (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). Mkhize learnt how

to play jazz standards mainly through listening, imitation, reading chord symbols, and observing demonstrations by his teachers and peers. The practice of playing jazz standards helped to sharpen Mkhize's jazz piano performance skills and compositional skills. It is expected of all jazz musicians to know how to perform and improvise on jazz standards, which serve as a benchmark to check the performance competence and readiness of a jazz musician (see Sepuru 2015: 1). Based on my own observation (as a professional jazz musician), more often at gigs when musicians have exhausted their personal repertoire, they normally resort into performing jazz standards, because every band member is expected to know the song even if it was not practised during the rehearsal. A common practice at jam session is for musicians to jam on jazz standards.

Some of the South African popular jazz standards that Mkhize learnt and performed include "*Ntyilo Ntyilo*" composed by Allan Mzamo Silinga and performed by a number of musicians including Miriam Makeba and the Manhattan Brothers; "*Lakutshon' Ilanga*" composed by Mackay Davashe and performed by many artists including Miriam Makeba; "*Meadowlands*" composed by Strike David Vilakazi and popularized by many musicians including Miriam Makeba and Dorothy Masuka; and "*Yakhal' Inkomo*" composed and performed by Winston Mankunku Ngozi. Like many South African jazz musicians, Mkhize played covers and many jazz standards as a way of learning and developing his own musical skills. As a professional recording jazz artist, in *Hands On* released in 2005, he recorded some covers such as "*Shosholoz*" by his former band *Sakhile*, "*Polina*" by Hugh Masekela, "*Lakutshon' Ilanga*" by Mackay Davashe, and "*Umkobola*" by Phillip Tabane.

6.5 Peer and group learning

Nielsen, Johansen and Jørgensen (2018: 2) state that learning from and with peers is of great benefit to learners. Peer learning is one of the ways through which Mkhize learnt jazz. As discussed in previous chapters, Mkhize performed with many bands, and learnt from fellow band members. Learning always occurred during music-making sessions whether in the recording studio, rehearsal, stage, or jam sessions. Mkhize learnt through interactions and discussions with other musicians, younger, older or peer.

Rizzi (2000: 121) states that learning music through interacting with other musicians is part of jazz education. He elaborates that though individual private practising is essential, it is not enough for the making of a jazz player (Ibid.). This means that in jazz education, there are certain skills and competences that can only be acquired in a band or ensemble setting. As a professional jazz musician, myself, I concur that jazz by its nature is a communal type of music in which musicians feed off each other's energy and creativity during ensemble performances. Mkhize advanced his performance and improvisational skills in a band setup, by learning from fellow band mates. Band rehearsal sessions are notably one of the most important settings where Mkhize's learning took place. During band rehearsals, a single song would be practised and repeated many times, until the band declared it perfect (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020; Mahlangu: Author's interview, November 2020). According to Mkhize, in a band set up, playing by ear, repetition, listening, imitating, watching were the most used methods of learning music.

Lipsitz (2004) and Perchard (2007) highlight an active role played by older band members, who are sometimes referred to as 'masters'. Mkhize's active involvement with various music bands such as *Sakhile*, *Bayethe* and his interactions with both peer and older band members contributed in his music learning. Mkhize narrates how band members at *Sakhile* and *Bayethe* would show him which chords to play on certain songs. He also tells an anecdote that Hugh Masekela was very strict during rehearsals and would insist on a particular chord progression and voicing, and not allow chord substitutions (Author's interview, November 2020).

Mkhize's learning from various band settings is consistent with Green (2001) and O'Neil's (2014) studies, which found that jazz musicians learn from the interactions with their peers or older musicians. Similarly, Berliner (1994: 37) emphasises the importance of informal learning sessions that occur when musicians interact and socialise. Makhathini (2018: 35) notes that Bheki Mseleku interacted and collaborated with numerous musicians in South Africa. He was featured on Sibongile Khumalo's *Immortal Secrets* (2000) album, in tandem with Themba Mkhize, Afrika Mkhize, Hugh Masekela,

Moses Molelekwa and many others. Notably, this album was produced by Mkhize, a peer to Mseleku. This shows how jazz musicians interact and work together with peers, older or younger generation of musicians. Interacting and working with professional bands and musicians allowed Mkhize to transition from a semi-professional to professional musician.

6.6 Learning through enculturation

Enculturation is one of the ways in which Mkhize learnt music, particularly during his early learning stages. He learnt by being exposed to music at home, as his father played a wide range of music. “I absorbed a lot of music when I was young in my home environment and from my neighbours” (Author’s interview, November 2020). Green (2001: 199) points out that musical enculturation is interwoven with acquisition of skills and knowledge in informal learning practices. She adds that enculturation affects both conscious and unconscious learning practices. Green (2001: 73) describes conscious learning practice as “the learning that occurs when learners are aware that they are learning”. Unconscious learning practice occurs without any particular awareness that learning is occurring (Ibid.). Musical enculturation normally involves unconscious learning practices, while formal music education emphasises conscious learning practices. In Mkhize’s context, unconscious learning was unplanned and occurred primarily when he was still young, in settings such as church, home, neighbourhood, various community and cultural events. The process involved unconscious listening to music, observing others and imitating them. He learnt in a same manner that a child follows when learning the language and culture.

Bheki Mseleku also exemplifies how jazz musicians learn through music enculturation (in Green’s sense). Mseleku is one of Mkhize’s contemporaries who did not receive any formal music education or training (Makhathini 2018: 60), yet he could play multiple musical instruments. “When I started playing, I discovered that I could play effortlessly. I must have had a lot of music when I was young...” (Bheki Mseleku, The South Bank Show, quoted in Makhathini 2018: 60). Similarly, Mkhize picked up the home-made

guitar, and started playing intuitively. Both Mseleku and Mkhize discovered that they could play effortlessly and naturally. It is important to point out that this ‘natural learning’ is directly linked to their ubiquitous exposure to a lot of music while growing up, resulting from unconscious learning and enculturation. Similar to Bheki Mseleku, Mkhize learnt music through musical enculturation and through what Berliner refers to as ‘osmosis’ learning (1994: 22). Learning by osmosis means an informal subconscious process of musical absorption, normally taking place at early childhood (Ibid.).

Enculturation also refers to a process of socialisation in a specific culture through learning from cultural practices (Bernal & Knight 1993). Mkhize credits his rich Zulu culture for providing him with a wide range of opportunities to learn. This includes exposure to indigenous Zulu dances, music, language, cultural rituals and practices. Many traditional Zulu music styles such as *isicathamiya*, *maskandi*, *mbhaqanga*, and *amahubo* directly influenced his music. His knowledge of this music enabled him to pioneer a distinct jazz style, which has characteristically become his unique signature. Evidently, we can hear this influence in his compositional style, harmonic approach, vocal arrangements, improvisation and performance.

Mkhize explains that in his improvisation, he uses his invented musical scale called “*Nongoma mode*”: C-Db-E-F-G-Ab-B-C (also see Sepuru 2019: 150). He states that he named it “*Nongoma mode*” because it is inspired by *amahubo* that originates from Nongoma in KwaZulu; second, Princess Magogo who is credited for popularising *amahubo* also comes from Nongoma area; third, the term “ingoma” in Zulu means a song or Zulu dance, therefore KwaNongoma means “home of song” or “home of Zulu dance”; fourth, similar to the ways other modes are named, he named the mode with the place called Nongoma. The examples of songs where Mkhize employed *Nongoma mode* includes: “*Wamthinta UPhefeni*” from the album entitled *Hands On* (2004); “*Yiyo*” from the album entitled *Lost and Found* (2001); “*Amankwebevu*” from the album *Tales from the South* (1999) and “*Ngaliwe*” from the same album.

6.7 Learning through practice

Practice is a way of learning through which perfection may be accomplished. Ericsson and Lehmann (1999: 695) describe practising as a structured activity with explicit goals of increasing performance. This description suggests that a learner must create specific goals in order to measure the effectiveness of practice. Jørgensen et al. (2009: 265) contend that practice should result to learning and behavioural change or adaptation. This means that practice creates learning opportunities and enhances growth and development. Practice is one of the ways in which Mkhize learnt music. He practised scales, arpeggios, chords, modes, technical exercises for technical development. Practice is entirely self-motivated with most popular musicians. Musicians know that practice makes perfect, that's why most jazz musicians spend hours practising, in order to perfect their skills and technique on their chosen instruments. Makhathini (2018: 28) claims that Mseleku never owned a piano until later in his life, so in order to practise, he relied on forming good relationships with club owners, whom he convinced to lock him in overnight in order to practise.

Regular practice on a chosen musical instrument is cited as a form of learning by all the three participants: Themba Mkhize, Afrika Mkhize and Khaya Mahlangu, whom I interviewed for this study. Both Mkhize and Mahlangu narrate that they used to practise regularly for many hours when they were younger, but later when they got married and began to have their own families, the frequency and hours decreased. "I practised a lot when I was younger..." (Mahlangu: Author's interview, November 2020).

Mkhize, who still practises, explains that some of his practice sessions are structured, while some are unstructured. Structured practises have specific goals and areas of focus, for example, he might choose to practise jazz scales with a special aim to improve speed and fluidity during improvisation. Unstructured practice occurs when he sits at the piano to play spontaneously whatever comes in mind (basically fooling around on the piano). This kind of practice normally helps him to discover new chord progressions, which sometimes lead to new compositions (Author's interview,

November 2020). Mkhize's son, Afrika Mkhize reveals that his father still practises regularly, and sometimes he practises away from the actual musical instrument by using mental rehearsal and imagery (Afrika Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). Jørgensen et al. (2009: 269) assert that mental rehearsal and imagery is essential in the learning and memorization of a song. Both Mkhize and Mahlangu mentioned that they often transcribe music, particularly the solos of their favourite jazz musicians, and practise the solos. The transcribed and practised solos are later employed during their improvisation. Mkhize adds that regular practise helps him to refine his improvisational skills, to develop technical proficiency, and to develop self-confidence (Author's interview, November 2020).

6.8 'Formal' musical knowledge: theory and jazz harmony

Mkhize indicates that though he learnt how to read and write music at an early age of seven, music notation and music theory books played a secondary role in his music learning, as he preferred to play by ear. He reveals that he used music theory books mainly to learn jazz chords and to improve his musical nomenclature (Author's interview, November 2020). This is consistent with Green (2006: 82), who argues that notation was usually secondary to learning by listening. Dlamini (2019: 45) expresses that most early African American jazz musicians learned jazz through aural tradition as opposed to their white counterparts who learned how to read and write music. Black South African jazz musicians, like their early African American counterparts learnt jazz primarily through the aural tradition.

Mkhize learnt how to read and write music earlier, with his Durban piano and music theory teachers. He recalls that his aunt discouraged him from playing by ear as she wanted him to sight read and play by reading the score (Author's interview, November 2020). Mkhize recalls clearly that one day his aunt left the piano room, only to stand by the door and watched him as he played the song without reading the score. Realizing that he was playing from memory, she rushed back and gave him a pep talk:

She came back and gave me quite a few spanks, I was like..., suddenly she said: 'You don't play by ear, you must read this thing...!' Coming to think of it, she

would first play the piece and I would memorize it, and I would only use the book for reference.” (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020).

Berliner (1994: 65) emphasises that the comprehension of the harmonic progressions of a jazz song is fundamental in structuring of a solo, therefore understanding jazz theory is essential to all jazz musicians. Every jazz musician must have knowledge of popular jazz standards, blues progressions, rhythm changes, and be able to transcribe solos of other prominent jazz musicians. The knowledge of jazz theory helps jazz musicians to be able to analyse jazz standards, chord structures, chord symbols, melody structures, musical form, chord substitutions and extensions. The understanding of jazz theory enhances the musician’s aural ability and improves their musicality. As a professional jazz musician, I have noticed that the knowledge of music theory makes the process of learning new repertoire easier and faster. It also improves comprehension of musical concepts.

“You learn these things, but sometimes they don’t make sense, until later in your life...” (Mahlangu: Author’s interview, November 2020). In the interview Mahlangu explains that he learnt music theory for the first time from Khabi Mngoma, the father of Sibongile Khumalo, for whom Mkhize produced three albums. He asserts that sometimes music theory did not make sense, until later in his music career journey. “My heart and soul was not into classical music...” (Author’s interview, November 2020). Mahlangu suggests that perhaps one of the reasons music theory did not make sense, it’s because classical music was unfamiliar to him. In 1986, on his return from United States of America where he was studying music at Berklee College, Victor Ntoni taught Mkhize and Mahlangu jazz theory. Both Mkhize and Mahlangu credit Ntoni as a music teacher that opened their eyes by teaching them jazz theory and its application. “Victor Ntoni really opened our eyes...” (Mahlangu: Author’s interview, November 2020).

One of the reasons I decided to base my research on Mkhize, is because of his advanced understanding of music harmony. This study reveals how he learnt and acquired such degree of harmonic understanding and excellence. Mkhize acquired his

first music theory knowledge from his aunt Audrey. Later he learnt from a private piano tutor, Victor Ntoni, through reading books, and watching music tutorials on YouTube. He adds that he learnt harmony through listening, and analysing choral, church music and traditional Zulu music genres notably: *amahubo*, *isicathamiya*, *mbhaqanga* and *maskandi*. These four traditional Zulu music genres have a rich and distinct music harmony, from which Mkhize draws his harmonic understanding and integrates it with jazz harmony (Author's interview, November 2020). It is in these varying musics that Mkhize acquired his extensive harmonic vocabulary.

6.9 Learning from nature

Perhaps one of the most fascinating and unique ways in which Mkhize learnt jazz, is learning from nature. There are not many jazz musicians that I know, who have credited nature as their teacher. Similarly, most researchers in music education are silent about the role of nature in learning jazz music. Mkhize explains: "If we listen carefully, we will realise that there's something that nature is teaching us..." (Author's interview, November 2020). He recounts that he regrets not growing up in a rural area, where he feels that he would have learnt more from nature. He feels that urban areas are highly polluted with unmusical and unpleasant manmade noise, such as noise of cars, trains, airplanes, and piercing noise of various industrial machines. On the other hand, rural areas are a sanctuary of natural sounds of birds and other animals. According to Mkhize, there is a lot that we can learn by observing nature. He advises that musicians can learn a lot by observing and listening to birds. He adds that all birds sing their melodies in a specific time signature and rhythm (Author's interview, November 2020).

Mkhize's views are confirmed by Gray et al. (2001: 2) who argue that like human composers, birds employ similar combinations of notes, rhythmic variations, pitch relationships and permutations when they compose music. A musical affinity with nature resonates with me: growing up in a semi-island village of KwaDapha, surrounded by the Indian Ocean and Lake Kosi Bay, there was no noise pollution by cars, trains, airplanes and industrial machines. The village has remained a natural wetland. Every morning, I

woke up to the natural sounds of the birds singing simultaneously, almost competing with one another, thus creating beautiful melodic and rhythmic polyphony. It sounded like a natural bird's orchestra. Reflectively, I can still hear the sound of the birds in my mind, which I often borrow to enhance my own improvisational and compositional skills. Mkhize's learning from nature was mainly through observation, listening, and imitating sounds of the birds. He still applies melodic and rhythmic patterns learnt from birds in his own piano improvisation (Author's interview, November 2020). One can hear the influence of nature in Mkhize's piano solo on the song, *Shosholoza* (3:22 – 3:28), as he mimics the sound of a bird.

6.10 Mathematical and musical learning

During the course of my research, I discovered that Mkhize employs numbers to create melodies and lay chord progression structures. While it is a common practice to use numbers in music, it is the extent in which Mkhize stretches this phenomenon that drew my attention. He advises that “there is a lot we can learn from science and numbers” (Author's interview, November 2020). Mkhize's understanding of the science of numbers, in relation to harmony is advanced and sophisticated. He explains clearly how melodies and chord progressions can be created by using numbers. He challenged me to randomly give him five numbers, and I gave him 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. From the numbers I gave him, he then created the chord progression which was: |I |ii |IV |V |vi || on C major scale it became: |C |D min |F |G |A min ||. He started playing a melody based on the numbers I gave him, and harmonizing it with the similar chord progression, just adding 7th or 9th on the chords to give it a jazzy harmonic feel. I then learnt from Mkhize that one can create beautiful music by simple throwing four or six or more numbers randomly, and create a beautiful melody and chord progression from those numbers.

6.11 Learning through travel

Roberson (2018: 15) expresses that travelling can foster intellectual and personal growth, as well as professional development. Falk et al. (2011: 920) point out that there

are learning experiences offered by travelling of any nature. Mkhize's travel around the world provided new learning opportunities and experiences. Musically, he learnt primarily through learning exchanges, workshops, interactions, talks, and working with other musicians such as Oumou Sangare from Mali, Sali Ngoro from Cameroon and Antshi from Madagascar, among others (Mkhize 2020). Another example of a learning experience provided by travelling, is Mkhize's travel to Germany, where he worked with the SWR big band as the music director, producer and performer in a music exchange project. In some instances, the learning occurred through sitting-in at music conferences such as Midem (in France), festivals, concerts, rehearsal spaces and listening to other bands perform.

In Zulu, there is a saying "*ukuhamba ukubona*" (travelling is seeing). This means that travelling provides learning opportunities. While Mkhize's family home became his first learning institution, it was through stepping out of home environment that provided more learning opportunities for him. Mkhize is a well-travelled jazz musician, whose travelling has taken him to Germany, France, Japan, China, United States of America, and many countries in Africa. His travels to countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Libya, and several West African countries, exposed him to African musicians from diverse cultures, thus resulting to a memorable and transformative learning experience. He recalls "For musicians who were not formally trained, the interaction with these artists was a valuable learning experience" (Mathe 2021: 558).

In 1993, Mkhize travelled to the United States of America for the recording of Hugh Masekela's *Hope* album. Mkhize's peer and friend, Khaya Mahlangu describes this trip as the best moment in his music life (Author's interview, November 2020). For Mkhize, travelling and performing in the United States was both significant and symbolic: he grew up listening to American jazz and influenced by American jazz musicians such as Bob James, Herbie Hancock, Oscar Peterson, and here he is stepping on the country of his masters and this had symbolism of reconnecting. The second aspect was the fulfilment of a childhood dream, which was to perform on global stages and share the stage with some of the greatest international jazz musicians. The third aspect is him

connecting with the United States of America, its people, culture and the birth place of jazz. Stepping on the USA soil, the home of jazz, symbolizes jazz baptism for Mkhize. Performing in the USA and trilling the jazz audience of a powerful American nation, symbolises attaining the highest endorsement and affirmation. Moreover, it has symbolism of conquering the world.

6.12 Unlearning as learning

Perhaps the most unique way of learning that Mkhize followed is learning by unlearning. This method of learning sees unlearning as learning. To learn means gaining knowledge or skill by study, experience or being taught; on the other side, to “unlearn” means to be no longer in one’s knowledge or memory (see Despres et al. 2016; McWilliam et al. 2006). Therefore, learning means attaining new knowledge or acquiring new skills; while unlearning means discharging or denouncing previous knowledge.

Despres et al. (2016: 167) argue that “the learn-unlearn process appears to underlie improvisational expertise development”. (McWilliam et al. 2006: 2) argue that there is a growing need for learners to unlearn and forget certain practices and processes and at the same time learn and embrace others. Similarly, in his music learning journey, Mkhize went through the process of learning and unlearning.

Essentially, unlearning and relearning is an unavoidable process in life as well as in the dynamic music industry that is driven by ever-changing technology (Mkhize: author’s interview, November 2020). Despite technological changes, there may be political and socio-economical changes. Therefore, there is always a need for every jazz musician to adapt to change by unlearning “the old” and relearning “the new”. Mkhize is a dynamic jazz musician who adapts easily to change. As a need arose, he transformed himself from being a band member of *Sakhile* and *Bayethe* into a solo jazz performer; from being a solo jazz musician into a music producer and music director. All these stages are some of Mkhize’s significant musical lifelong experiences. Metaphorically, life is like an improvisation, it is unrehearsed, we respond spontaneously and extemporaneously

to life challenges and experiences as life unfolds. Every transformation in his musical life journey required him to keep on unlearning and relearning.

Mkhize narrates how Tete Mbambisa and Victor Ntoni taught him jazz piano, jazz harmony and jazz improvisation by instructing him to start by unlearning all the bad habits from previous self-taught learning. The process of learning by ear required attentive listening and figuring out of the chords and melody in each song. He admits that sometimes he would not figure out the correct chords, and he would just play anything as close as possible to the correct chords. It was only when he went to class that his teachers showed him the correct chords and how to interpret the songs he was listening to. The learning process therefore involved a lot of unlearning, before he could relearn the correct chords. Furthermore, Mkhize recalls that Mbambisa's habit of substituting chords with more advanced jazz chords often challenged him to unlearn music chords that he had previously memorised and relearn the advanced jazz chords that his teacher was teaching him (Author's interview, November 2020).

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that Mkhize's musical learning practices occurred in a wide range of music learning contexts. Some of these have been identified in previous studies (notably by Lucy Green 2001), but interestingly there are those that are unique to Mkhize. These include learning from nature, culture, unlearning as learning, learning through travelling and musical encounters with other musicians. His process of music learning includes early exposure to music within his family. Osmosis learning (see Berliner 1994: 22), early music lessons, regular practice, self-initiated learning and regular performance also played a critical role in his development as a musician.

Chapter Seven: Biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning

This chapter identifies and discusses the key biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning and music career as a professional jazz musician. These include: socio-economic, political, religious, cultural, teachers, commercialisation, the media, jazz communities, and geographical factors. The chapter responds to one of the research questions: What are the main learning biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's lifelong learning in jazz music?

7.1 Social and economic factors

Mkhize's music learning biography was influenced by a number of social factors in his community: his immediate family, neighbours, community, church, school, bands, and peers. Social experiences inside and outside his family influenced his learning, his sense of belonging and how he became a jazz musician.

Enculturation and socialisation are two phenomena that laid the foundation for Mkhize's lifelong musical learning journey. Mkhize's immediate family and community represents "home" - a place where he belongs. His family and the community played a major role in laying the foundation of his formative learning. Mkhize's learning journey began at home with his family, who introduced him to a wide range of music through listening to his father's music collection. Later, the social circle grew to include his relatives, notably his aunt, Audrey, who later became his first piano teacher; neighbours, notably the AmaMpondo neighbours from whom he learnt about Xhosa culture and music.

His life mirrors the teachings, values, customs, traits, culture and religious beliefs of his family and community from whom he learnt by virtue of belonging. Bernal and Knight (1993: 106) argue that all children experience enculturation, and undergo normative socialization of their culture. Both family and social ecologies contributed to Mkhize's enculturation process and these have had a direct impact on how he sees and

interprets the world. Mkhize was enculturated by his family, neighbourhood and community. Through enculturation he learnt and acquired family values, morals, beliefs, skills, competences, and cultural identity (see Bernal and Knight 1993: 106). As Mkhize's social circle grew, so did new learning opportunities. Bernal and Knight (1993: 107) refer to immediate family ecology as the "familial agent", while agencies outside the family ecology such as school, church, community, teachers, peers and media, are referred to as "non-familial agencies". Personal conversations and formal interviews with Mkhize revealed that both familial and non-familial agencies played a major role in his formative learning.

I trace the impact of economic factors as early as Mkhize's childhood, when he formed his childhood band, the *Black Bees* with his cousin, Vusi Thwala. Mkhize recounts: "We played on lousy instruments..., but this was not your real instruments, just homemade guitar" (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020).

I suggest that the "lousy instruments" in this context symbolised lack of financial resources. Though Mkhize could not afford "proper musical instruments", he did not give up; instead he "improvised" and made his own guitar. Mkhize's "ability to improvise" when faced with an economic challenge, would later become a necessary skill he used differently in his career as a jazz performer. Metaphorically, life in itself requires improvisation and so Mkhize continues to improvise both in real life and musically.

To demonstrate his life improvisation skills, in 1985, when *Sakhile* disbanded, Mkhize turned to session work to earn money. He also created music for popular television programmes and commercial adverts, which became revenue streams. When Mkhize left *Sakhile*, the desperate need to support his family mounted, and he had to take any musical gig that came his way. Economic factors therefore influence musicians' choice of music to record or perform. Sometimes an artist will choose to record or perform a particular genre of music, solely for economic, rather than artistic reasons.

Mkhize was part of a strong jazz scene in Durban, where his musical journey began. In the mid-1990s jazz venues in Durban began to flourish; venues such as Hilton Hotel hosted regular live jazz performances, while the Durban International Convention Centre hosted conferences and corporate events, which primarily employed jazz musicians (Ramanna 2004: 112-125). Despite the flourishing jazz scene in Durban, economic factors became a hindrance to black jazz musicians like Mkhize, as Ramanna highlights (2004). Jazz venues tended to be monopolised, thus excluding township-based musicians, because they lacked resources such as transport and musical instruments (Ramanna 2004: 112-125).

An anecdote in pianist, Bheki Mseleku's biography (Makhathini 2018), highlights the extent to which economic factors influenced a musical family in Durban. Makhathini recounts how the Mseleku family had to chop up their piano in order to get wood to make fire (2018: 24). This symbolic event demonstrates the extent to which a jazz musician's education and professional career can be hindered by economic factors, poverty and inequality, which remain prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa.

7.2 Religious factors

The church's role in music education in South Africa has been underestimated. Many musicians, across various music genres, learnt to play in church. This is confirmed in Sepuru's study where she interviewed six professional South African jazz musicians about their music education (2015). In most black African churches, musicians largely learn to play music by ear. This observation is confirmed by one of Sepuru's (2015: 46) participants, who states that "where things started is church, where you have to develop your ear by force..., getting to accompany a lot of people, and for me that is the school that compares to no other...". Similarly, Mkhize credits his Roman Catholic Church for introducing him to hymnody and liturgy. He grew up referring to his church as "*ekhaya*", which means "home". Indeed, church was his "spiritual home" and he refers to the church music as his "first love" (Author's interview, November 2020).

The influence of church music is evident in Mkhize's compositions, notably on the albums *Tales from the South* (1999) and *Lost and Found* (2001). The influence of the church is also clear in the manner in which he approaches vocal arrangements - he tends to prefer harmonies characteristic of church music, particularly hymns. The influence of church music on Mkhize is also noted by Hawkins (2005) who writes that the two albums have a gospel-flavoured influence.

Mkhize was exposed to different musical styles of at least four different churches: Roman Catholic Church, Zionist Church, Shembe Church and Assemblies of God Church. He attended Catholic Church with his family from a young age, and learnt the music of his church by listening. As a young church member, he observed and learnt choir conducting and music directing from choir director Mr Willbard Majola, and he actively participated in singing. Majola's virtuosity as a church organist motivated Mkhize to start learning the piano. Majola's influence as a church organist and choir director is evident in Mkhize's range of skills in his professional career as a jazz pianist, music director, music producer, performer and composer.

Mkhize absorbed the various music styles of different churches, which influenced his own music compositions as noted by this researcher and Hawkins (2005). Essentially, church music played a major role in influencing Mkhize to construct a distinct pianistic and compositional voice.

7.3 Political factors

The most important works on South African jazz demonstrate how musicians' lives and careers were profoundly affected by politics (Ansell 2004; Coplan 2007; Dalamba 2008, 2014, 2016). More pertinently for a musical learning biography, Dalamba argues that "the current shape of South Africa's national biography – the story of apartheid and the struggle against it – has informed those of the musicians' autobiographies" (2008: 65).

South African jazz played a role in the fight against apartheid and later became instrumental in advocating for reconciliation in the post-apartheid era (Dlamini 2019). However, jazz also moved towards an elitist perception due to the rapid growth of the black middle class in our young democracy (Dlamini 2019: 12). Similarly, Muller (2007: 57-69) states that jazz became a vehicle to fight against apartheid in South Africa. Aesthetically and historically jazz has been at the centre of South African politics. This necessitates a closer look at how politics has influenced Mkhize as one of South Africa's iconic jazz musicians.

Coplan's *Township tonight* (2007) and Gwen Ansell's *Soweto blues* (2004) paint the political situation in South Africa during apartheid as violent and volatile, thus forcing many musicians into exile. Hugh Masekela's biography echoes similar sentiments, and highlights that Masekela was driven into exile by apartheid (Masekela & Cheers 2005). Similarly, Nkosi argues that during apartheid, exile became an "inescapable condition" for both black and white South African creatives due to violence and repression (1966: 34). This notion too is parallel to Ansell (2004), Coplan (2007) and Dalamba (2008)'s accounts of how politics and jazz in South Africa are inextricably linked. The South African political backdrop as painted by Ansell (2004), Coplan (2007), Dalamba (2008), and Nkosi (1966) is necessary in this study, to help us understand how South Africa's political context has influenced and affected Mkhize's musical learning biography and career trajectory.

In his reflection on the South African jazz scene during apartheid Coplan (2007: 229) explains that musicians were often faced with the choice of "fight or flight", in other words they were faced with the choice of either joining the struggle against apartheid or going into exile. Mkhize chose the former and remained in South Africa to "fight". Furthermore, Coplan (2007: 229) points out that the decisions by artists to go into exile were not only motivated by political protest, but also by the need to realise their full creative potential and to establish their professional careers abroad.

Mkhize remained in the country, to face the hostility of apartheid. He had to learn to survive under volatile circumstances. Like musicians in exile, he protested through his music, particularly as a member of *Sakhile* and *Bayethe*. In the 1980s, he also joined a highly political musical called *Buwa* by exiled Caiphus Semenya, which toured extensively in African countries (Mathe 2021: 557-8). After the musical, Mkhize then moved to the United States and stayed with Caiphus Semenya and Letta Mbulu for two months (Mkhize interview, Grand Finale, 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020). In 1993, Mkhize toured the United States of America with Hugh Masekela for eight months (Mahlangu: Author's interview, November 2020; Mkhize 2020). Mkhize's two-months stay in the United States with exiled Semenya, plus eight months tour with exiled Masekela gave him a taste of exile life. I then argue that though Mkhize is not regarded as one of the exiled musicians, he got a taste of exile, and I propose to call him and other musicians who had a brief taste of exile “*semi-exilic*” musicians.

Mkhize's political activism has been carried over to the post-apartheid period. His debut solo album, *Tales from the South*, was released in 1999, five years into a democratic South Africa. It was followed by his sophomore album, *Lost and Found*, in 2001, and his third offering, *Hands On*, came in 2004. Essentially, the launch of his solo career falls under the democratic dispensation. He continued with his political activism, composing protest music that highlights the political plight of the people. The titles of the albums communicate political messages. *Tales from the South*, metaphorically, narrates stories that will finally be heard, and how the majority of South Africans finally found a voice in the new democratic South Africa. Thus, Mkhize uses music to tell South African tales to the world. *Lost and Found*, metaphorically implies that everything that was lost during apartheid has been found in a democratic era. *Hands On*, communicates how South Africans finally found freedom, and how every citizen must adopt a hands-on approach and work towards building the new South Africa (Mkhize 2020: 2). Mkhize confirms his political influence when he states that songs in his third album, *Hands On*, “pay homage to our years of freedom” (Mkhize 2020: 2). He explains that “Walk the Talk” is a warning against resting on our laurels (Ibid.).

Though Mkhize is not modelled as a radical political activist, there is evidence of political awareness and activism filtering throughout his biography. Mkhize recounts that at high school, “We had a school band called *Comrades*, for obvious reasons. There was a political scene in South Africa, which has had an influence on everything that was happening” (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020). Political undertones are ubiquitous in band names that Mkhize played for: *Comrades*, *Black Bees*, and *The Rebels*.

In his own words Mkhize unambiguously confirms his political activism, “We were involved in the struggle...” (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020). He adds that his band, *Bayethe*, was highly political, and played struggle songs associated with the United Democratic Front (UDF). On numerous occasions, they had to escape from rubber bullets and teargas from the police after performances. Mkhize’s band mate, Khaya Mahlangu concurs: “It was tough ... you would just get arrested having done nothing” (Author’s interview, November 2020).

Mkhize recounts that although he entertained the idea of leaving the country, he did not pursue it. He states that “I wasn’t encouraged to leave the country, because we were already doing what the guys were doing out there...” (The Music Episode with Themba Mkhize by The Back-Story Roundtable, 13 June 2014, YouTube, accessed 15 December 2020). He also adds that he did not like the bad treatment and suffering of exiled musicians. Their treatment is captured by Carol Muller (1996: 130-141) who argues that exiles and “inxiles” were ostracized and felt displaced because of apartheid’s forced removals and homeland system, which further challenges the notion of exile as only a form transnational geographic displacement, and introduces other forms of exile such as “cultural exile”. Muller (1996: 129) also argues that the suffering of the exiles has not received sufficient attention, especially since there is an opposing debate about the “legitimacy of having been in exile”.

Another aspect of political influence that affected Mkhize came in the form of state censorship of music with political messages by the apartheid government. Through censorship, the government exercised control over musicians (Durbach 2015: 56). Censorship restricted the musician's creative freedom and discouraged them from spreading political messages that were challenging the government.

Without any doubt, Mkhize, like many other jazz musicians, was directly affected by politics in South Africa. Apartheid laws prevented him from attending schools of his choice, discrimination excluded him from economic benefits, racism robbed him of taking private jazz lessons, the banning of music robbed him of accessing bigger markets, the political violence and hostility made his life and music journey difficult.

7.4 Cultural factors

Mkhize's distinct jazz style is directly linked to the influence of traditional Zulu culture, with secondary cross-cultural influences such as black American culture interwoven into his music. These mixed cultural influences are clearly evident in his compositional, improvisational and performance approaches. His vocal arrangements mirror influences of *isicathamiya*, *amahubo*, choral music and African gospel music of *Amazayoni* and *Shembe* that he grew up listening to. Dlamini (2019) argues that Mkhize is strongly influenced by Zulu traditional *maskandi*, *isicathamiya*, and Bheki Mseleku. This is evident in his works like *Ngaliwe*, *Amankwebezu* and *UShaka* (Dlamini 2019: 49).

Mkhize is influenced by various traditional Zulu music genres that he grew up listening at home and outside home. He learnt traditional Zulu music styles by listening to the music from his home radio, listening to his neighbours Jack and Mfino who were *maskanda* guitarists, attending *isicathamiya* and choral music competitions that were normally held at local schools in Umlazi, attending multi-cultural live music performances at *stokvels* which also featured Xhosa and Mpondo traditional music, observing his family and community practicing cultural rituals, and attending traditional Zulu dance (*indlamu* or *ingoma*) showcases held in township hostels (see Mkhize 2021:

38-41). In his MA thesis entitled “Transcribing and notating *Isicathamiya* – a transcription of the *Impi Yemikhonto* album by Mtuba Thulisa Brothers”, Mkhize recounts: “When I recorded *Thililedam* in 2001, I was trying to reconstruct the moments experienced at Lindelani Higher Primary School” (2021: 41). Lindelani Higher Primary School is where he watched *isicathamiya* competitions, while he was young.

Mkhize’s music employs influences of *amahubo* (arguably the oldest Zulu music genre). From the influence of *amahubo*, he invented “*Nongoma mode*” a musical scale that originates from *umakhweyane* (traditional Zulu musical instrument). In the key of C, “*Nongoma mode*” would be: C-Db-E-F-G-Ab-B-C, notably a major scale with the flat 2nd and 6th notes (also see Sepuru 2019: 150). Furthermore, most of the lyrics in Mkhize’s songs are in Zulu language. Songs such as *UShaka* (Zulu king), *Wamthinta UPhefeni* (You’ve touched the Zulu regiment) support my argument of the cultural influence in Mkhize’s music.

7.5 Teachers, masters and mentors

Mkhize’s aunt, Audrey Mkhize became Mkhize’s first piano teacher in an informal learning environment and is credited for laying the first foundation for his future learning of the piano. Tete Mbambisa taught him jazz piano, while Victor Ntoni primarily taught him jazz music theory. Normally, music lessons were conducted at the homes of these teachers. The two jazz musicians had a strong influence in his jazz learning journey, both compositionally and pianistically.

Another remarkable influence came from Mkhize’s peers and fellow band members such as Khaya Mahlangu, Sipho Gumede and Fana Zulu who worked with him for many years in various band setups notably *Sakhile* and *Bayethe*, respectively. Mkhize narrates how Mahlangu showed him some “new things” on the piano (Author’s interview, November 2020)

Mkhize is influenced by two worlds of music, South African and American music. His South African predecessors like Abdullah Ibrahim, Tete Mbambisa, Pat Matshikiza, Bheki Mseleku represents a lineage of South African pianism. There is always a strong connection between black South African and black American history, hence it comes as no surprise that Mkhize is highly influenced by American pianists such as Joe Sample of the Crusaders, Bob James, Oscar Peterson, Keith Jarrett, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock. Seton Hawkins refers to Mkhize as the “South African Herbie Hancock” (Hawkins 2005: 2). Mkhize departs from these influences in constructing his own distinct pianistic and compositional style.

7.6 Jazz communities

Dlamini argues that many South African jazz musicians go to jazz clubs to learn and perform in jam sessions, and this promotes an informal communal culture and environment of learning for both aspiring and professional jazz musicians (2019: 12). These communities of jazz musicians, and jazz appreciators, can be viewed as “communities of practice” (Wenger 1998), where learning is a social, rather than individual activity. Thus, South African jazz clubs are not only regarded as performance venues, but as places of learning.

One of the aims of this study is to investigate various contexts and environments in which Mkhize learnt jazz. A jazz club can be considered an informal learning environment, where jazz musicians meet to perform and learn from one another through observation, interactions, discussions, watching, listening, and jamming. In a personal interview with Mkhize’s peer and band mate, Khaya Mahlangu, he revealed that he used to attend jam sessions in jazz clubs around Johannesburg. He recalls that jazz musicians (including himself) would not dare to participate in a jam session if they had not practised individually. Only a well-practised and confident jazz musician would ascend the stage to jam with others. “They would laugh at you if you are taking chances...” (Author’s interview, November 2020). The jam sessions culture motivated jazz musicians to practise thoroughly, and master their chosen musical instruments, in

order to impress, gain acceptance and approval from other “cats” (fellow jazz musicians).

There is an underground practice of “gaining acceptance or affirmation” from these jazz communities. I deliberately use the term “underground practice” because it is not necessarily formalised. The acumen of jazz musicians is determined by their virtuosity in playing an instrument of their choice as well as their improvisation skills (see Sepuru 2015). Usually, a jazz musician gains respect and acceptance through virtuosic performance and improvisation. Stating a similar view, Makhathini (2018: 29) writes that “between 1985 and 1986, Bheki Mseleku participated in jam sessions and earned respect among musicians”.

The practice of evaluating each other’s performances implies that even though a jazz musician may regard himself as a jazz musician, if the jazz communities have not “accepted” or “affirmed” him, he remains excluded by that jazz community. This practice or culture of being accepted has seen jazz musicians belonging to cliques. Jazz musicians prefer to perform and record their music with musicians that they endorse and with whom they feel comfortable.

Mkhize gained respect from his peers very early in his music career. Even the manner in which he was recruited to join *Sakhile* in 1981, suggests that it was out of respect for his musicality that he was headhunted from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, to join a Johannesburg-based band. “We had some great moments creating the sound of *Sakhile*. Themba was very musical, a very good piano player” (Mahlangu: Author’s interview, November 2020). These are sentiments of approval and the expression of respect for Mkhize, from a fellow band member and peer Khaya Mahlangu, who was tasked to recruit Mkhize to join *Sakhile*. Essentially, though not formalised, the culture of gaining acceptance and recognition as a jazz musician from jazz communities is clearly present in jazz “communities of practice” (Wenger 1998).

7.7 South African jazz and commercialisation

“They did not come to South Africa to promote South African music, they came to make money out of our music” (Mkhize: Author’s interview, November 2020). Mkhize’s statement regarding the South African music industry reveals where the priorities of record companies lie. Furthermore, it sums up the power of commercialisation in South African jazz and music in general. Gwen Ansell (cited in Dlamini 2019: 19) also states that corporates and record labels try to commercialise great artists for capital. Similarly, trumpeter Marcus Wyatt explores difficult issues that affect South African jazz, such as geographical, economical and undue pressure from record labels to artists to commercialise for sales (Ramanna 2004: 112-125).

My conversation with Mkhize revealed that commercialisation of music has a direct influence on the kind of music that the public consumes. There is always a strategic promotion of a particular type of music that is seen as selling at a time.

Commercialisation also affects the kind of music that jazz musicians record, because artists are required to record only songs that will sell. Therefore, any song that is viewed as unsellable by the record company is excluded. This strict control by record companies can interfere with the creative process, particularly composition, as it negates the artist’s autonomy during the creation of new music. Composers have to consider and be guided by the album delivery requirements as prescribed by the record company.

Another common requirement by radio stations is that the length of a song must be 3:30 or 4:00 minutes. That is why record companies sometimes request the music producer to have a “radio edit song”, which is a shorter version of a song edited specifically to meet radio length requirement of four or less minutes. This has proved to be problematic for many jazz musicians, as it limits solo improvisations. Such restrictions can interfere with the natural flow of music composition and performance, as jazz musicians are required to shorten their solos. My argument is echoed by Durbach (2015) who argues that record companies had to conform to the SABC (South African

Broadcasting Corporation) prescriptions in order to get airplay, and by conforming, they restricted musicians' creative freedom (2015: 55). It is difficult for jazz musicians to defy commercial restrictions, because they may breach their recording contracts, or risk not getting airplay. Therefore, jazz musicians compromise and try to create a balance between commercial and artistry. All these factors affected Mkhize who was signed to Sony Music record label.

Mkhize indicates that record companies tended to create templates with elements of previously successful hit songs, which artists had to follow as a formula to compose new songs. The copying of the selling formula by many record companies resulted in many similar-sounding artists. It has also led to an automatic exclusion of any music that was outside the perceived selling formula (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). This forced Mkhize and other artists to compromise their creativity.

Mkhize states that the South African I, IV, V chord progression became popular as a result of commercialisation. He argues that record companies chose to focus on the music that is in I, IV, V, chord progression, thus neglecting music in other forms of progressions. He gives an example of *amahubo*, which suggests a different chord progression, and the use of the Phrygian mode, both of which were systematically excluded by commercialization.

A further result of commercialisation, is that music that was excluded was lost and became "foreign". Mkhize tells an anecdote that when his grandson heard him playing the *Nongoma mode* scale with flat 2nd and 6th, he referred to it as "Indian music". This suggests that though the flat 2nd and 6th are common in traditional Zulu music like *amahubo*, it disappeared in many jazz compositions. Madala Kunene, a dexterous guitarist from Durban, is one of the few musicians who have maintained the use of flat 2nd and 6th in his music. When Mkhize released his sophomore album in 2001 he intentionally titled it "*Lost and Found*" – the title symbolises how musical structures, harmony and sounds sourced from pre-colonial tradition, have been found. The album comprises music with strong traditional South African elements, previously excluded by

commercialisation. Mkhize (2021) describes “*Lost and Found*” (Sony Music 2001) as “a collage of different styles from South African songbook” (2021: 36).

Mkhize argues that record companies did not record music by black musicians, because they wanted them to have a better life, “*ukuthi babengcono*” (Author’s interview, November 2020). He points out that South African music such as *mbhaqanga* was recorded, but record companies did not sufficiently promote this music overseas (where these major record companies come from). Furthermore, he highlights that capitalists had little interest in the overall development of music, because their interest was in making money (Ibid.).

Mkhize feels that record companies have deliberately promoted certain types of music, and excluded a lot of music that still needs to be ‘found’. Makhathini (2018) echoes similar views about Mseleku’s *Home At Last* album, released in 2003. While Mseleku’s album excitingly brings together the exiles and inxiles, it tends to be highly commercialised, compared to Mseleku’s previous works (2018: 36-37). Thus, record companies’ restrictive, commercial practices made a significant impact on jazz musicians’ musical creativity, performances and ability to record, and is an important factor in Mkhize’s learning biography.

7.8 The influence of radio

Radio is one of the primary mediums that introduced new music to Mkhize throughout his life. Mkhize narrates how he staged a one-man protest at the age of six, in order to persuade his parents to buy a radio (Mkhize 2021: 40). His parents eventually bought a four-legged pilot radio, from which Mkhize listened to various styles of music, ranging from *mgqashiyo*, *mbhaqanga*, *isicathamiya*, *maskandi*, jazz, soul, and choral music. “This is how I was introduced to the *isicathamiya* music coming out of the new Pilot radio” (Mkhize 2021: 41).

Radio Zulu (now known as Ukhozi FM) had a weekly jazz programme every Sunday afternoon that was presented by the late Guybon Mpanza. This programme played a

major role in teaching and introducing Mkhize to new jazz music and musicians. Mpanza did more than just presenting a jazz show in order to entertain listeners, he educated them. He was the only jazz presenter that creatively interwove entertainment with education, to produce an informative edutainment jazz show. Consistently, Mpanza used to give short biographical details about every jazz musician he played, and he also gave full details of the album including the names of all instrumentalists. Mkhize emphasises that the Radio Zulu jazz show helped him to learn more about jazz music and musicians. I can attest and relate to learning jazz music from radio, because I also grew up listening to the same jazz show on Radio Zulu. To this day, the jazz show still exists, though it has evolved over the years and changed its format and presenters.

In conclusion, the key biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning and music career are: socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, commercialisation, media (particularly radio), jazz communities, teachers and mentors. In addition to these, geographic factors also influenced Mkhize's music career, to the extent that he had to leave Durban and relocate to Johannesburg. The geographic factor in the South African music industry also affected many other musicians across all genres to leave their places of origin and migrate to Johannesburg. For Mkhize, it is in Johannesburg where his music career as a professional jazz musician began to flourish, and his jazz learning was finally realised and manifested.

Chapter Eight: Findings, conclusion and implications

In this closing chapter I present concluding remarks, summary, key research findings, and implications of the research based on my analysis of the collected data in preceding chapters. The purpose of creating Mkhize's musical learning biography was to investigate and document how, and in which contexts, Mkhize learnt jazz.

8.1 Addressing the research questions

To achieve the research objective, I formulated five key research questions that would guide and focus my investigation (see chapter one). Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to address these five interrelated research questions. The findings have subsequently contributed in creating Mkhize's musical learning biography.

- i. *What are the main learning biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's lifelong learning in jazz music?*

My study identified and discussed nine key biographical factors that emerged from the process of data analysis as having influenced Mkhize's learning. They are: socio-economic, political, religious, cultural, geographic, commercial, media, teachers, and jazz communities (see chapter seven). The geographic factor in particular, affects access to music education and career development opportunities, and thus compels movements from one place to another. This factor has influenced Mkhize and many other musicians across all genres to leave their places of origin and migrate to Johannesburg in pursuit of greener pastures, yet it has received minimal coverage by researchers in the context of music education and music career development.

Johannesburg remains the main attraction, and hub of the South African music industry, as most major record companies and media houses are based there. This centralisation of the music industry has resulted in artists' migration to the "land of gold" (as Johannesburg is affectionately referred to). Mkhize is one of these migrants.

Culturally, as discussed in chapter seven, Mkhize is deeply influenced by his Zulu culture and traditional Zulu music styles. The cultural influence has led to his invention of a scale or mode called “*Nongoma mode*” (see Sepuru 2019: 150), inspired by *amahubo*, and derived from playing *umakhweyane* (musical bow). Mkhize’s formative exposure to a wide variety of music laid a strong foundation that would later serve as his music reference. He seamlessly integrates South African and American aesthetics to produce his distinct jazz style. Mkhize’s ability to bring two worlds of music is evident in his entire oeuvre which is characterized by a blend of traditional Zulu music (such as *isicathamiya*, *maskanda*, *mbhaqanga*, and *amahubo*) with strong African American jazz elements and influences.

- ii. *What learning practices and processes did he follow to learn jazz music in his various educational contexts?*

My research demonstrates how Mkhize learnt jazz in a wide range of informal learning contexts such as family, neighbours, community, nature, culture, churches, bands, peers, predecessors, masters, and private tutors, as discussed in details in chapter six and seven. His learning spanned from childhood to his youth, and continued to his adulthood years.

My study has also discovered interesting modes of learning that Mkhize followed and that perhaps many South African jazz musicians are likely to have followed. These include: learning from nature; unlearning as learning; learning from travelling; learning from covers and jazz standards; learning by ear; learning by observation; peer learning; and learning from culture (as discussed in details in chapter six). This is evidencing that Mkhize learnt jazz music primarily in informal learning contexts.

Based on interviews with Themba Mkhize, the study identified seven listening objectives, which are associated with Mkhize’s learning. These listening objectives thus extend an understanding of the purposes of listening in order to learn jazz (see Green 2001; Louth 2006; Virkulla 2016). They are: (i) listen to the music in order to memorize

the song; (ii) listen to records in order to imitate or play back; (iii) conscious listening to the music of jazz masters in order to transcribe; (iv) listen to the music in order to familiarise himself with the genre; (v) listen to the music for pleasure or entertainment; (vi) unintended listening (e.g. when a neighbour plays loud music and you end up listening to it); (vii) listen to the music in order to analyse the compositional structure of the song (Mkhize: Author's interview, November 2020). Outlining the purpose of listening is paramount as it determines the intensity of listening required. Mkhize learnt music mainly by listening, and he listened to the music for various objectives as stated above.

iii. *Who were Mkhize's teachers and mentors who influenced his learning, and how did they influence his jazz learning?*

In the overall learning biography, formative teachers in both formal and informal environments (i.e. aunt Audrey, white private tutor, formal school teachers, church, family, neighbours, community, media, early amateur and semi-professional bands) played an important role of laying the necessary music foundation that Mkhize would later build on, while later teachers (i.e. Victor Ntoni, Tete Mbambisa, professional bands – *Sakhile* and *Bayethe*, encounter with professional musicians, University of Witwatersrand lecturers) helped to deepen his understanding of certain theoretical and practical aspects of music. The significance of music lessons in Mkhize's learning biography is clearly captured by Khaya Mahlangu who describes one of their music teachers as someone who "opened their eyes" (Author's interview, November 2020).

Notably, Mkhize does not discriminate between jazz and classical music lessons, instead he feels that all the music lessons whether learnt in a formal or informal environment were significant and contributed like blocks in the wall in building his musicality (Author's interview, November 2020). Details on how formative and later teachers and mentors influenced Mkhize's jazz learning are critically discussed in chapter four and five.

iv. *What were the social and musical contexts for Mkhize's musical learning?*

Social contexts for Mkhize's musical learning that emerged from my research included learning from home, neighbours, community, culture, nature, peers, church, cultural events, *stokvels*, internet (YouTube), and traditional ceremonies. These social contexts became important learning spaces for Mkhize primarily through socialization, musical enculturation, and listening, observing, imitating and active participation. Musical contexts in which he learnt included learning from bands (both developmental and professional), music teachers, private music tutors, music schools, community arts centres, community events or ceremonies, music concerts, music competitions (i.e. *isicathamiya* competitions), music masters, and radio as discussed in details in preceding chapters.

Mkhize listened to a wide range of music styles on his neighbours' radio (Mkhize 2021: 38). This study finds radio to be one of the most significant music learning contexts for Mkhize. Radio played a major teaching role to inform, entertain, and introduce new music and new artists to Mkhize. Later on, his parents also bought a radio and he continued to listen to music coming from home and from neighbours. Social and musical contexts for Mkhize's learning are discussed in details in Chapter four, five, six and seven.

v. *How did Themba Mkhize's involvement in various bands (e.g. Bayethe and Sakhile) contribute in the development of his musical learning life story?*

The thesis finds that all bands that Mkhize joined, became sites for learning and created learning opportunities for his further development. The formative amateur bands (such as *Comrades* and *Black Bees*), and semi-professional multiracial bands (i.e. *Dukes Combo* and *The Rebels*), played a major role of developing and preparing him for his professional music career, and represent his development period. Professional bands such as *Sakhile* and *Bayethe* mark the beginning of his professional music career, and represent his professional period. Bands as spaces for learning, helped to sharpen

Mkhize's music performance, improvisational and compositional skills. Learning took place during band rehearsals, live performances, jam sessions, and interactions with other musicians and became communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) that are characterized by 'social learning' as opposed to individual learning. I discuss the contribution of bands in Mkhize's development as a jazz musician in chapter four and five.

8.2 Findings

8.2.1 How jazz musicians learn

This study finds that Mkhize learnt jazz primarily by ear (aural learning) in informal settings (such as church, band, home, neighbours, community events, cultural rituals, nature, formal schools, homes of musicians and private tutors, and through encounters with other musicians). His practices include:

- (i) the process of thorough listening to a wide range of music styles (more importantly jazz),
- (ii) learning how to play a musical instrument (sometimes home-made musical instruments) through self-learning,
- (iii) taking music lessons with private tutors,
- (iv) listening to records and playing back what he hears,
- (v) transcribing and memorising solos of his favourite jazz masters,
- (vi) playing or performing jazz music in a band (as opposed to individual performance),
- (vii) practising regularly to improve technique and improvisational skills,
- (viii) observing nature and mimicking the sound of the birds,
- (ix) discipline, self-motivation, self-evaluation, and self-learning,
- (x) interacting and learning from other musicians.

While these findings may not be generalised, transferability may exist.

Broadly, research on how jazz musicians learn, regard aural learning as the cornerstone of traditional jazz learning (Berliner 1994; Prouty 2002). Similarly, my study discovers that Mkhize learnt primarily by ear. Green (2001) states that popular musicians learnt primarily by listening, listening to records, copying, imitating and watching. Similarly, my study finds that Mkhize learnt music prominently by listening to a wide range of music genres and by listening to records and playing back or imitating recordings. This is consistent with Lucy Green's (2001) findings on how popular musicians learn. As early as high school, Mkhize became involved in local bands and learnt to play by ear – a skill that would benefit him hugely in his future musical endeavours.

My study reverberates with Mans' research on enculturation (2009: 84), where she asserts that learning occurs through musical enculturation. Mkhize learnt music through a process of musical enculturation by living his Zulu culture, observing it, assimilating its practices and values (in his life and musical compositions), and learning cultural things from members of his culture.

My study clearly links with researchers such as Berliner (1994), Rizzi (2000), Louth (2006) who argue that learning jazz has to be done in a communal way. Berliner (1994: 37-42) emphasises the significance of jazz learning that takes place through various performance contexts such as “sitting in” at concerts, jazz clubs, and jam sessions. My study is consistent with Berliner, because similarly, Mkhize learnt music by attending music concerts, *isicathamiya* competitions, and taking part in jam sessions.

Mkhize also learnt jazz in what Louth (2006: 6) terms “community learning” environment which is characterised by personal interactions with other musicians. Throughout his music career, from early childhood to adulthood, Mkhize learnt through interactions with other musicians in various bands that he joined as discussed in details in preceding chapters.

In presenting a chronological narrative, I organised Mkhize's learning into early (formative) learning, and later learning. However, his musical learning has not stopped

there, as he continues to learn and develop as a musician throughout his lifespan. This displays what (Smilde 2008) refers to as “life-long learning”. Furthermore, this resonates with Louth’s (2006: 25) contention that music education pay attention to life-long learning and informal musical learning characteristics displayed by self-motivated adult jazz musicians. Mkhize’s non-institutional musical learning underscores evidence of long-term commitment that exceeds the demands of normal study for formal degrees, which is always tied to the specific time frame or duration. In other words, formal learning sets time frames within which a learner must finish learning, while informal learning is open-ended, and allows for life-long learning.

8.2.2 Musical learning spaces and communities of practice

In the absence of sufficient access to formal music education for the majority, community music plays a major role in music education more broadly in South Africa. One such music education context is the church, whose role has not been sufficiently emphasised in research. The church plays a significant role in community music education in South Africa, particularly in black communities, as revealed by my study. In the context of Mkhize’s music learning biography, the church became an important place of music learning mainly by listening, watching, observing and active participation. This is consistent with Sepuru’s (2015, 2019) findings that church plays a major role in music learning and development of jazz musicians.

My research also identifies various informal learning contexts in which Mkhize learnt music and highlights their significance in influencing the forms and practices of jazz education in South Africa. Examples of learning contexts include:

(i) Attending music or dance competitions that normally took place at local schools or hostels – learning primarily through listening, watching, and observation. “I was fortunate to witness these competitions, but also wish I had seen more to understand the practice better” (Mkhize 2021: 41).

(ii) Participating in *stokvels* held by his Mpondo neighbours – learning through listening, watching, and observation at *stokvels*. “The music and dance in these sessions was truly fascinating. This is where I first experienced the split tone singing of the Eastern Cape” (Mkhize 2021: 40). *Stokvels* can be understood as “communities of musical practice” where participants learn socially through shared practices.

(iii) Listening to a radio – learning through listening, active participation (by singing along if he knows the song), imitation, mimicking the songs. “This is how I was introduced to the *isicathamiya* music coming out of the new Pilot radio” (Mkhize 2021: 41).

(iv) Listening to African Zionist Church and African Shembe Church of Nazareth – learning through listening to church music from a distance. “As curious youngsters, we would listen from a distance and hear people shouting, Hallelujah! Amen! against the drum background” (Mkhize 2021: 39).

(v) Listening to ‘unsolicited music’ - unintentional music listening resulting from loud music played by neighbours. “...the world around me was full of sounds – There was a neighbour playing his *iwayalesi* (radio), someone passing by whistling his favourite tune, or men singing in a shower in what was known as *iwashawozi* (wash house), or my next-door neighbour, Jack strumming his guitar...” (Mkhize 2021: 37-38).

A particularly interesting finding is that Mkhize credits nature as one of the teachers from whom he learnt music. He specifically mentions the birds as the natural source from whom he learnt and borrowed melodic and rhythmic influences to enhance his musicality and improvisational skills (Author’s interview, November 2020). This confession is also highlighted in Mkhize’s (2021: 37) master’s thesis “You could hear birds singing to each other. As young boys, we would then mimic them and come up with our own interpretation of their sound”.

One of the key findings is the fluidity in which Mkhize moved between various spaces of learning, listening, practising, performing, composing and producing music. It is interesting that he would seamlessly move from one learning context to another, and adapt easily to changing circumstances. Examples include Mkhize's move from classical music to jazz; informal learning environments to formal learning spaces (i.e. enrolling and completing his master's degree at Wits University); moving from playing for development bands (in Durban) to playing for professional bands (in Johannesburg); move from a band to becoming a successful solo jazz artist, among others. Mkhize's ability to navigate and adapt to changes speaks to the notion of self-driven learning and his character of determination, discipline, and self-motivation. It also affirms his improvisational acuity in both life and music.

8.3 Implications of the research

My research has addressed how Mkhize's various forms of learning have come to influence his biography, and how biographical factors influenced his music education. The study further addresses a lack of research, certainly in South Africa, on how jazz musicians learn and the interconnectedness of learning and life. My research also emphasises the need for further learning biography studies not only for jazz musicians, but musicians in the diverse musical styles that characterise this country. There is a need to document their musical learning processes, practices and the wide range of contexts in which musicians learn.

Biographies are important, because they “story” (tell) and “store” (preserve) stories about the lives and the music of the documented musicians (Dalamba 2008), thus forming an important contribution to academic literature. Learning biographies help us to deepen our understanding of how musicians learn. Knowing how other jazz musicians learn is significant to music educators, students and aspiring jazz musicians, because they may want to employ those methods and learning practices, which may improve our music education.

In documenting the range of spaces and contexts where Mkhize learnt jazz, the thesis contributes to our understanding of the places, spaces and contexts where a wide range of musical learning in different musical styles, occur. Mkhize's musical learning biography highlights the significance of South African sites of informal musical learning for music education and proposes their consideration as community music practices. These include the church, which this thesis reveals plays an integral role in developing music and musicians in South Africa. A further important site of musical learning are jazz *stokvels*, which display key characteristics of community music. Jazz *stokvels* involve music teaching and learning for its members in an informal social context; promote active participation and provide access to different forms of musical engagement (Higgins 2012).

Therefore, there is an intersection with the field of community music that Mkhize's music learning biography highlights. The research thus emphasises the necessity for further research in South African community music education, allied with music education research in formal contexts. A further implication is that the research underscored the extent to which informal music learning practices in all music styles are relatively undocumented in South Africa.

Lastly, Mkhize's learning biography confirmed how many black people were excluded from formal music education, historically. As this is still the case (or where it is present, the quality of music education is poor) the research emphasises the importance of music education in community contexts. This, in turn, indicates the need for future research to investigate the state of music education in black townships and rural areas in post-apartheid South Africa. Such research may lead to recommendations of what needs to be done to ensure that black children in townships and rural areas have full access to different kinds of music education in South Africa.

This challenge provides South Africa with an opportunity to explore alternative creative means of providing for a wider, more inclusive and diverse music education system for all South Africans. I propose that all stakeholders should support, improve and

encourage music learning that takes place in informal settings such as church, bands, community centres, homes of musicians, and many other community contexts as revealed by my study. Distinct South African music styles such as *marabi*, *kwela*, *mbhaqanga*, *maskanda*, among others, were born out of informal settings. We must move towards embracing and recognising the major contribution that is made by informal music education in South Africa. It is through both informal and formal music education that Themba Mkhize learnt jazz. Both must coexist, like a bird that needs both wings to fly.

In conclusion, this study has also confirmed Themba Mkhize as an influential jazz pianist in post-apartheid South Africa who has inspired young jazz musicians and remains a musical father figure to many. Mkhize's ability to improvise on a jazz canvas has given him an advantage to improvise with ease in real life situations. I have learnt, through creating Mkhize's musical learning biography, how life itself is an improvisation - we make it up as we go. I also learnt how Mkhize embodies the idea of improvisation as a metaphor for life, learning and education, in keeping with the ways that jazz requires spontaneity and creativity.

My hope is that by creating Mkhize's erudite jazz learning biography and what it has revealed about how and in which contexts South African jazz musicians learn, the study will add to a growing body of work on community music practices, music education and jazz studies in South Africa.

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Appendix A: Interview questions for Themba Mkhize

SECTION A: PROCESS AND PRACTICES OF LEARNING

1. Tell me about the various music learning contexts/environments/places where you learnt music.
2. Explain to me the process you followed to learn jazz music (improvisation, jazz chords/harmony, and composition).
3. What learning practices did you follow to become the professional jazz performer that you are today (specifically in learning jazz improvisation, chords/harmony and composition)? Have the practices changed over the years, compared to when you were a child, youth, and an adult?
4. Would you say your learning of jazz music has been a lifelong process or perhaps there is a specific significant period in your life that you can pinpoint as a period where you learnt most of the things?
5. How often do you practice on your instrument and what do you practice? Has this changed over the years?
6. In your view, what are the key jazz fundamentals that anyone learning jazz must learn?

SECTION B: EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

7. Where did you learn jazz music?
8. Tell me about the content of what you learnt in order to become a jazz performer?

SECTION C: EARLY DEVELOPMENT

9. What kind of music did you grow up listening to?
10. What are the early musical bands you joined as youth, and how did these bands contribute in your development as a jazz musician?
11. How did your early experiences or exposure to music contribute into your development or in shaping your career as a jazz musician?
12. Please tell me about your involvement in various professional bands such as *Bayethe and Sakhile* and how this contributed in your development as a jazz performer?

SECTION D: INFLUENCES

13. Who were your music teachers, mentors and masters who influenced your learning of jazz? And how did they influence you?
14. Who were your early and later music influences? Have your influences changed over the years as you progressed from childhood, youth, adulthood, to professional?
15. Tell me about all the major factors that had influence in your learning of jazz music?

End

Appendix B: Interview questions for other participants (Khaya Mahlangu & Afrika Mkhize)

1. Tell me about the different spaces/contexts/settings where you learnt jazz music?
2. Take me through the process that you followed to learn jazz improvisation, jazz harmony and jazz composition.
3. How often do you practice on your musical instrument (hours per day/hours per week) and what do you practice (content)?
4. Has your practice routine changed over the years, if so, how has it changed?
5. Please take me through your first and early encounters with music. (Where was this, what kind of music were you listening to when growing up, and how has it helped your musical development?)
6. Who were your music teachers/mentors/influencers and how did they influence you?
7. Tell me specifically about Themba Mkhize's influence on you as a jazz musician.
8. Tell me about your experience of working with Themba Mkhize in a band/s.
9. Please, tell me what you know about how Themba Mkhize learnt jazz music.

End

Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent Forms



Faculty of Humanities
Wits School of Arts - Music
Tel: 011 717 1408

30 October 2020

Participant Information Sheet (For Themba Mkhize)

Dear Mr Themba Mkhize,

My name is **Simon Velaphi Ntuli**, and I am a Masters student in Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am researching Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography" under the supervision of Dr Susan Harrop-Allin. The aim of this research project is to explore Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography in a range of learning and performance contexts. I will explore the main biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning, investigating and identifying his jazz music learning practices and processes. The study explores the contexts and modes of learning jazz in order to create his jazz learning biography – this is a narrative account of Mkhize's jazz music education.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in at least three interviews. These interviews may be conducted via Skype/Zoom due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. This activity will involve answering questions about how you learnt jazz music. Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to video record (video recording) the interview using a digital device. There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project. I will offer to purchase one Gig data bundles for you should the interview be done via Skype or Zoom. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation, but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. Though anonymity cannot be guaranteed, because you are the main subject of the research. The information collected will only be used for the purpose of this study and you will have the right not to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable about. If there is any part of the interview content you do not wish to be reported in my thesis, you may indicate this to me. Any information you wish should remain confidential will not be published or communicated in any form. Furthermore, I will humble request a formal written consent from you for the use and disclosure of your name in my research. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time as you may wish. Though there are no direct benefits, this study will contribute tremendously in South African jazz history and jazz education.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you on request. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email: hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Simon Velaphi Ntuli
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Supervisor: Dr Susan Harrop-Allin
Email: susan.harrop-allin@wits.ac.za
Telephone: 011 717 4608



Faculty of Humanities
Wits School of Arts - Music
Tel: 011 717 1408

30 October 2020

Participant Information Sheet (For Khaya Mahlangu & Afrika Mkhize)

Dear Mr Mahlangu/Mr Mkhize

My name is **Simon Velaphi Ntuli**, and I am a Masters student in Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I am researching Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography under the supervision of Dr Susan Harrop-Allin. The aim of this research project is to explore Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography in a range of learning and performance contexts. I will explore the main biographical factors that influenced Mkhize's musical learning, investigating and identifying his jazz music learning practices and processes. The study explores the contexts and modes of jazz learning order to create a learning biography – which is a narrative account of Mkhize's jazz music education.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview that will be conducted via Skype/Zoom. This activity will involve answering questions about how you learnt jazz music, as well as questions about biographical factors that influenced Themba Mkhize's jazz learning. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to video record (video recording) the interview using a digital device. There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project. I will offer to purchase one Gig data bundles for you should the interview be done via Skype or Zoom. I will call you in order to arrange the suitable interview date. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation, but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to.

Regarding confidentiality, the information collected will only be used for the purposes of this study. You will have the right not to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable to answer. Any information you wish should remain confidential will not be published or communicated in any form

Due to the nature of the study, anonymity may not be guaranteed, therefore, I will humble request your written consent for the use and disclosure of your name. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time as you may wish.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you on request. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email: hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Faculty of Humanities
Wits School of Arts – Music
Tel: 011 717 4018

October 2020

CONSENT FORM

Title of project: Creating Themba Mkhize's jazz learning biography.

Name of researcher: Ntuli Simon Velaphi

Name of supervisor: Dr Susan Harrop-Allin

Institution: Wits School of Arts, Wits University

I _____ agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

(i) I agree that due to the nature of the study, my participation may not remain anonymous, and I give a written consent, for the use and disclosure of my name in this study. YES___/ NO___

(ii) I agree that the researcher may use my name quotes in his research report. YES___/ NO___

(iii) I agree that the interview/s may be recorded in audio and/or audio-visual (video recording). YES___/ NO___

(iv) I agree that the researcher may personally communicate to me via email, Zoom or Skype, and cell phone for the purposes of this study. YES ___/ NO___

Name of participant: _____

Participant contact number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____