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## Tracing the Development of the South African Alto Saxophone Style

Christopher Linn Merz

### *Abstract*

*In many parts of the world, the saxophone is symbolic of jazz. This essay traces the development of the South African jazz alto style from the 1950s through to the late 1980s through transcription and close musical analysis of fourteen recorded solos by Kippie Moeketsi, Barney Rachabane, Robbie Jansen, Dudu Pukwana, and Ntemi Piliso. The analyses consider aspects of each player's timbral conception (or "sound," in jazz parlance), his distinctive melodic and rhythmic vocabulary, and his approaches to phrasing and articulation.*

In many parts of the world, the saxophone is symbolic of jazz.<sup>1</sup> It is arguably the music's most popular frontline instrument, and its sound is immediately recognizable by aficionados and non-jazz fans alike. This was especially the case in South Africa, over the time period discussed in this essay, where groups not featuring at least one saxophonist were virtually unheard of. The most notable exceptions to this are the solo piano concerts of Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand). Yet when Abdullah was looking for a powerful sound for his early 1970s recordings, he used not a combination of reeds and brass, but three saxophonists, each of whom displayed their distinctive solo voices. Composer/pianist Tete Mbambisa enlisted the services of one trumpet player and four saxophonists for his 1976 recording, *Tete's Big Sound*. A 1992 show in the Superbowl Auditorium at Sun City called "Sax Appeal" featured four singers, a rhythm section, and no fewer than ten saxophonists performing specially-written arrangements from the South African repertoire, as well as the signature tunes by which they became known nationwide.

The saxophone wasn't always the dominating, defining voice of jazz in South Africa. In its early days in the 1930s and '40s, jazz music was music to be danced to, and that meant big bands. To be sure, saxophones were necessary to the big band sound, but American Swing was the craze, and most bands performed from stock arrangements imported from the U.S., complete with written-out solos. Much more important to these bands' existence than individuality and creativity in improvisation was an ability to read arrangements, so energies were spent on acquiring this skill

to the near exclusion of improvisation. This is ironic when one considers that music instruction was usually not available to black musicians at that time. In the 1930s the most prominent of these South African big bands, the Jazz Maniacs, led by alto saxophonist Solomon “Zuluboy” Cele, began arranging melodies drawn from the marabi tradition of solo piano for big band (Allen 1993:22). These tunes utilised the local harmonic structures (such as I–IV–V–I, characteristic of musical styles such as kwela and mbaqanga) and, in keeping with the recorded U.S.-American big band tradition, were not “opened up” for solos. Indeed, a perusal of the audio recordings accompanying Christopher Ballantine’s *Marabi Nights*, supports the claim that improvised solos were not a major feature of early South African jazz.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, there were musicians who saw beyond the limits of copying the U.S.-Americans note for note, and they began to experiment with improvisation and ways in which it could be applied to South African harmonic progressions over the U.S.-American swing feel. In the late ‘40s a tradition sprang up which could be compared with the approach of the original Count Basie band. Saxophonist Ntemi Piliso describes the format:

[The same song] but with different variations (...) They were improvised. And in between we’d take solos (...) a tenor (...) would stand up and take a solo with brass accompaniment. And then when the tenor’s through we come back to the tune for about sixteen bars, (...) then the trumpet would take a solo to saxophone accompaniment (...) And after a while, when we feel that we have played enough solos, we come back to the beginning, the tune. (Allen 1993:25)

By the 1950s, the big bands began to decline in popularity, to be replaced by a soloist’s music known as kwela. Kwela music was duo music for pennywhistle and guitar, with the whistle taking the lead and the guitar providing chordal accompaniment. When the music came to be recorded, producers felt that, for broadcast purposes, the music would be more successful if the group were augmented, and a rhythm section was added. Later, pennywhistle (or saxophone) choruses were added to cover the harmonic role behind the lead whistler (Allen 1993:88–90). At some point, many whistlers took up the alto saxophone and began using it in conjunction with, or even instead of the whistle. More importantly for jazz as well as the saxophone, this music featured improvisation to a much greater degree than big band arrangements did. Like African Jazz, one of kwela’s parent musical forms, this music was based on repetitions of a two- or four-measure harmonic cycle, over which melodic phrases, each the length of one cycle, were played, followed by improvisations by the lead musician and a return of this melodic material (similar to Piliso’s description of African Jazz). Originality of improvisational styles was highly prized, and elements of jazz would be mixed into the solos to a greater or lesser degree, according to the taste of the soloist.<sup>3</sup>

At roughly the same time, news of the bebop revolution in the United States of America was reaching the shores of South Africa via records brought by sailors to port cities like Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. This new improvisation-oriented music was just what creative saxophonists such as Mackay Davashe and Ntemi

Piliso, bored with the limited opportunities for improvisation in the big band setting, were looking for. They began learning the solos from the records and experimenting with the phrases in other contexts. Most broke away from the big bands and formed smaller units which allowed greater freedom for improvisers.

Out of these widely divergent approaches came one alto saxophonist who was able to successfully combine these elements into a cohesive whole while retaining a distinctively individual voice: Kippie Morolong Moeketsi. Kippie started his musical career as a clarinetist in the swing style with Bob Twala's Band in Blue. By 1950, he was gaining a reputation as an alto saxophone virtuoso in the Shantytown Sextet, led by Mackay Davashe, a Coleman Hawkins-style tenorman who like Moeketsi had fallen under the spell of the beboppers. In the mid '50s, he began an important association that would aid him in his further experimentations in bebop: he met and began working with Dollar Brand. These two enlisted the help of trumpeter Hugh Masekela and trombonist Jonas Gwangwa, and the Jazz Epistles were formed. This group performed original bebop-oriented material, composed primarily by Kippie and Brand. They soon became the most highly-regarded jazz group in the country, and remained so until Brand's departure for exile in Europe in 1962, which "left a bitterly disappointed Kippie Moeketsi behind" (Coplan 1985:192).

In 1964, customs officials at the South African border with Rhodesia confiscated Moeketsi's saxophone. As a freelance musician, Moeketsi was classified as a "day labourer" by the apartheid authorities, and, lacking an instrument, he was rendered unable to work until he was gifted an instrument in 1971 (Ansell, this volume). Following this, and at the encouragement of Corney Mabaso (artistic director of Dorkay House, a training centre for musicians), guitarist Allen Kwela and others, he began to record and perform again. He appeared on a series of record dates for the South African label, The Sun, with old friends Pat Matshikiza and Dollar Brand. In this listener's opinion, these recordings reveal few traces of the Parker-inspired brilliance of the '60s, but instead echo the cry of a creative musician who never achieved the international acclaim that was his due.

In the liner notes to a 1990 reissue of some material from sessions which took place in 1959, visiting U.S.-American jazz pianist John Mehegan called Kippie "the most personal and least imitative" of the legion of Parker imitators (1990 [1959]). This originality of concept is corroborated by Barney Rachabane who, in explaining the local approach to bebop phrasing said, "[s]ome of that stuff [inflection, articulation] is very complicated. Rather do it your own way."<sup>4</sup>

Not out of a lack of understanding but from a desire for a more personal approach, Kippie developed his own application of the Parker style. This individuality is most clearly reflected in his approach to articulation. Whereas most U.S.-American beboppers use the tongue on offbeat notes to provide a lilt and drive to their lines (fig. 1), Kippie seems to favour the "all or nothing" approach. That is, in normal eighth-note passages, every note is tongued, whereas in more technically demanding phrases the tongue is left out entirely.



Fig. 1: *Bebop articulation as practiced by American saxophonists.*

The effect is that the eighth-note lines are somewhat straighter than the normal swing feel, while the slurring of the sixteenth notes, combined with their intentionally less than metronomic subdivision (including by implication the obviously un-subdividable gestures so important to Kippie's rhythmic conception), create a stumbling feeling. The two together lead to a level of rhythmic tension that may be sustained for an entire solo. This effect is clearly demonstrated in Kippie's solo on the headless blues, "12 X 12," as well as Mackay Davashe's original "Mabomvana." The polyrhythm, or cross-rhythm, which results from the overlaying of straighter eighth-notes over the swing feel of the rhythm section has precedence in the kwela tradition, where Lara Allen cites the source as "the tension between the rhythmic characteristics of kwela's roots (swing-jazz and 'traditional' African music)" (1993:84). However, a more direct route is more likely: Kippie was not only familiar with, but was in fact keenly interested in, traditional music, as were many black South Africans at the time.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, this style of articulation is only apparent in improvisations. In recordings featuring Kippie as the lead player in a section, the phrasing is the same as if it had been recorded by U.S.-Americans of the same period, even on original compositions by South African composers ("Hamba Gwi"<sup>6</sup> and "Fudwa,"<sup>7</sup> for example). From this we can infer that it was a conscious stylistic choice for Kippie to develop this passive/assertive style of articulation, and not merely a misinterpretation of what he was hearing on records.

Another readily identifiable element of the Moeketsi style is the liberal use of expressive devices. U.S.-American beboppers, turning their backs on the excesses of the swing era, moved toward a smoother, more flowing style of improvisation, free from scoops, fall-offs, extreme staccato, and anything else that would detract from the grace of the line. Kippie, not being U.S.-American, felt totally at liberty to exploit these elements alongside the harmonic innovations of bebop. An example of this is his improvised introduction to "Blue Stompin',"<sup>8</sup> from the LP of the same name. Generally speaking, however, Kippie, unlike many who followed him, made a clear distinction between U.S.-American (bebop) and South African (kwela-derived) tunes, reserving his more extreme usage of expressive devices for tunes based in the I–IV–Ic–V–I kwela progression. It could be argued that as this progression is closely related to the blues (indeed, it has been referred to as "South Africa's blues" by musicians ranging from tenor-man Basil "Mannenburg" Coetzee to pianist Darius Brubeck, both in terms of its harmonic content and its overwhelming presence as *the* form to base compositions on), it is not surprising that this solo, as well as his solo

on “Blue Monk” (Brand 1976), exploit these elements to a similar extent as solos on kwela progressions.

One such device is the use of covered fingerings alternating with regular fingerings on repeated tones. Half of the transcriptions included here contain this idiom. Each time it is employed on a different degree of the tonic scale: in “Blue Stompin’,” he uses it on D-Flat, the subdominant. In “Tshona”<sup>9</sup> and “Little Boy”<sup>10</sup> it appears on C, in the first case functioning as the dominant degree and in the second, the tonic. Another common device is the fall-off, which features extensively in both of the post-1971 kwela-progression solos, most often on the dominant tone.

Certain idioms used by Moeketsi belie his roots in kwela, which coincided with the assimilation of bebop into South African jazz. Kippie was not a pennywhistler, but was innovative in kwela as the first to achieve “complete integration of the clarinet into the kwela idiom” (Allen 1993:126). While he made no more than four kwela recordings, including at least one on clarinet, they are “generic examples of this style” (ibid.). Even if he had made *no* kwela recordings, he would no doubt have been familiar with any style of music popular enough to drive the big bands into obscurity. As it was, he understood the style well enough to liberate some of its more definitive features for his own use in jazz improvisation. Chief among these is the pedal. Allen cites this device’s importance in kwela music:

The single most striking attribute of pennywhistle or saxophone solos in *kwela* music is the occurrence of dominant and tonic *ostinato* patterns or pedal notes. These are always at least the length of one harmonic cycle, often longer, and mostly occur in the high range where they are most audible. (1993:114)

Using this description as a basis for identifying pedals in the transcriptions analysed here, half of the solos contain some form of pedal. “Tshona” is by far the richest in such examples. There is an example of tonic pedal (incomplete, lasting only half a cycle) in mm. 49–50 and another in mm. 64–71, which lasts for two full cycles. Note that this example occurs two-thirds of the way through the solo and is used to build up to the climax. Both of the dominant pedals are varied using false fingerings (see earlier discussion), while the tonic pedal is presented straight. “Little Boy” has one extended example of pedal on the dominant using rhythmic variation. This example spans three-and-a-half cycles, and like the previous example, is used to build up to the climax, in this case occurring in the next measure. “Dollar’s Moods”<sup>11</sup> is illustrative of how Kippie was able to adapt kwela conventions to suit the requirements of bebop; there is a brief example of pedal oscillating between the dominant and tonic degrees in mm. 29–30.

Another identifiable link between Kippie’s jazz playing and the *kwela* tradition lies in the repetition of phrases. Allen writes, “[s]tructurally kwela music consists of the repetition of a short harmonic cycle over which a series of melodies, usually the length of the cycle, are repeated and varied” (1993:60). As one might expect, these repetitions manifest themselves predominantly in the kwela-oriented improvisations, most notably in “Little Boy” and “Tshona,” which each contain examples of straight repetition and repetition with variation.

Any improviser has their own personal vocabulary of ideas or motifs that they draw upon to supplement or give cohesion to the newly generated material. Occasionally a musician will use one such phrase with such frequency that it becomes a so-called signature. Count Basie's classic ending is an example of such an idiom. Kippie's signature figure consists of a turn on the tonic, followed by a drop to the dominant (fig. 2).



*Fig. 2: Kippie Moeketsi "signature figure."*

While this motif appears in five of the six transcriptions analysed here, it is constantly varied. The solo on "Little Boy," for example, contains five different variations on this idea (fig. 3).

Kippie's most important contribution to South African saxophone playing was to elevate it beyond the confines of section playing. While he wasn't the first improvising saxophonist in South Africa, he was set apart from the rest by his innovation and colossal technique. His most notable innovation was the creation of a South African interpretation of Parker. This factor enabled him to make a convincing fusion of elements of jazz and local musical forms, most notably kwela. His influence is heard in nearly all South African alto saxophonists, but undoubtedly most clearly in his protégé, Barney Rachabane.

Barney is quite literally Kippie's successor, in as much as he replaced Kippie in the Early Mabuza Quartet appearance at the 1964 Castle Lager Jazz Festival, as well as the recordings that followed (Mabusa 1964). Four years prior to that, at age eleven, Barney had achieved great notoriety as a pennywhistler, touring nationwide. This career caught the pennywhistle craze at its end, and was cut short when he was invited to tour the U.K. with the successful South African musical, *King Kong*. He had to decline the invitation because his mother wanted him back in school. This didn't stop him from learning a new instrument, however, and after trying the clarinet and trumpet he shifted his attention to the alto saxophone, beginning on a borrowed instrument and studying informally with Kippie and Zacks Nkosi. The transition from pennywhistle to alto, he insists, was not difficult because of the similarity of fingering.<sup>12</sup> Yet the chromatic capabilities of the saxophone are far beyond the half-holing technique required to play outside the key on the pennywhistle. Nonetheless, Barney was using the entire instrument by that recording debut four short years later, in 1964.

If Kippie can be credited with adapting kwela idioms and techniques for use in jazz, Barney deserves the credit for applying the harmonic innovations of bebop to





Fig. 3: Variations on Kippie's signature figure in "Little Boy."

kwela-type music (including for the purpose of this discussion, mbaqanga, a neo-traditional style that developed either from kwela or a common root.) Whereas Kippie's solos on kwela progressions are uniformly diatonic, Barney makes great use of chromatic tones. In the improvisation on "Mbaqanga,"<sup>13</sup> chromatic tones are used as upper and lower chromatic neighbouring tones and passing tones, in enclosure, and as the dominant seventh of the tonic chord in the progression, to make a smoother transition to the IV chord; in short, just as bebop musicians would use them. In this last instance, note that the dominant seventh is never used on the I-chord in second inversion (measure 3 of the cycle), as this chord functions as a prolongation of the dominant chord (C7).

This solo also features many of the same effects attributed to Kippie; e.g. growl tone and fall-offs. Like Kippie, Barney usually employs these effects on the domi-



nant degree of the scale. In Barney's playing, they are usually greatly exaggerated, almost to the point of parody. This exaggeration is particularly apparent in this solo, as well as in the introduction to "Kwela Mama," also from Rachabane's 1989 album. Another element in common is the use of the dominant pedal point, in this case running from mm. 41–5 and being varied by octave displacement (one of Barney's favourite idioms), which increases in frequency. This tension-creating device is pushed a step further, or rather two steps further, by the addition of growl tone and a trill running throughout. Instead of leading to the climax, as the idiom is used by Kippie, this figure is the climax.

Another typical kwela element used in this solo is the arpeggiation of the basic chord form. Examples of this include mm. 3, 6–7, 14–5, 23, and 34–5. These examples are all either on the tonic chord or bridging from the IV chord to the tonic chord, first inversion—that is, there are no arpeggios on the V chord. Rachabane's own personal twist to this figure is that the arpeggios are all syncopated against the double-time feel. This points up the difference in Kippie's and Barney's rhythmic conceptions: Barney frequently plays kwela-type progressions entirely in double-time, whereas Kippie uses double-time much less, and rarely uses it to play running lines. Note also that this solo ends with a stereotypical kwela figure: scalar motion from the dominant to the tonic (fig. 4). Again, this is a twist on straight kwela endings, which usually ascend to the tonic, whereas Barney descends.



Fig. 4: Closing figure from Barney Rachabane's solo on "Mbaqanga."

Like most players with a highly personal style, Barney has some favourite phrases or formulas that come up with some frequency. The most-used idiom in this solo is a two- or three-note decoration of the dominant degree, followed by an accented fall-off (fig. 5). This figure does not appear in the bebop solos, but is present in countless other kwela-type improvisations which were not transcribed for the purposes of this paper, bringing it almost to the stature of a signature were it not for the fact that its use is restricted to I–IV–V–I progressions and their variants. This is a rare example in which Barney does not achieve total integration of concept across stylistic boundaries.

The composition "Barney's Way" appears on his recording debut, *Castle Lager Jazz Festival 1964*,<sup>14</sup> and again on the album *Barney's Way*,<sup>15</sup> recorded in 1989. There are some striking similarities between the two saxophone solos, the most notable being a phrase which appears in both (with subtle variation), at the same point in the progression (fig. 6a and b). Like Kippie's bebop solos, lines in both solos tend



Fig. 5: Barney Rachabane signature figure.

to start on the beat rather than anticipating it. Both utilise bebop devices described in the discussion of “Mbaqanga,” as well as elements of an “in and out” harmonic approach, typified by delayed and anticipated resolutions and sequences which do not fit directly inside the harmony. This last idea is more prevalent in the 1964 solo than the 1989 version.



Fig. 6a and 6b: Common figure in “Barney’s Way” solos, 1964 and 1989.

Despite these similarities, there are many differences between the solo of a precocious youngster and that of a seasoned veteran. Of the two, the 1964 solo, at the much faster tempo, seems a bit out of control when compared to the later one, which, while rhythmically more daring, sounds much more relaxed. Three factors contribute to this. The first is phrase length. The 1964 version consists primarily of 2-measure phrases, while the 1989 version alternates +/- 8-measure lines and 1- to 2-measure interjections. The second factor concerns articulation. The earlier solo belies Kippie’s tremendous influence in that every note is articulated. In the later solos, however, the articulation has become completely “Americanised,” that is, he uses the upbeat articulations common to U.S.-American beboppers who were his later models. In fact, in conversation, he frequently downplays his South African role models with admonishments such as “Yes, but don’t forget, I’m heavy into Sonny Stitt and Parker too!”<sup>16</sup> The third factor is the use of asymmetrical, un-sub-dividable gestures, previously identified as part of Kippie’s approach, in the 1964 solo, and their conspicuous absence from the 1989 version. These factors all seem to point

toward a generally more metric rhythmic concept at this (early) stage in Barney's career.

Barney has kept up with the harmonic advances of recent years, possibly due in part to his performing with Michael Brecker on several tours with Paul Simon. But even in 1964 he was taking chances. The most harmonically challenging solo transcribed for analysis here is on Pat Matshikiza's "Maxhegwana" ("Little Old Man").<sup>17</sup> This solo makes use of altered scale forms such as diminished and diminished whole-tone (though it is doubtful that he knew the names at the time), as well as sequences of the type described in relation to the "Barney's Way" solos. Another notable feature of this solo is the care with which Barney uses dynamic shading. Sounds from fortissimo to pianissimo are used, as well as swells and dips in between. No parameter is left unexplored.

While continuing to advance the music himself Barney is also seeing to the next generation of players. His son Leonard,<sup>18</sup> a tenor player, is grafting many of Barney's more recognisable idioms onto his own approach, which makes for a very original sound indeed and may signal an end to the dominance of the U.S.-American model of tenor playing in the country.

Coming to jazz via the unlikely route of pop music, Robbie Jansen has forged a personal style that retains much of the South African aesthetic while making use of elements from U.S.-American R&B players like David Sanborn and Grover Washington. His background includes recording with Dollar Brand and Basil Coetzee, as well as leading his own group.

"CT Blues"<sup>19</sup> reflects these two aspects of Jansen's playing, though this is by no means all there is to his approach. R&B elements include the regular four-measure phrases, mostly ending with a fall-off on the tonic, the constant sixteenth-note flow, the diatonic lyricism of the lines (as opposed to harmonic variation *à la* Barney Rachabane) and the scant use of space. The South African element of this performance is found in the extensive use of scoops and fall-offs (though the fall-off tone is usually the tonic rather than the dominant, as practiced by Barney and Kippie). The articulation of this solo seems to be typical of neither South African nor U.S.-American models. On the one hand, most of the tones are tongued, which points toward South Africa. Yet the tonguing is much more subtle even than Barney, which suggests the United States of America.

There is no such thing as a typical Robbie Jansen solo. The solo discussed here was chosen as demonstrative of the South African elements of his playing, and also for its I-IV-V harmonic framework. Jansen approaches every tune on its own merits, and his repertoire of ideas runs the gamut of contemporary performance practice. On his own record, *Vastrap Island*, he juxtaposes elements of bebop, in-and-out harmonic approaches, rock, pop, and the avant-garde, with an occasional bow to Kippie.

An equally versatile performer was Dudu Pukwana. Dudu is of the same generation as Kippie, though he flowered somewhat later. He came to prominence with Chris McGregor and the Blue Notes, with whom he performed at the Antibes Festi-

val in 1964. The band never returned to South Africa, and all except Louis Moholo have since died in exile.

The chief feature of Pukwana's playing was his sound. It would be more accurate to say sounds, because he would alter his sound (like most of the South African players) to suit the situation. The common denominator was their incredible intensity. The solo on "Diamond Express"<sup>20</sup> is brimming with rhythmic invention and sonic energy. One gets the feeling that the solo was kept short so that the alto wouldn't have time to fly apart under the strain of so much sound. This piece is very traditional in both rhythmic and melodic concept. The progression (I–IV–V–I) is another variation on the kwela pattern. With the exception of the seventh and eighth phrases (mm. 14–7), the improvisation follows exactly Allen's model of repeated and varied phrases.

Expressive devices are very prevalent in this brief solo, and chief among them is the fall-off. It occurs on each tone of the tonic triad with equal frequency. There is also a dominant pedal, which occurs three times, in phrases seven, nine, and ten (mm. 13, 17–20). It is varied in the same way as the Moeketsi example ("Tshona," mm.40–4 and 64–71), by using false fingerings.

It is remarkable that Pukwana retained so much of his musical heritage living for so long in exile. He experimented with all of the improvisation styles happening in Europe and Britain during his exile, yet he still came back to the South African approach and retained the traditional elements that survived the transition from kwela to jazz. While other forms of jazz (notably bebop, as on the tune "Bird Lives," also on *Diamond Express* (1978)) are filtered through the whole of his experience from Euro-outness to rhythm and blues, the sonic markers of the South African approach are adhered to relatively faithfully, and even come out strongest in the mix (particularly in the area of articulation).

The discussion comes full circle with Ntemi Piliso, an alto player who was active in the heydays of South Africa's big bands before discovering Bird [Parker] in the 1950s. He began playing in 1947, making him Kippie's contemporary. He has for thirteen years been the leader of the African Jazz Pioneers, a big band playing in the "African Jazz" idiom, a style born in the thirties of marabi or *tsaba-tsaba* mixed with the rhythms of U.S.-American swing (Allen 1993). His improvisations with this band (African Jazz Pioneers 1989) build on the integration of bebop and kwela begun by Kippie (who was a member of the Pioneers for some time himself) and advanced by Barney. The solos presented here for analysis are typical of his approach.

"Ten-Ten Special"<sup>21</sup> is the more Kippie-inspired of the two, retaining more of the kwela idioms, including repetition and variation and pedal on the tonic (with rhythmic figures, mm 1–4 and 15–8), and is generally diatonic in nature with the exception of one beboppish phrase, which is used twice (mm. 9–10 and 19). The rhythmic conception is basically double-time, but with some phrases in regular time, which have a suave feeling about them. Most striking in terms of comparison with Kippie is the presence of a phrase identified earlier as his signature (Fig 7a–c), which occurs three times in the course of 22 measures.

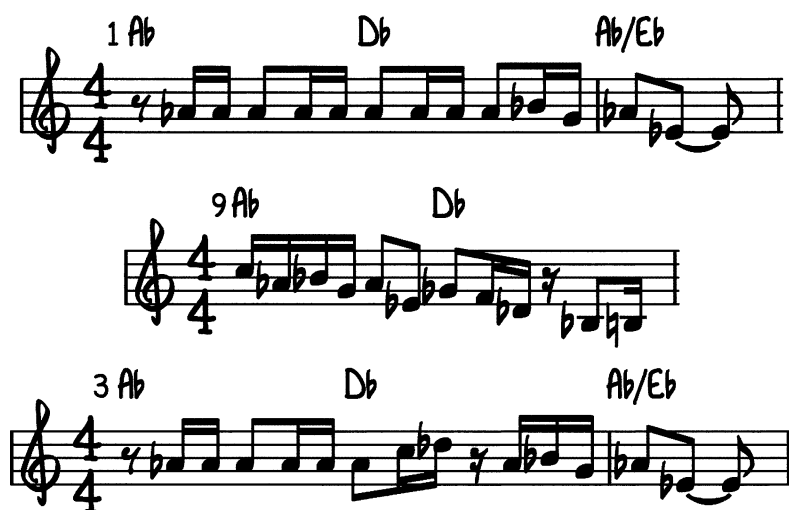


Fig. 7a, 7b, 7c: Kippie signature phrase variations in Ntemi Piliso's solo on "Ten-Ten Special."

By comparison, "Hellfire"<sup>22</sup> owes more to Barney's sense of harmonic and rhythmic daring. The solo is nearly all in double-time feel, and is highly chromatic. Particularly noteworthy is the syncopated line in fourths (mm. 12–3) that runs in and out of the harmony, connecting with the changes at various points but working more on the strength of the motif itself. This solo also has strong ties to kwela, particularly in the beginning, which is mostly triadic arpeggiations (also a feature of certain of Barney's solos). Both solos employ almost constant use of the tongue.

Having been involved since the very beginnings of jazz in South Africa, Ntemi is in a good position to project the future of the art. Coming from a time when most jazz musicians were entirely self-taught, he sees great things happening now that jazz instruction is offered at most of the major universities and technical colleges in the country. He is particularly excited by the movement among the younger university trained players, to incorporate more traditional elements into their music and further the local brand of jazz rather than taking the easy route of copying models from the U.S. or Europe. Typical of this movement is Zim Ngqawana,<sup>23</sup> the foremost of the "third generation" of South African saxophonists, and one of few alto players to emerge from this generation. Like many improvising musicians in the U.S., he is distancing himself from the word jazz, which he finds at once too limiting and too all-encompassing, and therefore meaningless. He thinks of himself as an improvising folk musician, which follows from his desire to take music out of the realm of entertainment and return it to its proper context in traditional life, as a form of healing. He feels that when one practices, one should think about becoming not a better musician, but a better person: "We are practicing to perfect *ourselves*."<sup>24</sup>

Zim sees the lack of community among the improvising musicians of South Africa as a major threat to this plan. For years the apartheid policies of the government fostered this division, but with a new democratic government this could change dramatically. Important steps have already been taken; for the first time, plans are being drawn up for a racially integrated musicians' union; South African jazz educators have formed a chapter of the International Association of Jazz Educators; the airwaves are becoming accessible to all people; international jazz festivals are being held again; and South African jazz musicians like the African Jazz Pioneers and tenor saxophone giant Winston Mankunku Ngozi are playing overseas with increasing frequency. The time is ripe for cross-influence, for the first time coming *from* South Africa, not just *to* it. Perhaps finally, Kippie Moeketsi will take his place among the recognised innovators of jazz.

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### Notes

- 1 *Guest editor's note:* this essay was originally written as a conference paper in 1993 while Merz, now based in the U.S., was living in South Africa and teaching at the former University of Natal in Durban. In all that time, the scholarly space that the essay started to fill has narrowed only minutely. For this reason, barring minor revisions called for during the review process, the essay has been left in its original form, a statement written in the context of a past disciplinary moment that nevertheless remains very relevant to the present one.
- 2 This book, with accompanying cassette, provides an excellent account of the rise of the big bands in South Africa. Readers interested in learning in greater detail about the styles which preceded the subject of this paper, i.e. improvising saxophonists in the small-group setting, are referred there.
- 3 For a further discussion of kwela, see (Allen 1993:29–130).
- 4 Barney Rachabane, interviewed by author, September 1993.
- 5 Of the musicians interviewed for this paper, all expressed more than casual interest in traditional music.
- 6 Kippie Moeketsi, "Hamba Gwi" (1959).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiHambaGwi.pdf> >

- 7 Kippie Moeketsi, "Fudwa" (1959).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiFudwa.pdf> >
- 8 Kippie Moeketsi, "Blue Stompin'" (1977).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiBlueStompin.pdf> >
- 9 Kippie Moeketsi, "Tshona" (1975).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiTshona.pdf> >
- 10 Kippie Moeketsi, "Little Boy" (1976).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiLittleBoy.pdf> >
- 11 Kippie Moeketsi, "Dollar's Moods" (1960).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/MoeketsiDollarsMoods.pdf> >
- 12 Barney Rachabane, interviewed by the author, September 1993.
- 13 Barney Rachabane, "Mbaqanga" (1989).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/RachabaneMbaqanga.pdf> >
- 14 Barney Rachabane, "Barney's Way" (1964).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/RachabaneBarneysWay1964.pdf> >
- 15 Barney Rachabane, "Barney's Way" (1989).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/RachabaneBarneysWay1989.pdf> >
- 16 Barney Rachabane, interviewed by the author, December 1993.
- 17 Barney Rachabane, "Maxhegwana" (1964).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/RachabaneMaxhegwana.pdf> >
- 18 Leonard Rachabane passed away at the age of 26, in 1999 some six years after this paper was originally written.
- 19 Robbie Jansen, "CT Blues" (1987).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/JansenCTBlues.pdf> >
- 20 Dudu Pukwana, "Diamond Express" (1978).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/PukwanaDiamondExpress.pdf> >
- 21 Ntemi Piliso, "Ten-Ten Special" (1989).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/PilisoTenTenSpecial.pdf> >
- 22 Ntemi Piliso, "Hellfire" (1989).  
< <http://www.journal-the-world-of-music.com/Media/5.2/PilisoHellfire.pdf> >
- 23 Zim Ngqawana passed away in 2011.
- 22 Zim Ngqawana, interviewed by the author, December 1993.

## Discography

The following records were used in preparation of the transcriptions:

### African Jazz Pioneers

1989 *African Jazz Pioneers*. Gallu HUL 40186. Ntemi Piliso, "Ten Ten Special" and "Hellfire."

### Brand, Dollar [Abdullah Ibrahim]

1976 *Black Lightning*. The Sun SRK 786138. Kippie Moeketsi, "Little Boy."



Coetzee, Basil "Mannenberg"

1987 *Sabenza*. Mountain Records MOULP(V) 52. Robbie Jansen, "CT Blues."

Early Mabusa Quartet (and the Molombo Jazz Men)

1964 *Castle Lager Jazz Festival 1964*. CCP Records JPL(M) 4019. Barney Rachabane, "Maxhegwana" and "Barney's Way."

Jazz Epistles

1990 [1960] *Jazz Epistle Verse I*. Gallo AC 56. Kippie Moeketsi, "Dollar's Moods."

Matshikiza, Pat

1975 *Tshona!* The Sun GL 1796. Kippie Moeketsi, "Tshona."

Moeketsi, Kippie, & Hal Singer

1977 *Blue Stompin'*. The Sun GL 1912. Kippie Moeketsi, "Blue Stompin'."

Pukwana, Dudu

1977 *Diamond Express*. Arista/Freedom AF 1041. Dudu Pukwana, "Diamond Express."

Rachabane, Barney

1989 *Barney's Way*. Zomba Records HIP(V) 9001. Barney Rachabane, "Mbaqanga" and "Barney's Way."

Various Artists

1990 [1959] *Township Swing Jazz Volume 2*. Gallo AC 54. Kippie Moeketsi, "Hamba Gwi" and "Fudwa."

The following records were also consulted, not for transcription purposes:

Blue Notes

1976 *Blue Notes for Mongezi*. Ogun OGD 001/002.

Brand, Dollar

1973 *Dollar Brand +3 with Kippie Moeketsi*. The Sun SRK 786142.

1974 *Mannenberg—"Is Where It's Happening!"* The Sun 786134.

1975 *African Herbs*. The Sun SRK 786135.

1982 *Dollar Brand Encounters Hugh Masekela*. Gold Star GSL 136.

Brotherhood of Breath

1974 *Live at Willisau*. Ogun OG 100.

Brubeck/Ntoni Afro Cool Concept

1990 *Live at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival 1989*. African Echoes/Sun Music AE 7865.

Chris McGregor's Castle Lager Big Band

1990 [1963] *Castle Lager Big Band; Cold Castle Festival 1963*. Teal TELCD 2300.

Jansen, Robbie

1990 *Vastrap Island*. Sea Records SEK 101.

Mbambisa, Tete

1976 *Tete's Big Sound*. The Sun GL 1830.

1979 *Did You Tell Your Mother?* The Sun ML 4258.

Nkosi, Zacks

1979 [1964] *Our Kind of Jazz*. RING RG(A) 1026.

Pukwana, Dudu

1978 *Yi-Yo Le*. ICP Records ICP 021.

Pukwana, Dudu, & Zila

1983 *Live in Bracknell and Willisau*. Jika ZL-2.

Various Artists

1990 [1959] *Jazz in Africa Volume 1*. Teal TELCD 2304.

1990 [1959] *Jazz in Africa Volume 2*. Teal TELCD 2314.

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1985 *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.