

THE TALKING DRUM

SEPTEMBER 2001

№ 16



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The Talking Drum • Newsletter Issue No. 16 • September 2001

Network for promoting Intercultural Education through Music (NETIEM)

Pan-African Society of Musical Arts Education (PASMAE)

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Editorial

In celebration of *The Talking Drum's* tenth year an upgrading of this publication is in order. Further the time is right to call upon ethnomusicologists, and others working in the field, who regard applied ethnomusicology as important in Southern Africa to contribute to this and future issues. Thus, invitations were sent to key people requesting them to share their wealth of relevant musical knowledge and materials. Submissions for *The Talking Drum* were requested. This issue features articles by Dave Dargie, professor of music at Fort Hare University, Sazi Dlamini, musician and graduate student at the University of Natal (UND)–Durban, and Vicky Goddard, graduate of UND and innovative teacher of the musics of Africa.

The Talking Drum continues to aim to promote intercultural education through music/dance. It began as a database and resource on publications and people in the know. Gradually it evolved into a collection of resource materials and ideas which are used extensively in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions throughout South Africa and beyond.

Feedback indicates that *The Talking Drum's* impact is positive. From South Africa: "...may I compliment you on *The Talking Drum*. I have seen more interesting stuff in it than anywhere else in the SA education circles. We need to spread the word". From the United States of America Patricia Shehan Campbell writes: "...an impressive effort". In addition librarians in many parts of Africa request copies of *The Talking Drum*, the latest being Mkoba Teachers' College in Zimbabwe.

Southern African educators/musicians form most of our readership (South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and Malawi). We also reach Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Gabon, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zambia, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Scandinavia, the UK and USA.

Our thanks to Dargie, Dlamini and Goddard. We look forward to submissions from others who regard applied ethnomusicology as important in Southern Africa. Your contributions will help to bridge the gap between the available, but largely untapped, research materials sitting on shelves round the country and the very real needs voiced repeatedly for such materials by those in the field of music/dance education.

Elizabeth Oehrle

Magical Musical Bows

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I. ORIGINS

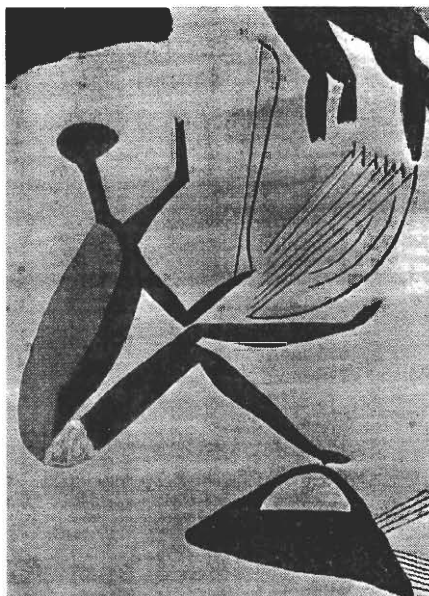
I.1. From Weapon to Musical Instrument

Some of humankind's most important inventions were first developed as weapons—for example, the rocket ships with which people explore space. The same type of origin is indicated for one of Africa's most important families of musical instruments.

Imagine yourself as one of the little people, the hunter-gatherers who inhabited this part of the world many hundreds of years ago. For providing yourself with food, you use a weapon passed down to you by your ancestors: a small bow, which shoots small arrows tipped with poison. The poison itself is perhaps not so dramatic—more soporific than deadly. You have to spend hours stalking some edible animal, and then when at last you get a shot into it, it runs off at great speed. You have to follow it until the poison takes effect enough to slow the prey down and make it sleepy. Then at last you are able to come up to it and give it the quietus with (probably) a large rock.

By now you are maybe a long way from home. So you have to drag or carry your prize all the way back, and there you and your family skin it and cook it, and — at last — you can enjoy your well-earned meal. And having eaten, like human beings everywhere, you can do with a bit of entertainment.

When you fired off your arrow, you heard your bow produce a musical tone. Maybe that could be the basis of some organised music. So you try to amplify the sound a bit — to make it louder and easier to use. Hold your bow down on a hard patch of earth, and tap the string with an arrow, and there you are! The tone is much louder. Now you have the basis of a musical instrument.



A: Rock painting, copied by G.W. Shaw, showing a Bushman using seven shooting bows as a musical instrument: from *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* by P. R. Kirby. (Witwatersrand University Press, 1965)

The frontispiece of Kirby's book on instruments (see illustration A) is a picture copied by a British soldier over a hundred years ago, from a cave painting in Lesotho. It shows a man squatting on his haunches, tapping on the strings of seven hunting bows which have been fixed into the ground. In the background a group of people are dancing to the rhythm of his music, the rhythm of musical bows.

It's possible that musical bows also arose from other origins. They have certainly been around for hundreds of years, and are found in "Bantu" languages and KhoiSan Africa. It does seem fairly certain however that at least some mouth-bows (see I.2.) have a hunting bow ancestry. In Kavango in 1981 I recorded a hunting bow used as a musical instrument — the *lipuruboro* (see 3.4.).

When Kirby compiled his famous book there were dozens, if not more than dozens, of kinds of musical bows used in the southern part of Africa. Some have since disappeared, but many

are still around. They are wonderful instruments. With some the player produces such clear tones you can feel them pulling at your insides. Other bows produce rich, full sounds, a mysterious collections of tones. To realise just what one is hearing takes a lot of listening, a lot of concentration.

For me, from the first time I heard recordings of bows they had a magic calling deep to the spirit. From then on I was compelled to go looking for musical bows.

Of all the musical instruments made by people, musical bows may appear to be among the simplest, but they produce complex results. Look at how they work.

I.2. The Mouth as Resonator

Sticking a bow firmly into the ground increases the sound coming from the string, when the string is tapped or beaten. The next step is to find a better way to control that sound. Holding the bow firmly against the side of the mouth enables the player to use the mouth as a resonator. In this way the player not only amplifies the basic sound or fundamental tone, but now the overtones or partial vibrations of the string become audible. By shaping the mouth the player can select which overtone to amplify, just like someone playing that ancient European and Asian instrument, the Jews Harp.

It is interesting that the Bunun people of Taiwan use a mouth bow on which a seven-note scale can be played, as with the Jews Harp (Illustration B). Mouth bows are made in Southern Africa, and work somewhat differently. In our part of the world the bow string is short enough, and strung tightly enough, to make it possible as a rule only to obtain the first five overtones easily. These are all notes of the same major chord. However, it's easy to



B: A chinese mouth bow: the *Bunun* (Taiwanese) *Ratok*, played by Dr I-to Loh.

alter the fundamental tone, by touching or holding the string to shorten its length. Then a higher fundamental tone is obtained, and a different set of overtones can be heard and used. The player can follow a melody by touching or not touching the string, and resonating the chosen overtones with the mouth. Different peoples in southern Africa may use different intervals between the bow fundamental tones, producing different chords and scales.

1.3. Artificial Resonators

It's an easy step from using one's own mouth as the resonator for an instrument to using an artificial mouth. One can use the mouth to resonate the overtones of a relatively small musical bow. But if one wishes to obtain a bigger sound from a bigger instrument, the human mouth is too small. All over Africa, and in Asia too, calabashes have been found to be ideal resonators for musical instruments. Undoubtedly the use of natural materials as resonators is very old. The ancient Greeks actually built lyres into tortoise-shells. But calabashes are very special and useful, and they work well for musical bows.

The most important Xhosa musical instrument is the *uhadi* (illustration C),

a large bow with calabash resonator. In Xhosa *umhadi* means a hole. So one could call the *uhadi* the "singing hole". The strange mellow sound of the *uhadi* comes clearly from the hole in the calabash. In Zulu the same instrument is called *ugubhu*, a name apparently referring to the hollowness of the calabash resonator.

Kirby and others have written about bow players who use holes in the ground as resonators. Apparently that does not happen any more. Five-litre oil tins are used as resonators for the bow type instruments called, in Lesotho, *sehankule* and *sekataru*. If necessary, bow makers will use whatever works when calabashes cannot be obtained such as jam tins or even plastic containers; however, it's hard to beat the calabash sound.

2. Features and Structures of Musical Bows

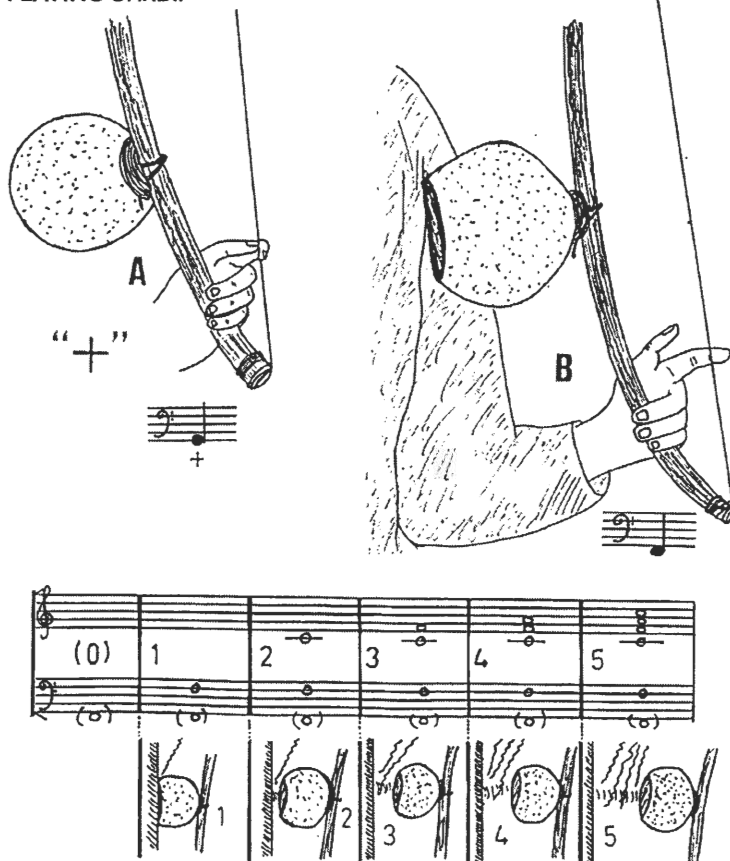
2.1. Types of Resonators

So far we've noted three types of resonators used for musical bows: the *mouth*, *calabashes*, and *other artificial resonators*. (These days it seems nobody sticks bows into the ground to improve the sound, or uses holes in the ground as resonator.)

2.2. Braced & Unbraced Bows

The hunting bow is an arc of wood with a string stretched between the two ends. This type of construction is used in many musical bows. However, a further variation in structure is frequently used: the bow string is *braced* by a tie or a loop attached to, or passing around, the bow stick.

C: PLAYING UHADI:



One hand holds the bow as shown—note that the thumb and first finger must both be on the same side of the stick. When the string is held (see A), indicated by the sign "+", the upper fundamental is sounded (written as G). When the string is not held, the lower fundamental (F) sounds (B).

The player holds the opening in the calabash towards the breast.

The brace may be placed near one end of the bow, in which case it serves mainly as a method of constructing the bow (e.g., for attaching the calabash). Or the brace may be placed near the middle of the bow, so that the player can use either open portion of the string, and also stop the string by touching it. In this way the player uses two open fundamental tones, plus one or more stopped fundamentals.

Therefore a calabash bow may have its calabash attached directly to the bow stick, or attached to the brace. Bows which use other artificial resonators may be made in the same way, but some bow-type instruments may either be built onto a five litre oil (or other) can as resonator, or simply hang such a can on the end.

2.3. Ways of Sounding the Bow String

Bows may be played by tapping or beating the string. Use something suitable to the bow such as a light reed or stick or a piece of thatch grass. Some mouth-bows are played by plucking the string. Some bows and bow-type instruments are played by friction. Playing bows by friction is done either by bowing or scraping the string, or by rubbing a stick across notches cut into the bow stick.

2.4. Ways of Amplifying and Selecting Bow Overtones for Melody

The way one can use the mouth to play selected overtones has been described. The mouth can change its size and shape, but not a calabash.

The performer on a calabash bow will hold the opening in the calabash

towards the breast, and open and close the calabash against the breast: a fully open calabash produces its maximum output of overtones; as the calabash is closed so the overtones are damped, from highest to lowest. It takes a bit of controlling, but the player manages to follow melodies (or at times melodies parallel to the voice melodies) exactly.

It's much more difficult to follow a melody with some of the bow-type instruments. The player's control of the sound depends entirely on how the string is bowed and the use of hand pressure. Some players show extraordinary skill in following the melody (and some even manage to produce rich chords as well).

2.5. Why not "collect" Musical Bows for yourself?

So when we take all these differences into account, it is clear that many different types of musical bows can be found. And with some bows, different people may play the same instrument in different ways, giving a fascinating variety of sounds and types of music.

It would be a very fine thing if students interested in music "collected" bows. It's still possible to experience bow performances. There are still performing musicians around, from the Ngqoko group, to Madosini with Amampondo down in the Cape, to Brother Clement Sithole of the Vryheid Benedictines, and many others. It's possible to find illustrations of many types of bows. It's also possible to hear recordings of many bows. And it's also possible to make and learn to play one's own bows. It's more than fun. The bows give musical satisfaction, and bow playing is very soothing to tired nerves and stressed souls!

So "collect" bows: get to know and learn to identify the looks and sounds of different bows, and make and play one or more for yourself.

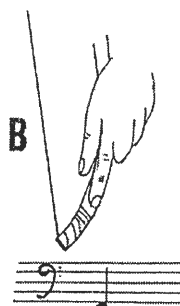
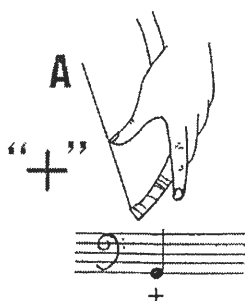
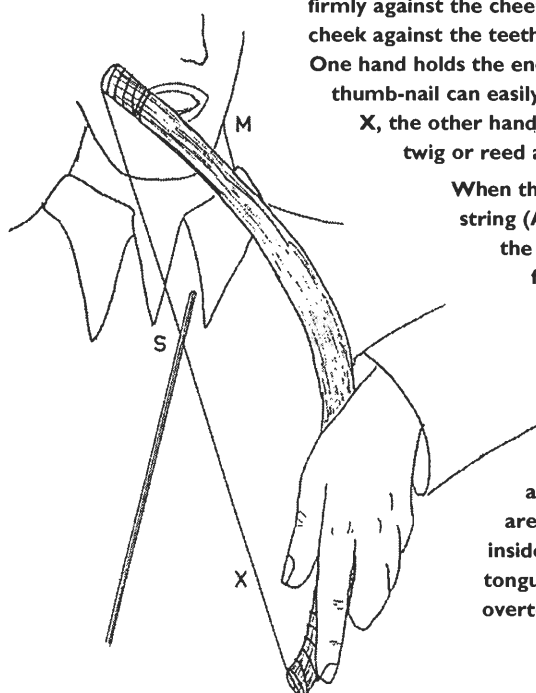
Regarding what I'm offering here: students who would like the fullest possible catalogues of musical bows

D: PREPARING UMQANGI

Hold *umqangi* as shown, with the bow stick pressed firmly against the cheek (pressing through the cheek against the teeth – but not in the mouth.) One hand holds the end of the bow so that the thumb-nail can easily be held against the string at X, the other hand beats the string with a dry twig or reed at S.

When the thumb-nail touches the string (A), indicated by the sign "+", the string sounds the higher fundamental tone (written as G). When the nail does not touch the string (B), the string sounds the lower fundamental tone (F).

The overtones produced by the string amplified by the mouth and are heard at M. By shaping inside the mouth (moving the tongue etc) the player "forms" overtones to follow the melody.



and bow type instruments will find Kirby invaluable. For this article, I don't have space to be exhaustive. I would like to share with readers the bows I have personally experienced and recorded. In fact, my experience covers the great majority of bow types, and also bows among many different peoples; but not all the bows those peoples used to have, and also not always all types of bows presently used by those peoples. Some of the old bows may now be extinct, and sadly others show signs of also becoming extinct. There's still need for further research on bows. Let's hope there'll be interested students to follow this up, before it's too late.

3. Types of Musical Bows

3.1. Mouth Bows

3.1.1. Unbraced mouth bows

a) A bow played by percussion or friction: *Umqangi/umrhubhe*

The same small mouth bow ($\pm 50\text{--}60\text{cm}$) used by Xhosa and Zulu people may be played in different ways. If it is played by percussion, tapping the string, then in Zulu it is called *umqangala*, and I personally have no doubt this was the instrument documented in the past as *umqangi* in Xhosa. (Illustration D) The click consonant (q) indicates its KhoiSan origin. Similarly the guttural (rh) in its other Xhosa name, *umrhubhe* (Zulu *umhubhe*) also indicates KhoiSan ancestry. Tap the *umqangala* (= small *umqangi*) and it goes "qangi-qangi-qangi". But play it by friction, scraping the string with a dried reed, and it goes "rhu-rhu-rhu" and becomes *umrhubhe*. Incidentally, *umrhubhe/umhubhe* may be constructed in two ways, with either a single arc of bow, or with a small bent piece of wood inserted into a straight stick or reed.

Recently I recorded women in the Hopsack district playing the same bow as *umrhubhe* (by friction) and as *umqangi* (by percussion). However, they called both forms of the instrument simply *inkinge* – a misnomer.



E: Playing the Xhosa *umrhubhe*, a mouth-bow played by friction.

The performer on the *umrhubhe* (illustration E) may produce truly amazing results. The technique used by some players is to use the bow overtones to follow the melody of the lead singer(s), and at the same time whistle the melodies of the answering singers. The famous *umrhubhe* player Madosini Qotoyi makes *umrhubhe* music of unforgettable beauty. Years ago she was recorded by David Marks of Third Ear Records. Recently she has produced a CD together with the Amampondo music group. Madosini is not the only one. Nogcinile Yekani of the Ngqoko music group has taught the technique to a number of other women in the group. And Johnny Clegg has used the *umhubhe* to striking effect in many Juluka songs.

To my amazement I have also been able to record *imirhubhe* played in duet: back in 1983 at old Lumko, and lately very fine performances given by members of the Ngqoko group. The bows were perfectly tuned together, and clearly take different parts in the song. On one video of mine one can see the hands of the two bow players moving in cross-rhythm, one based on the apparent 10 beat pattern of the voices, the other playing the 8 beats (against 10!) of the clap/dance rhythm. Bow

duets were something new to the "ethnomusicologists".

Singing like *umrhubhe*

A remarkable technique called *umngqokolo* is practised by Thembu Xhosa women. It is a form of overtone singing which imitates the rich overtone chords and melodies of the *umrhubhe*. One of its leading exponents, Nowayilethi Mbizweni of the Ngqoko Group, calls her version *Umngqokolo ngomqangi* – overtone singing in the style of *umqangi*. (In the Ngqoko area the instrument *umqangi* is no longer found, only the *umrhubhe*. *Umqangi* is the name applied to a certain unfortunate beetle which naughty boys impale on a thorn, and then use the mouth to resonate overtones from the loud buzzing noise as it tries to fly away.) The click *ngq* in *umngqokolo* also indicates a KhoiSan origin for this technique.

b). Bows played by plucking

The *inkinge* of the Xhosa is structurally the same as the *rugoma* of the Kavango. Both are made of a piece of bamboo or reed, and played by plucking. But, these days at least, the *inkinge* (which is now very scarce) uses a wire string like *uhadi*, but *rugoma* uses nylon fishing line (illustration F). The resultant sounds are rather different. *Inkinge* is plucked with a piece of ox horn. *Rugoma* is plucked with a finger. However, both use overtones to follow the melody. *Inkinge* uses the same scale as *uhadi*, created by using one stopping position (upper fundamental being a whole tone above the lower). But with *rugoma* the player may use several stopping positions, following melodies using the different Kavango scales (see *kaworongongo*, in the next section). *Inkinge* produces relatively soft sounds, but *rugoma* can lead group singing with its clear tones.

This bow is (I hope) still around, among the Venda, the Tsonga and maybe the Zulu and others in our region. Students, how about looking for examples?



F: A woman playing *rugoma*, a plucked mouth-bow: Kavango, 1988

c). The Bow played by scraping notches on the bow stick

Several times among peoples in Kavango I encountered the Kavango version of this bow, called there *kaworongongo* (illustration G), a name which clearly seems to represent the sound made by the bow. As the performer scrapes the bow stick, he produces a loud *rongo-rongo-rongo*. Shaping his mouth over the strip of palm leaf with which the bow is strung, he is able to resonate very clear overtones. The hand holding the bow stick also holds a short stick which is touched against the palm leaf string, to obtain the upper fundamental tone.

By using different intervals between fundamental tones the Kavango players produce three different four-note scales.

These scales could be written as F-G-C-D (whole tone interval), A-C-E-G (minor third interval), and C-E-G-B (major third interval); in each case the four-note scale uses only the root (and octave) and fifth of the fundamental tone, but the singers may also add a fifth tone to make the pentatonic scale (F-G-A-C-D, for example).

(This bow is called *xizambi* in Tsonga, and is also still around in other areas and among other peoples. Any takers for a bow expedition?)

d). Kirby's "String-wind Instrument"

This wonderful instrument, called *gora* by the KhoiSan, had a quill cut from a feather attached to one end of the stick, and the string attached to the other end of the quill and thence to the far end of the bow. The player blows on the quill (the "wind" element), and uses the mouth to



G: *Kaworongongo*, the notched mouth-bow, played by a blind man at Rundu, Kavango, 1981.

resonate the overtones produced by the vibration of the string (the "string" part). It was called *ugwali* by the Xhosa. I tried hard to find if it was still around, but found only the name surviving as a misnomer for *umrhubhe*. However it still exists in Lesotho, where it is called *lesiba* (the feather) and is played by shepherd boys. I also could not find it in Lesotho, but its strange, attractive sound was used as a signature tune by Lesotho radio.

3.1.2. Braced Mouth Bows

a). Bows played by Plucking

The braced mouth bow played by plucking, and which I have recorded, is called *isiqomqomana* in Zulu (a click word which may hint at KhoiSan origin) and *tshihwana* in Venda. The Zulu performer I recorded used the bow as a musical background to the recitation of oral poetry, softly whistling with the bow when he was not declaiming. The Venda performer was an elderly blind man. He not only performed traditional songs with his bow, but he also composed religious songs with it. He was a devoted member of an indigenous Christian Church. At times he would concentrate on the overtone melodies while his wife sang with him, and at times he would sing while still plucking the bow. Both Zulu and Venda performances were very moving.

This braced mouth bow may be constructed with a loop stretched around string and bow stick, or with the string tied to the bow stick with a single strand. The bow stick itself is made by shaving down the **two prongs** of the bow, leaving a complete **section** in the middle for holding and attaching the loop or strand.

This bow is called, in southern Sotho, *setolotolo*. This word finds its way into Xhosa (as *isitolotolo*) as a name for the Jew's harp.

b). A braced mouth bow played by percussion

Among the Khoi (Damara, Nama) of Namibia, when I was there with

Andrew Tracey in 1982, we found a man playing a braced mouth bow by tapping on the string with a little stick. The string was nylon fishing line. The sound was very soft and gentle. Unfortunately I was unable to record him. As far as I remember, he was too shy. But he sold me the bow, which I still have. He called the instrument *khas*, which is simply the term for a bow.

3.2. CALABASH BOWS

3.2.1. Unbraced calabash bows

There are apparently three versions of this bow still around: the Xhosa *uhadi*, the Zulu *ugubhu*, and the *thomo* of Lesotho. I have done quite a lot of work with *uhadi*, and also had the great good fortune to record different performers on *ugubhu* in 1981/1982.

As mentioned, *uhadi*, the "singing hole", sings through its calabash. Before metal strings were available,

bow strings using twisted ox tail hair and animal gut were documented. Back in the 1980s Xhosa women made bow strings for *uhadi*, *umrhubhe* and other instruments by heating and stretching out the brass wire used for making ankle bangles. These days this wire is very scarce in South Africa, but easy to obtain overseas, I have been able to supply both Nofinishi Dywili of the Ngqoko group, and Madosini, with brass wire from Germany.

Unfortunately musicologists sometimes create or propagate mythology about bows which may prove to be incorrect. No doubt musicologists base their assertions on what they learn from the performers they encounter, but sometimes the performers themselves may either be misinformed or have their own agenda in providing information. The researcher does well to check everything six times or more! Contrary to the dogmatic assertions of some researchers, I have met three

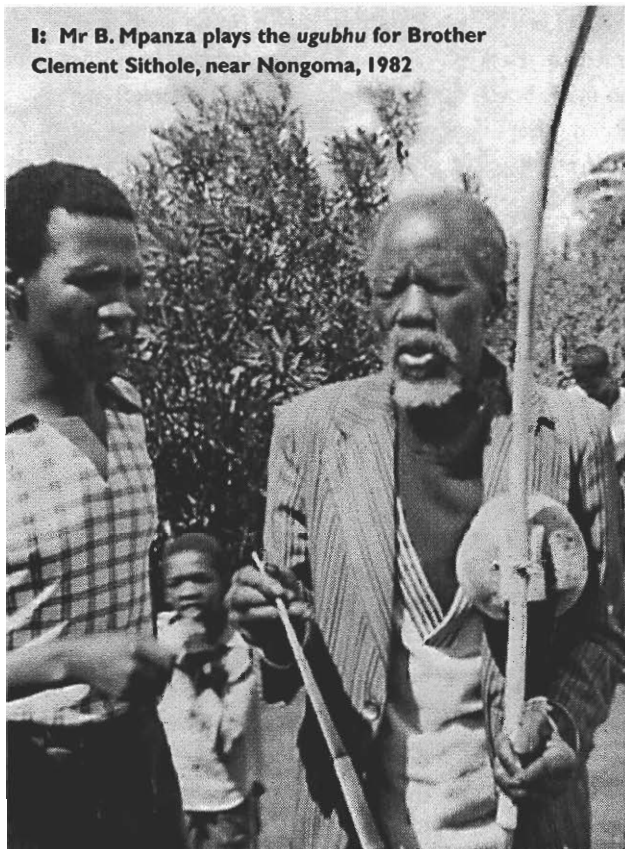
Xhosa men who played *uhadi* at one time, and I recorded one man (Mr Mpharholo Manisi of Ngqoko) in 1981. I also recorded an elderly man, Mr B. Mpanza, near Nongoma in 1982, playing *ugubhu*. Mr Mpanza was a marvelous musician, who also performed with *umakhweyane* and *isiqomqomana*. In addition, I have recorded not only group singing performances with *uhadi* on many occasions, but in 1982 at Nongoma I was also able to record Mrs N. Mhlongo leading a group singing marvelous old *amahubo* songs with the *ugubhu* bow.

My experiences with *uhadi* and *ugubhu* were especially significant for me. In 1979, after some months hunting for bows, I met the marvelous Nofinishi Dywili (illustration H) at old Lumko. Since then I have recorded dozens of her songs—which means there are probably only several hundred still unrecorded. She is now 82, still hale and dancing, but time for

H: Nofinishi Dywili, with *uhadi*, leads the Ngqoko Group in a performance in Geneva in 1995



I: Mr B. Mpanza plays the *ugubhu* for Brother Clement Sithole, near Nongoma, 1982



research is running out. In 1981 I had the good fortune to "discover" the first survival of Ntsikana's Song as an *uhadi* song. The version I recorded then I trace back as a freedom song version dating back to the War of Mlanjeni of the early 1850s. Other *uhadi* songs also seem to be historically dateable. One re-enacts the casting out of a small-pox victim from the village, and I believe probably dates back to the dreadful epidemic of 1770.

In 1981, thanks to the invaluable assistance of Brother Clement Sithole, I first met and recorded Mrs P. Mpanza, near Nongoma. Like Princess Magogo, she was a princess as she was one of the daughters of Zulu King Solomon. With *ugubhu* she sang a song mourning people killed in war against the whites - a freedom song maybe more than a hundred years old. In 1982, while I was again recording her, her husband, Mr B. Mpanza, came in, and he could not wait to be given a chance to play *ugubhu* (illustration I). Some people tried to chase him out, saying he was a nuisance, but fortunately I was able to prevent that. He was magnificent. With

ugubhu he sang a song recounting the killing of people by police, a freedom song probably dating back to the early part of the twentieth century. He sang other songs too, with *ugubhu* and *umakhweyane*. When I returned later that year he sang more songs with those bows, and also performed with an *isiqomqomana* he had made for my visit. At that time he was already 83, and his wife 81. His bows had been silent for a long time before my visits. People told me his son had broken his bow because he

created a disturbance when people wanted to listen to the radio. It reminded me of the lady near old Lumko who, in 1979, told us that she used to play *uhadi*, but now they had the FM, so she didn't have to play any more.

The third *ugubhu* player I recorded in 1982, Mrs Mhlongo, was 79. Since then Brother Clement told me he had found a younger player, but I was not able to return to the area. How I wish some keen student would follow that up with Clement!

Another remarkable fact about *uhadi/ugubhu* is the differences between how these instruments are played. The Xhosas use a whole-tone interval between the fundamental tones, producing a six-note scale (which may be written F-G-A-B-C-D) based on two major chords. This scale and its chords are relatively well-known from the famous "Click Song", and from Ntsikana's Song. The Zulu players, on the other hand, use a semitone interval, producing a strange scale which may be written E-F-A-B-C. The bow produces also the tone G sharp, but singers tend

to use G natural. (It's no use just talking about these bow scales: one needs to hear the music to appreciate the resulting sounds.) In addition, Zulu rhythms (with or without bows) tend to be simple but driving and powerful. Xhosa women's rhythms are marvelously subtle, with intricacies of cross-rhythm and additive rhythms. Mr Manisi, with *uhadi*, however, used a simple rhythm, not so different from those used by Mr Mpanza.

As for the Sotho *thomo*, it can be found in the mountains of Lesotho, and produces a result very close to the Xhosa *uhadi*. This seems to indicate Xhosa influence.

3.2.2. Braced Calabash Bows

a). The first type concerns bows which are braced towards the middle of the bow string. The calabash is attached to the brace, which is a loop passing around the string. Placing the loop/brace near the middle of the string gives the possibility of having two open fundamental tones. The Zulus, who call the bow *umakhweyane*, tend to use a difference of a whole tone between the two string lengths, whereas the Tsonga (with their version, called *xitende*) use an interval of a minor third.

The braced calabash bows produce a loud, relatively high tone, unless the bow is very large. (I have recorded a two metre Tsonga bow.) This means that, whereas it is easy to use the lower overtones (up to the fifth of the resultant chord), the third of the chord is not so powerful. So the fundamentals and fifths are available from the open sections of the string. These tones may be written as F-G-C-D for *umakhweyane*, and (say) D-F-A-C for *xitende*. The bow is held with the shorter section of the string down, so that the player can then obtain one or more further fundamentals by touching fingers of the hand holding the stick to the string. In this way with *umakhweyane* it is easy to use the note A, and thereby the pentatonic scale F-G-A-C-D. Similarly, with *xitende*, it is

easy to touch the string at the note G; which again produces the same pentatonic scale F-G-A-C-D. Once again, it's not much use just talking about this bow theory. The student should get hold of a bow, practise tuning it to the whole-tone and minor third positions, and then find out how the fundamentals and scales are obtained. It's very interesting and great fun. In addition, some bow players play rapid scale passages by touching two or three fingers to the bow string to obtain further tones. Note that when the longer section of string is struck, and a finger touched to the shorter section at the right place, the resultant tones reinforce the chord produced.

Sometimes I try to make my own "rules" of musical development. This rule, for example: the louder instrument tends to put the softer out of business. When the *umakhweyane* found its way among the Zulus, coming from the peoples to the north, it tended to put the *ugubhu* out of business. Similarly, the guitar tends to do likewise to the *umakhweyane*. Now amplifiers are blowing us all away, to the grave detriment and impoverishment of our music.

Brother Clement Sithole composes church music with his *umakhweyane*, with lovely settings of the psalms. He recorded one for me in English. Among the Tsonga, in 1988 elderly Mr Piet Mabasa (illustration J), a devout member of an indigenous church, recorded some of his church compositions for me, with his two metre *xitende* bow. As a resonator he used a cut-off plastic container, and successfully performed church and traditional songs with a group of singers and dancers, plus drumming group and kudu horn. Wonderful stuff! Yet another performer on this bow (called in Siswati *makhoyane*) is a Swazi Servite nun, Mother Adelia Dlamini. In the 1980s she was producing some fine church songs with a giant (more than two metre) *makhoyane*: the Ave Maria, psalms and so on. A particularly fine performer on *xitende* was Mr Peter

Chuma from up north beyond Tzaneen. I hope he's still around and singing!

b). Calabash Bows braced near the end of the String

Maybe the most famous bow of this type is the Brazilian *berimbau*. The *berimbau* is a bow taken to South America by African slaves long ago. *Berimbaos* are on sale in shops in Europe. Some years ago I saw a performance with three of them by young men from Brazil in the Marienplatz in Munich. All the bows were played simultaneously, and the group of young men acted out a stick-fight dance, as is done in Angola. In 1982, working in Namibia with Andrew Tracey, I had the chance to record an original form of this bow, called by the lovely name *okamburumbumbwa* by the Ovambos. The name is again apparently imitative of the bow sound.

These days *berimbau* is a large bow using a steel string. The calabash is on a loop near one end of the bow; the

player hooks the little finger around the loop to hold the bow, and holds a coin (originally a stone) against the string to obtain the raised fundamental tone. In many cases today in Brazilian popular music it seems *berimbau* is used as a rhythm instrument with bands, playing only two tones: the tonic (raised fundamental, up a semitone) and the leading tone. Recordings I have heard seem to show no sensitivity towards the sound of overtones. However it's quite different with *okamburumbumbwa*. The one Andrew Tracey and I recorded in Ovamboland in 1982 was quite small, and had a nylon fishing line as string. The player held it across his breast, holding it by his little finger in the bracing loop, and held the string to obtain a raised fundamental a whole tone up, as with the Xhosa *uhadi*. The overtones were soft but heart-rendingly clear. The player was Mr Emanuel Namuro, a blind man who earned his living playing his bow in the market place in Ombalantu (illustration K).



J: Mr Piet Mabasa leads group singing and drumming with his giant *xitende*, a braced bow he made with a plastic resonator.



K: The *okamburumbwa*, an end-braced calabash bow, played by Mr Emanuel Namulo, Ovamboland, 1982.



L: The over-the-shoulder bow type instrument, played by bowing with a small bow: here the player is Mr M. S. Matlapeng, who called the instrument *serankure*; near Gaborone, 1989.

At our workshop he composed some touching songs for the Mass, either singing or at times whistling softly with the bow.

3.3. Bow Type Instruments played by "bowing"

Sehankule and *sekatar*a are two forms of a bow type instrument which use usually a 5-litre tin as resonator. They are played by bowing the string with a small bow strung with animal hair or plant fibre.

3.3.1. *Sehankule* (as the instrument is called in Lesotho) is made usually of a long piece of wood, hollowed out in the shape of an elongated boat. The string is attached to the back end of the stick, and then to a tuning peg stuck into the front end of the "boat". The instrument is held over the shoulder, and a five litre or similar tin is hung onto the back end of the wood as resonator. The player uses a small bow to sound the string by friction, as does a violin player. However, there the similarity with the violin ends. This instrument also works by using overtones of the string. The only control the player has with regard to amplifying the overtone is by the pressure and direction applied to the small bow, and by using the thumb of the hand holding the instrument. The thumb is free to touch the string in order to obtain the raised fundamental tone. Despite the difficulty, some players achieve extraordinary control, following melodies exactly and with clear overtones.

Some musicologists feel that this instrument was developed by people who observed Europeans playing violins. That may be so, but instruments

played in this way are also found further north in Africa. What is quite certain is that both the method of playing, and the musical result, are very different from the method and result of playing the violin.

This instrument is still quite widespread in southern Africa. I have recorded it as *serankure* (illustration L) or *segankuru* (or as apparently incorrectly *sekgapa* or *segapa*) in Botswana, as *tsorwani* among the Northern Sotho, and as *gorito*, played by an elderly Damara man in Gobabis, Namibia, in 1981. The Damara man's singing was a type of yodelling. He was the dearest of men, already quite old and weak. He had to rest after every few phrases of his song. Sadly he passed away not long after I recorded him. He licked his small bow every now and then to give it a grip on the string. It was always men whom I recorded playing this instrument.

Among the Zulu the instrument is called *isicelekeshe*. I heard of a man who played it, and I was fortunate to obtain a carving depicting it. Unfortunately, I did not see or hear it in the Zulu area.

3.3.2. *Sekatar*a is a form of the same instrument made by inserting a bow into the five-litre tin, and attaching the string from the end of the bow to a corner of the tin. The tin is held by one arm, with the thumb free to touch the string to obtain the raised fundamental(s). The small bow is applied by the other hand. *Sekatar*a is what the instrument is called in Lesotho. Xhosa boys also play it. In Xhosa it becomes *isikatar*i. The name *isigankuri* has also been found among the Xhosa. The name *inkinge* is also sometimes used for this instrument, but of course *inkinge* is really the plucked mouth bow.

The *ikatar*i (and presumably also *sekatar*a) is a herd-boy's instrument. I've seen a lad standing on an anthill, watching his goats, playing away on *ikatar*i. Some of the most amusing Xhosa boys' songs are heard with this instrument.

The same difficulties of performance are found in playing this bow type. By

bowing in a circle one can influence which overtones are heard, but it's not easy. In the 1980s, in Ngqoko, the noted marimba player Mlamli Dlangamandla recorded for me with *ikadari*. He played with wonderful accuracy – not only the melody, but rich chords as well.

3.4. A Rhythm-only Bow: *Lipuruboro*

Of all the bows I have had the joy of hearing and recording, only *lipuruboro* was a purely rhythmic, non-melodic instrument (illustration M).

In 1981 in Sambiu, in Kavango people were composing songs in traditional style for use in church. A man brought in a great hunting bow. One man held the bow onto a reed mat placed on top of a cooking pot, holding a tin mug containing mielie seeds ready in his free hand. A second man then drummed on the string (of leather) with two small sticks, and the bow holder applied the mug of mielies to the string to add to the rhythm. The name *lipuruboro* gives a good idea of the sounds that were produced.

4. Conclusion

Those are some of the instruments that have given me a lot of pleasure in my encounters with African music. I wish all my readers to share in that pleasure—by hearing musical bows, studying them, and (let's hope) playing them. I have based this article on the bows I have experienced. The same bows may still be found among other peoples under different names. I certainly hope that there are plenty of musical bows still around, including all kinds of bows which I didn't come across. Happy bow hunting and collecting, and happy music making to you all!

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M: The fascinating *lipuruboro*, a hunting bow made into a rhythm bow; one man beats the string, the other touches the mug of mielies to it to emphasize the rhythm; Kavango, 1981.

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Booklet and Recording Collections for use by Students, produced by and obtainable from D. Dargie, include:

Sing an African Song (Song book with recordings);

Nguwe lo! (Collection of Xhosa traditional music);

Umngqokolo (Xhosa overtone singing); *Make and Play your own Musical Bow*.

Sources of Recordings:

The ILAM (*Sound of Africa* Series plus); Lumko and other music collections rec. by Dave Dargie; Third Ear Records and MELT productions have both produced recordings of Madosini.

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'Nikabheni':

Tin-guitars, juvenile performers and popular music in KwaZulu-Natal

© Sazi Dlamini, University of Natal



'*nikabheni*' – pidgin English (*nika-* v. 'to give' in Zulu and *-bheni* n. 'penny')

This paper pays attention to the popularity of home-made tin-guitars, their production technology, tuning system and harmonic approach commonly utilised by black children in KwaZulu-Natal.

The popularity of the guitar in KwaZulu-Natal has earned the region a considerable reputation for producing the finest exponents on the instrument in Southern Africa. There are no official records to support this widely-held belief but, alongside an unsurpassed neo-tradition of *maskandi* guitar musicianship, it is worth noting that the country's leading jazz-guitar exponents since well before the 1960s into the present era, have consistently emerged

from KwaZulu-Natal. In this regard several names are worth mentioning: the late Cyril Magubane, Sandile Shange, Allen Kwela, Almon Memela, Elias Ngidi, Bhabha Mokoena, Vusi Thusi, Bheki Khoza, Enoch Mthalande, Johnny Chonco, Siphon Gumede, Themba Mokoena, Mshaks Gasa, James Mbambo, Joshua Sithole, Spirit, Duze Mahlobo and the late Robert "Doc" Mthalande. These and many other unrecorded guitarists past and present, all started playing music on tin-guitars. The predominance of the guitar in performance and composition in the region's neo-traditional repertoire has yet to be fully explained. Both oral and documented evidence point to early influences of the *ramkie*-type tin-guitar on neo-traditional performance as a widespread phenomenon among African children in both urban and rural environments. Some of the postulations advanced by leading scholarship in the field include:

- a possibility, as a result of the port's situation on the principal route of the pre-17th century Asian-European mercantile trade, of the guitar's introduction by Portuguese seamen to the coastal Natives (Clegg 1981 :3)
- a pervasive influence of the three-stringed *ramkie*, said to have been brought to the Cape by Malay slaves from the Malabar coast of India, and subsequently adopted by Africans, (Coplan 1980:439)
- a legacy of widespread colonial, late 19th century industrial and post WWII nationwide advertising media campaigns, the latter largely capitalising on the prominence of the

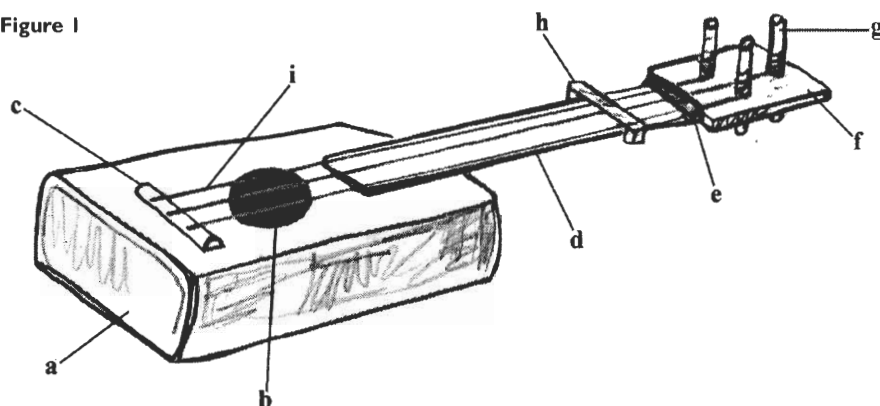
guitar as a solo instrument within the American big band swing movement. (Ilanga laseNatali, Oct– Dec.1951, Jan.1952; Edwards 1997:119).

Whatever the reasons were for the popularity of the guitar in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere, one result of this was the interpretation of diverse indigenous musical sensibilities and neo-traditional musical developments on an instrument, that had come to symbolise the essential musicality of Africans caught up in the flux of urbanisation and industrialisation. The celebrated mid-20th century urban music and dance styles such as *kwela*, *tsaba-tsaba*, *phatha-phatha*, *mbaqanga*, *mgqashiyi*, *simanje-manje* and neo-traditional *maskandi* guitar styles were popular cultural products of itinerant and unsettled post-colonial African cultural development. However, it is these styles' direct relationship to sustained accessibility of the guitar to large sections of the African community that is of significance to this paper.

The "*Nikabheni*" musical social performance practice

Older African guitarists both amateur and professional, especially those residing within the greater Durban metropolitan region, invariably attribute their formative performance experiences to the *nikabheni* street musical performance practice of the early 1950s. By way of a brief explanation, *nikabheni* comprised a set of social musical performance practices of the urban proletariat in the city's sprawling shanty lands. A juvenile interpretation of this practice in Mkhumbane (Cato Manor) settlement on Durban's periphery included formations of 'gangs' of performing

Figure 1



youngsters. Tin-guitars provided the main instrumental musical background for such itinerant youthful performances, whose members went around the city and shantytown entertaining passersby in return for coins. Reminiscing about his childhood in the 1950s Cato Manor, neo-traditional guitarist Madala Kunene related in an interview:

'Nikabheni' was when we got together, a gang of young boys all growing up together. One of us would play guitar... a three-string guitar, another one would dance as money was thrown for us to the ground by spectators... I played on a tin-guitar. If you performed 'nikabheni', it was on that kind of guitar, and a tambourine made out of discarded bottle-tops...then there would be dancers... (Dlamini 1998:65)

The tin-guitar

The tin-guitar or *ramkie* as it is commonly referred to by scholars of South African black performance culture is perhaps emblematic of African childrens' introduction to neo-traditional instrumental musical practice. The use of tin-guitars by black urban, mission and rural children has been amply documented (Kubik 1974; Rycroft 1977; Coplan 1980, 1985; Dargie 1988).

'ramkie' – A small, three or four-stringed plucked guitar....(Coplan 1980:439).

...two other stringed instruments have been recorded by me in the Lumko district. One is called "igitali", from the English "guitar", and is a three-stringed "ramkie" type, used to strum chord accompaniments to songs using the local version of the (Afro-Western) diatonic scale, (Dargie 1988:49)

Kunene related a similar experience

of making *ramkie*-type guitars from discarded materials:

'... when I was about six years old, I made my own tin-guitar. We used a kind of wire for strings. I wouldn't know the name, but that wire used to come in a tight bundle...and we used to undo it, each bundle yielding six or five single strings which we teased apart.' (Kunene M. interviewed by Dlamini 1998:66)

My brothers learned to make and play tin-guitars from a cousin who fashioned excellent six-string tin-guitars. This was around 1964 when my family had a home at a Christian mission station a little way up the Umkomaas river on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. My cousin had experimented with various tunings which enabled him to formulate original chord voicings and fingerings. My brothers, however, normally tuned their tin-guitars in intervals corresponding to the standard Western tuning of E A d g b e.

The three-string tin-guitar

Fig.1

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| a – <i>igogogo</i> | tin resonator (soundbox) |
| b – <i>imbobo</i> | sound-hole |
| c – <i>ibhiliji</i> | bridge |
| d – <i>umphini</i> | fingerboard |
| e – <i>ikamu</i> | nut |
| f – <i>ikhanda</i> | head |
| g – <i>izisetho</i> | wooden tuning-pegs |
| h – <i>ibhiliji</i> | capostato |
| i – <i>izintambo</i> | strings |

The *igogogo* tin resonator (a) is often an empty five-litre oil-can. Sometimes a floorpolish tin is used, producing a smaller, banjo-type instrument that may or may not have a sound-hole cut out. An *imbobo* sound-

hole (b) is cut out to obtain more volume and also to allow the artisan to insert the top block to support the lower end of the fingerboard inside the soundbox. Small holes are then punched along the lower rim of the tin resonator. The strings, made of cat-gut or thin wire material are threaded through the small holes and passed over the *ibhiliji* bridge (c) and under the *ikamu* nut (e), (often confusingly referred to as a 'bridge'). The *izisetho* tuning pegs (g) on the *ikhanda* head (f) are used to tighten or loosen the strings when tuning. In order to obtain a desired pitch for singing, some players use an *ibhiliji* capostato (h) carved out of wood to tie the *izintambo* strings (i) down at a higher position.

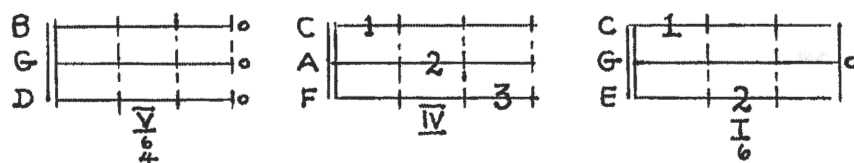
Tuning a three-stringed tin-guitar: a rudimentary triadic harmony

There are a great variety of tunings, intervallic relationships that are possible, utilising the three strings. Indeed, individual self-teaching guitarists develop their tunings to suit particular compositions, and their own interpretations of popular songs. There exists no one particular fingering of even the same chord voicing, as this will depend on the individual guitarist's choice of the basic open-string intervals. Being fretless, a tin-guitar is played chiefly in the open and first positions. Further positions up the fingerboard present problems with intonation. If for example, the three strings are tuned at intervals corresponding to D, G, b of the standard guitar tuning system, it is possible to voice the three primary triads in the key of C major using the following inversions:

The principal chord (CEG) in its first inversion: I6 (EGC);
The subdominant chord (FAC) in root position: IV (FAC)
The dominant chord (GBD) in its second inversion: V6/4 (DGB)
(The fingerings for the chords above are shown in Fig.2 overleaf):

Figure 2

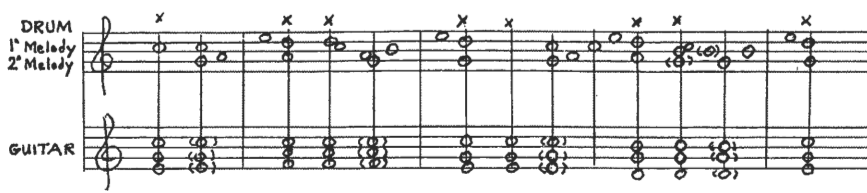
I6 (EGC); IV (FAC); V6/4 (DGB) (See fig.2 for the fingerstrings of these chords)



left hand: 0 open string
2 second finger
1 first finger
3 third finger

A tin-guitar harmonisation of a popular *marabi* 'type' melody

Figure 3



The basic harmonic framework of *marabi*, *kwela*, *mbaqanga* and other related sub styles utilises tonic – subdominant – dominant progressions. In Fig.3 is used a popular *marabi* melody broadly identified with recordings of *mbaqanga* (African jazz) of the 1950s bands. The *marabi* basis of these progressions and melodies has led Ballantine to comment on their widespread popularity.

The melodies superimposed on these endlessly repeating patterns sometimes became legendary; sometimes lyrics were invented as well, and in some instances the lyrics contained political commentary or protest (Ballantine 1993:26).

Three-string tin-guitar accompaniment employing the basic strumming technique of *ukuvamba*, enabled juveniles to imitate popular music styles heard on gramophone records, and radio after 1945. The above melody derives from a 1950s tune entitled "Engine Fire", which appeared on the B-side of a 78-rpm recording by the *Radio Bantu Orchestra* (His Master's Voice JP 647). Its composition was jointly credited to E. Themba – then leader of the band called *Harlem Swingsters*, and recording studio talent-scouts M.Vilakazi, and R.Bopape. Being as it was one of the

SABC's 'inhouse' productions, the tune's melody became widely recognised in most parts of the country, with various lyrics being composed to it. The cyclic, repetitive nature of *marabi* invited this kind of meta-improvisation from the wider public. I first heard a pennywhistle version of the "Engine Fire" melody when I was no more than knee-high in the middle 1960s, and to which the older boys sang the following lyric:

*Hello Spoki Mashiyani,
Hello Spoki Mashiyani*

An earlier melody to the same harmonic chord progression, as remembered by my mother (born 1930) was 'sung to' using with the words:

*Dansa Mgumuli
Dansel' uLeya
(Dance Mgumuli
Dance for Leah)*

In Fig.3 is superimposed the two melodies over a 'marabi' type chord progression. The result bears a striking similarity to the tunes in the same style as "Engine Fire", that is, their melodies are interchangeable. The above observations serve to highlight–
(a) the possibility of a grassroot interpretation of a popular musical stylistic sensibility such as *marabi*, and thereby

(b) a deep, and perhaps subconscious assimilation of an idiom that has become emblematic of abroad South African neo-traditional musical expressivity.

An earlier tangible outcome of this assimilation was *kwela*, a music whose emergence might well have been impossible were it not for the widespread availability to the slum and township youth, of the tin-guitar technology. Equally important for the evolution of this most popular urban African music style was the accessibility of *marabi* to interpretation by African children on their tin-guitars.

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[This paper is dedicated to the memory of my cousin Fando "Aron" Khuzwayo, who was born in 1947 at Dududu Mission Station, KwaZulu-Natal, and who passed away in April 2001.]






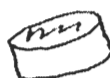

VUMA!

© Vicky Goddard, St. Mary's Diocesan School for Girls

This percussion piece was workshopped by Vicky Goddard and her students of the African Music Ensemble at St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls, Kloof. The group meets weekly to explore rhythms and dances from various African countries and create their own pieces. This is one such piece, the Zulu title meaning "to agree", "to be in strong agreement". As the girls state it is also a word that evokes much energy and as such the piece is aptly titled. This piece is one that was entered for performance in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, Wales, where the African Music Ensemble, Choir and Orchestra toured as part of their Music Tour 2001.

The key to the rhythm transcription is as follows:



	= Cowbell (struck with a stick)
	= Cowbell (scrap-ed with a stick)
	= Shakers (shaking)
	= Shakers (shake on beat)
	= Log Drum
	= Bass drum
	= Djembe
Vuma!	= Shouted or spoken
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + etc	= Quaver note values

The transcription reads across following each alphabetical letter. Bracketed sections are where there are multiple instruments playing. Repeats are indicated as:

} x2 or } x4

For example: follow the direction of the arrows

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	
A		→		→		→			} x2
B		→		→		→			
C		→		→		→			
									} x4

It should be noted that more than one Djembe or Log drum may be used. Drummers should experiment with all types of drums and find a suitable tone balance.

Vuma!

	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	5	+	6	+	7	+	8	+
A																
B																
C																
D																
E																
D	Repeat D section above															
E	Repeat E section above															

PASME now PasmaE!

The Pan-African Society for Music Education (PASME), first mooted at the 1998 ISME (International Society for Music Education) Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, recently acquired a new letter in its acronym: PasmaE. This in no way implies a move away from ISME (International Society for Music Education) and its links with the IMC (International Music Council) and UNESCO. It signifies a recognition of the fact that, for Africans, music encompasses more than simply a Western view of "music". Hence our name now embraces "Musical Arts Education".

At the first conference in Harare, Zimbabwe (August 2000) a PASME executive committee was elected:
Caroline van Niekerk (South Africa) — *President*
James Flolu (Ghana) — *Secretary General*
Mitchel Strumpf (Zimbabwe) — *Treasurer*.

At the second recently concluded PasmaE conference in Lusaka, Zambia (21–25 August 2001), a new executive committee was elected:
Meki Nzewi (Nigeria) — *President*
Caroline van Niekerk (South Africa) — *Secretary General*
Plaxedes Vimbai Chemugarira (Zimbabwe) — *Treasurer*.

This executive will function until the next PasmaE conference in 2003. From now on, PasmaE conferences will be scheduled in the years in between ISME conferences. The next ISME conference is due to be held in Bergen, Norway, in August 2002. It is a pleasure to announce that the next PasmaE conference will be in Kenya in 2003. We are most grateful to Dr Hellen Agak, Head of the Music Department at Maseno University, who extended the offer to host the 2003 conference, assisted by her colleague, Christo Caleb Okumu.

Grateful thanks is due to Joseph Ngandu, the conference chairman for last month's Zambian conference, and his organising committee. PasmaE is making plans for its future – watch this space!

Caroline van Niekerk
Secretary General



