

HUGH MASEKELA: THE LONG JOURNEY 1959-1968

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Abstract of the Thesis

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This thesis chronicles Masekela's transition from African refugee to Grammy nominated artist while also encompassing a musical analysis of his work before and including *The Promise of the Future*. This thesis will provide brief biographical information of Masekela's life as well as a sociological analysis to give context to his place in US pop culture. This study discusses Masekela's upbringing in South Africa and explores his transition into 1960s America. This thesis argues that Masekela faced an authenticity complex when breaking into the US market because he defied the expectations of what US audiences thought Africans to be. Masekela overcame this obstacle with the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966). A musical analysis and critique of the first three albums with an emphasis on Masekela's breakthrough compositions will be part of this thesis. This thesis concludes with a brief analysis of the cultural and racial impact of Masekela's work both in the United States and South Africa.

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## Timeline of Events

1902—Boer War ends leading to the industrialization of South Africa

1910—National Party rises to power and begins enforcing the systematic segregation of Whites, Coloreds and Africans. Africans and Coloreds would continue to systematically lose their rights beginning with the Native Land Act in 1913 which prohibited Africans from owning land.

1920—American culture begins to enter the South African market through music and film. The music of African Americans and their portrayal in film begins to influence the culture of South Africa for the next years. These years have come to be known as the marabi years.

1923—The Urban Areas act officially segregated colonies by race. Africans were relocated to the inner cities. The areas designated for Africans, or “black spots,” are too small and as a result, slums form in Johannesburg. Illegal home run bars, or *Sheebens*, rise because of economic necessity. It is here the marabi tradition and music came to fruition.

1939—On April 4th, Hugh Masekela is born in Kwa-Guqa Witbank, South Africa. His father is Thomas Salema Masekela, and his mother, Pauline Bowers Masekela. Masekela is the oldest and only son. He lives with grandmother who runs a sheeben during this time, and this is where he is first exposed to the marabi culture.

1948—The National Party rises to power and begins the initial steps toward apartheid. Originally formed in 1914, the party was founded by J.B.M Hertzog, who proposed the separation between Africans and Whites be more extreme.

1950—The Group Areas Act is passed further segregating colonies by race through the issuing of “pass laws,” and forcing them to relocate. Masekela’s grandfather loses his farm and the family all moves together in Alexandria.

1952—Masekela begins attending St. Peters boarding school where he meets Father Huddleston. Masekela’s first introduction to jazz came from his peers at St. Peters. After watching, Young Man with Horn, Masekela continually asks Father Huddleston for a trumpet to which he does oblige. Masekela excites the other students leading to the formation of the Huddleston jazz band.

1955—Father Huddleston is banned from South Africa for his radical views which were placing him in dangers, and he leaves in 1956. Masekela drops out of school during this time as he is constantly gigging. It is during this time that he meets Miriam Makeba.

1959—John Mehegan’s South African concert, lecture and research tour arrives. It is here that Masekela meets Kippie Moketsi and Jonas Gwanga, some of the members that would form the Jazz Epistles. Masekela is also part of the famous King Kong production, South Africa’s first musical.

1960—On March 21st, a large crowd of protesters was shot at by South African police killing 69 people and injuring 180. This came to be known as the Sharpeville Massacre and put the nation in a “State of Emergency.” The jazz

epistles tour dates are cancelled as a result, leaving the band to focus on recording an original album instead. The jazz epistles release 500 copies of their debut album, *The Jazz Epistles Vol. 1*. The album becomes the first South African modern jazz album becoming an instant hit. The government begins to see jazz as a threat to the status quo and cracks down on the mixed-race jazz scene. These tensions lead the Jazz Epistles to disband.

After Years of writing to Father Huddleston, Masekela is secured a scholarship and acceptance to the Guildhall School of Music in London. On May 18th, He leaves South Africa for London. His stay in London would be short. Miriam Makeba, who was already residing in New York, with the help of others, secures Masekela's acceptance to the Manhattan School of Music. Masekela leaves London sometime in late summer or early fall, and he arrives in New York City.

Masekela begins attending the Manhattan School of music in the fall.

1962—Masekela releases *Trumpet Africaine*. The album is a flop and a disappointed Masekela postpones his recording endeavors.

1963—Masekela arrives in the US amid the civil rights era. On August 28th, the civil rights movement begins to quickly progress with the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. to protest the continued inequalities faced by African Americans. This is where Martin Luther King Jr gave his iconic, "I have a Dream," speech and is considered a pivotal moment in the civil rights.

1964—Masekela graduates from the Manhattan School of Music with a degree in classical trumpet. He marries Miriam Makeba around this time, but their marriage would be turbulent and only last a couple years. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is passed preventing employment discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

1965—Mercury would record another album with Masekela in early May. This album came to be known as *Grrr*, but it would not be released until the following year due to a dispute between Masekela and the record company in which Masekela was dropped from the label.

Masekela met Tom Wilson, MGM records first black vice-president, and this leads to the recording of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* in November. The record becomes a hit especially on the west coast the following year. Sometime after the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga*, Mercury records releases *Grrr*.

1966—MGM records Masekela once more releasing *Hugh Masekela's Next Album*. It is around this time that Masekela begins his own label with music producer Stewart Levine who Masekela had befriended from the Manhattan School of Music. Levine and Masekela begin Chisa Records and both move to California. The label releases *The Emancipation of Hugh Masekela*.

1967—Chisa records releases Masekela's next studio album *Hugh Masekela's Latest*. Uni also releases a live set recording called *Hugh Masekela is Alive and Well at the Whiskey*. The album is a success and well received.

1968—Masekela would record *The Promise of the Future* earlier in the year. When the record was released, its single, “Gazin’ in the Grass,” became a crossover international hit. The single reached number one in the US pop and R&B charts and elevating Masekela’s career to new heights.

James Earl Ray assassinates Martin Luther King Jr on April 4th sending shockwaves through the black community. King’s assassination led to violent protest and riots. On April 11th, President Johnson signs the Fair Housing Act which provides equal housing opportunities regardless of race religion or national origin. This is viewed as ending the civil rights era in the US.

## Introduction

Hugh Masekela passed away from prostate cancer in late January of 2018 at the age of 78 amid the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion tour of the Jazz Epistles.<sup>1</sup> Scheduled to perform on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at The Town Hall in New York, Masekela dropped out of what would have been the opening concert of the US portion of the tour due to health complications and was replaced by South African trumpeter Lesedi Ntsane.<sup>2</sup> Masekela's death made global news as he was well-respected for his anti-apartheid political activism. From a musical standpoint, Masekela is remembered for being an innovative multi-instrumentalist and composer who fused African sensibilities with a jazz aesthetic. He has received acclaim for his skills on the trumpet, flugelhorn, and cornet, but his political affiliations often take precedence in musical literature. In simpler terms, his political achievements overshadow that of his instrumental.

This is not to say that Masekela's instrumental work has not received any recognition. His best-selling hit to date remains "Grazing in the Grass," and the song has gone on to become a standard in South Africa. "Grazing in the Grass" over the years has become an outlier in Masekela's canon as his music took a

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<sup>1</sup> Tsioulcas, Anastasia & Scott Neuman. "Hugh Masekela, South African Jazz Master and International Chart Topper, Dies at 78." *NPR*, January 23, 2018. Accessed April 27, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/23/579885226/hugh-masekela-south-african-jazz-master-and-international-chart-topper-dies-at-78>.

<sup>2</sup> Rentner, Simon. "The Legacy of The Jazz Epistles, South Africa's Short—Lived but Historic Group." *NPR*. April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Accessed March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/525696698/the-legacy-of-the-jazz-epistles-south-africas-short-lived-but-historic-group>.

major shift into the political realm in the early 1970s. Public awareness of apartheid in the US was growing, and Masekela took it upon himself to challenge apartheid in his music. Masekela's subject matter increasingly became Afrocentric as he often discussed aspects of South African life and he continued this trend into the 1980s.

Masekela was not alone in his fight against apartheid. He was one of many artists in the late 1980s who protested the segregationist policies in South Africa and openly pressured the US government to act. The anti-apartheid movement in the US grew in the 1970s, and the movement peaked in the late 1980s as multiple mainstream artists backed the cause. Masekela arguably became the most iconic figure of the movement. His most notable contribution to the movement came in 1986 with the release of "Bring Him Back Home." The song is a clear-cut protest song with lyrics directly aimed at the release of Nelson Mandela who had been imprisoned for nearly three decades by the apartheid administration. "Bring Him Back Home" received global admiration and the song is often referenced as the unofficial anti-apartheid anthem.

By 1990, internal conflicts and global pressure from the United Nations led the apartheid administration to relinquish power. Nelson Mandela was released the same year, and he would go on to become president of South Africa in 1994. As a result, Masekela's political persona became cemented in 1980 with the release of "Bring Him Back Home," but his political work did not end with the downfall of apartheid. Without apartheid to contend, Masekela began promoting messages of peace and anticolonialism. He also took it upon himself to

give back to the South African people through charitable work and by spreading the word about heritage restoration in Africa. The preservation of South African culture became the focus of Masekela's life after apartheid dissolved. In 2015, he began the Hugh Masekela Heritage Foundation whose mission was to restore the South African identity through culture preservation and restoration.<sup>3</sup> "Bring Him Back Home" continues to be played in South Africa, keeping the memory Masekela alive. In some sense, he has become a folk hero to the people of South Africa. Masekela continues to be viewed as an exiled musician, who against all adversity used his art and platform to help defeat apartheid.

### **Problem Statement**

While Masekela would become synonymous with the anti-apartheid movement of the late half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transition from jazz trumpeter to global political icon was not immediate. The irony of the matter is Masekela originally had no interest in being political or in playing South African jazz.

Masekela wrote in his memoir:

I had come to New York as a bebop musician, hoping to one day become a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers or Horace Silver's Quintet, or to play in Les McAnn's group, but when I broached the subject with any of them, the answer was always, "Hughie, why don't you form your own group? This frustration was lighted by Belafonte, who said to me, "Why don't you play music from your home? Look at what it's done for Miriam." Dizzy Gillespie told me the same thing, and Miles Davis always said to me, "Hughie, there are thousands of us jazz musicians in this country. You're gonna be a statistic. But if you play some shit from South Africa and mix it with the shit you know from here, you gonna come up with something none of us can do. Fuck jazz, man. You don't want that

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<sup>3</sup> "About the Hugh Masekela Heritage Foundation page," The Hugh Masekela Heritage Foundation Official Web Page. Accessed July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, <https://hmhf.co.za/about-us/>.

shit, ma'fucker. You know what I'm sayin'?" Bebop was at a crossroads, and Dizzy and Miles were both already experimenting with new styles. This encouragement was a turning point for me.<sup>4</sup>

As we see from this excerpt, Masekela initially rejected playing or fusing with South African music. Masekela would eventually embrace South African music and be branded "the father of South African jazz," but this would take years to come to fruition.

The reality of the matter is Masekela's embrace of South African jazz came later in his career with the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966). The album represents Masekela's first authentic work as a solo artist as it stands out early in his cannon for its creative achievements and represents Masekela's first steps into fusing American jazz with qualities found in South African music. The album's success created a platform for Masekela to continue experimenting and further define his sound. Masekela reached a mainstream audience in 1968 with the release of *The Promise of a Future*, which cemented him nationally as a South African icon. The album's single, "Grazing in the Grass," was an instant cross over hit in the summer of 1968, and it garnered Masekela national attention overnight.

When Masekela captured the nation's interest in 1968, by no means was his success instantaneous. Masekela had spent eight years in the US before the release of *The Promise of the Future*, and many of these years are often overlooked within his narrative. In news media and in his online presence,

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<sup>4</sup> Masekela, Hugh and D. Michael Cheers. *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004, page 165.

Masekela's story begins with "Grazing in the Grass." 1968 became an impactful year in Masekela's life, but this is not to say the formative years are of no importance. Masekela's formative years are rarely looked upon but are important when looking at Masekela's evolution as a musician. While Masekela continued to expand on his sound by experimenting and collaborating with other players, the music he released before 1968 is arguably more eclectic than the music released after 1968. Masekela's career took years to take off, and the music released before 1968 maps out the creative endeavor Masekela took upon himself. It also exemplifies the difficulties he had embracing his musical heritage within his music. The political climate of the US heavily contributed to his success as Masekela became associated with the ever-growing anti-apartheid movement in the US. Coincidentally, Masekela's embrace of his heritage aligns with the evolution of his political persona, meaning that as Masekela became more comfortable with his heritage, he also became more comfortable taking on an anti-apartheid public persona.

Masekela was able to reach mainstream audiences in part because apartheid awareness in the US was growing. The early critical reception of Masekela's music and subject matter are reflective of the US' perception of Africa at the time, its awareness of the anti-apartheid movement in Africa, and its changing views of imperialism. This thesis suggests that Masekela's transition into a renowned political icon depended on the US culturally distancing itself from the Jim Crow era as it was reminiscent of apartheid. Considering Masekela's back story, the racial climate of the country, and the recent widespread awareness

of apartheid in the early 1960s, there was little Masekela could do but be politicized by US audiences. The progressive changes inspired by the civil rights movement changed the way African Americans were perceived, which also altered the US's perceptions of Africa. This presented challenges for Masekela as it only allowed him to be accepted through a political lens, but these challenges also shaped his career.

Masekela's narrative has changed drastically through the decades, but every interpretation of Masekela's life grossly overlooks Masekela's formative years, especially since his earlier works do not align with his later political narrative. Once Masekela entered the political social sphere, all the details in his life were now redirected to emphasize that narrative. For example, the biographical page in Masekela's official webpage concludes, "Masekela confided—it was this commitment to his home continent that propelled him forward since he first began playing the trumpet."<sup>5</sup> This statement directly contradicts the initial statement presented earlier, and this is seeming to be the case for much of what is written in media about Masekela. He is often portrayed as a musician in exile, who climbed the US charts and used his music to aid his homeland, and these portrayals emphasize certain aspects of Masekela's life while omitting chapters of his life. As a result, the story of Masekela has been romanticized making it difficult to separate his life and work. For this reason, Masekela's body of work can be re-examined and reinterpreted. This study sets out to just this with a focus on his formative years which are lacking compared to

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<sup>5</sup> "Masekela Biography." The Hugh Masekela Official Webpage. Accessed August 4, 2020, <https://hughmasekela.co.za/biography/>.

the rest of his life.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the challenges Masekela faced by demystifying an unrecognized period of Masekela's career. There is not much written on Masekela's formative years as most writings deal with Masekela's political years. This thesis hopes to expand on this period by adding social and historical context to the narrative of Masekela which can give us insight on the struggle he faced transitioning from South Africa to the US. This thesis also analyzes Masekela's music and places it within a larger context of the US culture at the time. This analysis will address the following questions: How has Masekela's life in apartheid affected his musical identity? Why did Masekela's career struggle to take off in the early 1960s? How was Masekela able to defy US expectations of Africa and become the success he came to be? By addressing these questions, this thesis aims to broaden our understanding of how musical culture affects social identity and how these concepts transcend nationally.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study consists of three mediums: historical research, social analysis, and musical analysis. Historical and social resources used in the study include digital archives, books, periodicals, documentaries, academic journals, vinyl records, recorded interviews with Masekela, interviews with his associates, and autobiographies. This study follows a current trend in

historiography in which one critiques accepted history by reinterpreting it through political, social, and historical lenses. This thesis takes a pragmatic approach in describing the many aspects of Masekela's transition from South African Apartheid to US Jim Crow. It considers the effects his musical and cultural background had on his career and life. Through an interpretation of primary sources, I hope to explain the underlying symbolism and tie it to real world events as way of expanding our understanding of Masekela. By placing him within the historical and social context, we can discuss how the environment he was in affected his identity and rationale.

As of the writing of this thesis, there has been no extensive biographical work on Masekela's life. Therefore, most of this study will reflect on Masekela's memoir *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*. This is only biographical work available which encompasses all Masekela's life, but this study looks at Masekela's recollection with skepticism. South African sociologist Sam Radithalo claims Masekela's book follows a long tradition of autobiographical writings dating as far back as the 1600s.<sup>6</sup> According to Radithalo, the black South Africans have always had a sense of biography in their culture, but unlike western cultures, biographies were oral in what came to be known as "Praise Poems."<sup>7</sup> He goes on to say, "it remains a truism that Black South Africans generally see life as a continuum between the living and the dead, and hence the concept of having a praise poem to oneself is an important part of 'suturing' oneself into the lineage

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<sup>6</sup> Radithalo, Sam. "The Self-Invention of Hugh Masekela." *The Journal of Life Learning Sciences* 25, no.1 (March 2009): page 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, page 36.

from which one descends.”<sup>8</sup> Masekela’s memoir resembles this concept as it criticizes the events of the past while also justifying the choices he made. In many aspects, Masekela’s memoir is his way of explaining his past actions, and it will be viewed and examined in this manner.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This thesis is heavily influenced by the work of cultural sociologist Raymond Williams. Williams has expanded the definitions of culture in his work and has contributed to the ongoing Marxist critique of culture. In Williams’ perspective, “the analysis of culture, in the documentary sense, is of great importance because it can yield specific evidence about the whole organization within which it was expressed.”<sup>9</sup> Williams has critiqued past historians for assuming that culture results for social behavior. He argues that culture and society are intertwined and should be studied as such. He writes:

Cultural history must be more than the sum of histories, for it is with the relationship between them, the particular forms of the whole organization, that it is especially concerned. I would then define the theory of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships...it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins, and it is with the relationships between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities, sometimes again reveal discontinuities of an unexpected kind, that general cultural analysis is concerned.

It is with this approach that all the analysis of culture in this study will be founded upon.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, page 37.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Chatto & Windus. London, England, 1961, page 60.

This thesis also derives profoundly from Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (1978). Said's post-colonial writings discuss the effects the western world has had on the eastern during the era imperialism. In his work, Said argues the eastern world, what he calls the *Orient*, is a creation of the western world, or the *Occident*, and this relationship exists because of imperialism. He argues that the western world has historically portrayed the eastern culture as inferior and exotic as a means of establishing dominance. Said claims that the social structures and cultural practices of the east have been internalized through romanticized narratives forced upon them by the western writers and artists over the centuries. Thus, the history and culture of the east has been consistently produced through a relationship to the dominant western world. Said writes:

...ideas, cultures, and histories cannot be seriously understood or studied without their force, or more precisely, their configurations of power, also being studied. To believe that orient was created—or, as I call it, “Orientized”—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony...<sup>10</sup>

While Said's work is on the relationship between the Western and Eastern ideologies, this theoretical framework can be applied to the history of South Africa. As it will be further discussed in this study, the modern culture of South Africa has been initially shaped by its Dutch colonizers, and later by Britain and the US. Like the Orient discussed in Said's work, South Africa's culture has developed from a consistent relationship with its dominant oppressors who have changed over the centuries.

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<sup>10</sup> Said, W. Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books. New York, NY, 1978, page 5.

This thesis deals with the racist social structures of both the US and the South Africa. While this thesis drew from multiple sources on social structures, two works stand out as significantly influential. The first is *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American & South African History* by Historian George M. Fredrickson. Fredrickson's work has been extremely beneficial in understanding the similarities and differences between the racial structures of South Africa and the US. His study reveals that the ideology of white supremacy has been changed over the centuries to accommodate the needs for labor and the development of industry. While presented in different guises, the logic derived from white supremacist ideology is always to the benefit privileged class and not necessarily to create caste systems. Fredrickson's work was instrumental in understanding how racial ideologies transcend nationally which helped understand the predicament Masekela faced going from apartheid to Jim Crow.

The second is *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil* by Political Scientist Anthony W. Marx. Marx's work inspired this thesis immensely, as it revealed in great depth the influence legislation has on social identity. Through bureaucratic means, the state plays a key role in racial domination which it enforces through institutional boundaries of race. These boundaries play a significant role in group and identity formation; in other words, social culture is produced through the state leading to higher levels of solidarity for both those officially incorporated and those purposely excluded. Marx writes:

Citizenship is key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the nation state. It selectively allocates distinct

civil, political, and economic rights, reinforcing a sense of commonality and loyalty among those included. But by specifying to whom citizenship applies, states also define those outside the community of citizens, who then live as objects of domination...Such imposed exclusion inadvertently may serve as a unifying issue, mobilizing the excluded group to seek inclusion the polity as a central popular aspiration...But in the long run, institutionalized exclusion may further consolidate subordinate identity and encourages self-interested mobilization and protest.<sup>11</sup>

The works of Marx and Fredrickson have greatly aided this study by explaining how the political environment Masekela grew up in shaped his social identity, his music, and his political involvement.

### **Structure**

The main body of this thesis is broken into three chapters, each which encompasses different periods in Masekela's life. The chapters follow his life in chronological order beginning with Masekela's rise to fame in South Africa and concludes with his release of *The Promise of a Future* (1968). This thesis considers the end of Masekela's formative years to be 1968 when he released *The Promise of a Future*, because it garnered him mainstream success. By 1968, Masekela had released seven albums but not all were as impactful, and this analysis focuses more on his first three albums as these reveal the most on Masekela's rise to fame and his musical progression.

This thesis argues that the first six albums Masekela released can be split into two separate categories: there is his "exploring" phase, which was followed by his "experimental phase." The first three albums fall into Masekela's exploring

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<sup>11</sup> Marx W., Anthony. *Making Race and Nation: A comparison of the United States*. Cambridge University Press, 1998, page 7.

phase, because they represent a period where Masekela was unsure of his sound. This phase is emphasized in the study because these albums are crucial to Masekela's musical identity. The next three albums released constitute Masekela's experimenting phase, which differs from his previous releases because his sound had been established by this point. As it will be expanded in this thesis, the first three albums released have little in common with one another as Masekela was struggling to find his style. The following three albums constitute the experimenting phase, and these albums all have a distinguished Masekela style and are not as diverse. Masekela by this point had developed the foundation for his style and was focused more on developing his song writing.

The first chapter discusses Masekela's upbringing in South Africa and considers the racist social structures which shaped him. It begins with short historical introduction which chronicles the history of South Africa's marabi music scene and the rise of apartheid. The chapter continues by discussing the evolution of the marabi music scene which laid the foundation for South African jazz. As it will be explained further in this study, the musical culture of marabi is a direct result of the legislation placed to oppress the black South African community. This chapter references the ethnomusicological work of Christopher Ballantine, specifically focusing on his interpretation of the social roles of marabi. It is important to discuss marabi culture because it impacted Masekela's musical identity. In many ways, the story of marabi mirrors that of Masekela.

The second chapter begins with Masekela's transition to the US. It chronicles the series of events which brought Masekela to New York city and

discusses his school life. This chapter explores the challenges Masekela faced in 1960s America with respect to his South African status. The US public's prejudices towards Africa limited Masekela, as he did not meet US expectations of Africa, which created an authenticity complex for Masekela.

The third chapter covers Masekela's explorative phase of his formative years. The focus will be more on the explorative phase as it recounts the steps taken by Masekela which helped to overcome his authenticity complex and appeal to the US public. This thesis argues he accomplished this with the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966). For many reasons that will be expanded upon, this author argues that *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* is Masekela's first authentic album. In the analysis, I expand on the African musical elements found in Masekela's album as well as critiquing its cultural relevance. This chapter concludes by chronicling the albums in Masekela's experimental phase and examining their relevancy within his canon.

## Chapter One

Masekela was born into an increasingly aggressive political landscape that laid the cultural background for his childhood and teen years. His identity is rooted in his South African heritage, but it is also an aspect of his life which tortured him with guilt. Masekela's story begins with him leaving his home of South Africa, but to grasp a deeper understanding of who Masekela was, we must understand the cultural climate which molded his character and motivated him to leave.

This chapter contributes to the ongoing debate concerning the relationship between social and cultural identities. Musicologist Keith Negus argues that musical characteristics are not fixed to social groups but are “actively created through particular communication process, social practices and ‘articulations’ within specific circumstances.”<sup>12</sup> Given this approach to identity formation, the apartheid administration played a role in how Masekela not only views place in society but also his heritage. The truth of the matter is that the rise of apartheid affected Masekela as it dictated his decision making from early on his life. Apartheid created an environment which limited Masekela's social mobility and forced him into poverty, but it also reinforced his relationship with American jazz.

Before leaving South Africa, Masekela became active in the local music scene, which known as marabi. Marabi played an important role in shaping the environment that Masekela grew up in. It provided Masekela with the rituals and values which established his approach to his music and life. The following

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<sup>12</sup> Negus, Keith. *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CN, 1996, page 100.

segment explores the marabi tradition and its influence on Masekela and South African life; there is much to benefit from looking at Masekela's early life through the lens of the marabi tradition.

### **The Rise of Apartheid and the Marabi Scene**

Marabi is a South African music constructed through social events initiated by those in political power. The discovery of gold near Johannesburg in 1886 set in motion a series of political events leading to the industrialization of Johannesburg and creating the social atmosphere that would host marabi. In their study *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Clark and Worger argue this moment in South Africa as pivotal to how the state is viewed today:

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 dramatically altered the economic and political structure of southern Africa...For the first time, South Africa had an extremely valuable resource that attracted foreign capital and large-scale immigration. Discoveries of golds and diamonds in South Africa exceeded those in any other part of the world, and more foreign capital had been invested in South Africa than the rest of Africa combined.<sup>13</sup>

Britain colonized South Africa in the 1700's but recognized South Africa as its own republic in 1852. A stable relationship between the two states continued until 1886 when the discovery of gold mines reawakened Britain's interest in South Africa. Unimpressed with how the white Dutch natives of South Africa (known as "Boers") handled the gold mines, Britain invested in the gold industry and eventually dominated most of the South African gold market. The

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<sup>13</sup> Clark L. Nancy and William H. Worger. *South Africa: the rise and fall of apartheid*. Pearson Education Limited, New York, NY, 2004, page 14.

Boers became unhappy with the strong foreign influence on the gold market, as they felt they were being robbed of their potential profits. Most revenue from gold was reinvested in Europe and the US, which led the Boers to impose a tax on foreign investment to make up for economic loss. Britain chose to reject these imposed taxes, choosing instead to invade South Africa and leading to the South African War which lasted from 1899 through 1902. The Peace of Vereeniging Treaty was signed May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1902, and peacefully ended the South African War. The treaty allowed South Africa to become part of the British empire but remained self-ruled. Clark and Worger explain, “But how could the British return the Boers to self-rule without endangering the mining industry and thereby recreating the cycle of events that led to the war in 1899? The solution lay in the realization by both sides that profits for all could be made at the expense of African workers.”<sup>14</sup> Africans slowly took the place of all other foreign mine workers, replacing Chinese and Indian immigrants as they were cheap labor due to their subordinate social status. This was the first step to the systematic segregation and capitalistic exploitation of Africans.

Between October 1908 and May 1909, white British representatives met in South Africa to set the terms for a formal union they intended to create committed to segregation and national institutionalized white supremacy. This union came to fruition and political power in 1910, officially being recognized as the Union of South Africa. The union practiced a racist segregationist agenda, setting the

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<sup>14</sup> Clark L. Nancy and William H. Worger. *South Africa: the rise and fall of apartheid*. Pearson Education Limited, New York, NY, 2004, page 21.

foundation for the apartheid regime which would come into power later in 1948. The first stage of apartheid was the passing of legislation which officially separated the population by skin color into three social groups: whites, Africans (blacks), and colored (mixed). In the following years, the union helped pass more legislation effectively stripping Africans of their rights and relocating them at the expense of their land ownership.

In 1911, the Mines and Workers Act passed and restricted the jobs Africans could work, leaving them with low-wage, unskilled positions. To ensure a surplus of low wage workers, the union also passed the Native's Land Act in 1913 which limited the amount of land Africans could own. African farmers were forced to relocate to lands reserved for them which were of poor quality and unsustainable for harvesting. This immensely affected the farming population and hurt community morale. Economic instability left farmers with no real option but to the work in the mines under rigorous conditions and with poor pay. This led to the migration of African workers to the inner city of Johannesburg, which created overcrowded slums full of disillusioned workers with disposable income. *Sheebens*, or illegal home operated bars, became a popular staple of Johannesburg life. Many workers frequented these bars daily in search of a good time or to distract themselves from the harsh realities of life, and it is here the marabi style was born.<sup>15</sup>

Marabi formed during the 1920s, and it is regarded as the foundation for South African jazz (also known as mbaqanga). Although other instruments were

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<sup>15</sup> Ansell, Gwen. *Soweto Blues*. The Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, NY, 2004, page 29.

utilized, the keyboard has become the trademark instrument for marabi, as the style is based on the keyboard's interpretation of the chord progression associated with the music. Surviving for close to a century through the oral tradition, the music has become prominent folklore in South African popular music. Marabi players have claimed to be heavily inspired by the music of African Americans, making marabi, in some ways, the "ragtime (or stride) of South Africa." Unfortunately, the originators of marabi were never recorded so there is no definitive way of knowing. Marabi continues to exist today but only through influence, which leaves South African scholars speculating on what the original players may have sounded like.

The origin of the marabi name and its meaning remain somewhat of a mystery. Some historians argue it comes from the Sesotho language which is the language of the Basotho people who reside in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> Sesotho is one of eleven South African official languages.<sup>17</sup> In an interview, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim claims the style comes from Marabastad, a business area in Pretoria, the capital of South Africa.<sup>18</sup> Marabi players often lacked musical training, and the music is said to have been played on low quality instruments, usually cheap guitars or pianos.<sup>19</sup>

While Marabi music is viewed as the predecessor of South African jazz, its existence is heavily credited to African American music of 1920s through the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Appiah, Kwame Anthony and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of African American Experience*. Perseus Books Group, New York, NY, 1999, page 1763.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Andersson, Muff. *Music in the Mix: The story of South African popular music*. Raven Press. Johannesburg, South Africa, 1981, page 23-24.

1930s consisting of early jazz, ragtime, stride, and blues. The influence of American recordings and film in South Africa is incalculable. By the 1930s, both swing bands and vaudeville played in community events referred to as “Concert and Dance.”<sup>20</sup> Pass laws and curfew regulations kept the black South African community immobile, but despite these challenges, Africans devised ways to run indoor concerts, which featured vaudeville entertainment followed by dance music throughout the night.<sup>21</sup> It was through these social gatherings that African American music cemented itself into the South African culture and daily life.

During the 1920s and 1930s, American culture entered the South African economy through two important and vastly different mediums: film and gramophone records. Gramophones were a popular commodity in South Africa during the 1920s and continued to be for the next few decades. The music industry was booming in both the US and Britain during the swing era, and Britain suppliers began to sell gramophones in South Africa as there was a demand for them there. Music is viewed communally in African culture and is highly integral to society, so much so that in some African languages there is no word for music.<sup>22</sup> It is no surprise the gramophone popularized quickly becoming a staple of South African life. In an academic seminar, Hugh Masekela emphasized the importance the gramophone had in the culture while growing up:

It was just not in my household. Everyone had a gramophone. Gramophones in those days cost one pound seven and six. One pound seven and six today would probably be (pauses), I don't know how much

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<sup>20</sup> Ballantine, Christopher. “Concert and Dance: The Foundations of black Jazz in South Africa between the twenties and early forties.” *Popular Music*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1991), page 122.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, page 13.

(laughs). But people saved up for it, you know? Sometimes for a year...People used to buy them (records), two or three, and they play them on the porches. They just play them loud...and then there were records from the states. The big bands: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Glenn Miller, Tom Dorsey, and you know, and on and on, all the swing bands. Like a million of them.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the records imported to South Africa during the 1920s and 1930s were American and mainly from African American stars.<sup>24</sup> The record industry during this time had a modest presence in South Africa, and producers were hesitant to record African stars as their music was considered uncultured. Native South African music was culturally devalued and disenfranchised because of European colonization. The original Dutch settlers publicly shunned native African music leading to its slow extinction—this has resulted in African people of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century viewing the native music of South Africa as inferior to European music. This left Africans with no recorded music to call their own, and as a way of creating social identity within their circumstances, attached themselves symbolically to music produced by African Americans.

African Americans at the time were viewed as descendants of Africa, creating a link between the two social groups that gave Africans a sense of self accomplishment when they heard of the successes of their American counterparts. Inspired by what they heard; Africans emulated African American music paying homage to its players. African bands like the Jazz Maniacs and The Merry

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<sup>23</sup> Red Bull Music Academy. "Hugh Masekela Lecture (Cape Town 2003) | Red Bull Music Academy." Filmed (2003). YouTube video, 34:09. Posted (June 2017). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtcq6B\\_nyg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtcq6B_nyg).

<sup>24</sup> Ballantine, Christopher. "Concert and Dance: The Foundations of black Jazz in South Africa between the twenties and early forties." *Popular Music*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1991), page 122.

Blackbirds recorded in the 1930s producing a sound that was distinctly American and were prideful of doing so.<sup>25</sup>

South African musicologist Christopher Ballantine states that South Africa was “infatuated” with American culture during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>26</sup> He writes:

The premise upon which these exhortations and emulations were based, was the confident assertion of a racial and cultural identity between blacks at home and in the United States. People of colour in the USA – as an editorial in *Umteteli* insisted in 1932 – were ‘Africans in America’; *therefore* their achievements were a source of very great encouragement to ‘Africans in Africa’<sup>27</sup>

Along with Gramophones, film provided arguably a more important source of African American culture because of its visual component. Adding visuals to the music inflected a sense of style that heavily influenced African attire and musical attitudes. In the same seminar, Masekela commented on the influence African American culture had in the community through film:

And then there were Sephia Shorts, you know? In the movies. Half hour shorts. Sometimes they’d feature one or two bands, sometimes the Step Brothers or the Nicholas Brothers, they were tap dancers. And then people in the township Started to emulate, you know? To come up with their versions.<sup>28</sup>

Not only did musicians copy the swing style of African Americans, they also copied their attire and presentation, much of which was influenced from early films. Jonas Gwanga, trombonist and fellow peer of Masekela, reaffirms his bandmates’ sentiments towards the influence of African American culture:

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, page 124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, page 124.

<sup>28</sup> Red Bull Music Academy. “Hugh Masekela Lecture (Cape Town 2003) | Red Bull Music Academy.” Filmed (2003). YouTube video, 34:09. Posted (June 2017).

Our people were listening to American records and seeing from the movies what people were doing out there—the Cab Calloways, the Duke Ellingtons. All those movies came in... The Merry Blackbirds, the Jazz Maniacs were some of those disciplined bands, reading music, costumed and all that like any other big band in the US at the time.<sup>29</sup>

Seeing African Americans in films created a sense of inclusion and connection for Africans but this was illusionary. As musicologist Gwen Ansell has written, “the America that was loved was both illusory and real. The reality was that ‘Africans in America’ had achieved much formal emancipation from the kind of legal oppression that rendered life for all South Africans of color intolerable.”<sup>30</sup>

While African Americans had come a long way since the civil war, they clearly were still considered secondary citizens, which was publicly demonstrated though the rights afforded to them. The Harlem Renaissance may have started in the 1920s, but it was still amid segregationist policies of Jim Crow law, and it is only through retrospective speculation that the music during this time has been socially recognized. For most of the early 1920s, music made by African Americans was perceived as novelty and inferior to music of white composers.

US depictions of African Americans in film were perceived positively to Africans, but the same cannot be said for African Americans as film played a crucial role in the negative stereotyping and stigmatization of jazz artists in the US. According to author, Krin Gabbard, who writes on jazz and cinema, the history of both jazz and film is indistinguishable. Gabbard writes:

As jazz and narrative film—two areas in which Americans can claim some unique achievements—grew up together during the twentieth century, a

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<sup>29</sup> Interview for *Ubuyile*, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Ansell, Gwen. *Soweto Blues*, page 48.

jazz mythology developed to meet the needs of the paying audience. Although much jazz criticism has been devoted to unraveling that mythology and to taking political stances both acknowledged, the unravelers have created their own myths...the film industry is one of the many institutions that create mythology by transforming *history into nature*, by presenting culturally determined situations as the inevitable product of natural law.<sup>31</sup>

Early films were short, and directors relied on certain visual components to set up their scenes. Overtime, an African American jazz band came to signify to the audience that the venue being played at was a speakeasy. As a result, African American jazz musicians were perceived negatively by the public as they were “associated” with the criminal underworld. The portrayal of African Americans in early film created a problem decades later for artists who wanted jazz to be considered serious art. On the other hand, South African audiences were not aware of this social context. The irony is that while these jazz icons were displayed in film negatively from an American perspective, from the African perspective the movies painted them as stars.

The infatuation with African American culture led its music to be exceedingly popular among the local sheebens. The low wages paid to the mine workers and the lack of employment opportunities for women led to the rise of the sheeben culture. The purpose of sheebens were simple: they were economic means of profiting off home brewed beer. With pass laws in effect, Africans were unable to move around leaving them with few choices for entertainment. Musicians became a necessity in sheebens because they provided ambience and a

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<sup>31</sup> Gabbard, Krin. *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, page 1-2.

musical variety which the gramophone could not. Many of these musicians were not formally trained and learned their repertoire listening to African American records. It was in the interest of the player to be able to continue playing for long hours as this resulted in higher profits, so often musicians would improvise over common chord structures adding traditional African inspired inflections to their playing. The music and scene came to be known as marabi. Not all music that inspired marabi was sourced from US records, and players often included African Christian hymns and Afrikaans pop tunes of the time in their repertoire.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the African community gradually lost its civil rights through legislation, and segregation policies only worsened causing more Africans to move to the slum yards of Johannesburg. The slum yards became increasingly crowded over time, leading to more sheebens opening to supply the demand for beer and entertainment. During the 1920s and 1930s, marabi music could not be escaped in Johannesburg. Marabi and music in general became unavoidable during this time and the record industry in US began to take notice.

Backed by Decca records, Gallo records was founded in 1926 and became the first record company in South Africa dedicated to producing local musicians. Gallo records mainly produced music by traditional Zulu choir groups or gospel completely ignoring the market for marabi.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear why Gallo records ignored marabi music, but it can be speculated that Gallo saw no potential in the genre as it was overplayed and associated with illegal sheebens. While no

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<sup>32</sup> Ansell, Gwen. *Soweto Blues*, page 50.

commercial recordings of the original marabi players exist, the style has survived through rare recordings of marabi-inspired vaudeville, which illustrates the chord pattern and rhythm.<sup>33</sup> Anthropologists David Colon credits Gallos' talent scout, Griffiths Motsieloa, for overlooking marabi music.<sup>34</sup> Motsieloa, a former respected vaudeville musician, unfavored marabi because he viewed it as low-class, and it was only after African jazz bands began to polish their sound in later years that he even considered recording them.<sup>35</sup> South African jazz bands also hesitated recording with Gallo, as the label was notorious for cheating musicians through inequitable contracts.<sup>36</sup> After over a decade of anticipation, Gallo finally produced a single by a South African jazz band with the release of "Izikhalo Zika Z-Boy" by The Jazz Maniacs in 1939.<sup>37</sup>

While 1930s South African swing bands were dedicated to producing an identical American swing sound and avoided any African influence in their music, The Jazz Maniacs were the exception at the time and the public loved them for it.<sup>38</sup> The Jazz Maniacs were founded by Solomon "Zulu Boy" Cele, who is credited for bringing the marabi style out of the slums of Johannesburg.<sup>39</sup> Cele was a seasoned musician who had played marabi for years and eventually took up the saxophone when he switched to swing. Under the direction of Cele, The Jazz Maniacs hesitated fully copying American swing, choosing instead to incorporate

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<sup>33</sup> Ansell, *Soweto Blues*, pages 50.

<sup>34</sup> Colon, David, *In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Jacana Media Party, Auckland Park, South Africa, 2007, page 163-164.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 164.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

<sup>37</sup> Ansell, *Soweto Blues*, pages 50-51.

<sup>38</sup> Andersson, Muff. *Music in the Mix*, page 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, page 25.

a marabi feel in their compositions. Cele saw potential in combining musical elements of both cultures, and the release of “Izikhalo Zika Z-Boy” proved to be successful, which inspired other swing bands to adapt a marabi feel as well. Cele’s triumph was short-lived though, and in 1944 he mysteriously was found dead.<sup>40</sup> His death has been attributed to a heavy dispute between venue promoters over the loss of profits due to Cele’s constant double booking.<sup>41</sup> The music industry during this time had become notoriously violent and would continue this trend through the 1940s. After the death of Cele, Wilson “King Force” Silgee took over the band, and he changed the sound of the band undoing Cele’s original concept. Silgee possibly did this to secure the bands success, but it was ineffective. Township violence in the dance halls along with white club managers, who were reluctant to hire African jazz bands, eventually pressured the band to break up.<sup>42</sup>

The full band marabi sound of the 1940s eventually came to be known as mbaqanga. Mbaqanga is the Zulu word for, “stiff porridge,” which jazzmen of the time referenced as a “professional staple.”<sup>43</sup> It is not certain why the name change came to be but some speculate the change was made to disassociate mbaqanga from marabi as it had a reputation of being unsophisticated. Mbaqanga bands of the 1950s were trying to be taken seriously as artists, so it was in their best interest to distance themselves from the marabi culture to legitimize their

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<sup>40</sup> Ansell, Gwen. *Soweto Blues*, page 50.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Andersson, Muff. *Music in the Mix*, page 25.

<sup>43</sup> Coplan, David B., *The Concise Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, volume 1, “Black Popular Music in South Africa.” New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2008, page 116.

professionalism. As for the comparisons of the two musical styles, there is not much evidence showing the two styles as any different. Some musicians and scholars argue that mbaqanga and marabi are one in the same, interpreting marabi as the less-developed predecessor that eventually evolved into the full-band sound of mbaqanga. Others have viewed mbaqanga as ending marabi and claim the American swing influence popularized in the 1930s tarnished the authentic Africanism inherent in marabi.

Both marabi and mbaqanga are currently still active genres in South Africa, although the definitions of the genres have changed over the years. Before the late 1960s, the definition of mbaqanga was used more as an umbrella term that encompassed everything from traditional Zulu vocal groups to African swing. Today, the genre is divided into two main groups: vocal and instrumental. Vocal mbaqanga bands continue to be influenced by 1960s American R&B, and these pop vocal groups are more associated with genre today than their instrumental counterpart. Instrumental mbaqanga bands encompass a full township sound and, unlike their vocal counterparts, are more likely to incorporate improvisation into the music.

While it is still considered mbaqanga, modern instrumental groups are more widely known as African jazz and use mbaqanga is used to reference the specific sound of the 1940s and 1950s. As for marabi, the style over time became incorporated with mbaqanga and is used to refer to a specific rhythmic style and chord progression. Like the blues in the US, marabi has grown past a simple chord progression to a full-scale culture complete with mythology. South African

players often speak of the “marabi tradition” in a similar way that American and British artists reference the blues.

Historians argue as to when the marabi scene ended, but the scene had clearly died by the 1950s. According to Ansell, it was the passing of the Area Groups Act of 1950 that officially ended the marabi scene.<sup>44</sup> The act gave authorities the power to designate areas according to races. This led to many Africans being relocated to what were called, “black spots,” and many Africans lost their land and jobs in the process. While mixed races were once allowed to mingle with Africans, the Area Groups Act prohibited this, which led to the dismantling of the mixed race marabi and mbaqanga scene. The act temporarily shut the scene down for a couple of years, but as people settled, the scene came back in full force.

Unlike the previous music scene, this new scene was full of bands and artists who continued blending African musical elements with African American music. The scene overtime radicalized, and the government began to perceive jazz as a threat. Nonetheless, the 1950s was an important decade for the evolution of African jazz. It was in the 1950s that iconic African jazz groups such as the Jazz Pioneers and the Jazz Epistles came to fruition influencing future artists for decades to come. Once considered a genre, marabi today is seen more as a process, and many musicians claim their music is made in the marabi tradition. South African culture is adamant about preserving culture and creating music through the marabi tradition is seen as paying homage to past players. Marabi

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<sup>44</sup> Ansell, *Soweto*, page 61.

eventually reached the US in the 1960s as many South African musicians left South Africa in exile, Masekela being among them.

### **Born Amidst the rise of Apartheid<sup>45</sup>**

Hugh Masekela would be born on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939, amid the apartheid movement and about ten years before the Nationalist Party rose to power. Born in Kwa-Guqa, Witbank, South Africa, Masekela was the oldest child and only son of the family. The Masekela family comprised his father Thomas Salema Masakela, his mother, Pauline Bowers Masekela, and his three sisters Barbara, Elaine, and Sybil. In his memoir, Masekela writes about growing up alongside his grandmother Johana Bowers. As Masekela explains, “Grandparents raised just about all young children because moms and dads, needing to find steady, full time employment, had little time to raise their offspring properly,” and as he recalls, decent paying jobs were in Witwatersrand, thirty miles east of Johannesburg.

Masekela’s grandmother operated a Shebeen out of her home in Witbank. Masekela describes Witbank as a “miners’ town,” and many of these miners regularly visited Johana for her services. Johana always had plenty of business, as miners would routinely come to Johana after their long and arduous shift to willingly give away a day’s earnings for the opportunity to drink their sorrows away. The intensive labor of the mines often left its workers with short lives, many of which died of lung related diseases.

Masekela learned kindness from Johana but also learned to be stern,

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<sup>45</sup> Much of what is stated about Masekela’s life is sourced from his autobiography, *Still Grazing*, unless it is stated otherwise.

describing her as a complex woman who appeared to be two faced. On the one hand, Johana was a sweet compassionate grandmother who gave Masekela affection, yet she was intelligent enough to understand the harsh realities of life and fierce enough to handle any drunk losing control in her Sheeben. In 1945, Masekela's father found a job in Paynesville, a township in Springs, thirty miles from Johannesburg. Paynesville was a modern township with modern commodities. Masekela would be happy to move with his parents and looked forward to what Paynesville had to offer. Unfortunately, Paynesville quickly changed over a few years.

The National Party was elected to power three years into Masekela's stay in Paynesville. By 1950, the National Party passed the following laws: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages which outlawed racially mixed marriages; the Immortality Act banned mixed race sex relations; the Population Registration Act established a registration system categorizing every citizen as white, native, or colored (mixed); the Group Area Act controlled colored communities by prohibiting them from leaving assigning demographic areas; and the Suppression of Communism Act prohibited any form of communist formation including political parties or protests. Every aspect of daily life became politically controlled. The ideology of apartheid was not only to separate the races, but to ensure strategic inequality where only whites would enjoy political benefits.

The unjust rule of the National Party and their implementation of apartheid enraged Masekela. His mixed-race mother was of mixed race, and she was looked down upon by family members who questioned why Masekela's

father would marry such a woman with obvious racial flaws. Masekela would be discriminated against for being the son of a colored woman, but the colored community did not favor Masekela due to his dark skin tone. Race relations became constant in Masekela's mind, and as he got older, he feared his anger would get the best of him.

The implementation of apartheid separated families demographically, and many families lost their land to the government or other wealthy white men. Africans were designated to "black spots," and Masekela's grandfather lost his land and was forced to move in with Masekela's family in the busy city of Alexandria where he died later in 1952. Masekela witnessed his grandfather wither away after losing his land. Coupled with the social uprising happening in Alexandria at the time, Masekela's social identity formed during this time as he was coming of age, and it was clear to him that he was less than human to the government. To the whites in the National Party, he was just a source of cheap labor and easily disposable.

Around this time, Masekela's mother was hired as a social worker at Alexandria's Entokoweni Family Welfare Center where she met Father Trevor Huddleston. Huddleston was an activist fighting against the new policies of the National Party. He became a prominent figure in Johannesburg and surrounding towns in the following years. By 1949, Huddleston was elected Provincial of the Community of the Resurrection in South Africa, and he was made the Superintendent of St Peter's School where Masekela would attend. Huddleston became an active protester of apartheid once the Group Areas Act was enforced in

1950. Masekela said in his memoir, “few white people in south Africa were as respected and held in disdain as Father Trevor Huddleston.”<sup>46</sup>

Huddleston’s protest would cause him much controversy because he frequently clashed with authorities. In 1953, the apartheid administration impeded the Bantu Education Act which stated that blacks schooling would be handled not by the Ministry of Education but the Ministry of Affairs. This gave the government direct control on what blacks learned about their heritage and purpose in South African society. This issue was received with great protest, as it was a clear effort to discriminate blacks by lessening their opportunities. Huddleston refused to hand over St. Peters School to the government. His refusal to cooperate made him as a target of the National Party.

Huddleston’s life was perceived to be in danger, and he was recalled to England in December of 1955. He continued his activism from England, writing constantly about South Africa until his death in 1998. Huddleston made a massive impact on South African politics, but he also impacted the life of Masekela in many ways. As the superintendent of St. Peters school, Huddleston would not only get Masekela his first trumpet, but he would also use the full extent of his resources to ensure Masekela had the opportunity to learn and master the trumpet. Huddleston’s support for Masekela’s music gave Masekela the drive to play the trumpet but also the environment to learn. After leaving South Africa, Huddleston would use his connections to help Masekela escape the National Party and apartheid.

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<sup>46</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, 56.

### A Boy and His Trumpet

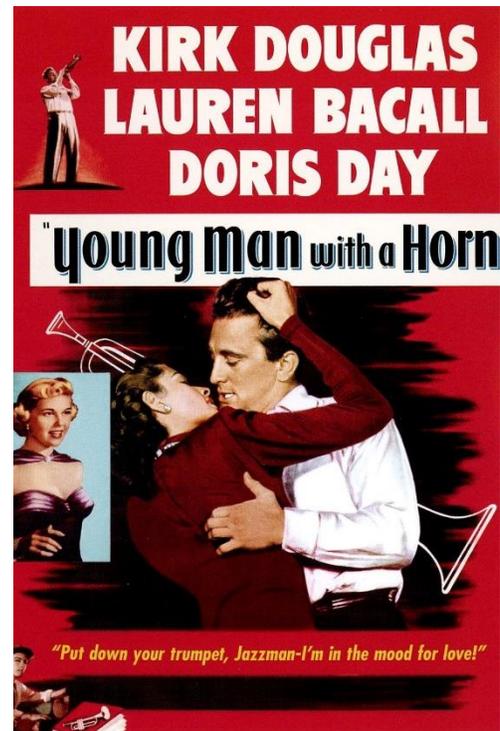
Masekela claims his interest for the trumpet came in September of 1953 when he saw the movie *Young Man with a Horn* in Harlem Cinema, but the classic Kirk Douglas film would not be Masekela's introduction to jazz.

Masekela's introduction to jazz would come when he attended St. Peters Schools boarding school after graduating from St. Michaels secondary school around 1952,

and it is there where Masekela's new-found friends first introduced him to jazz.

After the death of Godfrey, a close friend of Masekela who died from meningitis at St. Peppers after being delayed medical attention, Masekela began bonding with other colleagues by the names of Stompy, Monty, and Lawrence. Masekela's new group were sharp dressers, occasional shoplifters, and avid fans of American jazz and South African music. Masekela was interested in playing music, but his passion for jazz trumpet would arrive when he witnessed Kirk Douglas's portrayal of Rick Martin in *Young Man with Horn*. Once he saw the movie, Masekela's destiny in jazz was cemented. Masekela remembers:

I left the theatre not caring if I got caught or what punishment would bring. My resolve theater and then was to become a trumpet player. Kirk's portal of the jazz man was so brilliantly precocious and arrogant that we came of the moving swearing to spend the rest of our lives as musicians.



In the film, Kirk stood in front of the band in his snazzy threads, playing all the solos. He didn't take any shit from anybody, and the women were crazy about him<sup>47</sup>

Douglas's portrayal would prove to be more impacting than Masekela could have imagined. Having been in his teens and at a very impressionable time, Masekela's fascination with Kirk Douglas' rebellious behavior became a reality in his everyday life.

Huddleston had taken notice of Masekela at his time at St. Peters, and he had known of the boy from being acquainted with Masekela's mother. As Masekela recalls, Huddleston asked him what he wanted to do with his life, as he worried Masekela was hanging with the wrong crowd and heading down a bad path. Having Douglas' depiction of a jazz man still fresh in his mind, Masekela crazily asked for a trumpet. To the surprise of Masekela, Huddleston not only provided him with a trumpet, but also connected him to local players to provide him with lessons. Masekela's enthusiasm caught on to the other boys at St. Peters, and the formation of a band would soon take place.

Huddleston loved the group and was fascinated by the talent the students demonstrated, but, sadly, the Bantu Education act led to the closing of St. Peters. Huddleston would leave South Africa soon after in 1956. By this time, Masekela had garnered experience as a working musician, and his sights were set on a professional career. In 1956, he would transfer to Holy Cross preparatory school, but his poor attendance was an issue, and Masekela, losing all interest in school, dropped out. Masekela continued to collect jazz records and hone his skills as

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<sup>47</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, 59.

trumpeter but understood that his place in the apartheid system would never allow him to make a living as a musician. Masekela knew if he were to be a successful musician like his American icons, he would have to leave South Africa. Masekela asked Huddleston for assistance in securing a musical scholarship to leave South Africa. Huddleston helped Masekela leave a few years down the line. In the attempt to look for Sponsorship for Masekela, Huddleston, who at the time was associated with anti-apartheid activism, came across Louis Armstrong while he toured in England. He talked to Armstrong about Masekela and the struggle he and his students endured daily. Armstrong, moved by what he heard, sent Masekela one of his trumpets.

Masekela would not leave for about five years, during which he would make a name for himself playing trumpet around South Africa. He was a regular of the Bantu Men's Social club where he would play with older musicians and over time began keeping up with their skills. He took third and second chairs in sessions and was quickly replacing his mentors when they could not make recording sessions. This is also where Masekela met Miriam Makeba. Makeba at the time was an amateur singer but would garner world-renowned fame in the next few years. She would be discovered by the manager of the Manhattan Brothers. She would become famous in South Africa after being featured in *African Jazz and Variety*, a local series for African jazz players.

Masekela claims to have met Makeba and had a short-lived romantic affair with her during this time. Masekela recalls that Makeba had multiple lovers besides himself, and that they were kept a secret from the public. Makeba was

almost a decade older and was establishing herself as serious musician. In her memoir, *Makeba: My Story*, Makeba makes no mention of this affair and briefly discusses Masekela during this time. She writes, “In the Orchestra is a young man named Hugh Masekela. Hughie and I have been friends for years, ever since he was fourteen-year-old student at Huddleston Boy’s School and I was a twenty-one-year-old singer in the Manhattan Brothers.”<sup>48</sup> If this statement is true, more than likely Makeba mentioned Masekela in this way to avoid the stigmatization of their age difference especially at that time. There is some credibility to Masekela’s claim, as there have been other accounts of Makeba’s wild and erratic behavior.

Masekela had dropped out of school in 1956 and had successfully secured working with touring bands at seventeen years of age. During this period, Masekela continued tightening his horn playing as much as he indulged in the traveling musician’s life of sex and alcohol. Masekela recalls nights of prostitutes and constant drinking, one night after another. His big break came when he was hired for *King Kong*: South Africa’s first black jazz musical. Masekela remembers the challenges of working on the set of *King Kong* but recalls the excitement he felt working on something so spectacular.

*King Kong* was the brainchild of Harry Bloom, Todd Matshikiza, and Clive Menell, and it would be Africa’s first all-black musical in South African History. It tells the real-life story of African boxer Ezekiel Dlhmini. Dlhmini’s story is tragic and profoundly spoke to the people of Africa in those dark times. Dlhmini was the South African boxing champion who was so strong and giant he

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<sup>48</sup> Makeba, *Makeba: My Story*, 69.

was nicknamed “King Kong.” Makeba who played the champions love interest in the musical remembers:

But his (King Kong’s) life was full of frustration, and it ended tragically because the authorities would not let him continue his fighting. They would not let him travel overseas, where his true competition was. This is because some years before another great African Champion, Jake Tule, who was also undefeated at home, went to England and killed the first man he fought. When Tule came home, he had a hero’s welcome. The authorities were upset: This black man kills a white, and his people treat him as a hero. They were not going to let that happen again. So Dlhmini was not permitted to board. His talent was left to rust. He took to drink<sup>49</sup>

*King Kong* told a story the South African people could relate too. Ironically, while Dlhmini’s story is tragic, the musical itself was a beacon of hope for the blacks of South Africa. Never had there been a play with an all-black cast, but more importantly the blacks of South Africa believed this was a story about them and for them. Within apartheid, there were few things people felt belonged to them, and there was a sense of pride in the musical. The production had many issues, most of which dealt with pass laws, but the musical became a classic in South Africa and hit abroad. In 2017, nearly 60 years later, *King Kong* would be rereleased in South Africa to great success. In a small segment released by The Fugard Theatre, the theater which held the new production, Esme Matshikiza, widow of Todd Matshikiza reflects on those times fondly, “It was as amateur, I suppose as you could get in terms of creating a musical, but we were enthusiastic about it and got more and more engrossed.”<sup>50</sup>

Morris Goldberg was a musician living in Cape Town when he met

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<sup>49</sup> Makeba, *Makeba: My Story*, 68.

<sup>50</sup> The Fugard Theatre. “King Kong South Africa - A Reflection.” July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, YouTube video, 5:47. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JOYA2Cn-4>.

Masekela in 1959, and he was kind enough to meet with me for an in-person interview.<sup>51</sup> As of the writing of this thesis, Goldberg lives in New York City where he is an active musician, and I reached him through his booking email and interviewed him in his Manhattan apartment in October of 2018. Goldberg stands to be one of the last surviving pioneers of the late 1950s South African jazz scene and has known Masekela for most of his life. His friendship with Masekela spanned nearly sixty years, and his perspective is important to this work because he knew Masekela before and after his formative years. His experience gives insight to what Masekela was like as an up-and-coming musician in the early 1960s.

Coming from a musical family, Goldberg began playing clarinet when he was fourteen years old after begging his father for one. Goldberg's father was stern and did not want his son to be stigmatized for being a musician. He knew Goldberg would face discrimination, but after finally relenting and purchasing him a clarinet, Goldberg's father surprised him by telling him that he played the clarinet too as a boy. This was very surprising to Goldberg, who would have never suspected this about his father. As he recounted in the interview, Goldberg's parents migrated from Lithuania to South Africa, and when they did so, "they left that life behind." They never spoke of it. During the interview, Goldberg recalls spending long hours practicing with Masekela and others from the musical. "When I was nineteen years old, I met Hugh Masekela," says Goldberg, "He came to town. He was part of the band that was playing for a musical called *King*

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<sup>51</sup>Refer to the appendix on page 106 for full transcription of the interview.

*Kong.*” He recounts:

[*King Kong*] is quite a historic musical. The story was about a boxer called King Kong, but it featured Miriam Makeba, who you know about of course, and some other well-known people in Showbiz in South Africa. Anyhow, Hugh Masekela was in the band and Jonas Gwunba was a trombone player. They were friends. They had gone to some school in Johannesburg that was run by Father Trevor Huddleston...so yeah, I met Hugh.

By 1959, Masekela was playing frequently, and his career as a musician was taking off in South Africa. Apart from playing in *King Kong*, Masekela was part of two other major musical groups in South Africa: African Jazz and Variety, and The Jazz Epistles. In respect to African jazz and variety, Goldberg remembers, “There was also another musical troupe called “African Jazz and Variety” that toured South Africa. I don't know how the guy did it in the apartheid era, but he managed to...They were like a 40-member group.”

The “guy” Goldberg is referring to is white promoter Alfred Herbert, who created African Jazz and Variety as an entrepreneurial venture in 1952. There is not much information available on Herbert, and what is available is conflictive. On the one hand, Herbert is portrayed positively, as he employed black musicians and allegedly paid them well, but Herbert is also depicted as exploiting black musicians for profit. According to the South African history organization, black musicians in the 1950s were heavily exploited as they could not obtain the permits necessary to perform in clubs or events, and this led them to have to rely on white promoters to secure engagements.

While African jazz and variety offered its musicians control over their craft, the show exclusively played to white audiences. However, it has been stated

that Herbert changed authentic African elements of the show to suit his white audiences, but this was customary in the South African music industry. To further explain, consider this excerpt from *Rand Daily Mail*, a South African anti-apartheid newspaper, which states:

English speaking South Africans have traditionally regarded things local as inferior to things imported. This state of mind is a colonial legacy, and only in the manufacturing field is it completely eradicated. In media and the arts, we still say, “well for a local, it’s not too bad.” Local pop musicians are treated as some sort of cripples who need sympathy and understanding rather than objective appraisal.<sup>52</sup>

This type of thinking may be what led Masekela to leave South Africa, but it also is what made his other South African group, The Jazz Epistles, so memorable in South African history.

Many sources consider John Mehegan’s 1959 South African concert, lecture, and research tour as helping in the formation of The Jazz Epistles. Mehegan is an iconic name in jazz academia and was teaching at the Juilliard School of Music while he conducted his tour. He published a comprehensive textbook series on jazz theory, and his dedication to the craft has been greatly admired by many. In 1959, he arrived in South Africa where he played a crucial role in both Masekela’s and Goldberg’s career. Mehegan’s tour in South Africa was short but he was able to record three albums in that time called *Jazz in Africa vol. 1*, *Jazz in Africa vol.2*, and *John’s Mehegan’s Piano in Gold Burg*. The first two albums are the predecessors for The Jazz Epistles, but the third is not well known. In an interview with Don Albert, Goldberg briefly mentions that he

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<sup>52</sup> Andersson, Muff. *Music in the Mix: The Story of South African Popular Music*. Raven Press. Johannesburg, South Africa, 1981, page 51.

studied with Mehegan for a total of six hours.<sup>53</sup> He practiced what Mehegan had taught him, but it is not clear when he did record the album.

Kippie Moeketsi, Jonas Gwanga, and Masakela played on both volumes of *Jazz in Africa*. Both albums consist of wide range of jazz tunes ranging from traditional African compositions to modern bebop tunes, such as “Yardbird Suite.” This led them to participate in the Shanty Town Sextet and later as part of the *King Kong* musical, but the musicians had a desire to play in a smaller and more vivacious modern group. In *Soweto Blues: jazz, popular music, and politics in South Africa*, Ansell interviewed Gwanga, asking him how the group initiated. According to Gwanga, the group was playing originally with bassist Mongezi Velelo and drummer Early Mabuza, but decided they preferred other musicians from Cape Town, which at the time was hosting an underground jazz movement.<sup>54</sup> Despite not being in the iconic group, both Velelo and Mabuza went on to become prominent names in South African jazz.

In the same interview, Gwanga states that the group originally was set to play a festival in Switzerland, and they were focused on finding the best available players in South Africa for their group.<sup>55</sup> Moeketsi had met Abdullah Ibrahim (also known as “Dollar Brand”) while touring, and he joined the group. Ibrahim introduced pianist Johnny Gertze to the group, and drummer Makhaya Ntshoko

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<sup>53</sup> Goldberg, Morris. (jazz musician). interviewed by Don Albert. 2006. Published January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for Artslink. Accessed August 14, 2020, [https://www.artlink.co.za/news\\_article.htm?contentID=28990](https://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=28990).

<sup>54</sup> Ansell, Gwen. *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular music and politics in South America* (New York: Continuum International publishing, 2004), 118.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

soon joined after.<sup>56</sup> The group practiced for months becoming tight knit musically. Unfortunately, the trip to Switzerland never came to realization as the Sharpeville Massacre placed South Africa in a “State of Emergency,” limiting who was able to leave the country.<sup>57</sup> Rather than disbanding, the group, the members focused on writing original compositions. These compositions would later become *The Jazz Epistles: Verse 1*.

The Jazz Epistles formed in 1959, and by December of that year they had become a hit in Cape Town and Johannesburg. In early 1960, Gallo Records brought The Jazz Epistles into the studio to record their album. Gallo Records is still producing records, as of the writing of this thesis. According to the official Gallo website, the record company opened in 1926 and is the oldest independent record label in South Africa.<sup>58</sup> According to Masekela, the whole session took around two hours, as the musicians knew their music exceptionally well, but they were paid only sixty pounds and offered no contract. Little did Masekela know at the time that the album would become iconic in South Africa.

In an article for NPR’s “Jazz Night in America,” Simon Rentner, a New York journalist, producer, and radio host, discussed the impact the album had in South Africa. In his segment, he mentions that only 500 copies of the album were issued, which makes it extraordinary that it has survived this long. He goes on to say:

During this period, South Africa's white nationalists in power were in the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 118-119.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>58</sup> Gallo Recors. “Gallo Record Company Record contact page,” accessed July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://gallo.co.za/contact/>.

process of installing apartheid, one of the cruelest human experiments in modern history. They didn't think too fondly of jazz. In fact, jazz was so forbidden that it spawned secret jazz listening parties, where people would travel long distances to hear, say, the latest Miles Davis recording. Jazz symbolized what the white nationalist government feared most: the social mixing of racial groups.<sup>59</sup>

The creative work of The Jazz Epistles became something of a rebellious act, as it represented not only diversity among races, but constituted the reality that South African musicians could play as well as their American counterparts. The album became a symbol of pride for South African blacks who faced structural racism in their daily lives. The success of the album posed a threat for the government and the apartheid regime, especially since the work was completely original. As Ansell has said in an interview:

You had a collection of black musicians who were saying very defiantly: “We are here, we are modern-city people. There is no way you are going to exclude us from modern life.” And that is the beautiful undertone in that music. Basically, for the apartheid regime, this very kind of modern, non-tribal urban music was something they couldn't cope with. It didn't fit in to their perception of what Africans should be doing.<sup>60</sup>

Jazz, in the eyes of some, was becoming too strong an issue to ignore, so the government began to crack down on jazz clubs and its players. South African blacks began constructing their own identity through jazz and setting themselves apart and making a statement which the government considered threatening. As a statement of their identity, jazz musicians and active fans began emulating American beboppers in their mannerisms and clothing style. The bohemian

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<sup>59</sup> Rentner, Simon, “The Legacy Of The Jazz Epistles, South Africa's Short-Lived But Historic Group,” *NPRs Jazz Night in America*, published April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017, accessed August 14, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/525696698/the-legacy-of-the-jazz-epistles-south-africas-short-lived-but-historic-group>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

undertones of the bebop movement clashed heavily with South Africa's racial etiquette and its racial laws. While modern jazz in South Africa never hit mainstream, those in favor of the movement ensured its impact through outspoken activism and rebuttal of racial norms. Another significant issue was that jazz was inspiring mix-raced groups and venues, a situation deemed intolerable by the government.

During the early 1960s, the government began to crack down heavily on the mixed-race jazz scene. Police progressively shut down nightclubs and enforced laws prohibiting blacks from playing for white audiences. They also took measures to ensure that mixed-race groups were outlawed. The government effectively declared war on jazz. These changes in policy resulted in The Jazz Epistles being unable to practice or perform which ultimately began the demise of the group.

Masekela's luck changed early in 1960. After four years of writing to Father Huddleston, Masekela was accepted to Guildhall School of music in London. In May of 1960, after securing a passport, Masekela left South Africa for Europe. He wrote in his memoir, "although I was very sad to be leaving, deep in my heart I was excited and relieved to be leaving this cursed, godforsaken land."<sup>61</sup>

### **The Liberal vs The Radical View**

While rarely discussed in the narrative of Masekela, the marabi tradition fostered the musical traditions Masekela inherited and affected him in more ways

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<sup>61</sup> Masekela, *Grazing*, page 109.

than he could imagine. The tradition of Marabi helped Masekela define the purpose of his musical work, but it also enforced a sense of inferiority as the music was publicly shunned. Much of why marabi is disregarded ties with its origin. The industrialization of South Africa in the late 1800s led to systematic segregation policies set in place to help develop the gold industry—the marabi tradition is a byproduct of these policy changes. The legislation passed by the states was essential in the social domination of black South Africans, because it created social boundaries based on race which aided in the formation of group and self-identity formation. Since marabi was created through the process of domination, those in power help construct the identities of those tied with the genre. Thus, people identified with the music on a cultural level making the industry able to control social identity through the characteristics attributed to said genre.

The marabi tradition developed because of capitalistic endeavors; these endeavors clash with the traditional views on music held by native South Africans. Traditionally speaking, South African music is viewed communally. Gramophone records imported into South Africa challenged these cultural perspectives as they presented music as a commodity. In some respects, modern South African musical culture has been constructed through transnational influence making marabi a reflection of US black culture. Therefore, American jazz became a marker for success and authenticity within the South African culture. The marabi tradition reflects the cultural legacy of colonialism, and for this reason the music is made under the influence of the oppressor and to appease

those in power.<sup>62</sup> The influence of colonialism on South African music altered how music was traditionally perceived, and, from a cultural standpoint, influenced the social role of marabi.

The social role of marabi in South African culture is interpreted into two distinct views: The Liberal and Radical view. In the liberal view, black South African musicians appealed to the morality of their white oppressors using music as a form of moral persuasion.<sup>63</sup> By being able to play music outside of what is expected from them, black South African musicians used music to exemplify the stance claiming their social worth in society. Other musicians also chose to pursue fame in fortune as a means of escapism. Rather than appealing to morality or ethics, this view appeals to the economics. While traditional African music is communal and has no “stars” as part of its culture, this new idea of “fame and fortune” became a driving force for black South African musicians to escape poverty.

As for the radical view, these musicians differed from those within the liberal view because they challenged the status quo with their music. This includes protest music which accompanied organizational rallies who were advocating for social change. For example, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) often advocated for mine workers and hosted large events with live music.<sup>64</sup> The music itself became associated with the motives of the union and social change in general. The other aspect of the radical view

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<sup>62</sup> Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, page 45.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, page 55.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, page 67.

encompasses musicians who played American music with “African style.”<sup>65</sup> This refers to music that challenges the status quo through stylistic choice. The blending of African elements with African American music and the appropriation of these musical styles serve a political stance against the injustices of apartheid as they promote self-expression and inclusivity.

This author contends that given Masekela’s background and considering the role of jazz in South Africa, it can be surmised that Masekela’s actions feel in line with the liberal view. First and foremost, Masekela desired to play American jazz as the genre had garnered prestige in South African culture. Masekela saw his music as a means of escaping poverty and possibly South Africa. He understood that playing authentic American jazz had more of a chance to gain wealth than playing South African township music. Masekela’s initial rejection of South African music stems from the systemic racism of apartheid which deemed his music inferior and created a conundrum. On the one hand, Masekela was raised and shaped by the marabi tradition, but on the other hand, playing the township music associated with the marabi scene would only reaffirm his inferiority. Mastering American jazz became an option for Masekela to elevate his social status through economic means. American jazz became a way to escape not just poverty but also a beacon of self-worth.

When Masekela transitioned to American culture, his view of the role of music changed. This was not instant but over his career. Masekela’s music slowly became radicalized through the 1960s. Given the time periods and the social

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, page 73.

changes occurring in the 1960s, Masekela radicalized his music to stay relevant. Masekela's jazz skills held prestige in South Africa, but the same prestige would not carry over. Black South Africans who could play authentic American jazz were an anomaly, and Masekela's prestige extended farther as he played modern jazz. In the US, Masekela was just another black bebopper in a genre which was fading.

The cultural climate would prove to be an issue for Masekela as he entered the US at time when the black identity began to take form. As African Americans gained equal representation through legislative changes, the African American culture was able to form independently from the white mainstream. The era of the "African negro," had come to an end giving rise to the black identity, much of which was encapsulated with the slogan "Black Power." Kwame Ture, who coined the slogan, and Charles V. Hamilton have written about this time in the US:

Through this country, vast segments of black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture: to create their own sense of community and togetherness. There is a growing resentment for the term, "Negro," for example, because this term is the invention of our oppressor; it is his image of us that he describes. Many blacks are now calling themselves African Americans, Afro-Americans, or black people because that is our image of ourselves.<sup>66</sup>

The creation of the black identity led the African American community to distance themselves from Africa as they now held equal citizenship. This placed Masekela in an awkward position with respect to his African identity. When the African

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<sup>66</sup> Ture, Kwame and Charles V. Hamilton. *Black Power: The politics of Liberation*. Vintage Books, New York, NY, 1967, page 37.

American community gained representation and elevated in privilege, the views of Africa aligned with those of the mainstream.

Masekela learned quickly that the US was not what he had imagined it to be. While he experienced certain freedoms in the US, which he was not afforded in South Africa, in other ways he was limited by how the public would perceive him. Masekela was eager to make albums, but record companies found it difficult to advertise Masekela's music. The following chapter elaborates on Masekela's transition to the US and the challenges he faced both racially and culturally. The social role jazz held for Masekela in South Africa would be incompatible with how jazz was perceived in the US, placing him in an authenticity complex.

## Chapter Two

The scene of 1960's New York surprised the young South African trumpeter who had grown to expect something much more glamorous and sophisticated from the city he had been romanticizing all his teen years. The likes of Dizzy Gillespie and Clifford Brown were Gods to Masekela. The music from their records was enough to instill a lifelong passion for music, but the cacophonous nature of New York Life initially surprised Masekela. He wrote in his memoir *Still Grazing*:

I couldn't believe this was the same New York City I heard about and seen in movies. From the taxi blur of people in the millions scampering to work, dirty streets, busses, taxis, and shabby tenement buildings, open manholes, and newly dug ditches with hundreds of men in hard hats working on construction sites and street paving gangs. Signs all over read, DIG WE MUST FOR BETTER NEW YORK. Police cars and fire engines with screaming sirens hurried to one crisis or another, battling to get through the congested traffic. Window washers hung suspended on scaffolding high up against buildings whose windows were sixty stories up in the air. Blaring car horns, stuttering air hammers, screeching tires, screaming voices; street sweepers; garbage collectors running to and from grubby, noisy garbage trucks, toting gigantic plastic bags of trash; cyclists, joggers, and dog shit on the sidewalk—I could not believe the pandemonium. I quietly wondered if I had made the right decision in coming to America. Was this madness worth all the trouble I had gone through?<sup>67</sup>

Masekela's doubts would soon fade and he began to find wonder in the city. After meeting some of the jazz legends of the time (Davis, Gillespie, Monk, the list goes on...), Masekela knew he had made the right decision to come to the US. The transition for Masekela would not be an easy one. During his early years in New York, Masekela would constantly reconsider his stay in the US, desiring to

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<sup>67</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, pg. 122.

return to South Africa but this was not a possibility in the early 1960s. His return to Johannesburg would not be taken favorably by the South African government. In the eyes of the government, Masekela was a traitor and his defiance of the government was worthy of a life in prison or death. This resulted in a growing resentment, one that would follow him for the next thirty years of his life.

This chapter focuses on Masekela's first years in the US and discusses the cultural climate of the 1960s. It discusses his encounter with US racism and the implications of his African status. It was during this time which Masekela attended the Manhattan School of Music. The school is instrumental in Masekela's career because it legitimized his musicianship and allowed him to expand his network, and it would be Masekela's introduction into American culture.

Masekela landed in London on Wednesday May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1960.<sup>68</sup> His time in London would be short. According to his memoir, Masekela states Makeba visited him during his London stay, and it is she who told him of his acceptance to the Manhattan School of Music. In his memoir, Masekela is very brief, making it seem as though his transition to New York was mere coincidence, but this is not the whole story. In a strange twist of events, Harry Belafonte, the American singer who popularized calypso music in the 1950s with his hit "Banana Boat Song," helped Masekela reach New York by sponsoring him for his visa and paying for most of his education.

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<sup>68</sup>Masekela, *Still Grazing*, 110.

While Belafonte was in London on tour in the summer of 1960, he received an unexpected visit from Father Huddleston.<sup>69</sup> At the time, Father Huddleston had been promoting a movie by New York documentary filmmaker Lionel Rogosin called *Come back Africa*.<sup>70</sup> Rogosin started his film career in the mid-50s. His first film, *On the Bowery*, a documentary on the homeless of New York, reaped Rogosin with recognition and garnered him the Grand Prize at the 1956 Venice film festival.<sup>71</sup> Staying on a similar humanitarian path, Rogosin tackled South Africa's apartheid regime for his second film. In *Come Back Africa*, Rogosin went on site to Johannesburg to film the atrocities of apartheid firsthand and was able to do so by lying to the government about his intentions.<sup>72</sup> As far as the government knew, Rogosin was documenting a musical travelogue.<sup>73</sup> While the film raised awareness about apartheid, it created a problem for Father Huddleston, which is what had particularly brought him to Belafonte.

The film made an impression at the Venice Film Festival and the news reached the South African government who declared that anyone who participated in the film would be punished.<sup>74</sup> Some of Father Huddleston's students had been in the film and were in London promoting the film at the time. Their visas would expire soon, which placed them in a tough situation as they would have to return to South Africa and face possible jail time. Father Huddleston asked if Belafonte

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<sup>69</sup> Belafonte, *My Song*, 201.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> "Lionel Rogosin Biography," The Official Lionel Rogosin Web page, accessed August 3, 2017. <https://www.lionelrogosin.org/AboutLR.html>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Belafonte, *My Song*, 201.

could help the children in any way. Belafonte would agree to help after he watched the film.<sup>75</sup> Belafonte used his civil rights connections to expand the student's visas and helped them secure a path to residency in London.<sup>76</sup>

*Come back Africa* is typically regarded as being responsible for Makeba's global fame and departure from South Africa. According to her memoir, Makeba states that two years after the filming of *Comeback Africa*, she was contacted by Rogosin who informed her that she had made an impression in the film, and he arranged for Makeba to fly out of South Africa.<sup>77</sup> Makeba is featured in one scene in which she sings with an accompanying guitarist to a small audience. Her performance in the film was powerful and caught the attention of Belafonte. Belafonte would go on to manage Makeba's career, and he featured her on his tour which greatly elevated her career.

After the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, the political tension increased in South Africa worrying Makeba as she feared her friends and family were in danger. Belafonte writes in his autobiography,

I spent long hours talking about (the massacre) with Miriam, whose friends and family were in immediate danger. Miriam was especially worried about Hugh Masekela, a brilliant young horn player still living in South Africa... Soon Hugh would be banished from the country, and I would help him resettle in the United States, paying for him to go to the Manhattan School of Music and helping him get his musician's union card.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Belafonte, *My Song*, 202.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, pg. 73.

<sup>78</sup> Belafonte, *My Song*, pg. 213.

Masekela was more than excited to leave London and come to New York City as the city was regarded as the modern jazz capital of the world. Upon arriving, Masekela would live with Makeba. By now, Makeba was busy with her own career leaving Masekela to have the apartment mostly to himself. She and Belafonte toured heavily together during this time. Belafonte met Masekela about a year later in the spring of 1961.<sup>79</sup> Masekela speaks fondly of Belafonte, and he mentions in his memoir that he views Belafonte as a father figure. He wrote, “Over the years Harry came to be more than a benefactor to me. He has been a father to me, the strongest influence on my stage presentation, my community activism, and my commitment to the fight for human rights.”<sup>80</sup>

Belafonte supported Masekela financially for most of his school years. Makeba initially sponsored Masekela when he first arrived to the United States in the late summer of 1960, but the financial burden would be transferred to the Belafonte Foundation in 1961.<sup>81</sup> The Belafonte foundation provided Masekela with a job working with the Library of Harbel and Clara Music, a publishing company of Belafonte’s estate. Masekela worked under Bob Bollard, Belafonte’s production manager transcribing calypso music for copyright purposes. He was paid five dollars an hour apart from receiving a \$190 monthly living stipend.<sup>82</sup>

Belafonte helped Masekela’s career immensely. It was through Belafonte’s connections and finances that Masekela was able to record two albums for

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<sup>79</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, pg. 145.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 145-146.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 146.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Mercury Records, both of which undersold. While the records for Mercury proved to be unsuccessful, they gave Masekela a professional platform which allowed him to record hit albums for other record companies.

### **The Manhattan School of Music**

The Manhattan School of Music was founded in 1918 by Janet Daniels Schenck.<sup>83</sup> Daniels was an accomplished pianist who studied at Columbia University and received a graduate degree from the New York School of Social Work. It was there that Daniels became interested in New York's incoming immigrant population. Daniels wished to help the immigrant communities and felt she could help the community by teaching them music. Her passion led her to create the Manhattan School of Music in 1917, but the school would not be officially running until 1918. While at first the school was somewhat funded through community effort and sustained through donations, by 1943 it had become an accredited college offering a degree in music.<sup>84</sup>

While the school has been around a century, it is only recently that the school has added a full-time archivist. John K. Blanchard is the Manhattan School of Music's first Institutional Historian and Director of Archives as of the writing

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<sup>83</sup>"History: Meet our Founder," The Manhattan School of Music, accessed September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, <https://www.msmnyc.edu/about/history/meet-our-founder/>

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

of this thesis.<sup>85</sup> Blanchard has been with the Manhattan school of since 1989, and he currently is working to make as much of the school's archive available online. He was kind enough to speak to me over the phone and verify information provided from Masekela's memoir.<sup>86</sup>

Blanchard verified that Masekela attended the Manhattan School of Music from Fall of 1960 to Spring of 1964. He graduated and received a Bachelor of Arts in Music with a focus in classical trumpet. While it may seem odd that Masekela majored in classical music, it was still uncommon to teach jazz in a school setting in the early 1960s. The Manhattan School of Music would not have an official jazz program complete with full courses and a stage band until 1971.

Blanchard verified to me that Cecil Collins was Masekela's assigned mentor. Collins was a well-established musician who had participated in the Metropolitan Orchestra from 1943-1946. Collins also attended the Manhattan School of Music. He completed eleven semesters before dropping out but was eventually given an honorary degree by the school. Blanchard explained that Collins' career most likely took off, leaving him with no time for school. This is common for the school as some of its students begin playing professionally while still enrolled in courses.

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<sup>85</sup> Blanchard, John. K, "Archival Treasures: Blasts from Our Past," The Manhattan School of Music, accessed September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://connect.msmlnyc.edu/Archival\\_Treasures\\_Blasts\\_from\\_Our\\_Past](https://connect.msmlnyc.edu/Archival_Treasures_Blasts_from_Our_Past)

<sup>86</sup> I was unfortunately unable to record my conversation with Blanchard. All the information provided comes from recollection of the conversation and the notes I took while speaking to Blanchard.

Masekela does not hold a strong presence in the archives at the Manhattan School of Music, suggesting that he was not actively involved in school activities. Masekela mentions that he struggled in his studies at first, which was most likely due to a musical curriculum that did not interest him. Goldberg arrived in New York in 1962 where he lived briefly with Masekela. During our interview, Goldberg commented that the two played together for long hours practicing “Donna Lee.” He said:

I lived on West 87<sup>th</sup> Street, that’s where the apartment was for the first four months, then I got my own place. And we used to practice together every day. Our daily practice was Donna Lee by Charlie Parker. And it was an interesting time, you know, we were students and we had no money, I mean, whatever we had went to food, rent, whatever. Some of it went to school. But he had gotten help. I think he had scholarships. I got some scholarships after the first semester. Well, as I said before, we are struggling, you know, we were students. We had no money, but there were two people who were very good to us, and one was Mirriam Makeba. She lived on West 97<sup>th</sup> Street and Park West Village. And her star was rising rapidly from that point. And we used to go over to her apartment twice a week, she would feed us. She was great cook. She loved to cook. We would eat dinner with her and a friend of ours also, Saul, he’d take us out for a meal every now and then. So, we got by you know, with whatever it was. I worked part time. Then Hugh formed his first group. I think it was the first gig I played with him. And we played at the Apollo Theater. And that group was Hugh, myself, Larry Willis on piano, Eddie Gomez on bass and Henry Jenkins on drums.

Eddie Gomez played briefly with Masekela but found success early on playing with the likes of Gerry Mulligan, Thelonious Monk, and Bill Evans.<sup>87</sup> Larry Willis and Henry Jenkins would go on to become Masekela’s backing group

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<sup>87</sup> “Eddie Gomez On Piano Jazz,” NPR Music, <https://www.npr.org/2011/08/26/139975002/eddie-gomez-on-piano-jazz>, accessed September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

along with Harold Dotson on bass for the next few years. It would be with this rhythm section that Masekela achieved success in 1966.

Masekela's experience at the Manhattan School of Music was significant for many reasons. The school fostered Masekela's skills, but also legitimized his musicianship within the US. The connections he made at the school helped propel his career by extending his network. Bellefonte's connections to the music industry also paved the way for Masekela's first two album releases. Despite these factors, his rise to fame was not easy. The racial discrimination Masekela confronted in South Africa would continue in the US. While Masekela faced racial boundaries back home, the racial boundaries in the US functioned differently, especially with respect to his African status.

### **Culture Shock and the African American Experience**

In an interview, Masekela once claimed the first time he ever experienced racism was in 1945.<sup>88</sup> As he recounted:

It was about 1945 and my uncle had a brand-new Chevrolet. We were always dressed in fancy clothes, which later gave us an appreciation for cashmere and quality. We went to town to do some shopping with my mom and when we came out, some white Afrikaner farm kids were sitting in an open truck. They had dirty faces and cracked, muddy feet. They pointed at us and I will never forget what they said: "Oh, look, Mommy, look at the baboons. Why are they so nicely dressed?"<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Katz, Marcelle. "Relative Values." *London Times*, Sunday Magazine, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1995.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, Masekela would not escape racism entirely but rather live from one version of racism to another. Masekela was aware of his social position in South Africa, which is why he decided to leave for the US, but it is also important to remember the effects of colonization must have had on him. Given this approach to identity formation, the racist structures and the emotional effects suffered due to structural oppression of the apartheid played a role in how Masekela not only viewed himself but also his heritage. South Africa has a history of dismissing traditional African music. Missionaries discredited the music of South Africa claiming it barbaric during the early stages of colonization.<sup>90</sup> As a result, imported music held more prestige, and for this reason, US and British records were perceived to have more symbolic value and overshadowed local records.<sup>91</sup>

As Masekela's identity was clearly tied to his race, he could never escape his "inferiority." This resulted in Masekela avoiding his heritage when it came to his music for his first few years as a player. Masekela's strong desire to want to play *American* jazz was a way of avoiding his background and proving himself musically to the white record industry. Playing South African township music would only reinforce his racial domination, as it would prove these racial assumptions as correct. Being able to play American jazz defied racial expectations and unknowingly became a statement of protest as it clashed with an established social order.

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<sup>90</sup> Ansell, Owen, *Soweto Blues*, page 47.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Masekela admired American jazz musicians, because they were portrayed as successful from his South African point of view. What Masekela perceived from imported jazz memorabilia was that the US public appreciated the music of African Americans, which was more than what could be said for South Africa. Masekela was fully aware of the racism in South Africa, but his view of a non-racist America stems from efforts of the US government to portray the US this way. Forty countries gained their independence between 1945 and 1960 signifying the end of colonialism.<sup>92</sup> The US State Department grew concerned with the negative impact the civil rights movement had on the US reputation during the Cold War, fearing that these newly independentized countries would be discouraged by its racist policies and ally with the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup> The creation of the International Cultural and Trade Fairs Act of 1956 provided the funds for African American artists to tour globally and promote the US as leader of the free world.<sup>94</sup> These tours were especially successful in persuading African countries to reject the US's reputation for racism, as a significant portion of the musicians were African American.<sup>95</sup> This was far from true as parts of the US still functioned under segregationist law, but this was lost on most Africans who saw symbolic value in the success of African Americans. Unfortunately, these tours would not reach South Africa as the government prohibited it. This immensely

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<sup>92</sup>Monson, Ingrid. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007, page 111.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, page 108.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, page 111.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, page 126.

angered Masekela who developed resentment for the South African government, which only reinforced his romanization of the US and American jazz.

Masekela would be shocked to find racism in the US when he arrived in 1960. The racial climate in the US appeared to be less aggressive compared to the blunt stance of the apartheid administration, but Masekela soon learned he would still encounter discrimination for the color of his skin. The cultural climate of the US was in transition during this time. Significant changes had been made in the decade prior, but tensions had yet to peak. The events of the great depression and World War II allowed for the social spheres of whites and blacks to overlap, leading some whites to sympathize with the black community. The 1960s is associated with the struggle of African Americans, which the US public perceived as intertwined with anticolonialism.<sup>96</sup> This sentiment towards anticolonialism reflected the US's perception of the state of Africa.<sup>97</sup> Africa became seen as an example of the horrors of colonialism and received negative connotations in the process. In the US public's mind, Africa represented a country struggling to modernize.

The US in the 1960s was going through massive cultural changes most of which were a disadvantage to Masekela. The social rights movement gained traction through the 1950s which led to more African Americans rejecting the dominant white culture. For the first time in American history, African Americans were able to create a subculture which would not be perceived as a novelty by

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid, page 107.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

whites. The same could be said of the changing jazz scene. Although bebop initially was questioned as being the future of jazz, by the 1950s beboppers were pushing the definition of jazz music. Their influence helped modernize jazz and refashion it partly as a fine art. Bebop also created a sense of pride in the African American community as the music was challenging and considered creatively outstanding. The turning point for the music came in 1959, when some of the most iconic jazz albums were recorded. Unfortunately, by modernizing jazz players of the 1960s shifted the music away from its perceived African roots. Modern jazz signified progress to the African American community in the 1960s but this progress was aligned more with the dominant class.

Africa within the jazz narrative has always been controversial.

Anthropologist Steven Feld touches on this subject in his book *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five years in Ghana*. His book discusses Africa's relevancy within jazz and states that, "Africa was often reduced to a distant place and time in the American story of jazz," which left Africa, "with no serious space for engaging with Africa in the present."<sup>98</sup> Bebop further legitimized jazz music as well as its musicians. Bebop is arguably the first jazz subgenre to thrive without outside commercial influence. Previous jazz had been produced by privileged African Americans, who managed to get musical schooling in one way or another. The artists involved in the Harlem Renaissance made music to legitimize African Americans but worked within the narrative imposed on them.

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<sup>98</sup> Feld, Steven. *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five years in Ghana*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2012, page 55-56.

Early works embraced negative stereotypes and appropriated musical characteristics. Bebop represented a shift away from the commercialism of jazz and became a marker of pride and accomplishment. Bebop also became a marker for authentic African American music because it was considered the alternative to what was being perceived as antiquated swing.

Unfortunately, bebop also gave jazz a sense of American elitism that proclaimed that authentic jazz could only be made by African Americans. Bebop became a touchstone for authentic African American culture, and this caused actual authentic African elements to threaten the legitimacy of bebop. Ghanaian drummer Guy Warren faced this discrimination during his stay in the US between the 1950s and 1960s and has discussed it in interviews. Warren is arguably the originator of Afro-jazz and stated that his intentions in the US were to expand Africa's influence on jazz.<sup>99</sup> He recounts that he was met with opposition:

I've said openly for many years that my experience in America was hurtful. I went there knowing I could play jazz well. But I wanted blacks there to be excited about the fact that I had something extra, that I could bring Africa to the music. Blacks rejected that, rejected the idea that Africa had any new contribution to make...The blacks were busy being authentic with bebop.<sup>100</sup>

Masekela would face similar discrimination, but his experience would be slightly better being that his release was in the 1960s. Masekela's experience also was different, because South Africa had a different relationship with the US

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<sup>99</sup> Kelley, Robin D.G. *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern jazz in revolutionary times*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2012, page 18.

<sup>100</sup> Feld, Steven. *Jazz Cosmopolitanism*, page 58.

compared to the rest of Africa. Other African countries fancied American music, but it was an integral component of South African culture.

Masekela struggled to embrace his musical heritage because his focus was set on bebop, and he faced internal conflict because he wanted to be accepted into the modern jazz scene, but continuously was discouraged from doing so.

Masekela recounts an interaction with Miles Davis that helped him find his sound:

Miles Davis put me aside one day and he told said, “listen, let me tell you something. You wanna be a jazz musician? There are stars in your eyes. You’re just going to be a statistic,” you know, “but if you put some of that shit from your own into the decisions you make,” you know, every other word with Miles was “shit.” “And if you put some of that shit into the shit you’re doing now, your shit is going to be bad! Like me, you know? And then we’re going to learn something from you. Something that we don’t know.” And I said, “are you sure?” and he said,” ya man, because if you go this way, you’re going to be a mother fucking side man for the rest of your life.” So as Soon as I got my memory back again, I started zoning in on music from Township flavored music, everybody paid attention.<sup>101</sup>

While it may be easy to overlook Davis’s comment, there is truth in his statement. Masekela repeated frequently in his memoir his desire to play American jazz, as he idolized these players wanting nothing more than to play like them. His aspiration was to be part of the Jazz Messengers one day, but Masekela faced challenges breaking into the music industry as a South African musician. Goldberg stated, “The thing was that we, you know, we were so influenced by American jazz. And that took us over, kind of thing and it was only

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<sup>101</sup> Red Bull Music Academy. “Hugh Masekela Lecture (Cape Town 2003) | Red Bull Music Academy.” Filmed (2003). YouTube video, 34:09. Posted (June 2017). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtcq6B\\_nyg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndtcq6B_nyg).

after a while that he started realizing this South African thing is what we grew up with. It was in our blood.”

Masekela faced challenges as an African, particularly because of his arrival during a difficult and politically turbulent time in US history. Black identity was beginning to form and separate itself from the white mainstream, placing Masekela at odds with his African heritage. The roots of Africa in US history are deep, and the continent has symbolically changed over time, depending on the need for slave labor. The early romanticized depictions of blackness come from the traditions of minstrelsy; a genre that advertised their performers as authentic. These views changed in the early 1930s much to the credit of John and Alan Lomax. While the studies of the Lomax’s are well intentioned, the work of the Lomax’s helped create a blues mythology rooted in African romanticism. This romanticizing of African culture was necessary, because it allowed for white audiences to accept inferior perceptions of blacks without acknowledging their tragedy.<sup>102</sup> This resulted in a power relationship between Africa and the US in which Africa is depicted as the inferior of the two. This was necessary for the US to ensure dominance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The superiority of the US depended on the perception of Africa as inferior. This meant that the US had to consistently project Africa negatively to keep the African American as a subordinate class and justify their reasoning for doing so. As a result, Africa at this time was depicted as primitive, exotic, and distant.

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<sup>102</sup> Lipsitz, George. “Remembering Robert Johnson: Romance and Reality.” *Popular Music & Society*, 21(4): page 40.

Many of these negative implications were forced unto African Americans as they were viewed as direct descendants of Africa. By the 1960s, the belief was no longer prevalent, but the negative implications still resided for Africa. The primitiveness imposed on African Americans shifted to specifically to represent Africa. African Americans felt prideful about their African ancestry in the 1960s, as it solidified their distinction from the white mainstream but also symbolically distanced themselves in the process. This meant that not only would Masekela face discrimination for his skin color, his music would also be judged on false assumptions of Africa.

While Masekela's skin color made him susceptible to racism, this discrimination came from white social institutions affecting all people of color. He encountered both apartheid and Jim Crow law, but these racist structures only existed within their respective borders. In coming to the US, Masekela also faced a distinctive discrimination for his African status which differed from apartheid and Jim Crow because it was perceived on a global level. The US preconceptions of Africa in the 1960s were problematic for Masekela, as they were based on degrading stereotyped depictions of Africans as savages.<sup>103</sup> The perception of Africa as a land of savages tarnished the identity of the African, as it symbolically placed the African at the bottom of the social ladder.<sup>104</sup> While Africa is a continent with a large number of musical styles, African music was grossly over-

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<sup>103</sup> Magubane, Bernard Makhosezwe. *The Ties That Bind: Africa—American Consciousness of Africa*. Africa World Press Inc., Trenton, NJ, 1987, page 23.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

generalized to be purely rhythmic early in the 1900s.<sup>105</sup> Polyrhythms became a distinctive marker of Africanism and are credited as jazz's early link to Africa.<sup>106</sup> African Americans perpetuated these African stereotypes in jazz music, which reinforced the notion that all music of Africa was strictly percussive.

Masekela's rise to success in the early 1960s seemed very much like an uphill battle. US audiences were not aware of the intimate relationship jazz had in South Africa. Masekela was constantly pressured to embrace the music of heritage, but Masekela had grown up perceiving American jazz as prestigious. American jazz was prominent in Masekela's identity because it became symbolically valuable through the marabi tradition. American jazz symbolized, in a sense, hope, and to a degree was integral to Masekela's heritage. The reason Masekela struggled to embrace his heritage was because he had an internalized bias imposed on him through apartheid. He also perceived his African identity differently and was aware of how authentic South African Music sounded. Most musical descriptions of African life in the US came from West Africa, which only added to his complex.

Masekela's position in the 1960s must have been unbelievably frustrating for him. He had worked most of his life to play jazz as well as any African American but was frowned upon when doing so. The challenges Masekela faced were ones he did not understand. Masekela desired to play American jazz and he was expressing his authentic self. American jazz was rooted in the culture which

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<sup>105</sup> Weinstein, Norman C. *A Night in Tunisia: Imaginings of Africa In Jazz*. The Scarecrow Press Inc., Metuchen, Nj, 1993, page 50.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, page 51.

underlay his social upbringing, meaning that American jazz was part of his heritage. This clashed heavily with US understandings of Africa, which often viewed the continent as primitive. The culture of South Africa was misconceived by the US public, which linked the country's musical heritage with the rest of the continent, creating an authenticity complex for Masekela.

Masekela overcame his authenticity complex with the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966), Masekela's third album. Masekela secured a record contract from Mercury records after success of *The Many Voices of Miriam Makeba* (1962), which heavily featured him. He recorded his first two albums for Mercury, but rarely speaks of these recordings in interviews. Most likely this is due to the albums being commercial failures. The following chapter discusses the authenticity of Masekela's music and explains his appeal to US audiences.

### Chapter Three

Masekela's music has always been advertised as "authentic," but not all his albums reflect this notion. Some of Masekela's early work reveal authentic South African influence, while others deviate far from it, so that neither are clear indicators of success. The following section analyzes Masekela breakout releases both for cultural relevance and musical authenticity. Since the following discusses African authenticity, it is imperative to discuss what authentic African elements are. The following musical traits are distinct to African music and will be explained below:

1. Repetition as an organization principle
2. Polyrhythmic texture
3. The use of "call and response"
4. Use of octaves<sup>107</sup>

Repetition as an origination principle refers to how the song is constructed. It is common in African music to establish a repeating pattern through the interaction of various repetitive parts, some of which are predetermined while others are improvised. A song is often started by one player, who plays a rigid core pattern continuously throughout, while other layers of sound are added and subtracted—this results in the song sounding cyclical and giving the piece its rhythmic foundation. This is also what gives the music its polyrhythmic texture. "Call and response" is a musical technique in which one

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<sup>107</sup> Appiah, Kwame Anthony and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of African American Experience*. Perseus Books Group, New York, NY, 1999, page1361.

group or singer sings a melodic phrase and another group or singer responds. This musical trait is found in many sub-Saharan African cultures, and it said to have transferred from Africa to the US through the slave trade. This musical trait has become associated with all African American music and with Africa in general. While the use of octaves appears in all music cultures, octaves are used more for percussive and rhythmic effect in most African countries. Often vocal groups will alternate between octaves and other notes of the chord producing a pulse in the process.

South African music is unique compared to the rest of Africa. The musical characteristics unique to south African music are:

1. Heavy use of polyphonic vocals
2. Songs consisting of interchanging parts
3. Common occurrence of a multiple entry principle
4. Use of AABB musical form<sup>108</sup>

The Dutch colonized South Africa in the 16th century, and in doing so they completely dismantled the established culture. The original Dutch colonizers introduced European harmony to the South African natives. As a result, the original music of South Africa has been lost to time, and what does exist is a hybridization of traditional African rhythms with European harmony. This has resulted in South African music having more advanced harmony compared to the rest of Africa, especially with choral music. The Zulu are one of South Africa's thirteen original tribes, and their vocal stylings have been minimally modified

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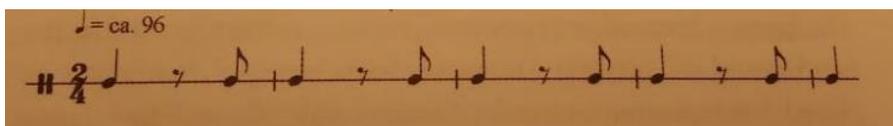
<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

through colonization compared to other South African tribal music. Zulu vocal music is traditionally played by a small vocal group accompanied by minimal percussion, and its primary purpose was to accompany Zulu dances. These dances have heavily influenced the rhythms used in South African music.

The rhythm found in South African music differentiates dramatically from other African rhythms, because there is a distinct emphasis the 4th beat of the measure. In an interview for Jazz at the Lincoln center, Justin Badenhorst, drummer for South African jazz band Uhadi, said the following about the rhythmic feel of South African music:

The one key thing about this feel is, when we were discussing it in rehearsal, when we were checking out this groove, is the accent of the lead of beat four. 1-2-3-4 (claps), 1-2-3-4 (claps), 1-2-3-4 (claps). Or you can think of it as the end of 2. 1 and 2 (claps), 1 and 2 (claps), 1 and 2 (claps). This is the key feature...It comes from marching bands of New Orleans...the Orleans style came from african drumming, but I think I am speaking from being a drum kit player. Pretty much, some of the oldest forms or drum kits that we started out with were in marching bands and marching bands were recorded in New Orleans. So, my point of reference is based on marching bands, but their point of reference was based on african drumming.<sup>109</sup>

The South African rhythmic feel is recognizable in the *Indlamu* rhythm (pictured below).<sup>110</sup> Indlamu is a native dance found in the Zulu tradition. The dance



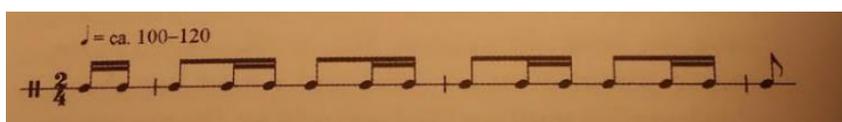
<sup>109</sup> Jazz at the Lincoln Center's JAZZ ACADEMY. "South African Jazz: Marabi." Published March 2016. YouTube video, 5:39, Posted March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NznMBXbDskI>

<sup>110</sup> Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, page 81.

involves high kicks which are choreographed to music. South African rhythms emphasize the syncopated last beat of the measure which gives the music is distinct feel. The music uses repetitive syncopated beats which are aligned with dance movements. The influence of Zulu rhythmic traits give the music of South Africa its feel, but it is also what truly separates it from other African music.

Basslines used in South African music heavily use octaves and incorporate the 4th and 5th degrees of the scale unsparingly. All basslines are structured identically, and players add rhythmic complexity to that structure to create originality. Basslines use passing tones to change from one chord to another, while continuing to emphasize the last eighth note in the measure as depicted in the Indalamu rhythm. The following is a typical rhythmic accompaniment, which was played on handheld percussive instruments or duplicated on the bass.<sup>111</sup>



### **Trumpet Africaine**

Masekela met Hugo Montenegro in the Summer of 1961 through a recommendation by Bob Bollard. According to Masekela, “Bob Bollard thought I was doing so well that he recommended me to Hugo Montenegro, Bellefonte’s new music director...Hugo was arranging orchestral music of Harry’s upcoming

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, page 35.

summer tour.”<sup>112</sup> Montenegro hired Masekela to transcribe dance sequences, which would then be converted to an orchestral score. Masekela impressed Montenegro, who went on to suggest they work together on a future project. Impressed by Masekela’s trumpet playing, Belafonte suggested Masekela record an album for Mercury records. Masekela took Montenegro on his offer, and both collaborated on the arrangements for the album. The result were twelve tracks of orchestral tunes which came to be known as *Trumpet Africaine* (1962).

The album is fully orchestrated and well crafted, but from a cultural standpoint is contradictory and confusing. The album consists of South African traditional songs, traditional negro spirituals, and covers of Belafonte’s work but all are interpreted through a Europeanized orchestrated style. Masekela openly regrets the musical decisions of *Trumpet Africaine*.<sup>113</sup> As he recalls, Montenegro was influential in the making of the album, but knew little of South African music.<sup>114</sup> Montenegro would go on to become famous for Spaghetti Western compositions, and this influence is present in the album. While some of the tracks resemble South African Township, the overall work lacks African musical elements. Masekela has openly called the album a disaster, claiming that the excitement of making an orchestral album with professional musicians took precedent over the music.<sup>115</sup> To some aspect, Masekela forwent the traditional South African township sound because the large orchestra may have been more

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<sup>112</sup> Masekela, *Grazing*, pg. 152.

<sup>113</sup> Masekela, *Grazing*, page 156.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

appealing, given the context of his cultural background. To some degree, orchestral music held higher symbolic value for him, because of its Eurocentricity. Masekela attended the Manhattan School of Music during this time and studied this of style of composition. These newly learned compositional tools may have swayed Masekela's decision-making when approaching the album.

Besides the recording year and track listing, there are few details documented for this session.<sup>116</sup> On the album, no musician in the orchestra besides Masekela is credited.<sup>117</sup> The album was produced by Bob Bollard, whom Masekela knew from the Library of Harbel and Clara Music, Belafonte's publishing company.<sup>118</sup> Bob Simpson took engineering duties, and the tape mastering responsibilities were carried out by Ed Begley.<sup>119</sup> The album consists of twelve tracks, most of which are covers, and Masekela is credited for the arrangement of four of the tracks.

Mercury Records did not know how to advertise Masekela's music, and this is evident in the cover art and liner notes. Masekela is constantly referenced to as "authentic," but the focus is always on rhythm. As stated before, US audiences associated African music in the early 1960s strictly with rhythm, as this is referenced throughout the album's front and back covers. The front cover,

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<sup>116</sup> Rupilli, Michael and Ed Novitsky. *The Mercury Labels: A Discography Volume II The 1956-1964 Era*. Green Wood Press, Connecticut, 1993, page 634.

<sup>117</sup>Hugh Masekela. *Trumpet Africaine*. Mercury Records, SR60797, vinyl LP record.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

under the title, reads: “The new *Beat* from South Africa.”<sup>120</sup> On the back cover, in bold letters, “authentic african rhythmic variations” appears, and these are only two examples.<sup>121</sup> The album liner notes consistently allude to African authenticity as only rhythmic.

The liner notes erroneously discuss South African culture, use incorrect translations, and suggest to US preconceived notions of the African as primitive. The liner notes even state that Masekela’s trumpet skills were attained without any schooling and that he learned to read music upon coming to the US. This not true but supports the narrative of Africa as primitive. The liner notes open with:

Oh yes, there have been recordings of so-called African dance music, some worthy, some bogus. But never before has there been a fusion of these native rhythms with the sound of a pop-jazz trumpet virtuoso who was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa.<sup>122</sup>

The album constantly refers to the rhythms as “native,” which can be coded as “primitive.” The album notes make the distinction that Masekela is not just South African, but a “native.” By referring his music as “native,” the album’s liner notes are attempting to authenticate Masekela’s Africanism to a 1960s audience. We can also infer from the excerpt that Mercury was hesitant to label Masekela’s work as “jazz,” instead referring to his work as “pop-jazz.”<sup>123</sup> Masekela’s association with the jazz greats of the 1960s authenticated his blackness, which the label desired to advertise, but the album is clearly not within the jazz genre.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Hugh Masekela. *Trumpet Africaine*. Mercury Records, SR60797, vinyl LP record.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

Mercury may have been attempting to sell Masekela as both a black and South African to achieve a larger demographic, but these social definitions clashed in the 1960s.

The music found on the album overall lacks authentic African elements. Masekela has stated that the album did not fit his musical background, and he views “Umhome” and “Merci Bon Die” to be the songs most aligned with his roots.<sup>124</sup> “Umhome” is a South African traditional song made famous by Miriam Makeba a couple years earlier. She is credited on the album with arranging the piece with Masekela. Surprisingly, “Umhome” stands out within the album for lacking African characteristics. The song’s style and structure reflect the neo-classical orchestral style of the time more than South African Township Music, a clash that would be confusing to the listener. Despite the album being advertised as “African dance music,” the tempo is kept through repeated stringed arpeggios, which continue through the entire song, and there is ironically no percussion of any sort. The song structure is based on motivic development of the melody. As the song progresses, the melody is carried by other instruments, and every timbral change causes the melody to be lost within the mix. “Merci Bon Dieu” more closely resembles African music, but also aligns more with neoclassicalism. The song uses a repetitive drum pattern, but still lacks an African feel.

“Ox Drivers Song” is a standout composition and the only song on the album to have vocals. The song was a collaboration between Masekela and

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<sup>124</sup> Masekela, *Grazing*, page 156.

Montenegro, and it astonishingly resembles the Spaghetti Western sound Montenegro would become famous for. “He’s Gone Away” also stands out stylistically within the album. The song is a traditional American folk song. Arranged by Andrew Gordon, the song showcases no African elements. Masekela plays the song exceptionally well, as the timbral qualities of his trumpet suit the song well.

The album was critically panned and received little airplay.<sup>125</sup> US audiences took little interest, but much of this is a result of Mercury completely misrepresenting the album. Mercury most likely saw the value in advertising Masekela’s heritage, but Masekela was not interested in having his background be a selling point. US audiences would not receive this album as authentic because it did not meet the “tribal” expectations they were accustomed to. Masekela was not interested in making this accommodation, nor did he know how. Masekela’s intentions were to elevate his status with his music. Masekela’s approach to the role of music was still within the liberal view as discussed prior. Making an album with established musicians attracted Masekela because, culturally speaking, this style of music signified success, as it is coded as high art, and thus inaccessible from his South African perspective. The same coding would make Masekela’s music and image incompatible with US audiences, as they most likely did not associate the trappings of high art with Africa.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

## Grrr

*Trumpet Africaine* became a learning lesson for Masekela. The album's failure signified to Masekela that his best route to success would be to embrace South African music. Masekela focused on his studies and performing and would not enter the studio for three years. His life changed drastically within those years. Masekela left the Manhattan School of Music in 1964. He rekindled his romance with Makeba the same year, and they married soon afterwards. Masekela was performing regularly during this time, while enjoying married life. In 1965, he recorded what came to be known as *Grrr*.<sup>126</sup> It was recorded in two sessions over April and May.<sup>127</sup>

There is little else known about this album: even the records at Mercury are unclear on when it was recorded or who played on it. Masekela, choosing to take the advice of those around him, embraces his musical heritage, which he was hesitant to do previously. Masekela chose a song list of authentic South African township songs, but the label did not promote the album. This resulted in a disagreement between Masekela and the record company, which he accused of ignoring the album.<sup>128</sup> In defense of the label, after the previous commercial failure of *Trumpet Africaine* in 1962, this album was most likely not the "African" album the record company was looking for. The album would be released later,

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<sup>126</sup> Rupilli, Michael and Ed Novitsky. *The Mercury Labels: A Discography Volume II The 1956-1964 Era*. Green Wood Press, Connecticut, 1993, page 238.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, page 238 and 251.

<sup>128</sup> Masekela, *Grazing*, page 173.

after Masekela was established, and the company would do so without his consent or creative input.

The album comprises both covers and original tunes, all played in authentic township fashion. This album showcases the developing abilities of Masekela, as his style was coming into his own. The nature of the music is much more fluid, which allows Masekela to demonstrate his improvisational skills. The album features Morris Goldberg, Larry Willis, Jonas Gwanga, Eric Gale and Howard St. Johnson, musicians with whom Masekela had been working with for some time.<sup>129</sup> The group was able to recreate an authentic sound because half of its players were from South Africa and exposed heavily to the music. This album also demonstrated Masekela's developing compositional skills as he composes a significant amount of the material. Masekela's compositions are simplistic but catch the spirit of South African Township music.

The album cover art of *Grrr* differs greatly from *Trumpet Africaine* in thematic representation. In both cases Masekela's background is the selling point, but the changes reflect the changing views of apartheid in the US. The main difference is that apartheid is alluded in *Grrr* and completely omitted from *Trumpet Africaine*. It is important to consider that even though *Grrr* was second studio album, it would be released after his third release, *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966). The liner notes of *Grrr* portray Africa horrifically, going as far as calling Johannesburg a "living hell."<sup>130</sup> Similar to *Trumpet Africaine*, the

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Masekela, Hugh. *Grrr*. Mercury Records. MG21109/SR61109, 1966, Vinyl LP Record.

liner notes of *Grrr* legitimize the album's Africanism by stressing rhythmic elements found in the music. The liner notes state, "What he is justly proud of is the deeply personal and completely emotional music which permeates the very marrow of South Africa—Mbaqanga, pulsating, driving and irresistible. It's complex rhythms and shifting tempos are compelling," and we can see from this excerpt that Mercury was still making the same assertions about African music as in the previous album.<sup>131</sup>

The album advertising of Mercury is again misleading. The cover art and liner notes have a dark tone to them and often reference the music as being the result of the treacherous environment, i.e., painting Africa as regressive. The music of the album does not reflect this sentiment as most of it is uplifting. Mercury struggled to advertise Masekela efficiently throughout all his involvement with the label. They failed to advertise his association with jazz despite the heavy jazz influence found on *Grrr*.

In a metaphorical sense, Masekela's first two albums are "two sides of the same coin," because they are foils in many ways. One album was strongly orchestrated and influenced by accomplished composers, and the other album was improvised and written by Masekela and his peers. The only commonality they share is their failure. Both albums failed to meet the expectations for US audiences. *Trumpet Africaine* deviated far from expectations of Africa, making it completely illegitimate to the listener. The album obviously lacked African

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

elements, which was apparent to audiences. *Grrr* is a unique case: it may have failed because it was *too* authentic. South Africa's music differs from the rest of Africa, sounding more like Caribbean music to audiences in the 1960s. The music coming from the marabi tradition did not rhythmically align with what is perceived as "tribal." South African music uses a shuffle rhythm created by subdividing beats unevenly. This style of playing is prominent in jazz and is an important element to the specific sound of South African music, but the shuffle rhythms in the music would not read as "tribal" to US audiences. *Grrr* would most likely be confused for Caribbean music or calypso.

### **The Americanization of Ooga Booga**

Compared to his previous albums, *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* came together organically, with only slight involvement by the recording industry. After the incident at Mercury Records, Masekela focused on solidifying his own group. He began to play out regularly with Larry Willis, Harold Dodson, and Henry Jenkins, musicians he knew through his school connections. The quartet fused their divergent musical backgrounds to create a sound which was as indescribable as it was innovative. Masekela took the liberty of teaching the members of the quartet about South African music, and he did so through singing. This became particularly important in the development of his music as it alludes to the oral tradition still prominent in South African Culture, but it also resulted in Masekela incorporating his vocals in live performances. The quartet was playing regularly at The Village Gate when they caught the attention of MGM's first

black record producer, Tom Wilson. Impressed by what he heard, he signed Masekela to a multi-record deal.

The first album released for MGM was *The Americanization of Ooga Booga*, which would be Masekela's first true-to-form release and his vocal debut. The album was recorded live at The Village Gate and comprised South African folk songs and modern jazz tunes. It showcases Masekela's charming personality, as he introduces each track. The album opens with two vocal pieces in dramatically different styles.

“Bajabula Bonke,” or “Healing Song,” is sung in the Zulu language and opens the album. “Healing Song” is simple and begins in free time. The song is built on a two-chord form and slowly builds up as layers are added to it. It begins with drummer Henry Jenkins who loosely plays toms before the band enters. Pianist Willis plays a progression of one bar in Bb which resolves to an Ab, doing so sparingly to create space—this is consistent in the entire song becoming a recurring motif. This back-and-forth shift of chords creates uneasiness, as the ear struggles to find the tonic and leaving the vocals to be the song's driving force. Willis also incorporates an octave leap on the last off beat of each measure before each chord change, which is common in South African township music. It follows the Indlamu rhythm giving the song a mbaqanga feel. In this album, Masekela improves upon mbaqanga by substituting for the swing elements a more modern jazz aesthetic based on cool and hard bop. This is evident in “Bajabula Bonke,” as the song begins traditionally, but by the end the group has morphed the folk song to resemble modern jazz—specifically hard bop. This seems to be a

conscious effort, as he mentions in his memoir, “Larry and I did a traditional call and response before jazzing up our solos.”<sup>132</sup>

What is especially noteworthy on “Bajabula Bonke,” are the vocals. The song itself is a Zulu folk song, but Masekela interprets this through a call and response between himself and Willis. On the recording, Masekela, while introducing the song, recites the lyrics in English:

When I was able and healthy  
I had many friends  
But now that I am bedridden  
I see many smiles  
on many faces<sup>133</sup>

It is not clear if he is reciting one verse or the entire song, and he also does not mention the song’s title, which is also part of the lyric. In his memoir, Masekela stated that the song translates to “They all rejoiced at my illness,” and it tells the story of someone who falls ill and is comforted by his loved ones. The song begins with Masekela singing a verse of the song. As the song progresses, Willis harmonizes with Masekela on the recurring line of, “Bajabula Bonke,” doing so every time the line is sung and symbolizing the message of community found in the song’s content. Later in the song, Willis begins to sing portions of the verse, thereby further promoting the sense of community. Masekela’s vocals on the albums are harsh and much of his sound resonates in his throat, which is common in African singing. His timbral range is impressive, as he fluctuates through the

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<sup>132</sup> Masekela, *Grazing in the Grass*, page 164.

<sup>133</sup> Masekela, Hugh. *The Americanization of Ooga Booga*. MGM. E/SE-4372, 1965, Vinyl LP

different sounds, but he sacrifices the fluidity in voice by choosing to be expressive with his timbre and phrasing. Masekela uses timbral changes as a way of communicating a story, as the audience likely cannot understand the lyrics.

“Dzinorabiro” is another Zulu folk song on the album, the second track immediately after “Bajabula Bonke.” This song provides a contrast to “Bajabula Bonke,” as it is quick and steady. “Dzinorabiro” follows a I-V-vi-IV cyclical eight-bar chord progression, keeping this pattern for most of the song. This pattern suits this song well, as its steadiness and consistency resemble that of a speeding train, which also happens to be part of the song’s subject material. As an introduction, Masekela explains the meaning behind the song over a vamp:

When the young men are recruited from the countryside of South Africa to go work in the gold mines of Johannesburg, in the packed trains they carried them from the mines, or rather, from the country to the mines. They usually sing many songs reminiscing of times of old. This is one such song and it speaks of the time of our forefathers when the sky was the roof and the ground was the floor. Things were much less complicated.<sup>134</sup>

In this quotation, “time of our forefathers” refers to South Africa before it was colonized by the Dutch. The song’s vocal content is again a call and response between Masekela and Willis, which is most likely improvised. Masekela and Willis sing in unison before each plays a solo, just as the mine workers would be riding the train. Masekela plays the first solo in this song, and it is typical of his style of the time. Willis’s solo, on the other hand, is uniquely treated: the rhythm

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

section changes to a half-time feel, in which Jenkins expertly keeps time and begins to loosen the ride cymbal to a swinging pattern. This allows Willis to showcase his piano skills with a Bill Evans-inspired solo, further adding to the modern jazz appeal of the album.

The album has many great selections, but its true masterpiece is arguably Masekela's cover of "Cantaloupe Island." Originally composed by Herbie Hancock, the song has become a modern-day standard and a good representation of the jazz scene at the time. Some jazz styles in the 1960s were experimenting with musical modes as opposed to chord progressions to be more up to date. Masekela manages to blend African influences seamlessly into the composition without compromising the tune's recognition. He does this by only changing the rhythmic structure of the tune rather than its harmonic and melodic structure. The musical characteristics of "Cantaloupe Island" also lend themselves well to an Africanized adaptation for the following reasons:

1. The Song is organized through repetition and is cyclical in nature.
2. "Call and response" is frequently used throughout the tune.
3. The rhythmic structure makes use of the fourth and fifth scale degrees and octaves, which are common in Mbaqanga.
4. Due to the melodic structure, the tune is arguably in AABB form, which is traditionally used in Mbaqanga.
5. Its rhythms resemble those of Mbaqanga.

By keeping the harmonic rhythm intact and adapting rhythmic elements found in mbaqanga, Masekela changes the overall feel of the music while keeping the song's integrity.

The song's cyclical nature comes from the bass and the piano working together to create the recurring musical motif that carries the song (see page 88 for notation). Their collaboration keeps the song consistent by laying the rhythmic foundation. The song's form also contributes to its cyclical nature. The melody of the song does not begin until the fifth measure, when excluding the pickup at the end of the fourth measure. This means the first four bars of the song are a vamp. Taking this into account, we find that the song both begins and ends with the vamp heard in the introduction. By incorporating a recurring vamp at the beginning of the song, it can never feel like it ends especially since the progression does not include the dominant chord. Because the song never progresses to the dominant, it does not resolve traditionally. The song uses deceptive cadences throughout, which also give it a feeling noncompletion. For these reasons, the song can fit well into an African aesthetic.

Call-and-response patterns can be found through the piece, for example, the piano and bass collaboration. The bass begins every measure, the piano "responds," and they both meet by the end. The form itself also has elements of "call and response." The song progresses by modulating down from F minor to Db, and then to D minor. Except for the section in D minor, the F minor and Db sections are similar, as they share the same melody played in different keys. The D minor section contrasts the other sections both melodically and rhythmically, which can be interpreted as "responding," to the established melody earlier in the song. This is also how many mbaqanga songs are constructed: they are often written in two contrasting parts that are played alternately and which tend not to

# Cantaloupe Island

Herbie Hancock

**Intro**

**Tema**

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resolve harmonically giving them their cyclical feel. The bass line resembles that of mbaqanga because of its use of octaves and fifths. Each measure ends with the root and begins with the root an octave lower. This disjunct motion propels the song by creating pulse through the use octaves. This is typical in mbaqanga bass lines and all South African music. It originated from the Zulu vocal groups who sang in alternating octaves. The rhythm of this song is what most makes it suitable to be Africanized because it concisely emphasizes the last off-beat on every measure as found on the Indlamu rhythm. Both the recurring bass line and piano riff emphasize this beat, which is what gives this piece its shuffle feel. This aspect of the song is also where Masekela's group excels. The original recording has a steady feel because the rhythmic pattern is played straight. Jenkins differs here as he plays swing eighths. While this detail is minuscule, it changes the mood of the song entirely. The song seems less stable but works to the group's advantage.

The cover artwork and liner notes also vary considerably here, as compared to Masekela's previous releases. This album was the first to feature Masekela's own words, which proved instrumental to understanding the title and album's message. He wrote:

When I was ten or eleven, I would go to the movies to watch Tarzan and his parodies of Africa and Africans. Even then, it would bug me to hear Hollywood Africans say things like "Ooga Booga Bwana!" Although Africa is now mostly free and Tarzan is washed-up, most people still think of Africans in grade-B movie terms so, when, one of those gashing types

at a cocktail party twists my arm to say something in African, I just say, “Ooga Booga”—which I learned from Tarzan. And, they dig it.<sup>135</sup>

The rest of the liner notes are written by Wilson. These notes feature a completely different tone from those of previous albums. Unlike the other albums, *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* exhibits the discrimination Masekela encounters for being African. The liner notes chronicle Masekela’s life but do not exaggerate it as the previous ones do. It is the first album to acknowledge fully the existence of apartheid but does so without making it Masekela’s selling point.

The cover photo also stands out when compared to his previous releases. Here, Masekela stands in a rainforest wearing a modern suit with a thin tie. In his hands, he holds a suitcase and a rolled newspaper, which, upon closer inspection, is the *Wall Street Journal*. He stands upon a rock, barefoot, and gives the camera a vacant stare. The picture is ironic, a drastic change in Masekela’s marketing. It has an undertone of protest, as it uses symbolic images of both Africa and the US to convey a message. It is representative of Masekela’s place in the US and epitomizes his struggle for proper representation. *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* was Masekela’s first album with a message and represents his first steps into becoming a political icon.

*The Americanization of Ooga Booga* was controversial for its political commentary and was released at a time of high racial tensions, but it was representative as part of a growing trend in jazz at the time. Many jazz musicians

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<sup>135</sup> Masekela, Hugh. *The Americanization of Ooga Booga*. MGM. E/SE-4372, 1965, Vinyl LP

of the 1960s were politically conscious and were often paying homage to Africa. Max Roach's political opus *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* (1960) and John Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* (1961) are only two examples of this trend which continued through the decade. By the release of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* (1966), the public knew of apartheid and the consensus portrayed it negatively. Apartheid became an important subtopic of the civil rights movement, and an anti-apartheid movement began to grow.

The success of *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* was possible because it was released during a transitional period in black history where there was an active embrace of Africa. Apartheid resonated with blacks, who sympathized with South African blacks as they too were considered secondary citizens, but the relationship US blacks had with Africa would change in the 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 legally gave blacks equal footing in US culture, which distanced them from their connection to Africa. As blacks gained rights and aligned more with whites, they adopted the same perception of Africa as an exotic land. The social changes happening in the 1960s allowed for Masekela to be accepted but also regarded his work as foreign, leaving him to be portrayed as a novelty. As a result, the instrumental tracks on *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* are what received the most attention as they fell in line with the popular hardbop sound.

Masekela's political life was only beginning, so his message was not yet clear. Rather than striving for social change, Masekela, at this time, searched for his sound and did so by embracing his heritage, which formed the root of his

protest. Coming from South Africa, Masekela's identity was forged by structural racism. The music associated with Masekela's culture codified him as inferior, but by embracing his musical heritage and fusing it with modern jazz, Masekela challenged the ideology imposed on him, which led to his protests against the oppression he endured in South Africa. This marked the beginning Masekela as a South African icon.

*The Americanization of Ooga Booga* marked a cultural shift in Masekela because it changed how he perceived the role of music. It is in this album that we see a clear shift to the radical view, as he succeeded in fusing both jazz and South African music. While this made him political, it was his fusing with *modern jazz* that makes Masekela's work radical. It also authenticates his work as it follows the marabi tradition. Marabi eventually grew into mbaqanga which was originally seen as South African jazz. Masekela continued this tradition by expanding beyond the swing-infused mbaqanga bands of the 1950s and adapting South African music to the current stylings of modern jazz. The original mbaqanga bands of the 1950s attempted to replicate swing, but radical bands were blending the sounds of both worlds. As the Jazz Maniacs had done a decade prior, Masekela updated mbaqanga for his generation.

The radicalization of Masekela in *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* was successful because it was romanticized. For Masekela to portray an authentic self, he first had to romanticize his heritage to appropriate it. Masekela's culture was created through the social domination implemented by the apartheid administration, which was not under his control. By romanticizing his heritage, he

overlooked its tragedy to create his own identity, an important step in appealing to a US audience because it legitimized both his Africanism and blackness. While the African American had moved away from the “African negro,” African American music was still perceived to be rooted in “Mother Africa.” Masekela achieved this through his song selection, his commentary between tracks, and his ability to adapt traditional South African folk songs to modern aesthetics. Masekela presented himself as authentic by embracing the romanticized notions of “Mother Africa,” which fit his narrative.

## Conclusion

*The Americanization of Ooga Booga* would be Masekela's first political work but a stand-alone attempt. Masekela recorded once again for MGM and released *Hugh Masekela's Next Album* (1966), but the album did not fare well. "Cantaloupe Island" picked up traction in California, and Masekela placed his efforts there. After MGM, Masekela would start his own label with Stewart Levine, a colleague from the Manhattan School of Music, which gave Masekela the creative freedom he craved. The albums following *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* changed drastically in sound. Without the influence of a record label, Masekela was free to produce anything he pleased.

Masekela's music after *The Americanization of Ooga Booga* lacked political direction. While Masekela had stepped into political realm, he did not pursue this course immediately afterwards. *The Promise of a Future* (1968) would be Masekela's return to political activism but would not pick up from where *The Americanization Ooga Booga* left off. Masekela's career changed instantly with the release of *The Promise of a Future*, as it allowed him a larger platform, thereby helping him take a more active role in the anti-apartheid movement of the 1970s.

### The Politicization of Hugh Masekela

*The Promise of a Future* (1968) was a pivotal moment in Masekela's career for two reasons. Firstly, the album gave Masekela nationwide success, which challenged 1960s American notions of not just South Africa, but Africa in

general. The 1960s represent a time of elevated awareness for Africa, much of which is credited to the influx of South African talent to the US at this time.

Along with Masekela, artists such as Miriam Makeba and Abdullah Ibrahim were vocal about their heritage and the vile conditions of their homeland. Of the anti-apartheid sentiment being vocalized in the late 1960s, Masekela would arguably be one of its most recognized voices. Masekela used this platform throughout the remainder of his career to spread awareness of apartheid. Coincidentally, his rising star aligned with the development of Masekela's political persona, so that as Masekela became actively political, he also grew in popularity. Secondly, *The Promise of a Future* is Masekela's first album to portray a clear message. From the album's title to its pictorial imagery, *The Promise of a Future* conveys themes of peace and inclusivity, both of which were absent from his previous releases.

The cover of the album is a picture of Masekela's quintet among a crowd culturally diverse in both age and gender, and, unlike Masekela's previous albums, it is the first cover to feature his players. Not only are the players pictured, they are the focus front and center while Masekela is placed further away from the camera where his presence does not dominate. The album title itself holds a deeper meaning, considering the historical context in which it was released. Appearing in the summer of 1968, *The Promise of a Future* reached audiences as the civil rights movement increased in tension. While early protests were mostly peaceful, they became violent over the course of the decade peaking in 1967. By September of that year, 170 cities in 34 states experienced rioting to some extent with significant portions of the country experiencing more than one

uprising.<sup>136</sup> In places such as New Jersey and Michigan, riots significantly escalated, causing the US government to intervene with militaristic force, which triggered widespread panic and distrust of the government.<sup>137</sup> Historians refer to this time period as “the long, hot summer of 1967.”

Coincidentally, 1967 is also known as “the summer of love,” in reference to the nearly 100,000 young, predominantly white people who migrated to San Francisco as part of a growing hippie movement. That the same year can be recognized for such contrasting experiences speaks deeply of the racial and cultural disconnect in the US at the time. Masekela, as a rising pop star from South Africa, gave him a unique cultural perspective encompassing both worlds. On the one hand, he was conscious of the structural racism African Americans faced in the US, but he also held certain privileges which allowed him to indulge in the “free love” philosophy of this time. The liner notes on the back cover of the album further support this notion. Alongside a large close-up black and white photograph of Masekela smiling, the liner notes are the lyrics to “Coincidence,” a song previously released by Masekela. They read:

WHAT A COINCIDENCE  
 everybody’s talking about love  
 wherever I go these days...I swear  
 boy...WHAT A COINCIDENCE  
 that everyone finally wants to be known  
 to be comin’ on so very groovy<sup>138</sup>

These are not the lyrics in their entirety, but the excerpt is representative of the

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<sup>136</sup> McLaughlin, Malcom. *Urban Rebellion in America: The Long Hot Summer of 1967.* Palgrave Macmillan Publishers Limited. New York, NY, 2014, page 7.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, page 6.

<sup>138</sup> Masekela, Hugh. *The Promise of a Future.* Universal City (UNI) Records. 73028, 1968, record.

song. Through the language and imagery presented in this excerpt, it can be inferred that Masekela's political alignment leaned more with the hippie culture as opposed to the African American experience. Referring to the title, *The Promise of a Future* is a response to the cultural climate of 1967, and given that the nation was heavily divided, the title within context becomes politicized as makes a statement of peace.

Masekela discusses *The Promise of a Future* in his memoir only briefly despite how impactful the album was on his life and career; but his narration as memoir focused on life events only and overlooked the creative process. Nonetheless, the album signified a shift in Masekela's public persona and represents the beginning of his more mainstream sound. *The Promise of a Future* was not overt with its messaging, but it commenced a trend in Masekela's career where his music progressively became more Afrocentric. While Masekela's South African heritage had always been a selling point, albums released after and including *The Promise of a Future* are arguably more authentic than previous albums because they incorporate authentic African imagery, photographs, cultural themes, and color arrangements. Masekela also began supporting and collaborating with other African artists shortly after the release of *The Promise of a Future*, adding further to this African credibility. For example, Masekela followed *The Promise of a Future* with *Africa '68* (1968), a compilation of South African artists singing in their native languages.

By contrast, the albums released before *The Promise of a Future* present a diversified array of sounds, as this was a period of experimentation for Masekela,

and the same can be said for his album artwork. Masekela has stated that he was heavily influenced by Motown and R&B during this period in his career, and the music he released in the mid-1960s supports this view.<sup>139</sup> His music resembled the growing Afro-funk scene of the period more so than the South African township music Masekela grew up listening to. He was still advertised as South African, but the imagery was playful. One prime example is the cover photo of *Hugh Masekela's Next Album*. Masekela is pictured standing barefoot next to an oversized toy zebra with a spear in hand in what appears to be Times Square. In his other hand, he holds his trumpet while sporting a modern suit with tie. The album cover is meant to be ironic as Masekela looks out of place, and this is representative of how Masekela was advertised early in his career. It seems that the record label was struggling to address Masekela's background in their advertising, choosing to portray him as, "a fish out of water." This period was short-lived and abandoned once Masekela began recording for his own label.

The message of peace in *The Promise of a Future* was lost on the African American community as it was released early in 1968, the same year Martin Luther King Jr. would be assassinated. King by 1968 had become an inspirational symbol of hope in the civil rights movement, and his sudden loss heavily affected that movement. King's death led to more riots, which helped pressure the US government to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which illegalized discrimination based on race. Riots continued into the 1970s, but most historians agree the passing of the act ended the civil rights era. Masekela confesses that he regretfully

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<sup>139</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, page 180.

missed these historical events because he was heavily indulging in drugs and alcohol at the time, eventually leading to severe addiction.<sup>140</sup> The success of *The Promise of a Future* brought Masekela global fame, but he found the success hard to handle and turned to substance abuse to cope.<sup>141</sup> He mentions in his memoir, “I stayed so high that I missed many historical events that were taking place under my powdered nose.”<sup>142</sup>

While other South African artists had become outspokenly political, Masekela hesitated to be vocal about the racial inequality found in the US. All this changed in 1969, when Masekela was unjustly arrested in his Los Angeles home. According to Masekela, Los Angeles police entered his home without a warrant and arrested him for drug possession.<sup>143</sup> The drug bust received national publicity, causing Masekela’s career to decline.<sup>144</sup> This incident led to the release of *Masekela* (1969), the follow-up to *The Promise of a Future* and his first album as political activist. Of *Masekela*, Masekela has written:

Because of my drug bust, I had developed a very deep anger towards America’s collaboration with the South African government and their concerted methods to punish everyone who criticized their anticommunist and racist campaigns. The songs in *Masekela* all addressed their evil partnership and condemned it because I felt that the apartheid administration was painstakingly working with US intelligence agencies to make my life a living hell.<sup>145</sup>

Masekela’s statement is hyperbolic but partly truthful. While the apartheid

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, page 195.

<sup>141</sup> Masekela, *Still Grazing*, page 224.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, page 221.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, page 222.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, page 225.

administration's priority most likely was not to torment Masekela, the US government's association with the apartheid administration was inconsistent until its complete demise in 1994.<sup>146</sup> The Kennedy administration had committed itself to civil rights legislation and advocated for human rights as a strategic rhetoric to gain African American voters.<sup>147</sup> In 1962, under the same rhetoric, the Kennedy administration adopted a stance of officially opposing apartheid to the U.N.<sup>148</sup> The Kennedy administration made steps towards ending apartheid, but not much was accomplished before Kennedy died the following year. The Johnson administration followed in Kennedy's steps but with the state of the nation in critical condition following Kennedy's death, the immediate problems of the US took precedence over the those in South Africa. The Johnson administration fought against apartheid, but the tension of the cold war made it difficult to do so, as the US had interests in keeping civil ties with South Africa for its natural resources and geographical location.<sup>149</sup> Of all the presidents who dealt with apartheid, the efforts of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations outweigh all those of the presidents who followed.<sup>150</sup> The following presidencies took no interest in dismantling apartheid, leading to the rise of an anti-apartheid movement in the 1970s which Masekela would become a poster child for.

*The Promise of a Future* is arguably Masekela's most important album,

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<sup>146</sup> Ojewale, Olugbenga Samson Mr, "America's Inconsistent Foreign Policy to Africa; a Case Study of Apartheid South Africa." Masters Thesis. East Tennessee State University. 2018, page 6-7.

<sup>147</sup> Thomson, Alex. U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948-1994. Palgrave Macmillan Publishers Limited. New York, NY, 2008, page 32.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, page 34.

<sup>149</sup> Ojewale, "America's Inconsistent Foreign Policy to Africa," page 51.

<sup>150</sup> Minter, William. *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa*. Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, NY, 1986, page 140.

because its success affected all albums following it, but it needs to be noted that the album was the result of Masekela's experimental phase, suggesting that the album was made with little thought involved. The albums released up to and including *The Promise of a Future* differ considerably in musical styling, advertising, and central theme. All this changed with *Masekela*. This album was a big shift in Masekela's career, because it was the first to establish the Hugh Masekela brand. In many ways, the album is the antithesis of *The Promise of a Future*. While the messaging of *The Promise of a Future* promoted inclusivity, the messaging in *Masekela* was a call to action and a reflection of the betrayal Masekela felt from the US government. The album cover is also symbolic of the creative changes Masekela was beginning to make. While the cover of *The Promise of a Future* is a picture of a diverse crowd, the cover of *Masekela* is a darkened close-up of photo of Masekela's face.

The *Masekela* tracks demonstrate an important change in tone compared to *The Promise of Future*. The latter album comprises mainly upbeat originals and pop covers as a mixture of American and traditional South African songs. The content of *Masekela* dramatically contrasts the previous work, as it is more direct. For example, "Mace and Grenades" and "Riot" were two of the controversial titles, especially since some rioting continued into the 1970s. In some respects, "Riot" is an ode to "Grazing in the Grass," but also exemplifies Masekela's changing view of the US. The pieces feature a similar chord progression, and both have memorable recurring guitar riffs, but differ drastically with respect to harmony as "Riot" has more use of dissonance. Masekela was advised to change

the song's title to ensure a mainstream release and heighten the success of "Grazing in the Grass," but he refused.<sup>151</sup> The album was successful despite its political affiliation, but it did not reach the levels of "Grazing in the Grass."

*Masekela* remains a crucial album because it established Masekela's public persona. It set in motion his identity as a political icon, but it would not be until the release in 1974 of "Stimela" (from the album *I Am Not Afraid*) that Masekela would be recognized as an anti-apartheid icon. Masekela had fully embraced his musical heritage at this stage in his career, and this album is no different. "Stimela," the closing song on the album, stands out and has been recognized as one of Masekela's best. Since its release, "Stimela" has been on all "Greatest Hits" compilations, and the song is featured on the soundtrack that accompanies his memoir. Inspired by the coal workers who came into his grandmother's home run bar when Masekela was a child, "Stimela" tells the story of the exploitation of Masekela's people. The lyrical content of "Stimela" paints a picture of tragedy, but there is no clear message; Masekela is simply critiquing what he has seen. "Stimela" is a protest song—not necessarily about apartheid, but about systems that allow it. "Stimela" criticizes capitalism, colonialism, and the exploitation of human lives for profit—all topics that would be emphasized throughout the rest of Masekela's career. The success of "Stimela" is a signifier of the changing views of apartheid. While apartheid held negative connotations in the 1960s, by the 1970s the US public was vocally against apartheid.

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<sup>151</sup> Masekela, *Grazing in the Grass*, page 226.

Masekela reached the pinnacle of his protest career with the release of *Tomorrow* in 1987, which featured “Bring Him Back Home.” “Bring Him Back Home” is Masekela’s most direct protest song. Its lyrics are:

Bring Back Nelson Mandela  
 Bring him back to all Soweto  
 I want to see him walking  
 Down the street in South Africa—Tomorrow!  
 Bring Back Nelson Mandela  
 Bring him back to all Soweto  
 I want to see him walking  
 Down the street with Winnie Mandela

The lyrics in this song contrast drastically from previous Masekela protest music because it makes a clear statement. The message in “Bring him Back Home” is direct. Typical of a protest song, the melody is simple as are the vocals that make up the whole piece. Masekela’s vocals do not stand out here, but they are not meant to. The melody is sung by a choir with Masekela’s voice one of many. The song became a crowd favorite in Masekela’s live shows and often closed the performance, but it also cemented Masekela as a political figure. “Bring Him Back Home” became the unofficial anthem for the anti-apartheid movement, and it continues to be influential in South Africa. With “Bring him Back Home,” Masekela not only succeeded in creating a protest song but created a modern-day folk song.

The Success of “Bring him back home” is representative of how the US public viewed apartheid. By 1986, the public was not only concerned but actively vocal about their disdain. The song’s popularity is also evidence of public sympathy for Africa, which in post-colonial discussion is problematic. Apartheid

through imagery and language was coded as an “evil” on par with Nazism, so it became something of a moral issue to eradicate apartheid; and this allowed the public to look beyond social boundaries and to receive the song with embrace even though the issue was completely unrelated to them. The success of “Bring Him Back Home” and the anti-apartheid movement reaching mainstream attention shaped how Masekela would be viewed and created a narrative that he embraced and could not escape. Up onto his death, his narrative was always that of an exiled musician who used his music to fight the injustices of apartheid.

### **Epilogue**

Given the high call for action, US finally responded to apartheid in 1986 with the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. According to the act, the law-imposed sanctions on South Africa unless they ended the apartheid policy. The South African government eventually met the demands of the act, and apartheid officially ended in 1994.

Masekela continued to make music with a political message despite having lost his principal cause. The nature of his music focused on inclusivity and conveyed messages of peace. In 2016, Masekela released his last album, *No Borders*, to great acclaim. As the title suggests, the album’s message is post-colonial and challenges nationalism. *No Borders* is a concept album telling the story of Africa before colonialism, so it is clear Masekela never gave up on his vision. The album is rich with varied vocal styles and was well received. While he

is no longer with us, Masekela's spirit continues in his music. In South Africa, he will soon not be forgotten.

Masekela represents a symbol of hope the world over, but to this author he will always be the rebellious musician who defied US expectations in the 1960s. Having learned of Masekela from a jazz context, it is odd to see where his career took him. As he developed his sound, began singing, and became evermore political, Masekela fell out of the realm of jazz. Much of this has to do with his marketing. Masekela went from jazz musician to "South African" jazz musician—and this made an enormous impact on the jazz world. This also speaks to the relationship jazz has with the African side of its origin. Masekela fell out of the jazz realm because he deviated from the American jazz mold. He became the symbol of a sub-genre, one that symbolized an inability to fully fit into an American jazz narrative, but there is no evidence that Masekela was concerned on the matter.

Masekela developed his musical skills with the intent of achieving success as an American jazz musician, but this goal became less significant as Masekela came to terms with his identity. This author wished to have interviewed Masekela, as this would have greatly expanded the scope of understanding him within his formative years, but he unfortunately died early into this project. Masekela's life took him beyond jazz to a deeper understanding of humanity, and most likely would not have minded being undervalued in jazz history. At the end of the day, genres are merely marketing labels: it is Masekela's music that lives on.

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## Appendix

### **Morris Goldberg Interview New York City. October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018.**

Cueva: I would like to start the interview by asking what your background is:

Goldberg: I started playing the clarinet when I was fourteen. I had a hard time with my father because I begged him for years. I was just set on the clarinet. We had a lot of music in the house. My mother sent me to piano lessons, and I didn't like them. I don't know why. I just wanted to play the clarinet. When I was twelve, I asked my father to buy me one. He finally relented when I was fourteen (laughs). On the way to the store he said, "you know I used to play the clarinet." What? I never knew this. You know, when my parents came from Lothringia, they're immigrants to South Africa, they left their whole life behind. Never talked about it. But apparently, he played clarinet in the Russian army band and he didn't want me to be a musician as it was looked down upon from his experiences and in general, of course, that's what the attitude was. Anyhow, I started on the clarinet and about a year or two later, bought the saxophone and I started playing, well, the first music I heard was, my brother in law had a lot of LPs of Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Big band stuff. I also heard Dave Brubeck. I started playing with this band, the first band that I played with, we used to rehearse. And it was around the time which obviously was during apartheid. It was a mixed band. We had white musicians, and we had... but in South Africa there were three main groups. They labeled white, colored and black African. Mixed race was called colored. So, we had a couple of colored guys in the band as well. So, we used to rehearse

in one guy's house actually, out of town anyway, that was my first experience. My first tune I ever learned was a tune called "Move," bebop tune. I studied classical. I played in the orchestra in the College of Music in Cape Town.

And moving on from that. When I was 19, that's when I met Hugh Masekela. And he came to town. He was part of the band that was playing for a musical called King Kong. And that's quite an historic musical because it was about it was about a boxer called King Kong, but it featured Mariam Makeba and some other well-known people in show business in South Africa. Hugh Masekela was in the band and Jonas Gwanga who was a trombone player and friend. They'd gone to this school in Johannesburg which was run by Father Trevor Huddleston. I don't know if you've heard that name. But he got Hugh that trumpet from Louis Armstrong. There was also another musical troupe called "African jazz and variety," that toured South Africa. I don't know how the guy did it in the apartheid era, but he managed to, to move around South Africa. They were like a 40-member group. He played in that as well. Whenever they came to town, I would invite the musicians to my house we would jam for hours. The neighbors, they called the police. My dad told them to "fuck off," (laughs). My father didn't care about apartheid. He didn't like it. So that's how I met Hugh. I invited him to visit. He came to my house, we talked.

At some point after that, there was an American piano teacher, by the name of John Mehegan. He came to town and he was instrumental in helping me, he helped Hugh to and Jonas, the three of us. I ended up doing concert with him. He was a pianist, but his main thing was teaching. He wrote, he was the first person

to write a book on jazz harmony. John Mehegan, of course now there are millions. But he was the first one. And I had like a lesson in harmony with him, which really set me up for if I ever did want to come here, and I thought about it, I thought about it, but not seriously. So that's what happened in South Africa. I didn't get to see much of Hugh because he was in Johannesburg. He used to come down with this group called the Jazz Epistles. You know that group? Yeah. So that was led by Dollar Brand and Abdul Aбраим. And they played. I was in Cape Town and he lived in Johannesburg. They played in Cape Town, there were two jazz clubs. I played in one and they played in the other. I played in a place called "The Nas," And they played in "the Ambassadors." It was cool. And that was historic, that group. They made the first jazz album in South Africa.

So, moving on from there. I eventually decided that I was going to leave South Africa. And I went to London and Hugh had gone. And Jonas had left before I left, and they went to London. And I think he studied it for a little while at one of the music schools there. So, when I got to London, he had already gone to New York. I got to stay in London for a while. And I got a job on a Queen Mary in one of the bands. And I decided that I was going to go to New York to study. So, I set myself up. The ship I worked on was the Queen Mary, went from Southampton, England to New York back and forth, back and forth. When I came to New York, I would set up audition whatever I had to, you know to get in. And Hugh, he was already there. And he invited me to stay with him when I did come over. So, I came over and I stayed with him when we went to school, Jonas, Hugh and myself.

I lived on West 87th Street, that's where the apartment was for the first four months, then I got my own place. And we used to practice together every day. Our daily practice was Donna Lee by Charlie Parker. And it was an interesting time, you know, we were students and we had no money, I mean, whatever we had went to food, rent, whatever. Some of it went to school. But he had gotten help. I think he had scholarships. I got some scholarships after the first semester. Well, as I said before, we are struggling, you know, we were students. We had no money, but there were two people who were very good to us, and one was Mirriam Makeba. She lived on West 97th Street and Park West Village. And her star was rising rapidly from that point. And we used to go over to her apartment twice a week, she would feed us. she was great cook. She loved to cook. We would eat dinner with her and a friend of ours also, Saul, he'd take us out for a meal every now and then. So, we got by you know, with whatever it was. I worked part time. Then Hugh formed his first group. I think it was the first gig I played with him. And we played at the Apollo Theater. And that group was Hugh, myself, Larry Willis on piano, Eddie Gomez on bass and Henry Jenkins on drums. Yeah.

The thing was that we, you know, we were so influenced by American jazz. And that took us over, kind of thing and it was only after a while that he started realizing this South African thing is what we grew up with. It was in our blood.