

Indigenous Influences on Popular Venda Music

EVANS NETSHIVHAMBE

Abstract: Venda musicians incorporate aspects of “traditional” Venda life and music while still trying to make their music marketable to a larger audience. Johannesburg, the “City of Gold” was never such for many popular Venda musicians as their music did not yield any gold for them. Two significant influences take center stage in realizing a wider market for popular Venda music. These influences reference melodic and rhythmic motifs from indigenous Venda music and children’s songs, while retaining a touch of “homegrown” in the music. Interviews with several popular musicians and an analysis of music indicates cultural relevancy in popular Venda music quoting.

Keywords: Children’s songs, folk tales, rhythmic and melodic influence, indigenous music, *Malende*

Introduction

Literature in African Studies, which engages with popular music, has been growing since the end of World War II. African independences led to a boom in popular music recording as a vehicle to express their liberation. Many others have been pioneers in documenting the rise of popular African music.¹ Various ethnic groups within each African country tried their luck in creating some semblance of identity through singing in their vernacular language. However, not all of these were successful in making a significant breakthrough, particularly those whose language was—and remains—unpopular in the well-developed city space. This research focuses on how Venda musicians have navigated the broader music industry by incorporating different aspects of what consumers understand as ‘traditional’ cultural life into their music. It documents their efforts in trying to use traditional Venda elements as a form of musical identity in major cities such as Johannesburg; how they have adapted their music under pressures from the commercial market; and how minority language music lobbied for space in an industry dominated by a highly ethnic-centered performing business. The research is based on personal interviews conducted with several veteran musicians that the author collected over an extended period, as well as analysis of lyrics and/or music, participant observation at musical events, and archival research.

Evans Netshivhambe is lecturer in the Department of Art & Music, University of South Africa.

<https://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/V21i4a1.pdf>

Historical Background

This section focuses on three generations of popular Venda musicians and their strategies for enticing audiences, especially in urban areas and on national radio. These three generations emerge from the early 1950s, when popular Venda musicians arrived in Johannesburg at a time when popular South African music started to become the genre of choice when recording music. This period was the most difficult for popular Venda musicians, specifically because they could not record in their own language at many of the commercial studios owing to its status as a minority language.² The second generation of popular Venda musicians experienced marginal success in the early 1980s, as a modicum of freedom allowed them to record in their own language.³ The third generation of popular Venda musicians enjoyed a growing success in the early 1990s and 2000s. This was entirely the result of the change wrought on the South African music industry after the removal of all discrimination towards minority languages. However, navigating the broader industry was still challenging as other languages had dominated for decades. Venda artists distinguished themselves and negotiated their status through use of traditional elements from cultural Venda music.

The article discusses various approaches by these three musical generations, with a special focus on the second and third generations who successfully took up the baton of ensuring the survival of popular Venda music. Surviving in Johannesburg was not for everyone and those that could speak and sing in dominant languages were at an advantage.⁴ Most artists chose to forgo the use of commercial recording studios, opting to record in home studios. This gave the second and third generations of popular Venda music the courage to promote their own music and manage their own CD sales, rather than relying on commercial record labels.⁵

From the inception of Radio Bantu in the 1960s, popular Venda music struggled to hit the charts, find its way into commercial radio stations, or receive nominations for major music awards. The apartheid regime's attitude towards the Venda language and its music as from a 'minority' group resulted in Tshivenda music receiving almost no airtime on many radio stations. One aim of Radio Bantu was to promote the vernacular of each Bantu language group. However, the paucity of recorded Venda music resulted in the programming of music from other language groups particularly Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho songs. So popular Venda music was continually ignored both within and outside of the South African music industry. The exception to this was the regional Radio Venda launched in 1965 (now known as Phalaphala FM) wholly dedicated to the promotion of the Venda language. As far back as the early 1980s, Venda musicians thereby decided to place their faith in their local radio stations to garner support for Venda music. In attempting to create a distinct identity for themselves—promoted via these local stations—musicians began using traditional elements of Venda music, including children's songs, rhythmic codes, and traditional dance songs.

Kruger conducted research in Venda during the 1980s when a fresh, positive approach to Venda music emerged.⁶ The demand for recordings of popular music in the Venda community was booming, enabled by both commercial and independent recording studios. The number of musicians crafting their own guitars to pursue careers in popular music intrigued Kruger. These musicians were more exploratory, as they learned to use guitar and keyboard in their music. Two concurrent musical ideologies intrigued him: "traditionalist essentialism" and "cultural

evolution” prompted by the commodification of music. These findings by Kruger track the early stages of expanding popular Venda music development. Musicians were doing whatever they could to retain their traditional values - i.e., elements quoted from cultural dance music, while others were finding ways to survive through music commodification.

Kruger discovered strong traces of traditional elements taking shape in popular music. These included harmonic sequences, rhythmic and melodic fusion of traditional music and popular styles. Kruger explains a basic principle used by the local musicians incorporating foreign musical influences as a means of enriching and reinforcing local cultural expressions. This essentialist approach sought to find ways of retaining traditional characteristics in popular music. In contrast, current findings tend towards a practice that no longer explores with instruments so much as using instruments to discover the best chord progressions to accompany various music. Dovchin describes the importance of transgressive theory in mixed cultural societies as a key point in understanding dominance of culture and language.⁷ To understand how to remove preconceived ideas about which traditional urban musical genres receive enough support from listeners, and therefore translating into a greater number of sales, the viable and preferred musical style takes precedence and thus one would have to use transgressive theory.⁸

In South Africa, popular Venda music sits at the very lowest rank on the list of preferred popular urban traditional music. Much of this classification is associated with an assumption of what qualifies as ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ languages. Opting to use cultural Venda elements as well as singing in Tshivenda was a last ditch effort by many popular Venda musicians. They had attempted to gain audience share in a less authentic manner through performing in the so-called dominant languages but were ultimately unsuccessful as this did not translate to increased sales. In using traditional elements of symbolism in their music, popular Venda musicians were simply attempting to find a new way of navigating success in the commercial terrain of popular music.

Using traditional elements as symbolism in popular music connects people with their culture through that with which they are familiar. Kruger shows that these guitarists—who were continually attempting to find opportunities for record deals or a means to record their songs—found ways of using cultural symbolism to leverage the Venda presence in popular music.⁹ Kruger conducted his research in the colonial period of South Africa, which made it difficult for these guitarists to make appreciable headway in the mainstream music scene. The bigger recording studios were located in the metropolitan cities, such as Johannesburg, and very few traditional musicians had access to these. Those who did came to Johannesburg initially as migrant laborers amidst the intense state control over inter-city movements. They would come to Johannesburg, disguising their true intentions as musicians seeking recording opportunities. Coplan argues that music styles were emerging, with the realization of a new, racially mixed and developing South African music scene and in Johannesburg specifically.¹⁰ Traces of homeland styles juxtaposed their search for new identities, through an emphasis on recitations of various African languages. The songs featured repetitive chords that symbolized cyclical traditional African music. Unfortunately, during this period, very few Venda musicians were able to overcome these difficult terrains and better their musical careers.

McNeill encountered the many social problems caused by HIV in the Venda area. He engaged with a local popular Venda band led by Colbert Mukwevho.¹¹ Repetition of simple chords that copied traditional elements were common in many of the songs by the band and many other performing groups. McNeill's account closely resembled what most Venda musicians go through when they are attempting to establish themselves in the commercial music industry—success for minority, indigenous cultures in metropolitan spaces was as much a political issue as a social one.

The apartheid regime's ideology of separate development shaped policies regarding radio, language and music.¹² The state-sponsored Venda-Tsonga station set up in 1965 eventually became two separate entities in 1979. Despite the existence of a radio station specifically aimed at Tshivenda audiences, Venda music did not find support in commercial studios such as Gallo, EMI, Troubadour, etc. until the beginning of the 1980s. Commercial radio stations rarely included popular Venda music because there was ostensibly no market and listeners were few.¹³

Under the colonial regime, not only were there restrictions on travelling but also stipulations on local languages permitted in the press, media and music.¹⁴ In fact, after the establishment of the Radio Bantu stations, the music styles that gained popularity were *marabi*, *isicathamiya* or *mbube*, jazz, *mbaqanga*, *kwela*, disco and jive. Popular Venda musicians needed to either align their music to an existing popular style to generate sales or return to their homelands. Venda musicians unsurprisingly found the greatest support in their homeland, where retaining traditional elements such as the use of call and response, quoting certain symbolic musical elements and rhythmic signifying gained them more popularity as part of the musical identity of communities.¹⁵

Clearly, the environment through which the first migrant generation of popular Venda musicians had to move to ascend the ladder of success did not favor them. Musicians in this first group from the 1960s through to the 1970s eventually became giants—heroes of the struggle to create a platform for Tshivenda music.¹⁶ Although they are now recognizable figures in popular Venda music and continue inspire the new generations of emergent musicians, the history of their careers is loaded with difficult economic and social imbalances. For the first generation of popular Venda musicians, they arrived as migrants in Johannesburg amidst the reality of apartheid as well as other changes, such as the 'Americanization' of local music.¹⁷ These cultural assimilations confused social circumstances for a migrant even further, with trending foreign influences assuming control over the city's music scene that yielded a cultural shock even more intense than might have been anticipated.

The second generation of popular Venda musicians who migrated to Johannesburg in the 1980s and 1990s were lucky in that most recording studios had lifted their separatist regulations and were venturing into the untapped markets, such as those of the minority languages. However, these musicians still needed to utilize the *mbaqanga* sound as a means of slowly introducing them to the popular music audience in the cities.¹⁸ When most of these artists began recording they did not have a band of their own which meant they relied on the recording studio's band.¹⁹ These bands generally had a particular sound when accompanying such that many artists ended up with the same commercially driven sound. Most musicians felt these other styles masked their traditional sound and did not represent their musical identity. In response, Tshivenda musicians would include different languages in the lyrics to their songs.

For artists such as Dan Tshaṅda, the solution was to sing in both Venda and English. The song would alternate verses between languages with the chorus generally in Venda as this was the most repeated and catchy part of the song. Right from the seminal 1986 album, Dan Tshaṅda's songs adopted this technique, such as "Peacock" which quotes a traditional Venda riddle. Tshaṅda continued to promote the Venda language in media, primarily through song choruses. For musicians like Irene Mawela, their efforts to succeed meant singing in other accepted languages, such as Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho, before she began singing in her own language. Similar to Tshaṅda's approach, on their first album Adziambei Band sang "Midzimu ya madimoni" in Venda and Sotho to accommodate a larger number of listeners. Dan Tshaṅda also succeeded in placing his music under a number of styles, namely Afro-pop, *mbaqanga* and African, rather than "traditional" Venda music which would have limited his audience.

There were also political pressures that contributed to the difficulties Venda musicians faced. Kruger indicates that apartheid ideology based on a separate development created a separatist resistance that different cultural groups inherited as a way to protect and promote ethnic nationalism.²⁰ He equates the *mbaqanga* style with *Muzika wa Sialala* in terms of the ideological values of celebrating individualism and nationalism at the height of suppression. Musicians of these two styles believe each is the closest to their respective heritage—in spite of their commoditization—as they both draw from cultural inspiration.²¹ Most popular Venda musicians who moved to Johannesburg tried to adopt new musical styles but were not happy with the outcome and decided to stick to established forms.

Cultural Practice as Inspiration for Popular Venda Musicians

Most musical fusions take place out of influences from various other musical genres that may show a tendency to adopt a new version of their style. Collins postulates that in spite of this, new styles would nevertheless retain a touch of local traditional elements.²² In other words, there would always be a feature in these new musical styles that is genuinely local, such as language, melodic or rhythmic quotes, as well as the use of instrumentation or soundscape. There are also continental influences that tend to play a major role in the realization of new styles of popular music in Africa. Highlife is one example of a musical genre heavily influenced by other musical styles, including *kwela*, *soukous*, *benga*, *mbaqanga*, *chimurenga* and *taraab* among many others.²³ Kubik explains how various popular music styles in many African countries tend to gain a continual musical influence in other countries through these fusions.²⁴ Many African bands gained popularity on radio stations played across different countries, which became a form of collective African identity. There are international, continental, national and regional influences that often shape the development of many popular music styles in Africa.

For example, Kubik postulates that music from South Africa—such as *kwela*, jive and jazz— influenced The Kachamba Brothers' Band in Malawi. Kruger notices the same trend in the development of Venda guitar music of *Muzika wa Sialala* influenced by the growing popularity of national styles that emerged in Johannesburg.²⁵ A similar mix of influences is notable in popular Venda music, but it has succeeded in maintaining a strong linguistic and ethnic identity. This fusion of traditional and modern music styles continues to stake place. Popular Venda music embraces influences from international music (rap and rhythm and blues),

continental (*soukous*, *kwasa kwasa* and *rumba*), national (*mbaqanga* and *kwela*), and regional (local dance practices).

Malende Music

Cultural music practice influences many popular Venda music songs, especially *Malende*, because of its symbolic rhythmic signifying patterns played on the *murumba* drum. In other words, the music becomes a pure representation of *Malende* or *Tshigombela* music, incorporating elements such as call-and-response, bitonal centers, and traditional drums, fused with Western instruments, such as the kick drum and high hats, guitar, keyboard, or synthesized sounds. This is where some bands, such as the Adziambei Band, built their popularity with the clever use of masking traditional elements with Western music. By using *Malende* elements in the background of *Muzika wa Sialala*, performers create songs that can be used as accompanying background tracks for people who want to dance *Malende* at parties or events without access to traditional instruments. When they perform live, most of these musicians try to encourage their listeners to dance along with their music in the *Malende* style. They also enjoy the idea of the audience singing along to the song when they are performing live, particularly songs that mimic *ngano* or children's songs because when the audience sings along it confirms that people are familiar with the music.

Some popular Venda musicians, particularly second and third-generation musicians specializing in the *Muzika wa Sialala* guitar style, would be clearly identifiable through their use of bitonality, which both Blacking and Kruger refer to as *Phala* and *Thakhula* tonal centres.²⁶ These include: Daniel Luambo, Alpheus Mashonelo Ramavhea, Tshivhangwaho na dzhatsha, Albert Mundalamo, Eric Mukhese, Elvis Mandiza, the Takalani Band, Irene Mawela, the Ikhou Bobodana Band, and the Sibasa Pirates. The call and response nature copied from *Malende* music has a dual functionality found in the response part, which is usually centered on two tonal centers a single tone apart.²⁷ This bitonality in traditional *Malende* music brings variety in the response portion. The call is usually a repetitive pattern that supports the lead singer throughout the song.

Children's Music

One of the most influential popular Venda musicians known beyond the South African borders is Daniel Ndivhiseni Tshanda. Born in Venda Matangari, Tshanda grew up in Chiawelo, Soweto. As the leader of Splash, which signed a record deal with Gallo Records in 1985, he released many songs that became hits in Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, as well as other African countries. "Pořilo" from the album 1987 *Snake* was the epitome of a children's song in popular Venda music.²⁸ Songs such as "Pořilo" are well-known children's songs, which have strong ties with the culture of Venda people when it comes to raising children. However, some of the children's songs embody melodic and rhythmic fantasy with indistinct words. These words are often borrowed from other languages, which was a common technique. Their words do not have any meaning in the Venda language. "Pořilo" is one example of a song with words for which no one can explain the meaning in the Venda language, as most of the words do not in fact exist. The song is widely used for teaching children how to count from one to ten and is

one of the most sung and recited Venda children's songs. The song is very well known and continues to circulate in the community. Splash used their own words to give meaning to the music. The song echoes past times, when people played games and sang as children.

For songs carried over from traditional Venda to the urban spaces of cities such as Johannesburg, musicians would use English or another dominant language, sometimes blended with Venda, to be more marketable. This language blend is shown in "Potilo" where the words of the song in the chorus refer to an old way of counting to ten, hardly used in contemporary society, as modern schools employ a more formal technique. The old way of counting uses words that are borrowed from other cultures, which do not have any meaning in Venda language.

"Potilo"

I remember those days
When we would say yeah
We used to play our lovely game
Calling it Potilo (x2)

Chorus

Potilo hangala hangala
Hangala nda tema
Nda tema temi
Tshiṇoni tsha gala matanda
Maṇdule Gumi wee

Na zwino ndi nga si kone	Now I cannot be able
U dovha na vha nwana	to be a child
Ndi nga si kone	I cannot be able
U humela murahu	to go back

Ain't no going back now
Our time has run out
We should be playing
Our lovely game
Calling it Potilo

Even though there are proper words in Tshivenda to count from one to ten, counting through song was done along to "Potilo" – the counting ended at ten in many villages while in other villages it went further. Numbers two and three "Hangala" are spelled the same but have different "khalo" or tone pronunciation.

"Potilo" Version A

Potilo	Thihi	1
Hangala	Mbili	2
Hangala	Raru	3

Nda tema	Iṅa	4
Temiso	Ṱhanu	5
Tshiṅoni	Rathi	6
Tsha gala	Sumbe	7
Mutanda	Malo	8
Maṅdule	Ṱahe	9
Guni wee	Fumi	10

There are different versions of the song from one village to another and some words differ from one village to the next. In his research of Venda children's songs, Blacking noted three different versions, which he heard in three different places. Version A above could be heard across Vendaland. He also heard Version B, at Luheni situated in a village called Ha Makuya, as well as in other places such as Sinthimule, east of Makhado (formerly Louis Trichardt).

"Poṱilo" Version B

Poṱilo
 Masagara
 Masagara
 Mashango "the territories"
 A Vhavaṅda "of the Venda people"
 Sidimela "a train"
 Simisoni "Samson"
 Gunyuni
 Ṱamadzavho
 Tshifumi-wee "ten"

In some areas of Vendaland, the counting goes further up to sixteen in places such as Ha Tshivhase. The author has never heard the version B that Blacking recorded. However, he has encountered an extended version of the first version, which counts up to sixteen, from Madombidzha, a village in the Sinthumule area. He has heard the same version in Itsani, from the Ha-Tshivhasa area. The author is of the opinion that there could be additional versions, but these may be very different from the popular versions. The author should note that he has also heard Version B in Vhuṱalu village, which sounds exactly like the one that Blacking heard.

Poṱilo Version C

Poṱilo
 Hangala
 Hangala
 Nda tema
 Temiso
 Tshiṅoni
 Tshagala
 Matanda

Maṇdule
 Gumi wee
 Nda posa “I throw”
 Kaṭinga
 La kudya
 Makumba (eggs)
 Kupaṭa
 Kuṅee

Blacking notes that Venda people attached meanings to some of these words but not to all of them.²⁹ The words do not make sense in TshiVenda language because most of these words derive from other languages such as ChiShona from Zimbabwe. Blacking also noted that he discovered Version C in Zimbabwe, and it is different from Versions A and B. However, they all begin with the same rhyme. Madida noted the same similarities Blacking indicated, of Shona words found in some of these children’s songs. He indicated that words such as *tema* (cut); *temiso* (cause to cut), and *gala* (from *gara*, sit), are all Shona words used in these Venda children’s songs.³⁰

“Potilo” as recorded by Splash is an example of a popular Venda song inspired by Venda children songs. A song like this has strong connection with Venda people because almost every child grows up singing this song. The musicians have changed the traditional melody to individualized new melodies that suit their music accompanied by instruments that gives new life to the music and makes the new tune easy to sing along and dance. It also draws a line of loyalty between these new songs and Venda culture through these much-loved, old children’s songs.

Another notable musician is Naledzani Rambuda Netshirembe from Dzanani village in Venda. She sings *Muzika wa Sialala* and her music has gained popularity in Venda over the last two decades. Her love for music started when she was young, when she used to sing and dance to *Malende* and *Tshifasi*. She plays indigenous instruments, such as *tshihwana* and *lugube lwa lutanga*. She is a poet and a storyteller as well as founder of the Vhutsila Cultural School. In her album, *Salungano-Slungano, Mandipo Bele* she includes a song based on the children’s song “Vhambona ndo rali” (seeing me like this). This song is the most played on regional radio station, Phalaphala FM. The title of the song does not suggest a children’s song, instead she has used this particular children’s song as the chorus of a song that contains her own words. The words below feature the quote from the children’s song.

Fhano ho ḁa nnyi	who came here?
Muyeni, muyeni ihi	a visitor, a visitor ihi
Namubikela ni wee	what did you cook for him?
Manyimba, manyimba ihi	Beans and maize, beans and maize ihi
Anga no a vheafhi wee	where did you put mine?
Patala, patala ihi	on the shelf, on the shelf ihi
Fhaululani ri vhone	take them down that I may see
Thiswiki, thiswiki ihi	I cannot reach (them), I cannot reach (them) ihi
Vhidzani Mutilikwa	call Mutilikwa

O lamba, o lamba ihi	Mutlikwa refused, Mutlikwa refused ihi
O lamba nga liphio	Why has Mutlikwa refused?
Nga lelo, nga lelo ihi	because of this, because of this ihi
Nga lelo la kutini	to what are you referring?
Nyakuti, nyakuti ihi	to what(ever) you say, what(ever) you say ihi
Nyakuti malembeni	of what do you say hoes are made?
A ngweḁi, a ngweḁi ihi	of iron ore, of iron ore
Dzhiyani tshigoma tshiri	play the small drum (tenor), it will say
Tundundu, tundundu ihii	Tundundu, tundundu ihii
Dzhiyani Murumba uri	Take Murumba drum (alto) it will say
Pambamba, phambamha ihii Pambamba, pambamba ihii	

This is another song where Blacking notes the similarities with a version called “Mbaeni” derived from the Shona language. Netshirembe believes that many children’s and *ngano* songs have words shared with the Shona people from Zimbabwe. The notable shared influence between the Venda and Shona people arises from their lengthy historical relationship and continued geographic proximity. This is not restricted to language but also extends to shared cultural and religious practices. Blacking’s interpretation of this song has quite a few lines that incorrectly translated in English that completely loses the actual meaning of the song.³¹ Blacking does note that the song seems to be celebratory, performed when there are visitors and serving the best Venda dish, *tshidzimba* or *manyimba*. Visitors would receive this special dish while this music plays. This song captures how visitors are welcomed in the Venda community that embraces cultural dignity and how people should treat visitors.

Netshirembe has also added her own words to the children’s song, words that make the song exciting. She has used modern instruments, such as guitars, bass, a Western drum set, and certain synthesizers to mimic *mbila dza mutondo* or the *Marimba* sound. Most of Netshirembe’s songs assume a storytelling structure, based on the culture of storytelling called *ngano*, often accompanied by songs. When she composes her songs, she uses both the Venda and Shona languages in her storytelling. She uses her songs to educate about the proper pronunciation of Venda words, the tone, diction and enunciations, because she sees such knowledge becoming lost with younger generations.

Conclusion

Popular Venda musicians have shown resilience in a very competitive urban music industry in the cities of South Africa, by incorporating aspects of ‘traditional’ Venda life and cultural practice in their music while simultaneously making their music ‘marketable’ to a larger audience through the inclusion of popular elements. Venda children’s songs, games, *ngano* storytelling, riddles, proverbs and other linguistic constructs in Venda culture have become a source of inspiration for popular Venda musicians. This is another way of using music to educate and preserve the language of the Venda. Most musicians who follow this path have a better chance of acquiring a large following while remaining loyal to culture and tradition. When people recognize children’s songs and games with which they grew up playing and singing, the music naturally appeals to them. This kind of cultural borrowing is an easy

connection for audiences to make, compared to using rhythmic motif derived from *Malende* especially if used distinctively by each artist. When using children's songs, games and *ngano* songs, it is easy to connect people with their culture, because people are able to sing along with the music. This signifying is able to reach a greater audience, such as those in metropolitan cities. The music fills them with a sense of belonging, even when they are working far from Vendaland. Musicians continue to embrace their cultural ethos through using these elements to celebrate their identities and culture, perpetuating the connection between old and new.

Works Cited

- Allen, Lara. 1996. "Drumbeats, Pennywhistles and All That Jazz: The Relationship between Urban South African Musical Styles and Musical Meaning." *African Music* 7.3: 52–59.
- Ballantine, Christopher. 1989. "A Brief History of South African Popular Music." *Popular Music* 8.3: 305–310.
- _____. 1999. "Looking to the USA: The Politics of Male Close-Harmony Song Style in South Africa during the 1940s and 1950s." *Popular Music* 18.1: 1–17.
- Coffie, Mark Millas. 2020. "Redefining Ghanaian Highlife Music in Modern Times." *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* 4.1: 18–29.
- Blacking John. 1967. *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- _____. 1995. *Music, Culture, and Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coplan, David. 1979. "The African Musician and the development of the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry, 1900–1960." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5.2: 135–64.
- Dargie, Dave. 2013. "Kavango Music." *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 9.3: 122–50.
- Dovchin, Sender. 2011. "Performing Identity through Language: The Local Practices of Urban Youth Populations in Post-Socialist Mongolia." *Inner Asia* 13.2: 315–33.
- Hamm, Charles. 1991. "The Constant Companion of Man: Separate Development, Radio Bantu and Music." *Popular Music* 10.2: 147–73.
- Kruger, Jaco. 1993 "A Cultural Analysis of Venda Guitar Songs". PhD thesis, Rhodes University
- _____. 2006. "Tracks of the Mouse: Tonal Reinterpretation in Venda Guitar Songs." In Reily (ed.), *The Musical Human: Rethinking John Blacking's Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-First Century* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing): 87–106.
- Kubik, Gerhard. 1981. "Neo-Traditional Popular Music in East Africa since 1945." *Popular Music* 1: 83–104.
- Letcher, Chris. 2009. "Mbaqanga, Beethoven and Bollywood on the Beachfront: A Composer's Perspective on Representation and Identity in the Film, *My Black Little Heart*." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 18.1: 21.

Madida, Mbulungeni Ronald. 1994. "A Linguistic Survey of Adoptives in Venda." Master's dissertation, University of South Africa.

McNeill, Fraser G. 2012. "Making Music, Making Money: Informal Musical Production and Performance in Venda, South Africa." *Africa* 82: 93–110.

Netshivhambe, Evans Ntshengedzeni. 2022. "Rhythmic Signifying in Popular Venda Music." In Salawu and Fadipe" (eds) *Indigenous African Popular Music Volume 1. Pop Music, Culture and Identity*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reily, Ana Suzel (ed.). 2006. *The Musical Human: Rethinking John Blacking's Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-First Century*. Burlington: Ashgate.

Richey, Austin Thomas. 2016. "Chimurenga Renaissance: Double Doubleness in the Diasporic Music of Tendai Maraire." *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 10.2: 167–85.

Tracey, Hugh. 1962. "The Arts in Africa, the Visual and the Aural." *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 3.1: 20–32.

Discography

Splash. 1987. "Poṭilo" from *Snake*. Marketed and Distributed by Gallo-GRC Records Co. (Pty) Ltd.

Netshirembe Naledzani. 2007. "Maiwangu" from *Bele* Vol 1. NNMP Music Production.

_____. 2020. "Vhambona ndo rali" from *Bele* Vol 4. NNMP Music Production.

_____. 2013. "Mandipo" from *Bele* Vol 4. NNMP Music Production.

Tshimangadzo Nmutamba Sinyegwe. 2018. "Nguvho ina Buli." Hinote Music.

Interviews

Adziambei Band. 2021. Interview in Venda Tshaanda, the home of where members of the band live. The interviews included Samuel Mabuda, Maele Elias Sirwali and Johannes Kwinda.

Naledzani Netshirembe. 2017. Interview in Venda Thohoyandou at her own home and some telephonic discussions over the years before the publication of this article.

Irene Mawela. 2018. Interview in Venda Makhado at a restaurant including some telephonic discussions over the years before the publication of this article.

Maluṭa Matsheka. 2017 and 2019. Interviews in Venda Mbahe at his own home including some telephonic discussions over the years before the publication of this article.

Notes

¹ Coplan 1979, Kubik 1981, Ballantine 1989, Hamm 1991, Wells 1996, Kruger 2006,

McNeill 2012 and Agawu 2016.

² Irene Mawela Interview 2021.

³ Irene Mawela Interview 2022 and Adziambei Band Interview 2021.

⁴ These musicians have experienced the hardship of trying to survive in Johannesburg. Irene Mawela Interview 2022, Maluṭa Matsheka Interview 2022, Adziambei Band Interview 2021, and Joel Maṭhoho Interview 2021.

⁵ McNeil 2012.

⁶ Kruger 1993.

⁷ Dovchin 2011.

⁸ Dovchin 2011, p. 319.

⁹ This refers to the use of certain cultural music features unique to Venda culture.

¹⁰ Coplan 1979.

¹¹ McNeil 2012.

¹² Hamm 1991, p. 153.

¹³ Irene Mawela Interview 2022.

¹⁴ Only songs performed in the approved language could be performed and played on radio stations.

¹⁵ Netshivhambe 2022.

¹⁶ This includes musicians such as Irene Mawela, Daniel Luambo, Eric Mandiza and Adziambei Band.

¹⁷ Ballantine 1999.

¹⁸ Mbaqanga was the popular music style and mainly sung in the Zulu language with a particular chord progression and a specific guitar turning method.

¹⁹ Adziambei Band Interview 2021.

²⁰ Hamm 1991.

²¹ Mbaqanga draws its inspiration from Zulu and Muzika wa Sialala from Venda culture.

²² Collins 1989, p. 221.

²³ Kwela music stems from another music style (marabi), which was a response to a cultural crisis due to the apartheid regime (see Allen 1996). Soukous is a Congolese music style that has also influenced many parts of the Sub-Saharan countries (see Coffie 2020b). Benga is a popular Kenyan music style that is believed to have emerged from the youth music of a particular ethnic group known as Luo (see Eisenberg 2017). Mbaqanga is a music style that emerged in the 1960s from a fusion of rural indigenous music and marabi style in South Africa (see Letcher 2009). Chimurenga is a style of popular music from Zimbabwe that is used as a form of resilience against colonial rule (see Richey 2016). Taarab is a style of music that has its origins from Arabic music, which has become one of the most inspiring influences for popular African music in countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda, Zanzibar and many more (Collins 1989).

²⁴ Kubik 1975.

²⁵ Kruger 2006.

²⁶ Kruger 2006.

²⁷ This concept is in Kruger 2006.

²⁸ Splash 1987.

²⁹ Blacking 1967.

³⁰ Madida 1994.

³¹ Blacking 1967, p. 114. *African Studies Quarterly* | Volume 21, Issue 4 | July 2023

<https://asq.africa.ufl.edu/files/V21i4a1.pdf>