

# **Bassists of *iKapa* (the Cape)**

A brief analysis of the development of the bass guitar in the musical genres of *Mbaqanga* and *Ghoema* in Cape Town, South Africa with a focus on the biographies and techniques of two of Cape Town's most prolific bassists, Spencer Mbadu and Gary Kriel.

By

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 'The Fairest Cape' – Background

Cape Town is situated at the south-western end of the African continent. Cape Agulhas, a town situated approximately 150 kilometres from Cape Town, is the lowest part of the African continent. It is the unofficial meeting place of the cold Benguela current from Antarctica that runs along the Atlantic Ocean and the warm Agulhas current from the Indian Ocean. This 'meeting' of cold and warm currents also serves as an apt metaphor when describing the races, cultures and music of the people living in Cape Town which is also known as the Mother City. One of the now iconic areas that best described this metaphor was District Six. "District Six," in her description of this historic suburb of Cape Town, the vocalist Zelda Benjamin states: "was an education...in that particular area, we had blacks, whites, coloureds, Romanians... they all lived in that area" (Rasmussen 2003, 34).

When in the company of older musicians the conversation would usually include a lament on the "good old days" before the Group Areas Act of 1950 when the ruling regime of the day, the National Party (NP), "established [separate] residential and business sections in urban areas for each race, and members of other races were barred from living, operating businesses, or owning land in them."<sup>1</sup> In doing so, the government cemented its newly established policy of segregation called *apartheid*. Separate white, coloured and black suburbs were established relative to their distance from the city centre. White suburbs were established closest to the *central business district* (CBD) as well as in the picturesque and lush areas of Cape Town. The coloured and black suburbs were at least 20km from the CBD. Apartheid was the ruling social policy in South Africa from 1948 until around the time of the release of Nelson Mandela from prison on 11 February 1990. The *apartheid* government was officially removed at the first democratic elections in the country on 27 April 1994.

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2009) *Group Areas Act*. Encyclopædia Britannica [Online]. 05 May 2009 Available: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/247103/Group-Areas-Act>.

In order to escape persecution from the government many icons of South African jazz left the country. Some of these artists included the influential band leaders Chris McGregor and Dudu Pukwana (real name Mtutuzeli Aubrey Pukwana) (Rasmussen 2001, 75). Many of those that remained in the country faced forced relocation with their families to the new sub-economic housing townships on the barren and sandy Cape Flats on the outskirts of Cape Town. The government wanted to control the influx of 'non-white' people into white suburbs near the centre of town and the surrounding picturesque suburbs of greater Cape Town. Many of the people who remained in South Africa were subjected to their cherished performance venues being segregated and regularly harassed by police.

As a bassist from Cape Town, I feel the necessity to investigate, analyze and document the bassists of years gone by who have been major contributors towards the advancement and conceptualization of the Cape Town and, more largely, South African bass-playing fraternity. Unfortunately several bassists have passed away prior to the commencement of this thesis. Two of these bassists are Sammy Maritz and Johnny Gertze who both performed with Abdullah Ibrahim (previously known as Dollar Brand). Therefore the motivation for this thesis is to capture the contributions of two bassists who are still alive and actively working in the South African music industry that are based in Cape Town, namely Gary Kriel and Spencer Mbadu. While there have been other bassists in Cape Town like Basil Moses, Charles Lazar and Philly Schilder who also have made contributions to the music industry and more so the bass playing fraternity in Cape Town, I feel that the contributions made by Mr Kriel and Mr Mbadu have a far greater significance for the reasons I outline below.

The style, sound and technique of Kriel and Mbadu may vary when it comes to playing the bass guitar but somehow their sound is still the quintessential Cape Town bass sound. The question "What exactly about their sound makes it unique to Cape Town?" is extremely difficult to define in musical terms. During the course of this thesis the answer to this question will be investigated. While a definitive answer may not be possible, an in depth contextualization, characterization and documentation will be established in order to further the aims of this work. The playing styles of Kriel and Mbadu have been

disseminated throughout the world through recordings that have been sold abroad or purchased locally by tourists. Examples of their playing can be heard on album recordings of Abdullah Ibrahim, Tony Schilder and Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi, to name a few artists with whom they have worked. Hence, it is vital that the contributions of Kriel and Mbadu have to be investigated, analyzed and documented for future music scholars and enthusiasts who may want to know more about the bassists on those aforementioned artists' recordings. It is my contention that the sound and musical contributions of Basil Moses, Charles Lazar and Philly Schilder resemble that of the bassists that abound in the music from the US and Europe. Hence the selection of Gary Kriel and Spencer Mbadu as the main focus of this thesis in order to showcase indigenous bass playing styles from South Africa.

### 1.1.1 *Apartheid*

Growing up in the Cape Town townships and the notorious Cape Flats during the 1990s in South Africa, I have had first-hand experience in how a changing political leadership, social unrest and a young democratic government can change one's course in life. There were several laws implemented by the *apartheid* regime that seemed to directly or indirectly affect the musical and personal lives of Kriel and Mbadu. The two most influential laws were the Group Areas Act and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act implemented in 1950 and 1953 respectively. The other law that I consider to be worth mentioning is the Bantu Education Act implemented in 1953. This Act would reveal an even greater significance in the years before and after 1994 when South Africa had its first general elections. The general elections in 1994 is widely regarded as the end of the *apartheid* regime but the remnants of some of the laws are still evident and entrenched in the older generations still living today.

#### The Group Areas Act, Act No. 41 of 1950

This Act imposed physical segregation by creating residential areas demarcated for specific races. Black, coloured and white suburbs were established and monitored by

police and other city officials. Coloured and black people who found themselves in white suburbs could only be there as servants and workers and could not own any property in these areas. The Group Areas Act resulted in the forced removals of black and coloured people from the newly established ‘whites only’ suburbs. The families removed from these areas were relocated to suburbs far from the city centre which would help to ensure the ‘purity’ of the white suburbs. The most well-known suburb which endured the effect of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town was District Six. This suburb was the melting pot for many musicians, artists and performers where they could freely communicate across racial boundaries and create new fusions of music and culture. After families were forcibly removed, most of the houses were razed to the ground by the government and what was once a bustling hub of the arts and cultures of Cape Town is today mostly a vacant expanse of land. Spencer Mbadu recollects his experiences with the Group Areas Act as follows:

“I was born in the fifties there in *Mcheko* Block...grew up there...nineteen-fifty-eight we had to move out of *Mcheko* Block because now the Group Areas Act was now taking place, really taking place so a lot of people were chucked out of... *Mcheko* Block...then *Nyanga* East then...they gave birth to a place called *Nyanga* West...which at a later stage turned to be *Gugulethu*...”<sup>2</sup> (19 February 2009).

#### Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No. 49 of 1953

This Act further imposed physical segregation in all public venues as well as public transportation. Amenities were marked as ‘Europeans Only’ and ‘Non-Europeans Only’ for whites and non-whites, respectively. It was commonplace that the amenities reserved for the respective race groups need not be equal. The impact of this act on the entertainment industry was prolific. Musicians and performers who previously worked in certain theatres, clubs and hotels were now forbidden from performing there.

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<sup>2</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

### Bantu Education Act, Act No. 47 of 1953

The Bantu Education Act has by far had the most long-lasting and remarkable effect on the people of South Africa even in the time after the 1994 general elections which marked the end of the *apartheid* government.. This Act established a Black Education Department in the already existing Department of Native Affairs which would devise a curriculum overseen by the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Hendrik F. Verwoerd (Shepherd 1955, 138). The main aim of the Act was to place the quality and content of the education afforded to black learners in schools in the hands of the Department of Native Affairs. The term ‘native’ was used exclusively as a designation for black South Africans. The focus of education post-Bantu Education Act would shift from academia to handiwork. The improved education and job positions of the coloured and Indian people gave them a sense of superiority over the black workers whom they supervised. I feel that this perceived superiority has resulted in “coloured racism” which is still felt in South Africa and specifically Cape Town today (Western 2001, 13). I contend that the quality of education afforded to black students since the implementation of the Bantu Education Act has had far-reaching implications for musicians in post-1994 elections South Africa.

In an attempt to try and explain the concept of coloured racism as I perceive it, I can only think of my own life as an example and basis for comparison in later discussion. I am a firm believer in the concept of social improvement through education. I started my musical career as a self-taught musician from the Cape Flats and am now completing a Masters degree in music. I have encountered problems along the way and, unfortunately, these problems have surfaced within my own coloured community. I am resented by my peers for making any kind of progress within the industry and I am told that I believe I am better than they are or, more colloquially, I think that I am white! It has later surfaced through candid conversations with some of my peers, colleagues and older musicians that the main source of the resentment stems from envy and a longing to also be able to study at a university.

There are many musicians from the Cape Flats that are talented and have a desire to be successful as musicians but due to *apartheid*, the aforementioned coloured racism and the feeling of marginalization experienced by coloured people there is still a large sense of resentment towards coloured people who do study at universities.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Brief Thesis Background

The reason for undertaking to do this thesis stems from an overwhelming lack of instructional material for bassists that provides information pertaining to playing music from Africa, and more importantly, South Africa. Through conversations and readings over several years I have established that the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is widely regarded by many local and international music scholars, musicians and enthusiasts as one of the best tertiary institutions for learning jazz music. When surveying the vast array of books, journals, articles, CD and DVD recordings as an undergraduate student I did not come across a single item from South Africa on the electric bass or any other instrument. Upon my return as a post-graduate two years after the completion of my undergraduate degree, I have seen that more literature has been acquired but still nothing on how to successfully learn the correct technique or musical approach for any South African music genre and, more specifically, *ghoema* and *mbaqanga*. This lack of information extends to general music education from a grassroots level in schools and community-based organisations which addresses South African music regionally and nationally.

By means of this thesis I will endeavour to start adding to the current body of knowledge about South African music from the viewpoint of an instrumentalist with further enhancements as to the clarity and definition of two musical genres played in Cape Town.

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<sup>3</sup> I discuss these concepts as it applies to my experiences in Cape Town and is not wholly representative of Coloured people. It is, therefore, a localized sentiment which I have experienced mainly throughout the working class of Coloured people in Cape Town.

### 1.3 Thesis objectives

The main aim of this thesis is to document and analyze several aspects surrounding the musical performances, such as technique, equipment and sentiments, pertaining to the bass playing of Spencer Mbadu and Gary Kriel. Both their personal and biographical details as well as their musical backgrounds will be investigated and documented. Most of the information gathered will be firsthand evidence through their own experiences and every effort to academically corroborate the information will be made. Technical aspects of their playing technique as well as the equipment used during musical performances will be discussed and analyzed with the aim of preserving their individual bass tone and relevant settings with regards to their basses and bass amplification. The secondary aim is to investigate and discuss the definitions of *mbaqanga* and *ghoema*. I intend to create a broader scope of musical reference for the respective genres but will only include information relevant to their musical influences, prolific and the role of the electric bass within the music under review.

Transcriptions of basslines from the genres of *mbaqanga* and *ghoema* will be completed and analyzed to contribute towards a better sense of the musical requirements for reproducing basslines and the appropriate tonal qualities for the bass guitar during musical performance. The tertiary aim is to discuss and define technical aspects regarding the bass guitar and its related equipment. I will discuss aspects relevant to the bass guitar such as its components, guitar brands as well as left- and right-hand techniques. I will investigate amplification types and tonal considerations regarding equalisation methods for creating the overall desired bass tone, and more specifically for those tonal considerations produced by the research consultants.

### 1.4 Setting the boundaries for topics under review

To ensure that this work does not deviate from its intended purpose, the limitations of the topics and concepts presented in this research need to be established. The research consultants in this work are the two most prolific bassists in Cape Town based on

numerous conversations with peers as well as older, established musicians. The selection criteria for Kriel and Mbadu were limited to age, socio-economic and socio-political background, recordings as well as performance history. These criteria, I felt, would yield more accurate matches in the selected bassists who best represent the music history of Cape Town from their early days of gigging up to the present day. Information regarding their upbringing, initial musical contacts and insights will be limited to their descriptions and my own insights will be kept to a minimum.

The aim of this thesis is to focus on Kriel and Mbadu's playing styles and techniques with a lesser focus on their biographical information. Each song transcription will be limited to a condensed score which will include the bassline, chord structures, tempo markings and the basic song arrangement. Solo transcriptions will include fully notated scores with notes, chords and articulations to aid the reproduction of the solo. Information regarding technical aspects under review such as bass guitar and amplifier manufacturers will be kept to the brand names. A short description of the tonal quality of the equipment is given so as to minimize the potential for digression regarding actual construction, electronics and so forth.

### 1.5 Research Methodology

There has been a large amount of ethnographical, and therefore, qualitative research employed throughout the completion of this work. In order to get a holistic purview of the subject matter of this thesis, I interviewed the research consultants, talked to musicians, music enthusiasts and music scholars in Cape Town. Most of the interviews took place in their homes or while on gigs and backstage at performances. The research consultants and I had arranged to meet regularly at three month intervals mainly as social visits. I wanted to, as far as possible, avoid an awkward feeling between myself and the research consultants. During these visits I was made aware of their sentiments towards me, music in general and the current political and social climate in South Africa and, more pertinently, Cape Town. While there were no objections to being recorded for the purposes of the research for this thesis, I thought it wise to not take along an audio

recording device as I would have to inform them of its presence and this knowledge may have made the research consultants apprehensive in divulging information.

Kriel and I had met inadvertently at two variety concert performances at the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town and with his consent I tried to use my cellular phone's audio recording function but the ambient noise was too loud. With Mbadu it was even worse as when we did unintentionally meet it was at night clubs or at three in the morning sitting at the Caltex garage on our way home from a gig. Needless to say the information attained during this time may have been incredibly important but would never be discernable on an audio recording as the noise was deafening. Two interviews were conducted at the homes of Mbadu and Kriel and complete transcriptions of these interviews have been appended to this thesis. These interviews gave me new insights and new questions regarding the research for my thesis. The interviews were done in the morning and with very few interruptions in phone calls and the odd interjection for refreshments from Kriel's wife.

While conducting the interviews I was acutely aware of my own presence and my relationship with Kriel and Mbadu. My first bass lesson was given to me by Mbadu and my first incursion into studying my own musical heritage was led by Kriel ten years prior to the interviews. I have been mindful of the concept of *participant observation* (Jorgensen 1989, 11) with regard to my relationships with the interviewees and how my presence may influence the revealing of information relevant to my thesis. There are several factors that influence my participation as the researcher regarding the people being interviewed. Firstly, I am a bassist in Cape Town who contributes to the general pool of musicians. Secondly, I have grown up musically and socially amongst the musicians and research consultants. These factors result in various relationship dynamics which are at play during any point of my research. These dynamics may in all likelihood be in my mind more than it is in the minds of the research consultants but it is still worth being mindful of them.

The first dynamic is based on the fact that I am so much younger than they are. In my career I have experienced a condescending tone and general regard from older musicians and I was mindful of that fact when dealing with the research consultants. A sense of ‘you will know what I want you to know’ was always a sentiment that was running through my mind during conversations and specifically the recorded interviews. The second dynamic is due to the fact that I am a bassist. I was aware of a potential situation where some technical aspect regarding bass technique and tone production may be omitted by the research consultants as they may be regarded as tacit information which all bassists know or should know.

I have relied on my formal and informal education, insight and experience as a musician and, more specifically, as a bassist in the completion of this thesis. There are many musicians who struggle to articulate musical concepts whether during lessons or performances. Upon meeting one of my teachers, George Werner, I asked him to teach me how to play “coloured jazz”. Werner proceeded to laugh at me throughout my lesson and later explained to me that there is no such thing! That experience has encapsulated and formulated how I have learned musical concepts while playing in and around Cape Town. In order to gain a better sense of the music of Cape Town I immersed myself into the music of Mac McKenzie and The Ghoema Captains, Robbie Jansen, Winston ‘Mankunku’ Ngozi. As a bassist this endeavour would be very productive as I could incorporate the basslines into my playing but as an ethnographer it would provide me with a broader musical and somewhat theoretical insight into the musical construction, musical analysis and overall sentiments of the content of material from these artists.

Sources gathered from instructional videos, bass magazines and instructional books include information on bass playing technique and the relevant equipment required for bass tone production. I have found that the information has been incredibly varied as it stems from different publishers from across the world. However, none of these materials discuss the bass guitar and relevant equipment from a South African perspective. I have tried to relate all the information gathered for this thesis to the South African musical genres of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga*. The research consultants have also offered their

insights into their preferred performance genres and I have tried to incorporate their sentiments into the basic technical understanding of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga*. Technical considerations such as tone, amplifier equalization and other relevant information have not been explored with reference to the genres of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga*.

Schools in Cape Town and indeed South Africa have endured poor academic infrastructure as far as teaching indigenous music and even more so in teaching the lesser-known genres which do not fall under the titles of pop, classical, jazz and traditional music. Even less is known about the instrumentation, melodies, harmony and history needed to reproduce these lesser-known genres convincingly. Having experienced this lack of indigenous music education as a student, I have made the goal of my thesis an attempt to document and analyze the lives and playing styles of Gary Kriel and Spencer Mbadu. This aim is to ensure the preservation of their musical contributions and their legacies as performers of indigenous musical styles. The result will be that Kriel and Mbadu's bass playing and musicality will be made accessible to future scholars of the electric bass guitar and music academics who would like to learn more about the music from South Africa and, specifically, Cape Town. Information was gathered and interpreted in a way that would enable the reader to reproduce the playing style and sound of Kriel and Mbadu. Transcriptions of basslines and solos from notable recordings by Mbadu and Kriel with proper analyses have been produced regarding issues of tone, note selection, rhythm, harmonic sense and overall musicality.

To facilitate complete, concise and accurate definitions for *mbaqanga* and *ghoema* I have compiled a large historical and anthropological database of literature from a fairly wide spectrum of sources. Since Cape Town is so culturally diverse, as indeed is South Africa in general, my literary endeavours have been in keeping with this sense of diversity but within limitations. I feel that less-than-scholarly references from pop culture magazines, books and recordings should be included in this work as these references are often regarded as basic knowledge that every local musician, teacher and scholar should know. In an attempt to make this thesis as holistic and accessible as possible, these sources have been listed as part of the bibliography as 'sources referenced'.

### 1.6 Technical considerations in audio-visual recording and processing

Interviews were recorded by means of a handheld camcorder (Sony Handycam) on a tripod stand. I have tried to create a completely un-biased audiovisual representation during the interviews by not using audiovisual effects or enhancers and by interviewing the research consultants in an environment which is familiar to them. The interviews were recorded onto 8mm digital tape and later transferred to DVD via my computer serving as an interface. All the data collected in this regard has remained completely untouched. DVD discs have been copied and stored for access during the completion of this work.

### 1.7 Transcription considerations

The transcriptions of the interviews have been done by me with the aid of software called 'Amazing Slow Downer v3.2.3' by Roni Music.<sup>4</sup> The transcriptions are very detailed and accurate representations of what was said but with some exclusion in the text of unconscious affirmations and other prompting utterances by the research consultants and I. The notated transcriptions of the musical examples in this work have been done on *Finale*<sup>5</sup> and are my original transcriptions.

### 1.8 Brief description and analysis of relevant literature

The aim of this section of my thesis is to examine the current literature which I have investigated for the thesis. References towards a better understanding of, and definition for, *ghoema* and *mbaqanga* as well as techniques involved in the art of bass playing have been made and studied. There are performance techniques and playing techniques which I have learned from other musicians and performers through lessons, conversations, watching performances and listening to recordings. Many of these techniques have come from instructional books and videos from American musicians and publishers.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.ronimusic.com>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.finalemusic.com>

The most notable instructional videos by other bassists and on internet forums have been Jaco Pastorius' *Modern Electric Bass* (1986) and John Patitucci's *Bass Day '97* (1997). Noteworthy bass instructional books include Ray Brown's *Double Bass Method* (1963) and Rufus Reid's *Evolving Bassist* (1974). All of these videos and books focus on scale practicing ideas, technique and basslines. The preferred genre of music is jazz with some references to blues and rock music. The only instructional material on African music is the *African Bass Bible* DVD which is presented by Kibisi Douglas. He originally hails from Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo but now lives and works in London in the UK. He is famous for his work with the Congolese artist Kanda Bongo Man and the band Baka Beyond. In his DVD he discusses the musical genres of *soukous*, rumba and *makossa* which he has performed. Although the work of Douglas is closer to home, my contribution is towards an understanding of South African music genres and bass tone production. As far as academic credibility goes, these instructional books and recordings are ultimately still not definitive works as they are not based on research but rather on the personal insights and experiences of the author or artist.

As in the socio-economic history of Cape Town, so too does the music performed in the city reflect its multi-cultural heritage and diversity. In my experience to be truly successful in Cape Town, you have to be able to perform competently in several musical genres. To limit yourself musically is to limit your ability to earn a living and your musical body of knowledge. Mbadu and Kriel often perform in the jazz tradition for regular gigs and corporate events and have even been known to play 'top 40' covers of popular music for many functions. Therefore, there may be passages in this work in which I will discuss techniques and musical considerations that will be applicable to both research consultants.

As the research for this thesis has progressed, a wider spectrum of knowledge had to be included as the descriptions and investigations of this thesis are interdisciplinary. The musical and anthropological scope had to be extended to include disciplines such as geographical studies, social sciences, economics, poetry and photography. A wide body of research has led me from the writings of respected academics such as Guido Adler

(1885), respected anthropologists such as David Coplan (2001, 1990, 1987 and 1985), and to articles in ‘The Sunday Times’ newspaper and websites such as [www.ghoema.org](http://www.ghoema.org) and [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Guido Adler was a co-founder of the first journal of musicology ‘*Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* [Musicology Quarterly]’. His first journal contribution was an article called ‘*Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft* [The Scope, Method and Aim of Musicology]’. Erica Mugglestone wrote an article where she would “render Adler’s thought accessible to a wider readership by: 1) sketching the historical context in which the paper was written; 2) indicating its themes, metaphors and assumptions; in a sense, its meta-language; 3) providing a translation of the text” (Mugglestone 1981, 1). She describes how Adler limits the study of music as an art form. According to Adler’s article, the analysis of music is to study the ‘work of art’ in terms of “notation, structure (form), and...mood-substance/aesthetic content” (Mugglestone 1981, 2). While completing this thesis I have found that there was a growing need to analyze the music which the research consultants perform in the same manner as Adler describes in his article. The ways in which this thesis differs from his methodology is that I do not equate the sentiments and ‘mood-substance/aesthetic content’ to the imagery of nature and flowers (Mugglestone 1981, 2). I, however, equate these same intangible aspects to the personalities of the research consultants themselves. After reading the work of Adler my concern regarding musicology was relating my research to South Africa and specifically to Cape Town.

In David B. Coplan’s book *In Township Tonight!*, his definition for *mbaqanga* is stated as “(Zulu: ‘African Maize Bread’)...term for popular commercial African jazz in the 1950s which developed from *kwela* and blended African melody, *marabi*, and American jazz...it came to be applied to a new style that combined urban neo-traditional music and *marabi*...see *msakazo*, *simanje-manje*” (1985, 441). *Msakazo* and *simanje-manje* also refers to *mbaqanga*: *msakazo* referring to the genre as a broadcasted, commercial genre of music, and in *simanje-manje* as a variant of *mbaqanga*, making reference to the band line-up. The definition of *mbaqanga* offered by Coplan is closest to my understanding and experience of it, I do, however, contend that Coplan’s definition is not complete enough. His definition does not include the context of musical performance. He describes

*mbaqanga* as it relates to its musical influences and social regard rather than a literal definition of the genre itself without reference to another genre of music. How this thesis intends to add to his definition is through a conceptualization of the musical influences, transcription of basslines with analysis thereof, and through the description of technical considerations for drum set and electric bass as they pertain to musical performance. In order to attain a better grasp of the origins of *ghoema* I needed to develop a more in-depth knowledge of Cape Town and its history.

Although born and raised in Cape Town, I have realized through reading the work of Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heynigen and Vivian Bickford-Smith (1998) in the book *Cape Town: The Making of a City* that I actually knew nothing about how the city came to be. The first story in the book is of the third day of July in 1620 when “commanders of two...fleets...took ‘quiet and peaceful possession’ of Table Bay and ‘of the whole continent near adjoining” (1998, 12). In school I was taught that Cape Town was founded by Jan Van Riebeeck as a refreshment station for the Dutch, East, India Company (DEIC) in 1652. I never came across any information of the time preceding that occupation of Cape Town up until I read this book. The work also dispelled some of the romanticized notions of how Cape Town came to be and depicts the many battles that took place between the *Khoi* inhabitants at the Cape and would-be occupiers of the region. Much of this information has helped me to get a very broad sense of the history of the people of Cape Town. Much of the content of the *ghoemmaliedjies* which I learned as a child now have added significance and meaning since reading this book. In an attempt to expand my research outside the realm of purely scholarly work, I started to move into the work of music enthusiasts, pop culture literature and even photography.

As explained in the previous chapter, my single biggest challenge as a musician has been learning inaccurate information from musicians. In the time after my B. Mus degree, I have even found that some of the information learned at the university, when applied in a real-world scenario, was inexact as the learning environment was in a controlled classroom and not a nightclub. Having sought a wider purview of the literature on the subjects of *mbaqanga* and *ghoema*, I became interested in the interviews conducted by

photographer Lars Rasmussen in his book *Jazz People of Cape Town*. Several definitions for *ghoema* offered by the interviewees are imprecise as they are from their own findings as musicians or through talking to other musicians. Rasmussen (2003) himself offers, “the *ghoema* beat has its origin in Indonesia and was brought to Cape Town by Malay prisoners...*Ghoema* is the rhythm of the carnival music...in Cape Town...”(ibid., 43) in a preface to his interview with William Van Bloemstein. The definitions by the interviewees are always relegated to a single sentence and then a swift move to another subject. This book further establishes a need for more complete definitions of musical genres from South Africa.

The book *World Music: The Basics*, defines *mbaqanga* as “Township jive from South Africa; first popular in the 1960s” (Nidel 2005, 368). The book goes through the popular music styles found around the world and features background information on the cultural and musical history of each area, along with “succinct reviews of key recordings” (Nidel 2005, back cover). It does in fact cover the major genres in the country/region under review but does so in a very skimmed and generalized manner. The book’s main body of the work is 360 pages long and does not describe any region in such a way as to propose any scholarly and definitive descriptions. This is certainly the case for the definition for *mbaqanga*. Nidel does not even offer a definition for *ghoema* which is also from South Africa which further illustrates the shortfall in these definitions offered by Nidel’s book.

In Louise Meintjes’ book *Sound of Africa!: making music Zulu in a South African studio* (2003), she focuses on many of the artists and performers of Zulu music genres and has an entire chapter dedicated to *mbaqanga*. In this chapter there are stories of experiences with some of the artists and groups which perform *mbaqanga*. The work seems to focus on much of the feeling and sentiment of the performers and her interaction with them regarding the music they perform and their experiences in rehearsal spaces and recording studios. Several pages have been written discussing *mbaqanga* as a genre of music. She discusses the evolution of the genre and its meaning to performers during several periods (ibid, 34-36). I feel that her book offers a narrower definition for *mbaqanga* with the added insight on the sentiments of the performers.

As the research for this thesis has developed so too has my interest in the esoteric aspects of music and its meaning to performers and audiences alike. The books *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* by Oliver Sacks (2007) and *This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding A Human Obsession* by Daniel Levitin (2006) have given me insight into the inner workings and the human experiences of music. Both books delve into the basic concepts of music and how the human brain reacts to it. While Levitin's book initially focuses on the technical aspects of music and on scientific findings related to the brain, the work of Sacks deals with the cognitive psychological aspects related to the experiences, feelings and reactions to listening to music.

While both of these books made for compelling reading and helped to shape my ideas about the musician's experience of music, it did not yield a great deal of information related to musicians and how they feel about music. Levitin analyzes what makes an "expert musician" (2006, 193) and discusses the related research but never looks at the research from the musician's viewpoint. Sacks tends to get closer to the emotional and physical content of music and the human experience thereof by discussing several neural ailments and how they interact with music and its related emotional content. Again no discussions ever centre on the musicians or their viewpoints. Both of these books have nonetheless directly influenced my line of thinking and perception of the experience of musicians and their sentiments and intentions with the music they perform.

Through reviewing the aforementioned literature, I have concluded that some of the readings tend to relate to one another. Since reading the two books by Sacks (2007) and Levitin (2006), I started to look at all of the readings in terms of musical meaning to the performer, audience and to the researcher. The more I intensified my enquiry into the work of Meintjies (2003) and Coplan (1985), the more I started finding new questions that needed answers. I have, however, had to be mindful of the scope of this thesis and have mentioned some thoughts regarding the esoteric considerations of Kriel and Mbadu. As I found more books and articles a constant metaphoric rivalry developed between the findings in the research and the questions that came from my initial work and interviews.

The aim of this thesis is to add value to the current body of knowledge on the various subjects under review.

## Chapter 2 - Musical considerations – bass evolution, definitions and other considerations

### 2.1 The Evolution of the Upright Bass and Electric Bass Guitar in Jazz Music

To establish the date of when the first time jazz music was performed is virtually impossible as it is a genre which resulted from the fusion of ragtime and blues music over a period of time (Gridley 2009, 35). The birthplace of jazz is undoubtedly New Orleans and the very first jazz recording was by the Original Dixieland Band in 1917 (Tirro 1993, 88). In early jazz the tuba was widely used to fulfil the role of the bass instrument in the ensemble. As jazz progressed into the era of the early swing bands, the upright bass was used and it was played mostly in the *Arco* or ‘bowing’ tradition. Musically the role of the bass was as the harmonic and rhythmic ‘anchor’ and played primarily on beats two and four also known as a two-beat style in jazz music (Gridley 2009, 88). The *pizzicato* technique was later employed but some players found the volume of this technique too soft and started using a slap technique where the strings were plucked hard and then rebounded off the fingerboard. This technique resulted in a very percussive and rhythmically interesting approach while generating a tone which would cut through the overall big band sound. Noteworthy bassists in this period utilising this technique include Harry Barth, Steve Brown, John Lindsay and Thelma Terry.<sup>6</sup>

The function of the bass in a big band has progressed with the inclusion of the *pizzicato* style as well as the overall rhythmic and harmonic liberation. The two-beat style of bass playing developed into a four-beat or walking style and an increase in the number of bass solos being incorporated into the song arrangements. The most prolific bassist exhibiting the walking style bass approach and high instrument proficiency is Jimmy Blanton who often played solos in the Duke Ellington Big Band either in the *Arco* or *pizzicato* tradition.

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<sup>6</sup> The Red Hot Jazz Archive. (2010) *Thelma Terry* [Online]. 10 December 2010 Available: <http://www.redhotjazz.com/thelmaterry.html>

The jazz music of the 1930s to 1940s developed into what is known as the Swing era where the focus started shifting from big bands to smaller ensembles led by instruments like the piano, trumpet and saxophone. The bass evolved into a role where it still functioned as the musical anchor but now also started to improvise basslines while in the four-beat or walking feel. This allowed for more interesting harmonic development for the bassist while still musically supporting the soloists. The 1940s saw the development of a more advanced form of jazz called bebop. Bebop was more advanced in its harmony as well as the proficiency levels of instrumentalists who performed this music. More emphasis was placed on soloing rather than on playing melodies or ensemble playing. New melodies were written on existing tunes and often only over the chorus sections. This explains why in reference to the length or form of a jazz standard, most musicians refer to the number of 'choruses' to be played. The two major innovators of bebop are trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and saxophonist Charlie Parker (Gridley 2009, 163). The bassists from this era were of the most harmonically advanced since New Orleans jazz and boasted some of the most influential soloists. Bassists like Ray Brown, Percy Heath and Oscar Pettiford really came to the fore as soloists and also recorded their own material while leading their own bands (Gridley 2009, 165).

The upright bass would continue to be the custodian of the low end frequencies in jazz to the present day even with the development of new equipment, amplification and playing techniques. Other sub-genres of jazz like jazz fusion and jazz rock have opened the doors for the electric bass guitar to stake its claim in the realm of jazz music. This does not mean to say that the electric bass is only used in these two genres as there have been many prolific performers in swing jazz music that have really created a niche for the electric bass and its particular approach and sound. For jazz fusion there have been many notable bass players like Anthony Jackson, Jeff Berlin, Paul Jackson and Stanley Clarke. The bassist who had the most impact on these genres from a compositional aspect as well as technique was, in his own words, "John Francis Pastorius III and I'm the greatest electric bass player in the world." John Francis Pastorius III, called Jaco Pastorius, is famous for his work with the band Weather Report and was a phenomenal arranger and composer in his own right (Milkowski 1996, 1-2).

Pastorius' self-entitled album *Jaco* was a turning point in the approach to the electric bass guitar as he truly explored the many tonal options of the instrument as well as stretching the boundaries for technique. The natural harmonics which occur on the instrument, through amplification, were utilized and developed to create new textures of sound and even songs constructed purely of harmonics. In his admiration for Jaco, Mbadu recollects his first encounter with Pastorius' bass playing:

“...one day they came with the LP...a Weather Report LP, Joe Zawinul...Listen to this bass player. This is Jaco playing. When I listened to this guy I said “No man, you compare me with this monster... my great inspiration”<sup>7</sup> (19 February 2009).

Mbadu's description is a typical example of how South African musicians have always been influenced by musicians from the United States. Most of the popular music on local radio stations was and still is from the USA and has resulted in instrumentalists emulating what was being played on recorded media such as vinyl records and cassette tapes which were sold locally. This practice of emulating US artists has become evident in other genres of music in South Africa such as gospel, rock and hip-hop, to name a few.

## 2.2 Contextualizing and Defining *Mbaqanga* and *Ghoema*

One of the main focuses of this work is to provide all-inclusive, well-researched and concise definitions of two indigenous South African genres of music known as *mbaqanga* and *ghoema*. The main difficulty in ultimately defining these genres is that their definitions vary from book-to-book, person-to-person and place-to-place. In my experience as a musician I have found that the best way to contextualize a genre of music is to explain some of the history, instrumentation, artists and groups that were prevalent at its infancy. Contextualisation is a good method of developing an understanding for the overall sentiments and musical themes being described in music of a specific genre. It is a way of attaching meaning to musical phenomena. Contextualisation helps to answer the question “why do you play those notes in the way you're playing them?”

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<sup>7</sup> See Interview Transcription with Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

### 2.2.1 *Mbaqanga*

In an interview between the author of the book *Jazz People of Cape Town*, Lars Rasmussen and Banzi Bangani, trumpeter/band leader from Cape Town, Banzi defines the genre of *mbaqanga* as being “derived from *marabi*. It is a modern way of playing *marabi*” (2003, 146). In the same book pianist, bassist and guitarist Lami Zokufa describes *mbaqanga* as “something that just crops up. It is not something that you compose to be able to play... That’s the idea of *mbaqanga*” (2003, 279). Another viewpoint on the description of *mbaqanga* is in its translation – in *Zulu*, an indigenous language of South Africa, *mbaqanga* translates into English as being “an everyday cornmeal porridge” (Coplan 2001, 109 ). Richard O. Nidel defines *mbaqanga* as being “rural dance music” and “also known as Township Jive” (2005, 368). The significance of this is interesting if you consider that the music is from the everyday, common jazz enthusiasts who found themselves in the shebeens of Johannesburg and Pretoria during the early 1960s. Since the institution of the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 these shebeens were the only venues where jazz musicians who were popular in the 1940s found themselves performing in the 1960s (Erlmann 1996, 83). The music style which emerged from the shebeens was firstly, a fusion of the rhythms of *marabi* – the name given to a pedal organ-driven style of music that originated in *Sophiatown* in the 1930s; secondly, the vocal harmonies of *isicathamiya* – a music derived from choirs consisting of migrant workers from rural areas who relocated to the city; thirdly, the instrumentation used in the jazz band tradition, i.e. drum set, upright bass and piano; and lastly, the melodies that emerged from the mixing of traditional melodies and the embellishment of jazz (Ballantine 1989, 307; Erlmann 1996, 83).

Through the advent of electric guitar, bass, organ and synthesizers, the sound of *mbaqanga* changed from the traditional jazz band setup with the exception of the horn section. The first band to become popular in this genre was ‘*Makgona Tsohle Band*’ who played the instrumental version of this genre which was a direct fusion of *kwela* and *marabi*. A vocalist, renowned for his ‘groaning’ style of singing, named Simon ‘Mahlathini’ Nkabinde often performed with this group as well as the female vocal group

called the ‘Mahotella Queens’. All three of these groups were recruited by the Gallo Record Company as part of *Mavuthela* Music Company which was the “black music” division of the major recording label in South Africa. Collaboratively, ‘Mahlathini’ and the ‘Mahotella Queens’ later went on to start the first major international export of *mbaqanga* called ‘Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens’ in early the early 1960s.

The genre declined in popularity by the 1970s due to the arrival of the genres of disco and soul music from the US. *Mbaqanga* enjoyed a meagre revival between 1983 and 1986 but its major comeback was due to its inclusion in the landmark Paul Simon album *Graceland* which was released in 1986. Songs like ‘Diamonds on the soles of her shoes’ and ‘Call me Al’ were written in a *mbaqanga* style. Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens continued to perform internationally up until Mahlathini’s death in 1999. They have also paved the way for other famous artists such as the vocalists Dolly Rathebe, Letta Mbulu and for such groups as the Soul Brothers.

**Figure 1.1**

The figure displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Bass' and is written in a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of staccato notes with syncopated rhythms, including eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Drum Set' and is written in a standard drum notation. It features a steady kick drum pattern on all four beats of each bar and a syncopated snare drum pattern that accents the staccato notes of the bass line.

The first example of a typical *mbaqanga* bassline is in **Figure 1.1**. This sample bassline was performed by Joseph Makwela of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens<sup>8</sup>. The bass is played with a plectrum and the notes are played staccato. The drum set plays a steady kick drum<sup>9</sup> on all four beats in the bar and plays a syncopated snare drum<sup>10</sup> pattern that accentuates the staccato notes of the bass.

<sup>8</sup> A transcription from the song ‘Mbaqanga’ off the album ‘The Best of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens’. See Discography. Page 96

<sup>9</sup> The largest drum of the drum set which is struck using a kick pedal with a beater attached to it. This drum has the lowest pitch of any drum on the drum set.

<sup>10</sup> The drum is constructed with metal snares running across the bottom velum of the drum and produces a sharp, rattling sound. It is the most frequently played drum of the drum set.

**Figure 1.2**

The second example of another typical *mbaqanga* bassline is in **Figure 1.2** which was performed by a band called The Gold Fingers<sup>11</sup>. The bass is once again performed with a plectrum and the notes are also played staccato. An ornamental approach is employed to enhance the growling quality of the bass guitar and is achieved through approaching the first note in the bassline with a slide from an open string-position. The growl is achieved as the finger slides up the fingerboard whilst depressing the string after it was initially struck. The drum set employs a one-drop feel<sup>12</sup> similar to that used in a sub-genre of reggae music called *roots reggae* (Chang and Chen 1998, 54). This is achieved by having the kick and snare drums play on the second and fourth beats respectively in a bar of music. An open hi-hat is also used on the last sixteenth note of beat two and beat four as an embellishment of this feel. This groove creates a more relaxed or open feel which allows for it to be performed at faster tempos.

The symbiotic relationship between the bass guitar and drum set in *mbaqanga* is not always an obvious one. In the examples of *mbaqanga* the drum set usually plays the same groove for the duration of the song with some accents or ‘hits’ to emphasize either the melody and arrangement within the rhythm section or to accentuate the movements of the dancing which accompany the performance. The bass plays a more ornamental role while maintaining its function as the musical anchor harmonically and rhythmically. The bassline is either played as long, lyrical phrases or as short, repetitively driving phrases like that in **Figure 1.2**.

<sup>11</sup> A transcription from the song ‘Uqala Abantu’ off the album ‘Mbaqanga Special’. See Discography

<sup>12</sup> The one-drop feel refers to a common drum groove found in reggae music. It describes how beat one of four in a bar of music is dropped or not played by the kick or snare drum.

My attempt to answer the question “*What is mbaqanga?*” in terms of its musical influences is that it is a vocal and instrumental genre of music that emerged in the early 1960s from a fusion between *kwela*, *marabi*, *isicathamiya* and jazz coupled with indigenous and traditional melodies of the Zulu-speaking people of South Africa. My attempt to answer the question “*What is mbaqanga?*” as it relates to musical performance is that it is a vibrant, punchy genre of music where the drum set, bass guitar and electric guitar or electric organ are the primary instruments. A basic description of a *mbaqanga* song is where the drum set plays a kick drum and snare drum (rim) on all four beats while the hi-hats play up-beats or in an eighth-note division. The electric bass plays the root on the first beat of the bar while interjecting small melodic phrases within the harmonic rhythm. The electric guitar or electric organ plays the main melodic and cyclical phrase that the song will be based on. The basic harmonic rhythm has a chord changing at four beat intervals and the chord structure is based on a I-IV-V-I chord progression.

### 2.2.2 *Ghoema*

As described earlier in this work, the definitions that are given for indigenous music genres by some music scholars and even performers are too vague according to my knowledge and understanding of these genres as a practicing musician from Cape Town, South Africa. In an interview with bassist Sammy Maritz, *ghoema* is described as, “the beat of Cape Town...deriving from the music of the Malay community”. Rasmussen includes that the word *ghoema*, incidentally, “resembles the Bantu word for drum, *Ngoma*” (Rasmussen 2003, 139). In another interview with the Cape Town drummer Willie Van Bloemstein, the author Lars Rasmussen describes *ghoema* as “the rhythm of the carnival music” (Rasmussen 2003, 43). Incidents such as these have led me to investigate and attempt to provide more all-inclusive and clear definitions for *ghoema* and its sub-genres.

In order to develop a holistic definition for *ghoema* there has to be a brief foray into the history and heritage of Cape Town. This foray will also help to partially describe the people who cherish, promote, preserve and perform this music in Cape Town. The ‘Cape

of Good Hope', as the city is informally known, not only possesses a diverse and rich musical heritage but also has a long history of oppression. Cape Town was established as a refreshment station in the mid-17th century. As more people settled in the Cape Colony the Dutch East India Company (VOC), who took up governance in the Cape, imported slaves from India, Madagascar and from areas found in today's Indonesia and neighbouring East African countries (Worden, et al 1998, 17). Musical acculturation was inevitable during this period. Slaves from different countries who were forced to live alongside one another often could not communicate verbally. Each region of slaves brought with them their culture, traditions and music. Thus Cape Town is still today referred to as a 'melting pot' of people and cultures where people from divergent cultures, classes, race and political persuasions can find a common bond with the music.

The word *ghoema* has several meanings: firstly, a drum used in the performance by Minstrel troupes and Malay Choirs; secondly, a song genre found in the repertoire of these troupes and choirs referred to as *ghoemmaliedjies*; and thirdly, the description of the prevailing beat that is used in the Minstrel troupes (Martin 1999, 172). As there are different dialects in language so too there are different variations of the *ghoema* genre. *Ghoema* is a fusion of the different musical styles from the initial slaves in the Cape colony. The slaves were also moved from the Cape to surrounding regions to work as farm labourers for the early Dutch settlers who migrated further north. As the slaves migrated, so too did *ghoema* music. The music would evolve as the people who settled further inland into their new surroundings evolved.

The movement of music from the city to outlying farms had resulted in different names for the same type of music due to the fact that it was experienced differently by different cultures. Examples of this phenomenon are what are known in coloured circles as *sopvleis* or *opskit* are known in white circles as *vastrap* or *tiekie draai*.<sup>13</sup> Through research and my own experience I am able to break the genre of *ghoema* down into three sub-genres: firstly, the parading traditions of the *Nagtroepe*, *Minstrel Carnival* and *Christmas*

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<sup>13</sup> Jephthah, H. (2007) History [Online]. 16 August 2008. Available: <http://sites.google.com/site/capetownghoema/history>

*Bands* which occur annually in Cape Town; secondly, *sopvleis* or *opskit* which was prevalent at dance hall events; and thirdly, *tiekiedraai* or *vastrap* which was performed by the slaves who worked on farms in the rural parts of the Cape Colony and is still performed today.

The first mention of the origins of the ‘Coon Carnival’ or street parade by the slaves on the day they were given a holiday from their work, on January second, can be dated back as far as 1823 (Worden, et al 1998, 194). In an article by Heinrich Egersdörfer in *The Cape Times*, 4 January 1884 he wrote:

*“The frivolous coloured inhabitants of Cape Town...indulged in their peculiar notions...by going about in large bodies dressed most fantastically...headed by blowers of wind and players of stringed instruments...singing selections from their...music with variations taken from ‘Rule Britannia’...beating the drum, singing and shouting”* (quoted in Martin 1999, 90).

This parade became an annual event which later became known as the Coon Carnival, now Minstrel Carnival. After slavery in the Cape was abolished in 1834 (Worden, et al 1998, 102), the custom of street parades around the time leading up to and after New Year’s day was kept as a way for the newly emancipated slaves to maintain a sense of tradition and their heritage. Several parades occur around this time of year. The Christmas Band is a cultural practice that takes place as the name suggests on and around the time of Christmas Day. The Christmas Band ensemble was a combination of a small vocal choir and instrumentation which could easily be carried as the band walked. Presently Christmas Bands consist of memberships ranging from fifty to two hundred members strong comprising of instrumentalists and young people who march ahead of the band while holding up the band’s banner. Instrumentation include banjos, saxophones, brass instruments in the trombone, trumpet, tuba and sousaphone, acoustic guitars and cellos which are held sideways with strings made of gut or plastic. The cello is played in a *pizzicato* fashion where the strings would be plucked to generate a sound. These cellos are known as *klein-bassies* or ‘little-basses’ (Bruinders 2006, 118). One of

the street parade customs is that it occurs annually on 31 December when a singing troupe will ‘say goodbye to the old year’ by singing *ghommaliédjies* through the streets. These troupes are referred to as *Nagtroepe* (literally ‘night troupes’). These *nagtroepe* are also referred to as Malay Choirs or a *sangkoor* (literally ‘vocal choir’). The third form of the street parading customs found in *ghoema* occurs annually on 2 January in which minstrel troupes take part in what is now referred to as the *Minstrel Carnival*. This day is also known as *Tweede Nuwejaar* or ‘second New-Year’.

Another bastion of *ghoema* developed in the dance halls of Cape Town at various weddings, competitions and other functions. The bands at these functions modelled themselves on the bands in the big band jazz tradition and initially performed repertoire from the early 1900s jazz band era. Later on the band size would diminish into a quintet or septet which consisted of a standard jazz rhythm section (drums set, upright bass, piano, guitar), a singer and a single-note melodic instrument usually the violin. The violin played the melodies with embellishments and also harmonies if the melody is arranged for another instrument. Eventually the violin gave way to the emergence of the saxophone which fulfilled the same duties as the violin but with added appeal: the saxophone enjoyed a connection to jazz combo performance and people held it in higher regard for its cool and smooth appeal; it could produce a more prominent vibrato and generate more volume than the violin. In this style the saxophonist played very loudly and produced an exaggerated vibrato.<sup>14</sup> A new musical phenomenon emerged in this smaller ensemble format (drums set, upright bass, piano, guitar and saxophone) and it became known as *langarm*.

*Langarm* directly translates into English as ‘long-arm’ which refers to the way in which couples danced to this music with one arm fully extended as in ballroom dancing. Subsequently, the repertoire performed at these *langarm* events is comprised of music from the popular swing band and dance hall music era from the US and Europe. The repertoire consisted of ballroom dance genres, i.e. the foxtrot, quick step, tango and waltz

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<sup>14</sup> Jephthah, H. (2007) History [Online]. Available: <http://sites.google.com/site/capetownghoema/history> [2008, 16 August]

to name a few. Gradually the rhythms and melodies of *ghoema* worked its way into *langarm* and they usually played the genuine *ghoema* melodies at the end of the function as the climax to the celebrations or function. This music would later become known as *sopvleis* (literally ‘soup-meat’) and *opskit* (literally ‘shake-up’). This description is as a result of a conversation with trumpeter Alex Van Heerden who became one of the foremost unofficial custodians of *ghoema* and other indigenous music from Cape Town.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the slaves in Cape Town were transported to work on the vineyards and farms further inland that surrounded the Cape. Nico Carstens, a famous South African accordion player, describes in an interview with the journalist Graham Howe how he was taught by a farm labourer in *Piketberg* (a farming town approximately 150km outside of Cape Town) to play guitar in the *ghoema* tradition (Howe 1997, 114). Nico Carstens describes the music played by the farmers and farm labourers as *boeremusiek* (literally ‘farmers’ music’ but meaning ‘white music’) and *gamatmusiek* (a pejorative term meaning ‘coloured music’)<sup>16</sup> although, as he explains, they were the same kind of music (Howe 1997, 114). The style of *ghoema* performed on the farms was more rhythmically rigid, had a strong marching pulse and was slightly more “Germanic” according to trumpeter Alex Van Heerden

The main genre of music performed on the farms was called *vastrap* or *tiekie draai*. It developed its own idiosyncratic sound as they used inferior quality or home-made instruments. The *vastrap* ensemble consisted of a concertina or piano accordion and home-made violins and guitars constructed of oil cans and wire. The piano-accordion, as wear-and-tear ensued, would sometimes be retuned in a different way to its original tuning setup. This was as a result of faulty keys and air-chambers.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Khoi Roots of Vastrap Music (Alex van Heerden)* [Online] 05 May 2009. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYxH9NjFQVI>

<sup>16</sup> The term *gamat*, or more locally *gam* is a colloquial derogatory term that is used to describe the so-called coloured people from the Western Cape.

**Figure 2.1**

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Bass' and is in a bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a syncopated bassline with eighth and quarter notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Drum Set' and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating a specific drum set groove.

A typical *ghoema* bassline is used in **Figure 2.1**. This bassline was performed by me under the guidance of Mac McKenzie of the *Ghoema Captains*.<sup>17</sup> The bassline focuses on playing the syncopated pattern that is usually performed by the *ghoema* drum. The drum set groove is a variation and orchestration for drum set of the ostinato pattern which would ordinarily be played on the *ghoema* drum. The pattern has a low pitch on every beat within the bar of music which gives the music its driving quality with the higher pitch playing a syncopated pattern to complement the singing and prevailing syncopation of *ghoema* music. The only embellishment by the bass comes in the form of a *leading* bassline at the end of every second bar to musically suggest a shift in harmony from the major I chord to the major IV chord. This bassline is played on the upright bass in a *pizzicato* fashion in keeping with the parading tradition of the *klein-bassies* found in Christmas Bands.

**Figure 2.2**

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Bass' and is in a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It features a more melodic and contemporary bassline with slurs and accents. The bottom staff is labeled 'Drum Set' and shows a rhythmic pattern similar to Figure 2.1, with eighth notes and 'x' marks.

**Figure 2.2** is a more contemporary foray into *ghoema*. The bassline is played on a fretless bass guitar and is played with the right-hand close to the neck to produce a more *singing* quality to the bass tone. As in **Figure 2.1** the drum set further emphasizes the

<sup>17</sup> A transcription from the song 'Save Me' off the album 'The Birth'. See Discography

*ghoema* drum pattern by playing the same rhythm and orchestrating it around the drum set but with added syncopation which is improvised throughout the tune by the snare drum and kick drum. The steady hi-hat pulse once again is being played on beats two and four which helps to anchor the rhythm-section. The song is entitled ‘Lansdowne Road’ which is one of the major roads that runs throughout the Southern suburbs of the Cape Flats in Cape Town.<sup>18</sup>

Taking into account all the aforementioned information on the subject of *ghoema*, my definition cannot be condensed into a single-lined answer. Therefore, in answering the question “*What is ghoema?*” my answer is that *ghoema* is an energetic music from Cape Town, South Africa with its musical heritage steeped in south-east Asian and African cultures. *Ghoema* occurs in three sub-genres of the annual parading traditions including the *Nagtroepe*, Minstrel Carnival and Christmas Bands (three variants of *ghoema* performed by troupes), *Langarm* (a dance hall variant of *ghoema* performed by an ensemble at social dances) and *Vastrap* (a rural variant of *ghoema* performed on farms by labourers and owners alike). *Ghoema* is synonymous with the ‘*ghoema drum*’ which is used during the performance of *ghoema* music.

The conceptualizations and definitions of *mbaqanga* and *ghoema* have included historic evidence, transcriptions and technical considerations on how to perform the music genres accurately. [In formulating the definitions of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga* in this thesis I have not included certain esoteric considerations about a performer’s regard for the music and musical instruments they play as it is not the aim of the thesis.

### 2.3 Development of tone as a result of esotericism

Possessing a fundamentally good tone on an electric bass guitar, whether plugged into an amplifier or acoustically, will become evident regardless of the quality of the bass being played. Other aspects of tone control like amplifiers, preamps and effects processors become superfluous without fundamentally good tone and technique. Hence, the previous

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<sup>18</sup> A transcription from the song ‘Lansdowne Road’ off the album ‘Sunshine In My Soul’. See Discography

statements beg the question: “Will an inferior quality bass not affect the sound?” The overall sound of a bassist lies in note-selection, phrasing, attack while playing, note-length, technique and feel. Regardless of the quality of the bass being played, these concepts would always be heard and can make the bassist easily identifiable. However, having good equipment does go a long way in making your identifiable sound even more so. Two major considerations which affect the selection of bass playing equipment are the bass guitar and the amplifier with a lesser importance extended to strings, pickups and on-board preamps as well as speaker cabinets, preamplifiers, cables and effects.

Amplifier head and speaker cabinet choices only really concern live performance while things like pre-amplifiers and effects apply more to recording applications. The choice of guitar is a crucial one as every guitar brand is different in tone and feel. The components and wood selection for parts of the guitar also yield different results in terms of the overall guitar tone and playability. The kind of strings used also makes a huge difference in the feel of the bass as every string brand sounds different and reacts differently to the player’s technique. Pickups and on-board preamp (if so desired) selections and matching also significantly affect the sound of the bass guitar.

After all the technical aspects of developing a fundamentally good bass tone have been considered, the intangible considerations around music performance have to be reviewed. While it is difficult or impossible to prove, it is not my intention to make sweeping statements or generalisations regarding the esoteric aspects about playing music, however, these generalisations have to occur in order to develop better insight. It is my contention that the esoteric aspects of performing music and the sentiment exhibited before and during performances by musicians strongly influence their sound. Through watching performances, listening to recordings and talking to other musicians I have condensed the types of bassists into these categories: bassists that are naturally extroverted and boisterous tend to have a very creative and playful yet compassionate style of playing while musicians that are introverted and quiet tend to have a determined and prudent yet supportive and driven style of playing.

The first example of this concept is the bassist Jaco Pastorius who performed with the fusion, jazz-rock band Weather Report. Pastorius was bi-polar which was further aggravated by his constant alcohol and drug abuse (Milkowski 1996, 123). His personality was very erratic and he was renowned for making spectacular entrances to performances and for making spectacular exits by being thrown out of venues. Pastorius was and still is regarded as having been the most creative and revolutionary electric bassist of all time, particularly concerning the fretless electric bass guitar. Examples of his playing style can be heard on his album *Jaco*<sup>19</sup> where he exhibits great imagination with the song 'Portrait of Tracey' and technical virtuosity with his arrangement of Charlie Parker's 'Donna Lee'.<sup>20</sup> The upright bassist Ron Carter who performed with Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock was the complete opposite. Through many readings on CD liner notes, magazine articles, jazz books and bass player websites as well as having had the honour of meeting and spending time with Mr Carter, I can confirm that he has a quiet and calm personality while still possessing a determined and stately quality. Ron Carter's bass playing is known for its supportive and driving qualities while very rarely straying from the original bassline and the role of the bass in the music he performs.

Through research and several conversations with music and medical lecturers at UCT, there is increasing evidence of interest in the study of how music performance interacts with the performer physically and psychologically (Sacks 2007). There have been numerous studies on how music affects the brains of children and adults and physically which parts of the brain are affected. Some of these studies include: *Effects of music training on the child's brain and cognitive development* (Schlaug, Norton, Overy and Winner 2005), *Intensely pleasurable responses to music correlate with activity in brain regions implicated in reward and emotion* (Blood and Zatorre 2001) and *Swinging in the brain: Shared neural substrates for behaviours related to sequencing and music* (Janata and Grafton 2003). One of the leading universities in this field is Stanford University in California, USA which boasts renowned best-selling authors/researchers such as Daniel Levitin and academics in the field of cognitive

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<sup>19</sup> See Discography

<sup>20</sup> See Discography

psychology such as Roger Shepard (Levitin 2006). How a musician thinks about the song being performed and his or her regard for it affects the way in which the song will be played and more specifically the approach in technique during performance. In the jazz tradition, songs usually follow a form which has at least two themes and these themes are labelled 'section A' and 'section B'. In my experience and through watching or listening to other musicians the practice is when the 'section A' has a flowing and melodic feel, 'section B' often is driving and abrupt. Similarly the approach of the bassist in such a song would be influenced by the sentiment expressed in the contrasting sections. During 'section A' the bass has a rounder tone and plays legato while in 'section B' it has a meatier tone and plays shorter notes to emphasise the drive. Sometimes instead of shorter notes the bassist just plays louder and physically harder.

After conducting interviews with Kriel and Mbadu, there have been many concerts and jam sessions where I could watch Mbadu and Kriel perform. At the jam sessions they sometimes perform separately and sometimes together as Kriel would swop to guitar or Mbadu to piano. Somehow even when they were not playing the bass, their sound and sentiment seemed to remain constant during the performance although the medium for musical expression changed. Having spent time with them after these performances, the formulation of a holistic view of them as people and musicians developed. Trying to establish the trajectory from personality to performance surfaced mid-way during this thesis and has resulted in its inclusion. I have subsequently had independent conversations with both research consultants and have come to assess that they have not given the concept of esotericism in music performance any thought. Therefore, further research and my own experiences as evidence has been included in this thesis. The development of the concept of tone as a result of esotericism has been enhanced through the documentation of their individual biographical information as well as the description and transcription of their bass playing.

## Chapter 3 - Spencer Mbadu

The first time I heard Spencer Mbadu I was sixteen years old, it was 1 o'clock in the morning and I was at the jam session at the club *Riffs* in Wynberg which was owned by Jay Reddy. The song was the Sonny Rollins composition *St. Thomas* and I remember thinking that never before have I heard a bass sound like it did that evening. The sound was lyrical, warm, personal and exciting. There were many slurs, harmonics and the basslines were frenetic yet driving, determined and grooved. It sounded as if Mbadu was playing like it was the last time he would ever play the bass again! I would later come to learn that Mbadu's playing is always like that. Suffice it to say that I was completely mesmerized that evening and would continue to be for a long time after that performance. When I was introduced to him we ended up talking about everything other than bass playing and it would turn out to be one of most informative evenings in my life.

### 3.1 The biography

#### 3.1.1 Earliest memories

Spencer Mbadu was born on 21 January 1955. He grew up in a post-World War II shanty-town (Western 2001, 632) called Windermere in a sub-section called *Mcheke* Block. Today Windermere is known as Kensington and is situated in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. After the implementation of the Group Areas Act in 1950 by the *apartheid* government, Mbadu and his family were forcibly removed from Windermere as it was rezoned as a 'coloured area' in 1958 (Field 2001, 13). They were relocated to *Nyanga* (literally 'Moon') West which was later to become *Gugulethu* (literally 'Our Pride') (Field 2001, 42). Like District Six that was situated near the Cape Town CBD, Windermere was also a melting pot of cultures and races and as Mbadu recalls a "mixed masala...Indians...coloureds, whites, blacks being born together...growing in harmony."<sup>21</sup> It was initially also a suburb which was both urban as well as rural in its socio-economic identity. Windermere, in being rural, was mostly farmland with small

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<sup>21</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

dams servicing some of the livestock and crops that people maintained on or near their property whilst, in being urban, new apartments, stores and centres were being built to promote economic development outside of the CBD of Cape Town (Field 2001, 27). Today the only signs of the existence of the former shanty town are in some of the street names and the name of the primary school in the area.

Spencer Mbadu is a gigging bassist with some of Cape Town's most notable bands and artists. Some of the bands have included *Opus de Funk* and *Siyabuya* as well as artists like vocalist Sylvia Mdunyelwa and saxophonist Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi. He has worked around the country and moved to Johannesburg on several occasions to pursue a career there. One of the most prolific bands in Cape Town's history was called *Work Force*. This band was home to the city's finest jazz-rock-fusion musicians. The band members included guitarist Alvin Dyers, drummer Denver Furness, the late saxophonist Nic Le Roux and various vocalists who fronted the band with Mbadu on bass. Mbadu was one of a select few musicians who were booked to be part of the local band for the series of internationally publicized '46664' concerts which were held across the world. He performed with world leading pop artists and groups at this event. Throughout his career he has spent much of his time teaching privately but mostly at the *Jazz Workshop* in Cape Town. Some of his students have become very prominent on the local and international music scene. Some of these students include the late Eddie Jooste, Bongani Sokhela, Peter Ndlala and Herbie Tsoaeli.

### 3.1.2 Family and friends as an influence in music

Most of the musicians that I have researched either for this work or for my own enlightenment seem to have had music played, sung or described to them by persons close to them within the early stages of their childhoods. In the interview with Spencer Mbadu in February this year, this concept is reflected as he described how he "started making sounds on the instruments [that were accessible]" at the age of three and his first composition was a song that he had composed when he was four years of age. His grandmother played the concert or pedal harp and it was on this instrument that he first

ventured to play music. During his childhood living in *Gugulethu*, he was surrounded by music in the forms of pennywhistles being played by kids in the streets and by the tradition of bands performing on trucks that would drive around the neighbourhood. One of these was the first big band established in Langa called the Merry Macs led by Joel M'Brooks Mlomo which included the legendary South African jazz saxophonist, Christopher 'Columbus' Ncgukana (Rasmussen 2003, 155). Ncgukana's sons are still active today in the South African music industry and Mbadu has performed with all of them but most notably Ncgukana's eldest sons Duke and Ezra Ncgukana. The Merry Macs band members were quite capable of playing on a truck since all of the instruments were performed acoustically.

## **3.2 The instruments**

### **3.2.1 Instruments played and why**

After his initial attempts to play the harp, Mbadu later taught himself to play the pennywhistle, guitar and the piano. The pennywhistle was freely available and in order to play the guitar children and adults alike in the more impoverished communities would manufacture their own guitars which were constructed by cleaning out a five gallon tin (the resonator) and by cutting a hole on one side (the sound-hole), affixing a wooden beam (the neck and fingerboard) and lastly stringing wire or fishing line from the end of the neck to the opposite end on the tin. The piano has always been a cherished possession amongst families but more so in aspirant coloured and black families (Western 2001, 633). It gave these families a sense of sophistication and achievement in owning a piano as well as prestige amongst their neighbours when their children performed at Eisteddfods, Royal Schools' Examinations and at school cultural evenings. Mbadu explains in his first interview that he "was lazy to go attend school" and found "school...boring from the age of five already" and was never enrolled for any of the aforementioned extra-curricular activities. Understanding this, one can relate to Mbadu's explanation of the inaccessibility of the piano:

“SJ: was it [the piano] freely accessible? Could you get to it [the piano] quickly?

SM: Not really, not especially with the piano... You’ll... make sure there’s nobody home, all by yourself while others are watching outside when the parents come... [and you] make as if you didn’t touch the instrument”<sup>22</sup> (19 February 2009).

After reading many interviews and articles of international bassists, a common theme emerged: for many the bass was usually not the first instrument they played. This phenomenon is displayed again as Mbadu describes how he went from playing rhythm-guitar in a band to playing bass in the same band. He explains that in 1972 the original bassist of the band in which he played suddenly quit only two days before their performance at a festival in Cape Town. The bandleader asked Mbadu to fulfil the bass playing role for the next two days in order for them to pull off their performance at the festival. Mbadu explains that he did this with some protest as he explained to the bandleader that he was only prepared to play for those two days and exclaimed, “Why don’t you ask my grandmother?! She plays this better than I can play this thing!”<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2.2 First explorations into identifying and emulating bassists

As described in earlier passages of this work, Mbadu’s earliest influences were found right on his doorstep. Bands performed on trucks and drove around his neighbourhood, kids played on pennywhistles and makeshift guitars, and even his own family was a source of musical inspiration. In the interview, he mentions the name Joseph Makwela who was a member of the band which backed *Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens*, the *Makgona Tsohle Band*. This discovery ratified the endeavour by this thesis to nail down the description and definition for *mbaqanga*. It also answered my suspicions of how he came to play in the manner in that he does and for which he is known. It is my contention that Mbadu’s playing is very playful almost bordering on being too musically busy while still somehow maintaining a strong rhythmic pulse and groove. My admiration for Mbadu

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<sup>22</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

<sup>23</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

in this regard is ironic in that I admire him as much as he admires Joseph Makwela's playing: "He (Joseph Makwela) was so rhythmical and so melodic on his bass...you would dance to his basslines even if there's no drum beats going...he was really hip."<sup>24</sup> The best recorded example of Mbadu playing in this fashion can be found in his basslines performing the song *Khawuleza* written by *Winston Mankunku* and Mike Perry.<sup>25</sup>

The legendary jazz saxophonist Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi formed a band called *Siyabuya* with members who later became world-famous musicians like Bheki Mseleku and Tony Cedras. While Mbadu performed with this band they continually compared his playing to that of the bass-playing phenomenon Jaco Pastorius. Pastorius is hailed as "The World's Greatest Bass Player" due to his revolutionary approach on the electric and, more specifically, fretless electric bass.<sup>26</sup> He was the first person to really play the instrument as a lead instrument in a band as opposed to its usual function in a band as a supportive and background instrument (Gridley 2009, 381). Mbadu's influence by Jaco is the first notable thing about his playing for a number of reasons: firstly, he was given a 4-string *Höhner* fretless bass guitar as a birthday gift by the late bassist and ex-student of Mbadu's, Eddie Jooste; secondly, his almost excessive use of harmonics in his playing, which was popularized by the song 'Portrait of Tracey' by Jaco Pastorius on his debut album *Jaco*;<sup>27</sup> thirdly, the very percussive and rhythmic embellishments; and lastly, the very lyrical playing and inflections when playing ballads and slow-tempo songs.

### 3.3 The tone – technical considerations

The sound which you are known by has much to do with the inherent tone of your musical equipment. The inherent tone in musical equipment is more obvious in instruments made of wood or metal. Hence, different guitars produce different tones because the woods they are constructed of produce varied tones and affect overall performance. Electronics in the form of pickups and on-board preamps are also to be

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<sup>24</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

<sup>25</sup> See Discography

<sup>26</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>27</sup> See Discography

considered as well as their power requirements in terms of them being either ‘active’ or ‘passive’ electronic systems.<sup>28</sup> Moreover certain brands of musical instruments have become the standard for everything else that is made after it. The best example of this concept regarding electric bass guitars can be found in the Fender brand of guitars which were built by Leo Fender with guitar models dating back to the 1940s.<sup>29</sup> This does not mean that everything before Fender was irrelevant. Due to its subsequent widespread popularity and preferred choice by the recording artists since its inception, everything relating to parts, tone, size, shape and feel are based on this brand of guitar. This is due to the rise of electric basses and guitars with the arrival of rock, pop, folk rock and jazz fusion around that time.

### 3.3.1 Physicality, Technique – *Pizzicato* and ‘Slapping and Popping’, Character and Sentiment

#### Physicality

Upon shaking hands with Mbadu, I was amazed to feel how hard his hands were. The surfaces of his hands were hard due to calluses from years of playing bass guitar and his fingers were also meaty or pudgy due to his large size. However, as much as his hands were akin to those of someone in the construction industry, his grip and touch were incredibly light and considerate. A greater insight into the fundamental bass tone of Mbadu could be drawn from this discovery. He has a fat and driving bass sound and seems to always attack the bass strings with a lot of vigour and conviction while at the same time maintaining a deft and agile approach.

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<sup>28</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>29</sup> See Terms and Definitions

### Technique – *Pizzicato*

Mbadu utilizes a *one-finger-per-fret* or *the claw* approach in how he positions his left-hand in relation to the fingerboard and frets.<sup>30</sup> *The Claw* method covers many notes across the fretboard without moving the position of the left hand along the fingerboard. Mbadu's right-hand technique is the commonly used method which utilizes the index- and middle-fingers as the main plucking fingers while the ring- and little-fingers act as dampers across the strings. In this common method of playing electric bass the thumb is not used to pluck the strings but instead rests on top of the pickup or on the bottom string (the E-string on a 4-string bass). Mbadu's use of his thumb is slightly different at times as it seems to float parallel to and in front of his main plucking fingers. This floating method allows him to limit tension on the strings while simultaneously giving him access to creating false harmonics by using his thumb. This method allows for a decrease in string tension by not resting the thumb on a string or pickup and in so doing decreasing the overall tension within the guitar.

### Technique – 'Slapping and Popping'

Mbadu's 'slapping and popping' technique is unique and slightly humorous when you discover why he has adapted his particular style. 'Slapping and Popping' on the bass guitar is a technique first made popular by the bassists of the 1970's like Larry Graham and Louis Johnson who played funk and soul music. Slapping the bass is a technique whereby the thumb on the right-hand is positioned perpendicular to the strings and is used like a hammer to strike the strings against the fretboard. Popping the bass refers to a strong plucking of a string where it is lifted by the index or middle finger and when the string is released it violently rebounds off of the fretboard. This technique is a very percussive way of playing the bass guitar and has become the highlight of any solo or bassline.

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<sup>30</sup> See Terms and Definitions

The technique that Mbadu has developed has come about from trying to save money! Slapping puts a great deal of tension on the strings and if they are not supple, they have a tendency to snap. Subsequently, new strings are always preferred by bassists as they sound clearer and have minimal tension. As the strings get older the tone diminishes and the strings are also less supple and if not slapped or popped correctly will snap. The technique utilised by Mbadu limits his ability to play more elaborate and intricate slapping rhythms and phrases but he admits to not using the slapping sound much as he prefers a more lyrical style of playing. His technique involves using his index finger on his right hand as a counter-pressure to his middle-finger. He places his middle-finger on top of, and behind, his index-finger and allows it to slide past the index-finger quickly. This counter-pressure from the index finger to the downward pressure of the middle finger allows Mbadu to create a similar motion to that of the thumb in the slapping technique yet allows him to use less force to create the desired sound. In so doing he can save money on buying new strings often as they are less likely to snap while slapping them.

#### Character and Sentiment

In my time as a student and now a colleague, I can verify that Spencer Mbadu has a 'larger than life' personality that is very nurturing and supportive. He is also very respectful and exhibits a fair amount of humility with an underlying determination and sense of purpose. Regarding music he is very diligent in wanting to improve upon his abilities and can always be seen practising between lessons with students. Mbadu does, however, tend to be somewhat controversial expressing his thoughts regarding music, musicians and work. By understanding the abovementioned attributes of Spencer Mbadu, a deeper understanding of his playing can be drawn. Mbadu's bass playing is very reminiscent of Jaco Pastorius. While still assimilating a large sense of his own musical heritage, his style exhibits an inventive, flamboyant and innovative approach to music and technique.

### 3.3.2 Gear - the bass, the equalisation and other technical considerations

#### The Bass

The quest for the perfect tone is a never-ending one. This is the case simply because the perfect tone is relative to the person searching for it. My idea of what constitutes a great sound for the bass generically and for my personal tone has changed considerably since the day I started playing. There are a few contributing factors to this tonal evolution. The most overriding factor is the one of musical taste: as my musical appreciation palette broadened, so too has my understanding of what makes a good bass tone with regard to a certain genre. One tone does not work universally and to think so may be somewhat problematic - it would be like the bassist bringing a harmonica to a club gig!

Mbadu has owned several basses and has elected to do recordings on only a select few, one of which was a four-string, fretted *Ibanez* bass guitar.<sup>31</sup> This bass had active electronics but gave him endless problems regarding its on-board preamp and general feel. He has since discarded that bass and now only uses the basses which have been gifts from students. The basses he now owns include an *Aria*<sup>32</sup> from Bongani Sokhela, a *Cort*<sup>33</sup> A6 six-string bass from Peter Ndlala and, his prized possession, the *Höhner* four-string, fretless bass. The bass that I associate him with is the *Höhner* bass. As fretless basses go, the technique of the player generates the overall tone. If you get two bassists to play the exact same notes on the exact same bass, it would sound remarkably different as a result of the attack of the strings and the hand placement along the body by the right-hand as well as the pressure exerted and hand placement on the fretboard by the left-hand.

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<sup>31</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>32</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>33</sup> See Terms and Definitions

## The Equalisation (EQ)

To really get the most out of your bass tone a basic understanding of how altering the levels of certain frequencies will affect your sound in relation to the venue in which you may be performing. The book *Modern Recording Techniques* states that:

“The rate at which an acoustic generator...repeats within a cycle of positive and negative amplitude is known as the *frequency* of that signal...The number of cycles that occur within a second is measured in *hertz*...the charted output of an audio device is known as its *frequency response curve*. This curve is used to graphically represent how a device will respond to the audio spectrum and, thus, how it will affect a signal’s overall sound...the x-axis represents the signal’s measured frequency, while the y-axis represents the...measured output signal” (Huber and Runstein 2005, 37 and 41).

By understanding the passage above it is possible to formulate a mental image of how the equalisation controls on a bass guitar and amplifier alters the input signal from the bass. On a combo amplifier,<sup>34</sup> the knobs labelled as *pre-gain*, *bass*, *mid*, *treble*, *post-gain* work as follows: *pre-gain* refers to the amount of signal which is being sent from the sound source (guitar, bass, keyboard and so forth) into the amplifier circuitry before equalisation; *bass*, *mid* and *treble* refer to the boosting or cutting of the amplitude of the signal over a specific frequency range for each control knob; and *post-gain* refers to the amount of signal sent from the amplifier to the connected speaker. A *selectable frequency equalizer* is an adjustable audio filter inserted into a circuit to divide and adjust frequency response through altering or distorting the relative amplitude of a certain frequency range (Huber and Runstein 2005, 450). The *bass*, *mid* and *treble* controls on an amp are effectively acting as *equalizers* which *boost* or *cut* a desired frequency range. The specific frequency range for a tone control knob is also known as a *band of equalisation* or, more commonly, an *EQ band*.

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<sup>34</sup> A combo amplifier refers to combination of a preamplifier and speaker housed in a single cabinet or enclosure.

The most basic version of tone control on a bass can be found on the Fender bass guitars where the on-board controls simply include three knobs: a neck pickup volume, bridge pickup volume and a tone shape knob. The positions on the bass body where the pickups are situated have two distinct tonal characters while the tone control knob allows the player to boost a set frequency range across various portions of the frequency spectrum. Generally basses include a 2-band or 3-band EQ control system. The more bands of frequency control there are on a bass, the more a player can sculpt his or her desired tone.

Some amplifiers include a parametric equalisation stage that allows players to cut or boost the signals of only selected frequencies. This altering of equalisation allows musicians who perform in different settings to accurately try and recreate their desired tone. The bass frequencies and subsequent audio signal is omni-directional and can be heard farther than any other signal from its original source (Adelman-Larsen and Thompson 2008, 1). Therefore, it is also the most difficult tone to control in smaller venues with poor acoustics. High ceilings, glass doors, wooden floors and square or flat reflective surfaces are the enemies of every bass amplifier. These surfaces do not allow for enough diffusion or absorption of the bass signal. The bass frequencies become amplified due to increased audio reflection and in so doing create a louder yet muffled sound. This bass tone would colloquially be referred to as being boomy. Understanding amplifiers and acoustics are less important for the bass guitar in studio applications as its audio signal is usually recorded ‘dry’, that is before equalisation and any other signal altering processes such as compression.

The equalisation generally employed by Mbadu is not very specific regarding his fretted or fretless basses. His only requirement for his fretless tone is a “fat sound with a nice nag” and for his fretted basses to possess a “fat sound with a solid slap and nice sizzle.”<sup>35</sup> With the fretless bass he would like the lower frequencies between 80Hz and 120 Hz boosted to provide the fat, deep bass tone. The ‘nag’ is achieved by boosting the Mid-range frequencies between 200Hz to 600Hz which provides a more ‘nasal’ and warm tone. On the fretted bass the lower- and mid-ranged frequencies are boosted just as with

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<sup>35</sup> See Interview Transcription with Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A

the fretless bass but the sizzle that he wants to achieve on the fretted bass is produced by boosting the frequencies between 1 kHz to 10 kHz.

## Chapter 4 - Gary Kriel

The first time I heard Gary Kriel was on Errol Dyers' album *Sonesta* where he played electric guitar on the title track. I always think it is out of admiration that a guitarist would hire another guitarist to play their music. The first time I heard Kriel play bass was at a bazaar held at a home for the physically disabled in Bridgetown where he was playing with the musicians of the surrounding area. I remember being very excited when I heard him play as the sound of the bass was tonally and musically perfect for what was being performed. The band sounded like the bands which used to perform at the many weddings and church functions that I attended with my family. The sound was strong and gritty<sup>36</sup> yet incredibly supportive and always understated. I was introduced to Kriel at another occasion by drummer Richard Pickett while backstage during a concert at the Artscape Theatre. Pickett and Kriel were playing for Tony Schilder who was to perform later that evening. Kriel was very friendly and said that he was honoured to finally meet me as he had heard so much about me. The irony was unbelievable to say the least! I mentioned to him that I was a huge admirer of his bass playing for a number of years and that I would really like to meet him one day for a lesson or just to chat as I was sure I would have much to learn from him about the music scene in Cape Town, his background and, more importantly, as a bassist.

### 4.1 The biography

#### 4.1.1 Earliest Memories

Gary Kriel was born on 5 December 1939 in the house on the corner where Church Street intersects *Buitengracht* Street in the Cape Town CBD. His musical background comes in the form of his grandmother who played the guitar. She was from a town called Calvinia which is situated in the northern region of the Western Cape Province. The area is more

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<sup>36</sup> A gritty bass tone refers to a tone where the combination of sounds creates an overall tonal colour. The sound of the strings as they are depressed by the left-hand, plucked by the right-hand and when the strings touch the frets and fretboard all produce a combined tone that is similar to the sound of sandpaper being applied to a piece of wood. Hence the term gritty.

commonly referred to as the *Koue Bokkeveld* (literally ‘cold’ ‘goats-field’) which is part of the *Klein Karoo* District and lies to the west of the *Tanqua* Karoo (Penn 2006, 2). The *Klein Karoo* has recently been under the spotlight with the release of the DVD ‘*Karoo Guitar Blues*’ which was a documentary and concert series about the many singers and guitarists from the different farming settlements and small towns which can be found in the *Klein Karoo* region. Kriel explains:

“David Kramer...he made a documentary about the musicians in the *Little Karoo*, *Koue Bokkeveld*...my grandmother, my mother was born in a place called, a small place called *Calvinia*...my grandmother’s there and all these people originated from *Calvinia* playing guitar...”<sup>37</sup> (12 May 2009).

Kriel spent his early childhood playing in the streets of Cape Town and attended school in the city.

#### 4.1.2 Family or friends as an influence in music

In 1948 Gary Kriel was diagnosed with tuberculosis of the hip. After the diagnoses he was admitted to Maitland Cottage Home which was established in 1929 through the Invalid Aid Fund established in 1923 by the Cape Town Society for the Protection of Child Life.<sup>38</sup> While at the institution, Kriel met up with two people who would eventually become leading musicians in their own right, namely Jimmy Adams and Harold Jephthah. Adams’ mother was the cook for the home and he used to teach music to some of the students while Jephthah was also a patient at the Maitland Cottage Home. They started a little wind ensemble playing instruments made from the bamboo that grew naturally in the surrounding area. The home would host various bands around the festive season and on one occasion the mayor of Cape Town presented Kriel with a guitar as a Christmas gift. This gesture would turn out to be a turning point in Kriel’s life and career as it became the first of several instruments with which he performed extensively.

Kriel underwent surgery on his hip and left the Maitland Cottage Home after having been a patient and student for four years. He completed his schooling up until standard 6, now

<sup>37</sup> See Interview Transcription with Gary Kriel. Appendix B

<sup>38</sup> Black Dot IT Solutions. (2009) *Maitland Cottage Home* [Online]. 04 August 2009 Available: <http://www.mch.org.za/index.htm>

grade 8. Being the eldest child in his family he was forced to work at an early age to supplement the family's income. He went to work for the post office and was responsible for cleaning telephone booths. Kriel explains his first involvement as a gigging musician as follows:

“he [Kenny Jephtha] went up to, those days was Rhodesia, Zimbabwe is Rhodesia, and he was on tour there and I took his place and the next thing I think I played, I played for about 5 or 6 years...then they recruited me for the *Golden City Dixies*”<sup>39</sup> (12 May 2009).

Kriel performed for approximately six years at the venue, which was the old catacomb of St George's Cathedral in Cape Town.

The *Golden City Dixies* was one of the most notable groups in Cape Town's musical history having been the stomping ground for many of the city's most prolific performers and musicians. Some famous names include the jazz guitarist Jonathan Butler, vocalist and actor Cyril Valentine, bassist 'Philly' Schilder and the jazz pianist Sammy Hartman. Kriel was booked to play the guitar for the Golden City Dixies but when the *Moppies*<sup>40</sup> were performed he played the banjo. After touring with the show for a number of years, Kriel became a stalwart in the local South African music industry mainly performing with groups and artists from Cape Town. The most notable of these performers are two pianists with whom Kriel has worked for over twenty years. These pianists are iconic jazz pianists and composers in their own right, namely Abdullah Ibrahim, formerly known as Dollar Brand, and Tony Schilder. Ibrahim has enjoyed great success abroad and subsequently spends most of the year playing in the US and Europe while Schilder has performed throughout Southern Africa and steadily in and around Cape Town. Unfortunately, due to poor health Schilder has not been performing for the past few years. Kriel now regularly performs at the restaurant Pigalle with bandleader and guitarist Richard Caesar.

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<sup>39</sup> See Interview Transcription with Gary Kriel. Appendix B

<sup>40</sup> Comic, upbeat songs which make light of events that are a source of worry (Martin 1999)

## 4.2 The instruments

### 4.2.1 Instruments played and why

Upon leaving the Maitland Cottages Home Kriel learned to play the accordion and went on to perform with a *langarm*<sup>41</sup> band to earn a living. Only after being asked to join a band in Durban did he start to play the electric bass. Kriel is self-taught and claims to have never practiced a day in his life. He has recorded albums on both electric guitar and electric bass.

### 4.2.2 First explorations into identifying and emulating bassists

As Kriel explains, every instrument and gig which he has played has been a last minute decision, a gift or as a result of, as he puts it, “being thrown into the deep end.” He does, however, admit that his family and his surroundings have all contributed to the way in which he plays and feels about music. Kriel always takes a supportive role while playing music whether it is on electric bass, guitar or the accordion. His playing style is heavily influenced by his experiences with the Golden City Dixies regarding the more common *ghoema* and Cape Town-styled music. Kriel enjoyed the music of the jazz pianist Oscar Petersen and emulated the feel and sound of the bassist for the Oscar Petersen Trio, namely Ray Brown.

Kriel claims he has never checked out any musical genres like samba, rock, reggae or fusion. This is strange by current standards as the average student through the advent of the internet and a wide variety of print media ends up knowing about players and styles in these musical genres after their first or second lesson. It is my contention that new students need to learn as many styles as possible to increase their overall musicality and general music knowledge. Unfortunately, this does sometimes lead to the student often overplaying a musical situation and not really functioning as a bassist in laying down the musical foundations of harmony and rhythm. Kriel has learned how the bass

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<sup>41</sup> Refer to Chapter 2.2.2 *Ghoema*. Page 33

fundamentally works in music through experience. It could be argued that this extensive experience has made the need for learning these other genres remarkably less important for Kriel. This lack of knowledge in other musical genres could be viewed as being beneficial to Kriel in the sense that he has no pre-conceived ideas of what a typical bassline in these genres would sound like. I contend that his reliance on his own musical sense of rhythm and harmony has allowed him to put his ‘musical stamp’ on the music he performs. The musical stamp is more a sense of sound and feel. Kriel has an ability to vary the tone by means of his technique to best suit the music being performed: he could either possess a gritty tone or a warm, round tone depending on the song. His groove and feel is relative to the length of notes, the length between notes and the placement of the notes in relation to the feel of the song. A general sense of groove is exhibited over technical prowess.

### **4.3 The tone – technical considerations**

#### **4.3.1 Physicality, Technique – *Pizzicato* and ‘Slapping and Popping’, Character and Sentiment**

##### Physicality

Upon meeting Kriel I did not immediately notice that he had a limp due to having had tuberculosis of the hip. He is just under 1,5 metres in height and of a medium build yet still possesses a quietly commanding and determined presence about him. When Kriel performs he is usually seated and plays without a guitar strap, instead he straddles the bass guitar over his left leg. There are several pictures in the foyer of Westend, a club in Cape Town, where Kriel has the bass resting upright on a barstool while he stands next to it and plays it in the same fashion that one would play an upright bass. I asked him whether it was in an attempt to emulate the sound or feel of an upright bass. He explained that it was due the fact that the stage at the venue was too small for him to sit and play with the guitar neck in its usual position.

### Technique – *Pizzicato*

Kriel's technique is based on the more commonly used technique which involves draping the right-hand over the body of the bass perpendicular to the strings. The index and middle fingers are used to pluck the strings in an upward motion. When listening to recordings of Kriel, a sense that he plays with significant force is evident due to the very gritty and focused sound conveyed. However, upon watching him perform it is clear that he plays with a light touch in both his hands and utilizes a low guitar action<sup>42</sup> to best suit this technique. His left-hand technique does, however, hint at a partial explanation for why his sound comes across as gritty. He primarily only utilizes three of his four available fingers to play notes on the fingerboard – his index, middle and ring fingers. Playing in this manner forces him to move around on the fingerboard substantially more than if he utilized the *Claw*<sup>43</sup> technique. This is as a result of having to find the right notes on the right string to achieve his desired bassline's note selection with only three fingers. This substantial movement results in increased grit entering the overall tone of the guitar.

Regarding ornamental playing on the bass in the form of slides and dead or percussive notes<sup>44</sup> Kriel is the complete opposite of Mbadu. Kriel very rarely uses dead or percussive notes and always opts to play the actual note he is fretting. Slides are sometimes used as mechanisms to get to other notes on the fretboard. He very rarely uses them as ornaments in his playing. Kriel utilizes his sense of feel and note-syncopation to enhance the ornamental qualities of his basslines. Unlike Spencer, Kriel does not use the 'slapping and popping' technique.

### Character and Sentiment

Kriel is a humorous and sincere person. He is incredibly humble and tends to shake off any kind of praise by saying that he is "just a bass player". This humble and soft nature

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<sup>42</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>43</sup> See Terms and Definitions

<sup>44</sup> Dead or percussive notes are produced by playing the strings while the left hand does not fret a note but instead lightly applies pressure to stop the string from vibrating.

believes an underlying sense of self-worth and determination to constantly improve upon his playing and that of his fellow musicians. In the countless conversations with Kriel there is always some story or anecdote about how he was misjudged or taken for granted and how he was able to subtly but surely reaffirm his worth, experience and ability. One example is about a visiting singer from the US with whom Kriel was booked to play. He explains:

“Henry Shields he phoned me he says ‘Listen, this American singer she’s performing at the Green Dolphin...will you come in?’ I was first there and here this singer came up and said ‘I don’t want a E[lectric] bass’ I said ‘Oh, Mr Shields asked me to come and I could get back into my car and I can go home.’ She phoned Henry...[he] said that ‘this is the best I could find to accommodate you.’ So she says to me ‘I didn’t know that a E[lectric] bass can sound like it’s [a] double bass’. I said ‘it depends how you play it. Let me tell you something: you know you didn’t even introduce yourself you just...you actually make me feel very small’ and stuff like that...”<sup>45</sup> (12 May 2009).

She asked him if she came to perform again, would he be willing to play for her. His response was simply, “If you can afford me!” This anecdote further shows his firm stature as a musician and as a person.

Understanding Kriel’s quiet and understated yet determined nature, it is easy to see why Kriel plays the way he does in terms of being a supportive, driving bassist with a unique groove and a huge repertoire of music from which to draw. His presence on the stage is always supportive and quiet with the uncanny ability to play exactly what is musically required or appropriate at any stage of the performance.

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<sup>45</sup> See Interview Transcription with Gary Kriel. Appendix B

#### 4.3.2 Gear – the bass, the equalisation and other technical considerations

##### The Bass

The two basses closely associated with Kriel are the 4-string *Höfner*<sup>46</sup> bass guitar (circa 1961) and the 4-string Fender Precision Bass. The characteristic tones produced by these two basses are significantly different. The *Höfner* produces an incredibly warm tone with a dull attack even when played with a plectrum. The most famous user of this bass is Sir Paul McCartney of The Beatles. The Fender Precision Bass produces a warm tone but not to the same extent as the *Höfner* and the Fender also has much more ‘grit’ and increased tonal clarity from note-to-note and string-to-string.

##### The Equalisation (EQ)

The overall tone of the Fender Precision bass that Kriel uses to record with is generally untouched. Kriel does however add the slightest amount low-range to the sound of his bass. The frequencies between 80 kHz and 110 kHz are boosted for the bass tone while increased grit is achieved by either recording using a pre-amplifier or Direct Injection (DI) box which has vacuum tubes incorporated into the circuitry. The grit could also be added by boosting the mid-ranged frequencies between 330 kHz and 750 kHz. His tone also has a very warm quality to it which can mostly be attributed to Kriel’s attack while playing but is also achieved through the tube DI box which adds body and warmth. Another way to achieve this warm quality would be to boost the frequencies between 85 kHz and 160 kHz.

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<sup>46</sup> See Terms and Definitions

## Chapter 5 - Transcriptions

### 5.1 Transcription of the quintessential bassline and analysis

Spencer Mbadu

The following transcription is from the recording of a collaborative album between saxophonist Winston ‘Mankunku’ Ngozi and pianist Mike Perry called ‘*Lagunya Khayelitsha (Zonke)*’ on the album entitled *Molo Africa*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Discography

# Lagunya Khayelitsha

- Bass played by *Spencer Mbadu* -

*Transcription by  
Shaun Johannes*

Composed & Arranged by  
M. Perry/W. Ngozi

Mbaqanga (♩ = 112 bpm), Total Playing Time - 08:25

Musical score for bass guitar, featuring a mbaqanga style. The score is written in E-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as Mbaqanga (♩ = 112 bpm) and the total playing time is 08:25. The score begins with a whole note E-flat chord, followed by a double bar line and the instruction "a tempo...". The music consists of nine staves of bass lines, with chords indicated below the staff: A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, and E<sup>b</sup>. The piece features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and trills. The score concludes with a final E<sup>b</sup>7 chord.

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 2

This page contains the bassline transcription for measures 36 through 72 of the song 'Lagunya Khayelitsha'. The music is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo and meter are not explicitly stated but are implied by the notation.

The transcription is organized into eight systems, each starting with a measure number:

- System 1 (Measures 36-39): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 2 (Measures 40-43): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 3 (Measures 44-47): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 4 (Measures 48-51): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 5 (Measures 52-55): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 6 (Measures 56-59): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7.
- System 7 (Measures 60-63): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>. A box labeled "Solo Form Start" is placed above measure 62.
- System 8 (Measures 64-67): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>.
- System 9 (Measures 68-71): Chords A<sup>b</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>.

The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, along with rests and accidentals. The bassline features a consistent eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand.

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 3

72  $A^b$   $B^b7$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 72-75. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 72,  $B^b7$  at measure 73, and  $E^b$  at measure 74.

76  $A^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 76-79. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 76 and  $E^b$  at measure 77.

80  $A^b$   $B^b7$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 80-83. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 80,  $B^b7$  at measure 81, and  $E^b$  at measure 82.

84  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 84-87. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 84,  $B^b$  at measure 85, and  $E^b$  at measure 86.

88  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 88-91. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 88,  $B^b$  at measure 89, and  $E^b$  at measure 90.

92  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 92-95. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 92,  $B^b$  at measure 93, and  $E^b$  at measure 94.

96  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 96-99. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 96,  $B^b$  at measure 97, and  $E^b$  at measure 98.

100  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 100-103. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 100,  $B^b$  at measure 101, and  $E^b$  at measure 102.

104  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

Musical staff for measures 104-107. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. It features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. Chord changes are indicated above the staff:  $A^b$  at measure 104,  $B^b$  at measure 105, and  $E^b$  at measure 106.

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 4

108  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

112  $A^b$   $E^b$  Solo Form Start

116  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

120  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

124  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  rushed

128  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

132  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

136  $A^b$   $B^7$   $E^b$

140  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 5

144  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$   $E^b7$  rushed - - - -

148  $A^b$   $B^b11$   $E^b$   $E^b7$

152  $A^b$   $B^b11$   $E^b$   $E^b7$

156  $A^b$   $B^b11$   $E^b$   $E^b7$

160  $A^b$   $B^b11$   $E^b$

164  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  Punch-in Error

168  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

172  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

176  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 6

180  $A^b$  rushed  $B^b$   $E^b$

184  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

188  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  rushed

192  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  (Late)  $E^b7$

196  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$   $E^b7$

200  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  (Rushed)  $E^b7$   $E^b7$

204  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$  (Rushed)  $E^b7$

208  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

212  $A^b$   $B^b$   $E^b$

## Lagunya Khayelitsha-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 7

216 A<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

220 A<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

224 A<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup>

Fine

The image shows a bassline transcription for the song 'Lagunya Khayelitsha'. It consists of three staves of music in bass clef, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff starts at measure 216 and ends at measure 219, with chord changes to A-flat, B-flat, and E-flat. The second staff starts at measure 220 and ends at measure 223, with chord changes to A-flat, B-flat, and E-flat. The third staff starts at measure 224 and ends at measure 227, with chord changes to A-flat and B-flat. The piece concludes with a 'Fine' marking.

### The analysis

It is evident in this example that Mbadu's playing possesses the two distinct musical influences of Jaco Pastorius and Joseph Makwela. Overall the bassline is very percussive, musically ornamental and playful. The evidence of Pastorius' influence can first be seen in bar 50 where Mbadu plays a portion of a bassline which was first performed and extensively utilized by Pastorius. The bassline is in a sixteenth-note division feel and makes use of dead notes to promote the percussive and frantic nature of the bassline. It is based on the major pentatonic starting on the root of the chord being outlined. This bassline has become one of Pastorius' signature basslines. Examples can be found on the songs 'The Chicken' from his album *Jaco* and the song 'Dry Cleaner from Des Moines' on the album *Mingus* by Joni Mitchell.<sup>48</sup> The strong presence of Joseph Makwela can be found in the more commonly used *mbaqanga* basslines used throughout the transcription. To describe *mbaqanga* derived basslines in terms of their construction is difficult as the basslines' main focus is feel and groove while harmonically the bass only plays roots and sometimes the third degree of a chord. Mostly the bassline will focus on phrasing similar to those which might be sung by performers of this genre. As I understand it, as much inflection as possible is utilized in these basslines in order to mimic the nuances of the human voice. The first example of this kind of playing is in bars 10-13.

### The bassline arrangement, construction and purpose

Mbadu utilizes 'themes' in his basslines which help to convey a specific section of the song's arrangement. The first indication of a theme is from bars 4-8 - I will call it Theme A. At bar 10 he starts to change into another theme - this is Theme B, which signifies a change in the song's arrangement. He utilizes Theme B to the end of bar 25 and reverts back to Theme A at bar 26. He proceeds to experiment with Theme A at bar 34 by implementing double-stops while still trying to maintain the essence of the bassline. A new theme, Theme C, is employed to signal a change in the song arrangement at bar 50 and continues to the end of bar 61.

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<sup>48</sup> See Discography

The start of the first solo form of the song commences at bar 62 and Theme A is employed to assist the change. The bassline becomes progressively more syncopated and the groove, as a result, busier as the intensity of the solo increases. At bar 98 the song structure changes within the solo form and a bassline reminiscent of Jaco Pastorius, as described in the analysis of this bassline, is employed. This is Theme D. Theme A reappears at bar 114 which is also the start of the new solo form within the song. The bassline becomes more elaborate sooner in this solo form in comparison to the first solo form. At bar 146 a new variation within Theme A is employed to mimic and enhance the solo played by the saxophone. Mbadu continues with this varied version of Theme A until bar 162 where the arrangement changes again and he employs Theme D to signal this change. The solo form ends at bar 194 which is also the start of the song's melody. The double-stops utilized in Theme A are used to signal a new section of the song. At bar 210 Theme D is utilized and carries on until the song's end at bar 225.

Theme A has the most *space* as far as amount of notes and syncopation is concerned. By space I refer to the fact that the bassline is not filled with many notes and the space effectively refers to the silence between notes within the bassline. This allows for a more relaxed and supportive bassline. Harmonically the bassline is constructed mainly of root-notes of the corresponding chords which are being played. The syncopation is purely to help to lock the timing and groove of the kick drum. By referring to the syncopation as a way to lock the timing and groove I refer to the sense of cohesion and synchronicity between the drummer and bassist in their communal phrasing and feel. The change into Theme B at bar 10 is as much an ornamental approach as a functional approach. Mbadu could have opted to still utilize Theme A but to change as the melody and intent changed, he was wise to use a busier and more colourful bassline. The solo is played on a harmonic sequence form that is used during the melody. Since the song enters this sequence again, the busier version of the bassline is a wiser choice as it signifies that the original bassline theme is the basis for the new bassline while interacting with the phrasing and new energy of the soloist. Theme B (bar 10) helps to pick up the momentum and excitement of the song with increased syncopation of the notes and bassline colour. Reverting to the

song's melody at bar 26 by the horn section is further aided by Mbadu changing to Theme A. The variation of Theme A (bar 34) which includes double-stops is a way of simultaneously enhancing the harmonic, rhythmic and ornamental qualities of a bassline. Double stops sound more lyrical than a conventional bassline as it has increased harmonic content. Due to the tuning of the bass guitar, the easiest way to play a double-stop would be to suggest a major, minor or dominant seventh chord quality. Rhythmic enhancement is due to the fact that you have to produce the upper register where the chord colour is emphasised while still performing your duties in playing the root of the chord and all this has to be done within the space of one or two bars. This variant of Theme A picks up the overall intensity of the section within the song arrangement but also adds to the clutter and an overall busy nature of the bassline.

Theme C (bar 50) is the quintessential example of the bass playing of Spencer Mbadu. It is a natural hybrid in terms of a mixing of the styles of Joseph Makwela and Jaco Pastorius. The bassline here is reminiscent of the playing styles of both musicians in the note-selection and syncopation. This bassline further increases the playful energy within the song but also increases the 'clutter' due to its busy nature. Theme D (bar 98) is a more direct interpretation of a bassline popularized by Jaco Pastorius. Mbadu directly quotes the bassline verbatim as it is played by Pastorius on the song 'Dry Cleaner from Des Moines' by Joni Mitchell. Overall there are very few instances of superimposed harmonic movement by the bassline by means of root movement, arpeggio-like runs or through the use of double-stops.

Gary Kriel

The following transcription is from the recording of pianist Abdullah Ibrahim called '*Shosholozza (Trio)*' on the album entitled *Township One More Time*.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See Discography

# Shosholoza (Trio)

- Bass played by *Gary Kriel* -

Transcription by  
*Shaun Johannes*

Composed & Arranged by  
*Abdullah Ibrahim*

Ghoema (♩ = 112 bpm), Total Playing Time - 03:51

5  
F Gm/F F B<sup>b</sup>/F F

9  
F Gm/F F C7 F

13  
F Gm/F F C7 F

17  
Gm/F F

21  
F Gm F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

25  
F Gm F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

29  
F Gm F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

33  
F F7/A B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

## Shosholozza (Trio)-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 2

37 F F7/A B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

41 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

45 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

49 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

53 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G<sup>m</sup><sub>3</sub> C7 F

57 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

61 F B<sup>b</sup>6 G7 C7 F

65 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 G7 C7 F

69 F F7 B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A G<sup>m</sup> C7 F

## Shosholoza (Trio)-BASSLINE TRANSCRIPTION-Page 3

73 F Gm F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

77 F Gm F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

81 F B<sup>b</sup> G7 C7 F

85 F B<sup>b</sup> G7 C7 F

89 F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

93 F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

97 F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

101 F B<sup>b</sup>6 F/A Gm C7 F

Fade Out... ----- Fine

### The analysis

The overall feel of the bassline is laid-back or behind the beat.<sup>50</sup> This way of playing creates a calm and soulful tone for the bassline but also the entire song. The groove for this song is *ghoema* and Kriel further emphasizes the overall feel by maintaining the syncopated rhythm in the first few bars throughout the song with variations at times. Kriel makes use of a thematic approach to his basslines in helping to define the overall song arrangement. The first bassline, Theme A, is played from bar 1 to bar 20. The second bassline is a variation of Theme A, which I refer to as Theme B, and is introduced at bar 21. A less syncopated rhythm and a new bassline are ushered in at bar 33 and carries on to bar 40. Theme A is repeated from bar 41 to bar 76. Theme B is re-employed from bar 77 to bar 80. A hybrid of Theme A and Theme B is used from bar 81 to bar 92. Theme B is played from bar 93 to the end of the song.

### The bassline arrangement, construction and purpose

My general feeling about this bassline is that it is different from conventional basslines. The typical bassline is constructed in such a way as to serve the purposes of solidifying the harmony and rhythm in syncopating the bass and other instruments with the general groove and harmonic rhythm. Kriel's bassline in Theme A (bar 1-4) seems to be more focused on creating a groove and colour. When the piano enters the song at bar 5, Kriel still plays the same bassline while the piano melody and harmonic rhythm seems to constantly be shifting around. The two instruments start to synchronize, although briefly, at bar 21 where Kriel also starts using a new bassline. This new bassline offers a firmer support and general cohesion within the trio. At bar 33 the form of the song starts shifting towards a solo for the pianist. Kriel's playing tends to be more communicative regarding the phrases and interjections of the pianist. The overall feeling of the bassline starts to become more playful yet still maintains support and thoughtfulness.

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<sup>50</sup> Refers to the rhythmic placement of notes to be behind the pulse or beat in a bar of music. To place the notes behind creates a lazy or laid-back feel as opposed to placing the notes ahead, which creates a sense of anxiety or forward momentum.

Kriel's playing sometimes focuses more on feel than on colour and ornamental approaches. He employs rhythmic changes throughout the song, the most notable of which occurs at bars 27-28, 53-54 and 75-76. Harmonically the only suggestion towards re-harmonization comes in the form of tri-tone substitutions. When he approaches strong harmonic centres such as chord IV or chord V7, he plays the note a semitone higher towards the end of the preceding bar. Other harmonic ideas include semitone movements from chord ii to chord iii which gives the suggestion of a diminished chord preceding chord iii. This diminished chord suggestion could also be viewed as the relative V7 chord in its third inversion of chord iii. Towards the end of the solo form the bassline tends to revert to the bassline Theme A (bar 69). This brings closure to the solo form and also creates the support and familiarity when replaying the melody as the song gets softer or fades out.

For the most part, there is very little difference between Kriel's approach to bass soloing or basslines. His bassline and solo transcription both reflect a general sense of being harmonically solid and a constant delivery of the appropriate harmonic rhythm. His bassline seems to be thought out and regimented in its rhythmic concept and his note selection often centres on the chord-tones of the related chords. His soloing feels looser and less determined to deliver the overall rhythmic feel as strongly with instances of deviation from the chord-tone approach to note selection.

## 5.2 Transcription of the quintessential solo and analysis

Spencer Mbadu

The following transcription is taken from a recording of a bass solo by Spencer Mbadu. The song is from another collaborative album between saxophonist Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi and pianist Mike Perry called '*Khawuleza (Hurry Up!)*' on the album entitled *Dudula*.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Discography

# Khawuleza (Hurry Up!)

Transcription by  
Shaun Johannes

- Bass Solo played by *Spencer Mbadu* -

Composed & Arranged by  
M. Perry/W. Ngozi

Mbaqanga (♩ = 112 bpm)

The image displays a bass solo transcription for the song 'Khawuleza (Hurry Up!)'. The music is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked as Mbaqanga with a quarter note equal to 112 bpm. The transcription consists of ten staves of music. Above each staff, the corresponding chords are indicated: F, Bb6, F/C, Bb6/C, F, Bb6, F/C, Bb6/C. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A '3' indicates a triplet in the third staff. A '8va' marking is present above the first staff of the second system and above the first staff of the seventh system. The piece concludes with a final chord of Bb6/C.

The solo starts with a melody constructed from the pentatonic scale found on chord I. This melody is reminiscent of the melody and scale found throughout *mbaqanga* and *isicathamiya*. These genres are based on 3-chord harmonies which yield a hexatonic scale. At bar 6 of the solo, Mbadu plays a riff or lick.<sup>52</sup> The phrase carries on and then ends in a lick reminiscent of blues music in bar 8. Mbadu now launches into a new theme in his solo which is more concerned with the intensity and feeling of the solo than trying to play in accordance with the chords as some of the notes played at certain points would be horribly dissonant. At bar 14 Mbadu plays a more anchoring and root-orientated phrasing similar to his initial *mbaqanga* bassline. At the end of the solo Mbadu plays a fill which serves two purposes in that it completes the solo but also signifies the start of a new section in the song.

#### Gary Kriel

The following transcription is taken from a recording of a bass solo by Kriel. The song is called '*The Minstrel (Trio)*' from Abdullah Ibrahim's album entitled *Township One More Time*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> A riff or lick can best be described as a musical cliché from a specific genre of music and is generally used where improvisation is involved.

<sup>53</sup> See Discography

# The Minstrel (Trio)

Transcription by  
Shaun Johannes

- Bass Solo by Gary Kriel -

Composed & Arranged by  
Abdullah Ibrahim

Ghoema  $\text{♩} = 120$

Chords:  $B^b$ ,  $G7$ ,  $Cm$ ,  $F7$ ,  $B^b6$ ,  $G7(b9)$ ,  $Cm9$ ,  $F7$ ,  $Fm9$ ,  $B^b7^{\flat 9}$ ,  $E^b\Delta$ ,  $A^b13$ ,  $B^b$ ,  $G9$ ,  $Cm7$ ,  $F7$ ,  $B^b$ ,  $F7$ ,  $B^b$

Audio Edit Error.....

Overall the solo is more rhythmically than harmonically diverse or strong. The syncopation of the solo further emphasises the groove of the song and is in keeping with the general sixteenth-note syncopation and feel throughout the song. The solo phrases all start on the root of the corresponding chord at the beginning of the bar. Mostly chord-tones are utilised in phrase construction with semitones above or below certain chord tones included to create harmonic tension. Examples of this semi-tonal approach can be found at bars 1, 3, 8 and 15.

While transcribing the solo it became evident that there was an error in the track. At bar 15 there seems to be two different bass solos overlapping for a second or two within the bar. To confirm my suspicions I attempted to play the solo myself and soon realized that it was physically impossible with the technique that Kriel uses. It was potentially feasible if being executed with the use of the technique referred to as tapping whereby the left and right hands depress the strings on the fingerboard with a hammering action and can generate several quick phrases in a short space of time. The overlapping solos are indicated as an error which would have happened during the mixing and editing process during the completion of the album. I transcribed the most prominent parts of the overlap and presented it as being the actual part of the solo.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The major aim of this thesis is to investigate, document and analyze the playing and biography of two of the most notable bassists from Cape Town who perform the music indigenous to the region. Kriel and Mbadu come from vastly different biographical and musical backgrounds and have unique playing techniques and musical approaches. I seem to be the last generation of bass players in Cape Town who know these two bassists and can really appreciate their contribution towards the pedagogy of the instrument in a way which is relevant to South Africa and its indigenous music. I feel that this work has accomplished this aim to a large extent even though a great deal of the information has come from personal experience as a bassist in Cape Town. My intention of formulating a more holistic viewpoint regarding the definitions of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga* has been achieved through the documentation and discussion of my personal experience as well as academic research surrounding the contextualization of these genres. The overall conceptualizations of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga* are offered and transcriptions of a quintessential bassline from each genre is presented, analyzed and discussed for use by future bass players locally and internationally. A great deal of time has gone into researching the technical aspects regarding the actual bass playing technique and tone reproduction in these genres. Unfortunately, only a general description of the basses being used and equalization employed in generating their specific tones is included.

It is my contention that over the last five years there have been too few academic or even popular works which help to preserve the music or playing traditions from a performer's viewpoint from Cape Town and South Africa. The only published work from Cape Town over the last five years in this regard has been the 'Cape Jazz Collection' songbook by Colin Miller (2008). This book includes a small biography of the artists listed and several songs which have been transcribed and arranged. In my research I have come across several published works about Cape Town's Jazz musicians but none that talk about the actual technical aspects of music creation. Descriptions surrounding socio-economic background and political influences have been included but no information about the music to such an extent that it has been transcribed, analyzed and discussed.

The preservation of music is through performance and the teaching from one musician to another. Music preservation is also achieved through scholarly study, analysis, transcription, and lastly, publication. Through conversations with my peers, older musicians and some private students it has become evident that the general feeling is that music genres from North, South and Latin America and Europe are the most desirable in terms of learning the playing techniques, music production and general performance. When musicians get together, the conversation always revolves around a recording of some famous US jazz musician, German cellist and composer or Cuban percussionist. For bassists the conversation is even more specific and limited to several famous US bassists, their techniques and soloing proficiencies. It is therefore a worthwhile goal to ensure the preservation of the music and musicians of South Africa for future scholars of music. It is my personal objective to have future conversations which revolve around the technique and soloing of Kriel or Mbadu and the music of South African artists. This thesis aims to accomplish the worthwhile goal of the preservation of South African music as it documents clearer, more concise and contextualised definitions for the two musical genres of *ghoema* and *mbaqanga*. The goal of preservation is further enhanced through the investigation, analysis and transcription of the playing techniques, musical insights and notable recordings of two of Cape Town's most influential bassists in Gary Kriel and Spencer Mbadu.

Making everything relate solely to South Africa, or specifically to Cape Town, is the one aim that has proven somewhat difficult when referring to the concepts surrounding the electric bass guitar and its relevant technical considerations. This is, as explained in the brief description and analysis of relevant literature, a result of the fact that most instructional videos and books come from the US and all the content in these instructional videos and books is only relevant to US genres of music like rock, soul, funk and so forth. The playing of the electric bass is not limited to American forms of music as explained by Mbadu:

“I never think in terms of American music (or) African music, to me music is music whichever angle it comes from...as long as its got a treble clef and a bass

clef... the instrument I play doesn't sound Italian, neither Russian, neither Chinese...its just a musical note...if I hold it, it will sustain (and) if I stop playing, it will stop”<sup>54</sup> (19 February 2009).

The inclusion of transcriptions of the bass playing of Kriel and Mbadu further reinforce my aim of ensuring the preservation of their unique playing styles. The analysis of the transcriptions have been laid out in a way to ensure the successful reproduction of these bass playing styles theoretically as well as practically. It is not the intention of this thesis to analyze the transcriptions to such an extent as to diminish the sense of creativity within the transcriptions. Every effort was made to maintain the character and sentiment of Kriel and Mbadu in their respective transcriptions.

Finally, in the preservation of the bass playing styles of Kriel and Mbadu, this work should, ideally, be made available to musicians across the world in respect and gratitude to the musicians who have come before and have blazed musical trails without any recognition, thanks or thought. Several musicians have passed away while completing this thesis: Alex Van Heerden passed away in a car accident, Jeff Weiner passed away from a heart attack with Winston ‘Mankunku’ Ngozi and Tony Schilder passing away as a result of generally failing health. The musical contributions of these musicians and others like them should be preserved instead of their contributions dying with them. It is my sincere hope that this thesis is the first of many in the preservation of music, musical contributions and performance transcriptions from Cape Town, South Africa.

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<sup>54</sup> See Interview Transcription of Spencer Mbadu. Appendix A





- Cymbals (not notated)

Cymbals are used primarily for musical embellishment and tonal variety. The two basic cymbals are: the 'ride' cymbal which is usually the largest and can be struck on its 'bell' (centre-most part of the cymbal) and 'bow' (area between 'bell' and the 'edge of the cymbal); and the 'crash' cymbal which is struck to create a sharp sound to accentuate musical events during a performance.

## 2. Description of Bass Guitar Components

- Body

Guitar bodies are made up of at least one and at most 3 types of woods that are put together in layers. Cavities are made to house the various hardware and electronics that complete the electric guitar.

- Neck

The neck comes in two formats namely 'bolt-on' or 'neck-through'. 'Bolt-on; refers to a neck made from a separate piece of wood that slots into the guitar body and is attached by means of large metal screws. 'Neck-through' refers to a neck that is carved from the same piece of wood that the body is made of and is a natural, flowing extension from the guitar body. The neck also house's the 'truss rod' running the length on the inside of the neck. The 'truss' rod is used to make the guitar neck more concave or convex in relation to the strings

- Fingerboard or Fretboard

A wood usually made of rosewood, maple or ebony which is attached to the neck. The fingerboard has the frets installed onto it which are the markers for playing notes on the bass. The fingers are placed between frets to produce a pitched note. A fretless bass is as the name suggests. There are no frets to play between so instead the finger has to be pushed onto where the fret would be to produce the correct pitch. Intonation is a big problem on the fretless bass and is often frowned upon as bass players tend to play out of

tune. Sometimes inlays of abalone or oyster shell are used for decorative purposes on the fingerboard.

- Bridge

A metal component that acts as the housing for the end of the strings attached to the guitar. The string passes through the bridge, and rests on a 'saddle' whereby the guitar's 'action' and 'intonation' may be adjusted. Guitar 'action' refers to the height of the string from the fingerboard. Guitar 'intonation' refers to the guitar's ability to be in tune within itself. It requires that the correct string length is used between the bridge and the 'nut' and that it allows for the tone produced on an open string to be 'in tune' to the same note being produced on a depressed string.

- Headstock

This is the furthest part of the neck away from the body of the guitar. This houses the 'tuning pegs' on which the strings are wound to secure them to the guitar and to tune the strings' pitches. The section where the headstock meets the fingerboard is the position for the 'nut' of the guitar. The 'nut' is a thin block usually made of wood, plastic and sometimes bone on which the strings rest before reaching the 'tuning pegs'

- Pickups

These are the two components housed in the guitar's body between the bridge and the guitar neck under the strings. These act as the transducers explain with which the sound generated by plucking the strings is transferred to the guitar's output-jack plug. Pickups work in either a 'passive' or an 'active' and are situated near the neck and bridge on the body. Pickups come in various dimensions, shapes and pickup-coil windings/positions. 'Passive' pickups do not require any power from the on-board preamp and 'active' pickups do require power from the on-board preamp (usually in the form of at least one 9-volt battery).

- On-board Preamp

From the mid-1980s, guitar manufacturers started moving away from the ‘passive’ bass circuitry design to an ‘active’ circuitry design. The circuitry is housed inside the guitar’s body in a cavity carved out on the lower half of the body. ‘Passive’ guitar circuitry usually has a volume control knob for each pickup and an overall tone shaper or filter. ‘Active’ circuitry usually requires either one or two 9-volt batteries to power the preamp and has equalization controls in various setups but always has either one or two volume knobs and a pickup blend knob in the event of a single volume knob. Various bands of equalisation altering are available in either 2-band (bass and treble knobs) or three-band (bass, midrange and treble) settings. Some preamps even have switches or ‘push/pull’ knobs whereby the preamp may be bypassed and the guitar returned to a ‘passive’ state and a midrange frequency selection switch or ‘push/pull’ knob to change the frequency range that is altered when increasing or decreasing the amount of midrange being produced by the preamp.

3. Popular Bass Guitar Brands and Tonal Descriptions (based on research and personal experience)

- Fender (Founded by Leo Fender in 1946, USA)<sup>55</sup>

This is the quintessential example of the electric bass guitar. Everything from guitar parts to guitar accessories is modelled on this brand. The two flagship models of the Fender bass guitars are the *Jazz Bass* and the *Precision Bass*. There are also differences within these two styles based on where it was built i.e. The United States, Mexico or Japan.

- Ernie Ball Music Man (Sterling Ball, Dan Norton, and Dudley Gimpel produce the first Musicman StingRay in 1984, USA)<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (2009) *Fender History*. [Online] 14 January 2010. Available: [http://www.fender.com/support/fender\\_history.php](http://www.fender.com/support/fender_history.php)

<sup>56</sup> Ernie Ball Inc., (1995-2010) *History*. [Online] 14 January 2010. Available: <http://www.ernieball.com/history>

This bass is largely considered amongst musicians to be the competition of Fender in many respects. The Musicman bass sound is as unique as that of the Fender but comparatively has a 'sweeter' sound to the 'Fender'.

- Ibanez

These basses are considered to be of the first models to incorporate active pickup and on-board preamp systems to their designs. These were the first of the new 'hi-fi' sounding basses to be developed. The Ibanez sound is a very robust sound with a somewhat nasal quality of tone. These basses can be heard on countless disco-era recordings.

- Aria (Founded by Shiro Arai in 1956, Japan)<sup>57</sup>

The Aria brand was really the first entry-level and competitively priced in the guitar and bass guitar world. They continue to still build some excellent basses and guitars. The Aria tone is very generic and still favours passive electronics in their designs.

- Warwick (Founded by Hans Peter Wilfer in 1982, Germany)<sup>58</sup>

The Warwick bass sound is very unique. These basses are generally considered to be used primarily for rock and groove orientated music. It has a high fidelity tone quality with well defined low-end and 'sweet' high-end frequencies.

- Cort (Founded by Yung H. Park and Jack Westheimer 1973)<sup>59</sup>

This brand is today regarded as the most widely spread guitar and bass manufacturer worldwide. This South-Korean brand specializes in guitar and electric guitar in varying degrees of quality in terms of general design and tone production. The company is famous for modelling their designs on existing well-known brands while keeping the prices lower for the average musician. The overall Cort sound can range from generic to incredibly specific depending on the model. They also pride themselves on boasting a

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<sup>57</sup> Aria and Co., Inc., (2004) *The history of Aria*. [Online] 14 January 2010. Available: [http://www.ariaguitars.com/int/00int\\_main/archives\\_main.html](http://www.ariaguitars.com/int/00int_main/archives_main.html)

<sup>58</sup> Warwick and Co Music Equipment KG (2008) *Philosophy*. [Online] 14 January 2010. Available: <http://www.warwickbass.com/modules/infos/info.php?katID=14554&cl=EN>

<sup>59</sup> Cort. (2006) *History*. [Online] 8 June 2009. Available: <http://www.cort.co.kr/english/index.asp>

vast array of model basses which have the desired specifications from some of the world's leading artists.

- *Höfner* (Founded by Karl Höfner in 1887, Germany)<sup>60</sup>

This company is one of the oldest manufacturers of quality musical instruments in the world. The most notable instrument regarding bass players is the bass which was used by Paul McCartney of 'The Beatles'. This bass produces a round, punchy tone without an overtly treble or mid-range sound.

- *Hohner* (Established in 1885)<sup>61</sup>

Hohner specialised in the building and sales of harmonicas, accordions and later went on to produce guitars and bass guitars. Their signature bass guitar design was that modelled off the 'Steinberger' bass which had a small body and no headstock. Instead the bridge had tuning mechanisms built into its design. This development meant that the bass would remain in tune for longer and would never accidentally detune.

#### 4. "The Claw" and "One-finger-per-fret" Technique

"The Claw" technique involves shaping the left-hand to resemble the paw of a bear. It should look as if the player is holding an imaginary bowl in his hand. The resulting shape of the hand will allow the player to play with the finger-tips in the correct position and for the correct thumb placement on the back of the neck. The 'one-finger-per-fret' technique describes the manner in which the left-hand must operate when playing notes. Each finger should be able to cover a fret space on the fingerboard. This technique allows for economy of movement in playing basslines and soloing.

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<sup>60</sup> Höfner, K. and Co. KG (2005) *History*. [Online] 14 January 2010. Available: <http://www.hofner.com/gab/en/content/32/view/13/>

<sup>61</sup> Hohner, Inc. (2010) *Company*. [Online] 21 January 2010. Available: <http://www.hohnerusa.com/index.php?357>

## 5. Right-hand Technique – Pizzicato and ‘Slapping and Popping’

The standard *pizzicato* technique for the electric bass has been the same since the times of The Beatles and other rock bands of the day. The general technique involves draping the right-hand over the body of the bass perpendicular to the strings. The index and middle fingers are used to pluck the strings in an upward motion. As the technique has progressed the thumb and ring fingers have been added and a hybrid technique similar to that used in classical guitar playing has been employed.

The first pioneer of the slap bass technique was Larry Graham who performed with Sly and the Family Stone (Mulhern 1993). This technique started out as a way for the bass to have a more percussive role and move away from the standard role of harmony and rhythm. The technique involves the right-hand utilizing the thumb as a ‘hammer’ in striking the strings. The slap tone is a more percussive and metallic sound which is produced from the string striking the last fret closest to the pickups. The hand is closed with the thumb fully extended and held perpendicular to the strings. The pop sound is generated by plucking the string upward with the index or middle finger which results in the string violently rebounding onto the fretboard and thus also generating a metallic tone. The concept to be employed while performing this technique is that the tone generated by the slap emulates the kick drum while the pop emulates the snare drum in a traditional drum kit setup. The technique has evolved into a technique referred to as ‘double-thumbing’. In this technique the thumb acts as a plectrum where the thumb strikes the string on the down-stroke and instead of rebounding carries past the string and is brought up past the string again to produce a note on the up-stroke.

## 6. Amplifier Operations and Considerations

Most of the early bass amplifiers were combo amps which housed both the preamplifier and the speaker cone in one enclosure. The amp usually had several stages of signal processing called pre-gain, equalisation and post-gain. Pre-gain refers to the amount of signal being allowed into the preamp circuitry before processing. The equalisation

incorporated two or several bands of frequencies that could be altered to produce the desired tone. These controls were usually called bass, midrange and treble. Post-gain refers to the amount of signal released after processing which would continue to the speaker cone to produce a sound. The post-gain is often considered to be the overall volume of the amp. Distortion was generally achieved through increasing the pre-gain level to the point where the preamp could not handle the signal and by regulating the post-gain to keep the volume at a manageable volume level.

As amplification technology has developed the matching of preamps and speakers has become a detailed aspect of the bass players sound. Now one may use a separately housed preamplifier which connects to a separately housed individual speaker or combination of speakers and tweeters all in a single enclosure. Various effects and utility pedals have been generated to morph the original bass sound which could affect the overall signal's distortion, modulation, compression and could also be used to trigger the effects of envelope filters and other synthesizer effects.

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## Discography

### For Spencer Mbadu:

Errol Dyers

- Dyers, E. (1997). *Sonesta* (CD), Cape Town: Nkomo Records

Winston 'Mankunku' Ngozi

- Ngozi, W. (1997). *Dudula* (CD), Cape Town: Nkomo Records
- Ngozi, W. (1998). *Molo Africa* (CD), Cape Town: Nkomo Records

### For Gary Kriel:

Errol Dyers

- Dyers, E. (1997). *Sonesta* (CD), Cape Town: Nkomo Records

Abdullah Ibrahim

- Ibrahim, A. (1998). *The Minstrel* (Trio). Township One More Time (CD), Johannesburg: EMI Music SA (Pty) Ltd

Tony Schilder

- Schilder, T. (1995). *Tony Schilder Trio* (CD), Cape Town: Mountain Records
- Schilder, T. (2004) *Be Positive* (CD), Cape Town: Mountain Records

### Other Artist Albums:

Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens

- Piliso, S. and Bopape, R. (1991). *Mbaqanga. The Best of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens* (CD), Johannesburg: Gallo Music Productions

Jaco Pastorius:

- Pastorius, J. F. (1976). *Jaco* (CD), New York: Sony Music.
- Mitchell, J. (2000). *Mingus* (CD), New York: Elektra Entertainment

Paul Petersen:

- Petersen, P. (2006). *Sunshine In My Soul* (CD), Cape Town: Cape Town Sound
- MacKenzie, M (2004). *The Birth* (CD), Cape Town: (Not Published)
- Mhlanga, J. (2003). *Mbaqanga Special* (CD), Johannesburg: Gallo Music Publishing

## Appendix A

### Interview Transcription with Spencer Mbadu

Date & Time Recorded  
Thursday, 19 February at 2pm

Shaun Johannes will be referred to as SJ and Spencer Mbadu will be referred to as SM

SJ: So, firstly thank-you for agreeing to do the interview

SM: Yeah, Shaun

SJ: So I think...I'm just gonna jump right in...like the first section of the interview is like stuff like...some of your history like where you were born...the day or like about your family how many sisters, how many brothers all that kind of thing, so...'Cause what I wanted to do for the thesis was, on both you and Gary, was to do some of your life story and where you guys are from, who you've played with, all the bands and...like influences musically and not musically...'Cause what I wanted to look at was getting proper definitions for some of the stuff like with all the text books and stuff I've read they don't have proper definitions for ghoema and cape jazz and that kind of thing so...what I, like my whole reason behind getting some of the history and all that is I want to see if I can find the...if there's a link between, like...the surroundings you're in or people you met or played with or whatever that now made this style...so I suppose the, the first...

SM: Like ghoema itself you mean...

SJ: Well not ghoema per say but like...because I'm, I'm trying to establish because like no-one's got a proper definition for the stuff like...like experts can say "Jazz is...American music, came from blues, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera" like they can say its got this and this and that but for us its like we can explain the ghoema thing that's not too hard for me like...would be...cape jazz is a hard to put down...'cause its, 'cause its so wide its hard to define one thing that makes it...know what I mean like...'cause it takes from everything...so I suppose the first part of the interview (would) be stuff like...where you were born, when you were born...family, sisters, brothers...

SM: Oraait, no I was born in Kensington...in a place called Mcheko Block in Kensington...I'm sure elderly people will know where Mcheko Block was in Kensington,

Windermere they call it...I was born in the fifties there in Mcheko Block...grew up there in...nineteen-fifty-eight we had to move out of Mcheko Block because now the Group Ares Act was now taking place, really taking place so a lot of people were chucked out of Simonstown, Mcheko Block...other places...then we were thrown in the place called Nyanga West, then it was Langa...then Nyanga East then there was (the spoil) they gave birth to a place called Nyanga West...which at later stage turned to be Gugulethu...United States of '*Jou-jou le tois*'...partly I grew up in Gugs also...having to meet new friends now away from that Mixed Masala we were in Kensington...

SJ: So like who stayed in Kensington was it...now it's generally like a coloured area with...

SM: ...Hence I say it was like a Mixed Masala before...

SJ: anyone and everyone...

SM: Indians, you know...coloureds, whites, blacks being born together...growing in harmony...at a later stage this giant called apartheid came...victimized all of us...

SJ: ...do you think...or okay never mind do you think...what was your first hint at wanting to be a musician was there someone in your family who was a muso or friends or...

SM: Actually I didn't wanna become a musician...

SJ: ...that's weird...

SM: No serious...it just happened on its own...because I started, I started touching a musical instrument at the age of three...when I was three years of age when I started making sound on the instruments...though I didn't even know what I was playing because I was too young...but I think my first piece that came to my head when I was four years of age...I started singing this one song because I was lazy to go attend school...it's one thing that I never wanted to go to...school. School was very boring to me from the age of 5 already

SJ: So did your mother teach you the songs or you learned from someone else or...

SM: Um, music was always part of the family...

SJ: Like singing in church and...

SM: Yah, church and also home...we used to watch a lot of bands, when I grew up there was this big band called, um...I remember most of the elder musicians like Ezra's

father...Merry Macs, they used to be called Merry Macs so we used to when we were young kids listen to Merry Macs, follow Merry Macs for they were a group playing in the truck, they were unplugged, they were not using electric instruments so it would be easy for them to play in a truck while the truck was driving around the streets...well then I guess the interest started then

SJ: just like, just watching other bands play...

SM: Actually not even bands but that this one particular big band and also music, sport was more in the streets than being locked up in restaurants and hotels nowadays...If you wanna good music now they have to go and pay for a meal in a restaurant then you hear some good music. Music was more in the streets...each and every street corner you'd find guys blowing pennywhistles and acoustic guitars and stuff like that.

SJ: So it would be safe to say that you just grew up around music generally the whole time

SM: Yah, my PhD in music comes from the universities of the street...if ever I do have a PhD

SJ: Um, what was...do you remember the first day you picked up an instrument like an official...like a piano or a...

SM: Yes, I remember it was a harp

SJ: as in harp, a classical harp...

SM: yah, a classical harp...

SJ: the big one?

SM: yes...

SJ: who played the harp?

SM: my grandmother, she played that

SJ: and then what, did you just move on to like, what was, what was the first couple of instruments you played 'cause I know you play a couple?

SM: Um, pennywhistle...guitar, which...we manufactured our own guitars those days we used to take a five gallon tin put a piece of string then make our own guitar...also piano

SJ: was it freely accessible? could you get to it quickly?

SM: Not really, not especially with the piano...you'll, like, make sure there's nobody home, all by yourself while others are watching outside when the parents come...*sout!!!*...make as if you didn't touch the instrument

SJ: ...when, if you remember a date would be cool but if you don't, don't worry about it, um, when did you decide to go to bass? specifically...

SM: Bass was not my decision I did not decide it came from...if I may say, the first or second band I played in...I was playing rhythm guitar in this band and, um, the bass player left the band playing only about only two days before the festival that was taking place...and the guys decided its gonna take too long now to find a bass player who can replace this man in two days time, "so why don't you switch on bass?" so I tried it so when I told the guys "only for two days guys, not more than two days", so after two days "guys, man, find a bass player...want to go back to play rhythm guitar" said "no, no, no you stay, you stay there", "no you doing fine, stay there", "why don't you ask my grandmother, she plays this better than I can play this thing!"

SJ: and that was what twenty, thirty years ago?

SM: I think so, yes...seventy, nineteen-seventy-two, nineteen-seventy-two.

SJ: you've been playing longer than I've been living...and then like as far as bass playing goes was there anything you'd think, I mean obviously you fashioned your playing on other people like the American guys and...was there anyone locally or was there any, not a person necessarily but like an event or...or was there something outside of music that would you say influenced you play at all? Like what you played not so much that you played bass like, um, 'cause for me personally I always thought my basslines I make up from singing melodies and especially from if I'm playing the local basslines, that's stuff I learned from you or melodies I hear from people singing, especially more traditional stuff...would you say for you it was the same or the melodies just come out or...

SM: I would say maybe, maybe not but, um, there was this one bass player I used to like listening to...his name was Joseph Makwela. I don't know whether he still lives, is still alive but if he's still alive "Hi, bra Joe...'cause I know you the king on this instrument"

SJ: was he Cape Town local, Jo'burg?

SM: um, I think he was based in Jo'burg but he played with the Mahlatini Band... Makgona Tsohle...but I'm not talking about this Mahlathini now, I'm talking the

sixties...well even the lead guitarist, Marks Mangwane, was still alive...that band was a super-band for me, 'cause everybody contributed up to...tops.

SJ: So would you say, I mean I don't want to pin-point anything but probably he was the first, not first, but he was an influence on your playing obviously...

SM: Yes, I used to like his approach on bass, um, he was so rhythmical and so melodic on his bass...you would dance to his basslines even if there's no drum beats going...he was really hip and really pushing hard

SJ: are there any international people that you can list specifically that...you probably checked out other music besides the local stuff

SM: Yes, um, there was Jaco Pastorius everybody talks about like, um, I remember when Winston Mankunku opened up his band called Siyabuya...Siyabuya was formed in nineteen-seventy-nine if I'm not mistaken, um, the late Russell Herman, Bheki Mseleku, Tony Cedras, Bra Winston himself, Steven Erasmus was our vocalist, the late Archie Fisher, Khader Khan...Khader Khan was the first sight-reader in the band...so they used to help us, actually they are the ones who taught me how to read music...so when that band was open I didn't know most of the guys but I knew Bra Winston...no whenever we play or do something they would say to me "hey man, you remind us of Jaco. Always when we hear you play you remind us Jaco" I ask him "Who is this Jaco?" So one day they came with the LP...a Weather Report LP, Joe Zawinul..."Listen to this bass player. This is Jaco playing." When I listened to this guy I said "No man, you compare me with this monster! I don't play near like this! I no longer listen to this!" This guy's three much, not even too much...yah, but not just Jaco but all of them...even here at home too, um, you, yourself...my great inspiration to me nowadays...so is Peter (Ndlala), so is Musa (Manzini), you guys make me not to age. The more I hear you play, the more I want to practice.

SJ: ...did you make a conscious decision to just like learn the South African stuff and learn some of the like swing and the American kinds of music

SM: Funny...I never think in terms of American music (or) African music, to me music is music whichever angle it comes from...as long as its got a treble clef and a bass clef

SJ: Can you list some of the really important bands or gigs or people you played with or...that have really influenced your playing or your musicianship...or any event that stood out in that period

SM: Actually, musicians...like the influence came to every musician I have ever play (with) even those I've never played with before...like for instance I listen a lot to Mulgrew Miller nowadays, piano player...there are things like when he plays then I'm saying "Hey, its like I'm listening to Tony Cedras play", such things...but every musician was a great inspiration to my career...I wouldn't really mention names...even those who play what they call rock music, there are some also that I like...

SJ: ...what would you say what's given you your particular sound like in terms of your understanding harmony, some of the basslines you play...would you attribute it to gigging or getting lessons from someone...like what makes you play what you play in terms of like sound and note selection...

SM: Oraait, I guess to answer that question...mainly I never had a special teacher teaching me how to play but I guess each and everybody whose been playing out there...contributed...my teacher without even sitting with that person in the same room and tell me play this play that...but like just by watching other people play becomes a lesson me

SJ: ...the two hardest things I want to ask you are...if you had to give definitions for...a definition for what cape jazz is...'cause now the problem with that term is that its very vague...'cause I find that cape jazz is everything, like its samba, its ghoema, its jazz, proper swing jazz...so would you say that the cape jazz has a sound...and if so what do you think it is

SM: Well, I'd sound like someone who's claiming...jazz was born in Cape Town and taken to America...otherwise there wouldn't have been jazz in America if there were no black slaves in America...coming from Cape Town. Once I was listening [to] this interview on TV channel one, (I) think that was the time of Cape Town International Jazz Festival...Herbie Hancock was interviewed by this one SABC guy and he happened to say to Herbie Hancock "Hey Herbie, how do you like our African jazz, South African jazz?" So Herbie turned around (and) says "What?! There's nothing called South African jazz. Jazz is Africa, Period."...hence I say, jazz was born here

SJ: ...would you agree if I said that there's a difference between the jazz played in Jo'burg and the jazz played in Cape Town

SM: Well, I wouldn't say there is a difference in the sense that...

SJ: ...would you say there's a difference between Jo'burg style of...like, I don't mean jazz as in playing in the jazz American tradition I mean, would you say that the guys who play jazz in Jo'burg have a different sound to the guys who play jazz in Cape Town

SM: Well, we might all have a different print when it comes to playing...but I wouldn't say their approach is different 'cause at the end of the day the notes sound the same...the 'C' I play hear, even in Japan (and) in Russia, the sound will sound the same like the 'C' I play here...like people they'd sometimes they say to me I must play African music. Then when I ask them "What is African music?" then they don't have the answer because the instrument I play doesn't sound Italian, neither Russian, neither Chinese...its just a musical note...if I hold it, it will sustain (and) if I stop playing, it will stop...if you can just run away playing with words...you're not supposed to be labelling, actually its not us its people...like for instance I just heard this new music called House...I know a house, house is my home but I don't know where they call it a house (and) all these other names but music is music. I wanna play music – not jazz, not blues, not ballads but music. 'cause all these names they tell you to include us in a corner where we don't wanna be into. Like for instance these couple of months or years I've been refusing to be called an artist.

SJ: that's weird...why?

SM: because I wanna become a musician not an artist. Now if I have to be an artist now I have to stand in front of the TV camera and make as if I play. No, I want to play, don't make as if I play. Me, I want to play...enjoy what I'm playing

SJ: do think that kind of labelling adds pressure

SM: Yah but at times its sort of messes us up, you know...in the sense that now they'd say all the artists, meaning the painters, the musicians...then it, you as a musician it puts you in a particular...its really, really you don't develop into something else, you grow somewhere else

SJ: ...I want to get into the gear as well 'cause for this thesis I find like in the stuff I've read a lot of it is very like...a lot of times I find...like you'll know as well in some of the

books you read they give a lot of information regarding the guy or the artists information about his life and all that and a transcription of the playing but I also want to get into sound as in gear...what basses have you owned, what sounds did you like, didn't like about them...are there any particular settings like EQ or pedals or that kind of thing that you...favour or don't like...anything technical like firstly, what kind of basses did you have, do you have, what did you like about them and that kind of thing

SM: okay...I don't even own one instrument...even the one I think I own its not mine, it belongs to all the bass players, whoever wants to use it but nevertheless now I only have a fretless bass and a six-string bass which it came from people who I've taught before...like the late Eddie Jooste gave me the fretless bass for my birthday present, later I got a six-string bass from Peter Ndlala...he presented me (with a) six-string bass whereas before I had a five-string bass, Aria, from Mandla Zikalala...this boy who plays with Miriam Makeba, the late mama Miriam Makeba...then the bass I bought with my own money had so much problems and frustration and I set it alight, I took petrol...

SJ: ...do you remember the brand before you burned it

SM: ...it was a Ibanez

SJ: ...as far as EQ and that kind of thing

SM: actually I'm not into pedals at all except a chorus pedal sometimes I may use that when I play all by myself and use some harmonics, I use harmonics a lot, all by myself, not any accompaniment. Then I use a...chorus pedal but I'm not really into pedals, I still have to go through that

SJ: ...like as far as EQ goes on a amp...if you can picture it as a clock...so like where would your bass be if 12 o'clock is naught...what would it be 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock...does it depend on the amp or the guitar or...and the venue as well's another thing

SM: Yah to me it's about the venue, the volume and the tone I really want...'cause at times the sound people they tend to tell us "No, just play, man. I will turn the knobs there"...its not exactly what I want, I know exactly how my bass must sound...my fretless must be a fat sound with a nice nag and my other fretted basses a fat sound with a solid slap and nice sizzle...because we always get problems from them, I don't blame them also because sometimes we become very rude to sound people...then they don't have a choice, they just have to give us whatever...but if you's nice to them, approach

them in a right way, they become nice to you (and) they make sure that they give the exact sound you wanted...but also like with the volume again, I was once given a tip...that...if I don't hear the person I'm playing with, that simply means I'm the one who's loud I must tone down...so that I can be able the next person whose playing, otherwise I don't hear him (and) that means I'm the one who's loud. So I make use of that everyday when I play. Also...it's so good and healthy to play in a sober mind. Don't go and take a beer before you go on stage, you might lose it. Don't go and take a drug before you go on stage

SJ: ... do you lose your sense of where you are, do you lose your hearing, do you lose your...

SM: Everything! God just takes it away from you at that present moment. Because we may how brag about these talents its not ours at the end of the day

**TOTAL RECORDING TIME:**

**27 minutes, 24 seconds**

## Appendix B

### Interview Transcription with Gary Kriel

#### Date & Time Recorded

Tuesday, 12 May 2009 at 11am

Shaun Johannes will be referred to as SJ and Gary Kriel will be referred to as GK

GK: I believe...Cape Town I left in 1960

SJ: that must've been hard...just you alone, no family and you just left?

GK: Ya, I left my, my brothers and sisters and I'm the eldest...we also group up in kind of poverty circumstances...being the eldest...soos hulle sê in Afrikaans "jy moet nou uit kruip"...but now actually what made me ran away with my instrument which...I joined the...actually they asked me to join them and there's a rock-n-roll band and of course having a manager and then we were the first Coloured band to play in a White establishment

SJ: [do] you remember the name of the band?

GK: ...in...what's that place called Cogill's in Wynberg is a white hotel and we all bought our instruments through a friend...that had a connection at R. Müller...and then we bought the stuff and the next thing a big truck pulled up in front of my house here, luckily I knew the driver. I said "Hey! Nice to see you Ronald what you doing?" He says "Gary, man, a bit of sad news." [GARY] "What sad news – death in the family?" He says "No, I'm coming for your instrument." I said "How come?" He said "Well, the people just took their instruments and no instalments was paid."...and then it was discovered that the manager...took all the money, got married, just disappeared and I said to him "Ronald...Do me a favour, man – you go back and you just tell your manager or your boss [that] you didn't find me at home but you left a message...that I must contact you."...and he did that...I'll never forget on a Wednesday night I'm on the train to Durban with my instrument.

SJ: ...Do you remember what it was, the instrument that you're talking about?

GK: I had a...now what's it, I had a Fender guitar which...I didn't buy the Fender I got it by Cecil Ricca...the drummer. He had a musical shop and he brought the demonstration

model a Fender Jazz model and he says "...here."...the only thing I bought was the amplifier...then I got a job in Durban also at a White hotel there and I played with the guys. Then I phone him [Cecil Ricca] from there I said "Listen here, I'll pay you...money now...I'll pay you.

SJ: Let me get right off the bat and say thank-you for taking time out to do this...

GK: No, it's a pleasure, man...I'm highly honoured...I've seen you around and I was very impressed [with] what you're doing...you know...you're one of the bass players...I'm critical about bass players especially...the double bass players...playing in the cracks and stuff like that...but you can listen on a recording...

SJ: ...which is why I cringe on recordings...I think only now, recently, have...'cause you know with double its always about getting a decent sound...half the time you can't hear what the guys playing or...like they try and play quickly and you don't actually here the notes, the EQ...I don't play that thing a lot but now, only now, after like say five, six years that I actually now, finally, kind of getting a sound on the thing...but its so expensive...to get a decent one.

GK: It is expensive. I spoke to Sammy Hartman; actually we played together at...Pigalle.

SJ: ...Ian's [Smith] gig?

GK: Ian's place...I play with Caesar, Richard Caesar...and I said I was lucky; I played in a place called Welkom in the Free-state, it's a mining town...played with some White guys...they thought I was a Portuguese...one guy had a 5-string Höfner bass,  $\frac{3}{4}$  bass...which was very nice, which I enjoyed...I stayed there about 6 months...going back to the 'Golden City Dixies'...I played banjo and guitar just to survive...then I met this friend of mine [that has this]  $\frac{3}{4}$  bass..."Hello. Nice seeing you, man. What happened to the bass?" He said he left it in the loft of the house and he quite forgot about it then he sold the house...the bass was still there...

SJ: ...those things are hard to come by...I actually wanted Mr Green, uncle Ronny's bass...he had a  $\frac{3}{4}$ ...ya but Wesley [Rustin] stole it before I could...Wesley's playing it now...

GK: ...and you know he, Ronny Green, was the first guy here...that had...the 'jazz disco' at his house every Sunday...he played jazz records...LP's and stuff like that...I

don't know where the hell he got it...he was also a bass player but never played a right note.

SJ: I've heard that story, 'cause people say "why don't you go to uncle green for lessons?" okay, well...but he's got hands like a plumber...what I wanted to ask you, 'cause for the purpose of my thesis what I was gonna do was like some of the history of your life...just like in a kind of two-part interview thing – the way I want to structure it was kind of life information like what you were telling me now about playing in bands and travelling...and then I wanna do another portion on just playing because the things that I really want to take from this is to document your life...I've got a short space of time to do it in, I've only got 25 000 words which is not a lot...just talk about some of your history and...some musical influences and all that kind of thing...'cause your sound's a very particular one...I definitely think so...I think what gets me more is the way you play something...and the sound to go with it like if I play a song compared to the way you play a song then it'll be so different but your feel is so, its so hard to explain to someone...and only if you've heard you play would you get it...would you be able to understand...students now, I so badly want to explain to them...go learn all this American stuff, fine...but learn where you're from...like learn the people that have come before you then you can appreciate...may you could do it better, maybe you can improve on [it] but at least our lines are still kept...and so for the purposes of academia I wanted to put it down on paper...so its playing the way you play, sound, tone what kind of amps and EQ, what kind of guitars and all of that kind of thing...so I suppose to get the ball rolling for this thing is...like normal history like where were you born, how many brothers, how many sisters...

GK: I come from a big family...

SJ: ...when were you born...short of insulting you...cause people get very precious about their age...

GK: ...I call myself a 'recycled pensioner'...born in a place called Cape Town...you know where the swimming baths were in Long Street...you go up that road, it was a cobble street before and you get to a place called...Church Street...I'm on the corner as you come from Buitengracht Street down on the corner I was born there...

SJ: ...I've been there and I know exactly where you're talking about...

GK: I was on the corner there...I think it's a...some designer opposite...that was my...what do you call it now, my race track...going down and walking...I think music started, this is from my mother... when I was about 3 months old while sleeping I'd go like that...because my grandmother used to play guitar...and funny enough I got David Kramer...[we] played this benefit concert for Cyril Valentine [actor], I got David Kramer there...he made a documentary about the musicians in the Little Karoo, Koue Bokkeveld...my grandmother, my mother was born in a place called, a small place called Calvinia...my grandmother's there and all these people originated from Calvinia playing guitar...

SJ: and your granny's one of them...

GK: ...he said I can get it at the Baxter theatre, I could just check it out...then I started...growing up I mean at the age of going to school then my leg gave me a problem, my hip...my first gig was with a Langarm band playing piano-accordion...and then I entered hospital at the Maitland Cottage Home which was in Garden Village at which I met up with Jimmy Adams...his mother was the cook there and he used to come and teach the guys playing and Harold Jephtha...we were together and we had a kind of a bamboo-pipe band there...I think I was on alto and he was on a, like a clarinet type of thing and we used to jam together and the guys used to come and then...the mayor, I can't even remember the mayor of that time, gave me a guitar as a Christmas present...and that's where it started. I played guitar...just picked it up and taught myself...to tell you the truth the chords what I'm playing, I can't even tell you the name of the chords, the notes, I can't read music...then I was there till the age of 15 years then I had an operation...what was that...4 years, hey...4 years I spent there...then every Christmas then you would get different bands come and play there to entertain the patients then we used to sit in the...and then coming out...in my teens...

SJ: ...I mean you weren't really playing by then you're just kind of surrounded by music but not playing necessarily...

GK: ...then I was still at school, I never made standard 6, just ended...standard 5 I just went/entered standard 6 and then I had to go and work...I worked for the post office cleaning the telephone booths...then they got me a job in the catacombs...there I played guitar, I took Kenny Jephthah's place...the late Kenny Jephtha...he went up to, those

days was Rhodesia, Zimbabwe is Rhodesia, and he was on tour there and I took his place and the next thing I think I played, I played for about 5 or 6 years...then they recruited me for the Golden City Dixies

SJ: So was the Dixies...that was Jimmy Adams'...I'm confusing with someone else...who ran the Golden City Dixies?

GK: There was a guy called, from Durban, Morris Smith...and then he's advance manager Fred Langford took it over then I found myself with Sammy Hartman, Zayn Adams, Jonathan Butler...

SJ: ...and this was just a band or...

GK: No, it was a touring group it was like taking the Coons from Cape Town on the road...Minstrel Show, that was it...Taliep Petersen was never in the show but most of the guys like Cyril Valentine, Dave Bestman, they were all in the show...and its 30 people...

SJ: going on the road?

GK: Singers and girls and dancing girls and what...you have to remember every...key of the singers...

SJ: ...there's no music back then, well, no notated anything. You played...

GK: ...played...there was no score. The only score that was the keys...

SJ: ...name of the songs and the keys

GK: ...that's it. When they called the Moppies, then I used to play banjo in between then take the guitar...and, of course, the Schilder brothers was also there, Jackie, Philly which was a good bass player.

SJ: ...I know very little about that man. Everybody just says he played bass but I know nothing else about him

GK: ...a very good bass player and a very good guitarist...

SJ: ...He passed away...

GK: ...No, no, he's still around...he's a bit off his head...I don't know if it's through drugs...

SJ: ...it's the Schilders. All the Schilders...the Schilder family and the Afrika family...

GK: ...I mean I never met the Afrika Family

SJ: ...like Derek...

GK: ...I've never heard of the guys...but to me, not to be...I'm now not a diva or any...I'm just a bass player...lay the foundation, that's my job.

SJ: ...you've made a big impact like I can tell you honestly. Learning to play, I followed your playing and Spencer [Mbadu]'s playing like you can't believe...it's tough to explain but there came a point...you know, you learn the whole American swing thing and you learn to play...but there comes a point when you try to actually figure out who you are here...

GK: ...I'll tell you a little incident at the Green Dolphin. It was owned by Henry Shields and he said to me one day "Why don't you play double bass in my place?" and I said "Henry, are you going to pay me double?" I play once every 3 or 6 months...and actually he's a double bass player and he hired me once for two nights 'cause he was playing double bass and he had a little blister...

SJ: Did you ever want to play double or did you ever play double bass?

GK: ...I played at a few places double bass but...I'd like to play double bass where I've got a job for 3 or 4 nights in the week...not to carry this big thing...because double bass is expensive and something happens to it...what you earn the night won't cover...I've got [no] interest in playing that...but there's a stigma against electric bass players...the same Henry Shields he phoned me he says "Listen, this American singer she's performing at the Green Dolphin...Basil Moses played but I don't know what happened...he said "will you come in?" I was first there and here this singer came up and said "I don't want a 'E' bass"...Is said "No, it's a 'Bb' Bass"...and then I discovered she doesn't want electric bass...I said "Oh, Mr Shields asked me to come and I could get back into my car and I can go home." She said "just hang on, hang in!" and she phoned Henry...said that "this is the best I could find to accommodate you"...I'm sitting there; I don't know...who I'm playing with. Next thing Morris Gowronsky come over. He played with he two nights before...Jason from Breakfast Included he just flew in from the [United] States...and this woman brought her charts and I said "I don't read music but I'll try my to do my best to accommodate you..." Jason says "just play"...and its all stuff...Mack the Knife and all that crap...and her husband is the manager.

SJ: Do you remember the name of the singer?

GK: No, man. You must ask Basil Moses. I didn't even...attempt to find out who she is...but who was in the audience there was Tina Schouw...and I said to the lady after the gig, Tina came and she hugged me and said "Well done, Gary" So this woman said "Do you know him?" she said "...I know him for years" So she says to me "I didn't know that a 'E' bass can sound like its double bass. I said "...it depends how you play it. Let me tell you something: you know you didn't even introduced yourself you just...you actually make me feel very small" and stuff like that...but what they all think that the electric bass can just play as soft and even softer than what a string bass...because you always mic up the string bass. You play through an amplifier which...and she says to me "You did a good job so thank-you. If I come again will you play...?" I said "if you can afford me?"...

SJ: Fair enough...

GK: so she says to me "What do you mean?" I said "if you can afford me, then I will play. You pay my price...because you made me feel uncomfortable. I didn't know where I'm going or what I'm going to do but...the only person she had to check was Morris Gowronsky playing too loud...just one of the experiences you get..."

SJ: No but I must admit in this town I've had that problem where...and it's always the same few people that are like "Why didn't you bring your double?" the truth is: I'm an electric bassist first. Double bass is something I enjoy playing but they put too much pressure on you, man...like you say, it's too much of a stigma attached...so I...as a point of trying to say "No, stuff you...I play what I want"

GK: Its...I went [on a] tour to [United] States playing in the jazz festivals there... [they] wanted to know where I'm from; I said...I went there with a Dixieland band. The only Coloured guy there...first of all they had me on CBS...television...I was this fool to play with the white musicians...ever the political. I said "No, I'm not playing with white musicians. They playing with me!"...and they called me Bassman, Mr Bassman. I was with the Dixieland band but its most of the top class jazz musicians that plays in other bands that formed...you know and they come and play the Dixieland because it was a Dixieland festival. I said "You know – we can play like you people. We can sing like you, we can dance like you, we got the Sinatra's...we got the Michael Jackson's, you name it [and] we've got it in Cape Town. Then they wanted to know "Where's Cape

Town?" I said "It's a city in South Africa at the end of...at the point of Africa". Then they said "You mean Africa?!" [and] I said "No, South Africa"...met a lot of friends there and they couldn't believe what we were producing...that is disappointing to me. I said to them "I'm only a sample back home"...and what we've got here

SJ: ...It's a combination of two things like 'Our people' don't get out. Like they think very 'small town', they think very...like I'll say with the younger crowd like us, we get very arrogant fast 'cause you think you have a few gigs o now we think we rule this town. The problem is [that] the town is that big...and we don't even think about the rest of the planet. Everyone'll forever just play the clubs here and think it's great...there's no 'outside'...and the thing in the [United] States is [that] the people there think "No but we're the best at everything"...I mean what can they show us that we can't do?...It's a bit of a toss up...but I find with 'our people' it's a bit narrow-minded in that...we just think 'here'. It's a small pond...

GK: ...but we got top-class musicians here that...like at overseas where I saw something that kind of...opened my eyes. I got to Atlanta International Airport...and they were dishing out that 'long toms', Pepsi...Diet Pepsi a see-through Pepsi...what you call it 'six-packs' and there's a million people passing through that...airport...and they were giving out for two weeks, 14 days. So it's a million people a day...that's 14 million people a day and that's why Michael Jackson is so rich because he does the ads...the adverts for Pepsi...that's how he...what about Americas...especially the Blacks. They invest into...if you're a good football player or baseball player...they support you.

SJ: ...I find here, like the problem we still have I think is...like, people here don't want to pay for anything have you realized like...they want a comp. They want a hook-up, they want you to give them some tickets...and I find it's not so much about the money, it's about the sentiment, like we should actually be supporting, I should be grateful to pay that however much it is to come and watch...like look at Jazzathon. If Jazzathon [audience] had to pay [for] tickets, no one would go...and then they moan about his, that and the other and Quinton [Raaf] them are struggling to keep it going.

GK: ...when I came back from the [United] States and Tony Schilder's phoned me he said "they want us to play on the...they just started the Cape Town Jazz Festival but they want to pay the band R 5,000 for the whole [band]...

SJ: ...you want to guess how much they pay those Americans?

GK: Yes, that's it. They get a courtesy car, their 5 star hotel...

SJ: ...and we have to suckle for parking at the convention [centre]... I'm definitely behind you...we get treated very peculiarly down here and it's...believe me, it's not just you. it's still a bit like that that's why...it's slowly changing, I must admit.

GK: So he, what's his name [Rashid] Lombard couldn't believe that I just got back from the [United] States...I just got back from...I played in California...[I] had the pleasure of seeing...what's that guy's name now..."I left my heart in San Francisco"...Tony Bennet...I had the pleasure of meeting a lot of guys and I played at the 'Preservation Hall'...in New Orleans...through meeting these guys that was playing on the festival in Palm Springs and they said "When you get to New Orleans give me a call."...I didn't even believe that I made the grade. What happened [was] the guy that was supposed to go with gave the band hell and nobody sponsored us. The only people the we got a discount was from South African Airways but when we got there, they refunded everything.

SJ: ...so your first musical influences obviously...I mean, did you play in church a lot, actually, growing up?

GK: No, I used to sing in a choir...I mean, I could reach the single notes...I used to be a first tenor...

SJ: ...your first musical influences were playing there with Jimmy [Adams]...

GK: I played piano-accordion in a Langarm band...my pay was 5-bob...

SJ: ...Did you check anything out musically? Specifically, like did you spend a lot of time listening to people or...like because you started playing a lot of...I'm assuming, playing a lot of the swing stuff, the standard stuff 'cause it was popular music back then anyways...did you go listen to someone specifically like a bass player...like Ray Brown or Jimmy Blanton or...

GK: ...No, as I said I was just thrown in the deep end and played the bass and that's it...Oscar Petersen Trio was popular. I liked the style they played...

SJ: ...I checked with Basil [Moses] as well – Basil learned but he learned them cold like, if they did re-harmonization or whatever then he'd sommer just play that normally with anyone, I've found. 'Cause I remember when I still played piano in the early days of my playing, I booked once to play for me and I couldn't think of the changes he was playing, it didn't make any sense to me 'til it turned out that Basil, he learned it that way...off a LP.

GK: ...Now that is the biggest mistake, you see...I played with Cecil Ricca which played with top guys that were there, he's a drummer and we spoke about this...he used to make a trio sound as big as a big band...and Tony Schilder had to find the players. I just fitted a slot. I spent ten years with those guys...of my life...ten years with Roy Petersen, I don't know if you...Bjorn, you know Bjorn Petersen?

SJ: Yes...his dad?

GK: ... his dad...his dead now [I] played with him...and off course with...

SJ: Did you play much with Henry...Henry February... 'cause he was another one of that cloth.

GK: He disappoints you...he says to me "you think you played with Tony Schilder [now you think] you're great?!"...

SJ: I remember having one lesson with that uncle...he was difficult, *jong*.

GK: ...but he' straight to the point...

SJ: ...but he was good, like he was one of those people that...and it's to do with the older crowd which is why, I suppose, I'm so lucky 'cause I learned playing like that...they know every tune in every key...and he'll crap you out for not knowing it as well

GK: ...and he says to me "don't you think that note will sound better?"...I followed their instructions, you see...to me bass playing is not trying t outplay the guys, man. You hang in there, you're the foundation of the band and you follow the pianist...

SJ: ...what I wanted to asked about, specifically, was...'cause for me your playing is like especially when you play the ghoema stuff and you play sambas...it's got a very particular feel. So is it something that you checked out or is it just [that] it naturally came out?

GJ: ...it just came out naturally. First of all, I don't think there is such [a] things as a...ghoema...that, to me, that's a lot of bull...because I used to play in the, what [do] you

call it, Nagtroepe...Abdullah Ibrahim used to play the straight sax, the clarinet, and he was in the 'Americans', the '*Atchar* Americans'...and the ghoema was the little drum. The ghoema took the place of the bass.

SJ: How do you mean "the ghoema took the place of...the bass"?

GK: it took the place of the bass because it's two tones...Understand? Because there's no bass for it they had the double...cello...and this thing...that's why I...can't get over with the ghoema sound...

SJ: Well, that's what I want to ask you because its...made a big part of my thesis and I've gone researching far and wide and it took me a while...but there's...no real definition for what ghoema is. Everybody always just says "it's the drum"...which it is...

GK: ...there's a...let me put it...like specially from the Coons side...they would take a song like 'Fly me to the Moon' or any song and then they'll make a 'comic song' out of it - a moppie...and this thing give's that beat, and the banjo. They synchronise you see and then you get the...if you just have a...banjo and this ghoema [drum], you can have only one ghoema thing and you can hear...

SJ: ...would you say it's a particular groove like...is it a particular beat or is it just any old thing?

GK: As far as the Coons is [concerned]...there's no strength...whether you sing 'Rosa'...it doesn't matter, you see?

SJ: ...because it's confusing for me because I've been reading up on so many things that...I couldn't find a definition so I rather just gave a thousand examples of what I think it could be. So like I went through the 'Coon Carnival' thing like you explained now and then for me there was the Langarm...'cause that also turned into a sound like I remember...Jimmy Adams is a good example...Bobby Hendricks from Caledon. They played that big, fat sax sound...but then they played the ghoema at the end of the thing...

GK: ...but then you didn't have the ghoema! You had the drums...

SJ: ...didn't the player then make it a ghoema thing? 'cause you know they only played that [ghoema] stuff at the end of the Langarm, at the end of the dance...the sopvleis.

GK: ...sopvleis...that's the square [dance]...you see, that's part of the square. It's like a samba...or a vastrap...

SJ: ...so then it was a style within the Langarm...

GK: ...in the Coloured community.

SJ: ...'cause it makes more sense now...

GK: ...because you didn't get the ghoema in the African [music]...you hear the difference of the African sound...it's only in the Coloured community.

SJ: ...if you look at a Bobby Hendricks CD it'll say, 'that song' whatever and it will have the 'feel' next to it but the tempo's like very specific. A foxtrot is that speed and a waltz, a quickstep is that speed...so I always thought the sopvleis was...now that it's all done, let's let our hair down and we play...[but] the way you explain it is that its actually part of the...repertoire...like were there particular songs or was it just a *druk*?

GK: [it was] the moppie with a druk...if you don't play that...that's part of the square...then those people will kill you...like Abdullah Ibrahim what he did, he took all those moppies or ghoema what he called it and he turned it into ballads or jazz pieces but with a spiritual [twist]...but he himself used to play, he was in the midst of those Coons and the *Atchar* Americans was The Devils and all...they were the evil guys in the [coons]...

SJ: ...Was gangs and all that big then already...in the coons? ...gangs are big...now

GK: ...the gangsters only came in now because of...it's a big business now. You see it get's sponsors by...Shoprite...I tell you what happened, I went to a musicians' union meeting. I mean, I'm still waiting [for] what's happening...and this guy says to me "There was a guy called Whitey Jacobs...Minister of Agriculture here in the Cape" and this gentleman, Mr Matthews, says the guy said to him "You know, in 2010 we're gonna show them our African music". So he said..."Mr Jacobs, N1. This is Cape Town. We're gonna show them our Cape Town music...and if the Africans want to join us, they must put on a Coon uniform...but I also wanna tell you we don't need 'arts and culture', we need uniforms or we need instruments. You know who's our sponsors...the drug lords."...which is the truth...of course, the 'arts and culture' never came either they said "here".

SJ: Ya, it's a fight we've been having like I remember I had a laugh actually, Paul Bothner the music shop was moaning [because] one of their stores got broken into and they sent a list of the stuff that was stolen: trumpets, saxes, one of those big 'Century' drums. I though "Okay, No!" I can guess who took it and I think I'll be right...there's

tons of guitars hanging there that cost much more than a *las* trumpet there but I tell you...I've picked that fight where I couldn't understand where...'cause I've applied for funding for some things and its like, I definitely don't think I'm gonna get it. If it's me and another brother then...

GK: ...this is what get's me down...and the struggle is not over yet. You know that we were part of the fundraising. How we got to UWC to raise funds for the activists and all that was a miracle that was 1986. It was not '75 or so..? I think it was '75 or '76...

SJ: You're talking about the uprisings? Was '76...

GK: '76 and then of course again in '80

SJ: ...I was in primary school, so late '80s like '80... '88, '89.

GK: ...because my own nephew was a activist...Ashley Kriel...Robbie Jansen, the late Basil Coetzee those guys were all...put up concerts here...raising funds for...the activists and...you know they used to light up the candles in the middle of the road and if you come pass it, one of those candles goes out then you get pelted with stones...that was in the heart of Mannenberg where we played at Club Montreal...Sherwood...we only had one guy who was, what's his name, the drummer played with us...he should...get an award because coming from Hout Bay, the white guy with us, going to Sherwood and playing all the other places to raise funds and stuff like that, Richard Pickett...Always the same...and when Tony [Schilder] left us and I played keyboards and Richard played...but the show must go on. Then Jonathan Butler came and Jonathan Butler played guitar, he [Jonathan] played keyboards and I played...I think we played there about...eight or ten years we played there.

SJ: Did you ever play the Landros [Hotel] here up the road...it was quite a long-standing venue...

GK: Cliffie [Moses]-them came after us...Henry February played there and then Tony Schilder which I played with Tony and Henry...after that Cliffie then came...but management also...they'll rather cut the musician out which, any place in the world that's...the musicians get first priorities because they're the people that brings in...

SJ: This is a argument I had last week...it's a strange thing that I don't think people have caught on here. A musician always seems to be like an inconvenience...but if you just

play CDs the people are not going to come as much as if there's a band. It's proven time and time again...

GK: ...even with backing tracks. It's empty...you can put the biggest show on with backing tracks it doesn't matter...

SJ: ...as far as gear goes: Can you remember what basses you owned and what you liked about them, what you didn't like about them?

GK: The first...electric bass I had...which I've still got was the old Höfner bass...that's the Paul McCartney one...there's only ten of those in the country...it's a collector's item.

SJ: 'cause every photo I see you in you've got that bass...why did you start doing that? I really want to know. I was so curious 'cause [of that] photo of you at Westend playing like that.

GK: ...because of space...

SJ: So it wasn't a thing of you want to play double bass now I'll put it like that...

GK: ...no, it was [because] of space...the space...was very small...to get a four...five-piece...you will always find me standing in the corner.

SJ: ...For years you played that bass?

GK: I've got about four...Fender bass. The first Fender I had was...I only had it for months...two...on the Oceanos [CRUISLINER].

SJ: Were you on it when it sank?

GK: Yes! Myself, Tony Schilder, Hilton Schilder, Tina Schouw...and that went down with it...

SJ: '92, I think

GK: '91...

SJ: Did it go out with the boat, that bass?

GK: Ya it went down...and then when I got back...actually I had my Höfner with me and I gave it to my wife. We came to.... the...but early in the morning, about four o'clock.

SJ: Do you remember what kind of Fender it was? A Jazz bass or a 'P' bass?

GK: Ya it was a Jazz model. It was a red one still...I didn't have it [for a] long time then I lost everything and I came back penniless...

SJ: Did they not reimburse you from that? Did they not give you...

GK: Not really, not really...because I tried to get some money out of them and the only thing they said was “No, Tony Schilder is the band leader. He signed the contract.”

SJ: So you guys never saw any money? So you actually came off a bad second there? That’s so weird...it’s silly to ask now but...Tony knew about this...so there must be clause that...

GK: ...but I mean Hilton also he took a keyboard on appro... from [Paul] Bothners...that went down with the [ship]...

SJ: ...I remember seeing you *hoekal* at that Bridgetown-thing playing another Fender bass but you’ve hade that for a long time as well.

GK: ...now I got that... I paid about R 1,000 from a guy, a... ‘melody’ something...in Parow. This guy was paralyzed [and] he owned this music shop and he said “I got this bass...it’s a...Fender...1993...I got that bass which served a purpose”

SJ: but I mean the one that you recorded with most of the time...

GK: was the Höfner

SJ: is that the one that you used on...Abdullah’s last recording...township one more time I think its called...

GK: ...I used this Fender. Let me tell you a little...experience of Abdullah...a bright, beautiful musician...and business [minded]...now before we went...he first did the CD...and concerts and stuff like that and he says to me “you’re not doing a gig. You’re doing my show.”...we played from...7 o’clock in the morning we rehearse till tonight [till] 11...but he’ll give you the lines you’ve got to play. I got frustrated with him...rehearsing the whole day...second day...[he] all of a sudden says “No, he’s got a bright idea”...then I said “haven’t you got the music [then] at least I can follow?” He says “No you write your own music because you understand your own handwriting.

SJ: How long did you play with Abdullah? I mean, did you play for a long stretch, in the early days or did you [only] play a bit now as you’re older...

GK:...he’s [Abdullah’s] got his second doctorate now and I only think [he’s] about seventy-five now.

SJ:...have you played with him when you were younger as well or only now over the last few years?

GK:...before I got married I played with him in Swaziland.

SJ: Did you guys do the...hotel circuit that was happening there?

GK: Ya...I played with him in Swaziland because he stayed in Swaziland...before he went to the [United] States...and we became friends through this and that...then we played in Johannesburg...then a half-an-hour before the show he calls us up to...his suite...he says "Gary, I want you to play exactly like that bass player that's playing on that CD"...so I said "Abdullah that's a tall order, man...half-an-hour before the show...but he played the CD. Danny Butler was there...and...Dave Roubain was there. I said to Danny "Danny, that's me playing there, man." He says "are you sure?"...and I said "Ya, man, it's me"...and I said to Dave Roubain also "that's me playing, man!"...so I said Abdullah, "that's me playing there." So he says to his producer "who's the gentleman playing bass with me?"...and the producer say "[a] gentleman by the name of Gary Kriel". So he says to me "you have improved!"...but a wonderful person. I enjoyed playing with him.

SJ: Do you still play now and again when he comes to town...

GK:...once he phoned me from Tokyo...come I join him in Tokyo...then I was in the [United] States....

SJ: You do a lot of travelling, hey...did your wife ever go with you...

GK:...not really...then I ended up on a cruiser liner...

SJ: So ...you still actively go out and tour and all that...

GK:...two years back I was in Australia...by accident. My sister wanted me to come up to play with some guys there that did [gig] bookings...and then when I got to Australia, Tony Schilder them was looking for me. Then they heard I was in Australia...then they said "No, you're the only one that can fill this gap" because I had to back Zayn Adams...and The Flames...Steve Fataar...it was a show...travelling from Perth. I stayed there for six weeks...from Perth to Brisbane. My first gig was with a Rock 'n Roll there and...before I came back I had another gig with them.

SJ: How old were you then?

GK:...I was 67.

SJ:...and you're travelling more than I am

GK: I'll be 70 this year...I told you I'm recycled...I think it's the music...playing with younger guys. Richard [Caesar] is a fantastic musician...he says why he has chosen me

[is because] I will just fit in. Last night we played The Shadows. I'm not a cover version guy. I can't play a cover version.

SJ: You play how you play...that's why they book you obviously...if they wanted a cover guy, they'd get a cover guy...it's taught me a lot listening to you that's why I want to actually put it down because I can't explain to my students...

GK:...you see, Shaun sometimes my mind is not even there. Like I go on a trip...it [music] takes you on another level, man.

SJ: while playing...I think I know what you mean. [it's like] you're not even aware of what you're playing even though you're sitting there playing it.

GK: Being a bass player I never went into [bass] I just got into being a guitarist.

SJ:...is there a particular way you play? Do you use a pick? Do you use three fingers...

GK: No. I just use my fingers...the only thing I can't do the slap...the female singer...Erika [Lundi] said...I don't like taking solos or stuff like that...[I just play] jazz standard...

SJ: Do you ever solo much or...do you really enjoy playing, being 'that' function...

GK:...I like to be in the background. That's me...then Richard [Caesar] would say "*wys hulle ou man, wys hulle*"...but it's a joy. I'd like, especially the South African musicians...I've had the opportunity to play with everybody in this town and even with the guys in Johannesburg. Myself and Gilbert Matthews also used to play a lot. I'd like to see them become international stars because the standard is very high. Give them that break...

SJ: So what do you think is stopping...is that barrier between the guys here becoming...international exports...is it the musicians themselves...

GK: There's no shortcut to the success. You've got to work hard...you should open opportunities...

SJ: is it them [musicians] not seeing the opportunities...or the opportunities [are not] afforded to them...

GK: I think the opportunities doesn't afford them because like our soccer players. Most of them play overseas...the experience got they have it to implement it here.

SJ: If you look at soccer players now, since you brought it up, I think it's them looking out. I don't think...because you know a lot of those...soccer clubs, in Europe especially,

they bring people out here to come watch the boys play...but then the players themselves are always on the lookout...I think maybe it's our musicians here who don't look out

GK: Could be...but I mean...number one: you need the instrument...and the instrument is expensive...[on] the first gig I did [it was said]...that "you must have 'this' bass and you must play like 'that'..."At the end of the day you're only there to entertain the people and if the people like you then you will play...and if you don't entertain people because you're only a servant. If you can't do it, then you must make way for somebody else. That's my philosophy and so far I've been successful playing with different bands and exposing myself...whether it's right or wrong...more than that I can't do more than that. I can't play like this one, I can't play like that one. When Chick Corea was here and he asked me to sit down and play that was something [which] I couldn't believe it was happening to me but still...the way that guy [played] I keep my ears [for that]...that's all. When I got to the [United] States and he [Chick Corea] heard [about it] he came to say hello to me.

SJ: Now you see you definitely made a [lasting] mark there. Imagine how many people that guy meets in a day...that's why I keep saying it's a good thing that you don't sound like everyone else.

GK: It's plain and simple, man...a bass player, he controls everything. You know that...you can set the tempo, you can make people get up to dance, you can drag the band down and they don't realise that you [are doing so]

SJ: I tell my students "you are the guy that is that 'link' between everyone else...only you can speed up or slow down the band to such an extent. You can change the groove if you feel like it, you can change the chords if you feel like it". Like if you play a 'C' and your note is 'C', its 'C' but if you play a 'A', its 'A' minor.

GK: No matter that guy can go mad there, he needs you...it didn't give me a big head or so. Just to be grateful to be part of...the group and in the evening must be a success.

SJ:...do you remember the name of the home you were in...when Jimmy Adams' mommy...

GK: Maitland Cottage Home, Garden Village...

SJ: You must tell me if it's out of line but...for putting it down for [a] fact, what is the condition that has caused your limp or why were you in the home

GK: When I was two or three, I think it was before I was six or something like that, they discovered that I had TB in my hip...and I had to go there for medication and then at the age of fifteen I had a operation. A professor from Australia came to do the operation where they replaced a bone in the [hip]...they take the bone out here and replace it...the healing process, you have to lay for a few years on your back, you know, in a frame

SJ: ...you know Richard [Picket] also got a hip replacement...he likes jogging and so on...and he used to do the 'two oceans' and all that. He said he just got a new hip the other day and he's back out running again. Thank-you very much. I really appreciated this...I definitely am glad that you did

GK:...you're welcome to everything that you need. I can help you...

SJ: There's a chance that I might come maybe just do one more interview. It's like a follow-up...maybe there's something we spoke about that I just want to clear up.

GK: The time goes so quick, man...

SJ: ...remember I asked you a year ago almost...

GK: I'm so lucky...Derek Hutton told me that you were going to come and see me...

SJ: There's a man I love playing with...but he's a nice guy actually...he makes you feel good about

GK: That is a gentleman...he controlled the navy band...he was in charge of the navy band...it was him before Willie [van Zyl]...we used to play for...Jeff Weiner's band also...Jeff had a big band. 'Mainstream' was the band called...and most of the guys was from the navy...the brass sections.

SJ:...they still play together like that...I've done functions where Willie's brass section from the navy band was on the gig and then a rhythm section from here.

GK: Jeff actually had a good band...I used to play in this nightclub...just after my sixtieth [birthday]...Jeff used to come and sing...Jeff used to bring the band two bottles of brandy every Friday night just to sing 'Forty Days'...but you can ask Jeff about that band.

SJ: I look at a lot of the people around me that play and they still play clubs like Jonathan Roubain who's a nice bass player as well and Gino and those boys. They still haven't had the same musical upbringing and I still think I'm very lucky...I learned from George [Werner] who's my first teacher...then he stuck me in with everyone else...that's how I

met Derek who was play [at] Kennedy's [Cigar Bar] backing Jeff and Erika with Alvin [Dyers] on guitar. I don't think a lot of people have had that kind of gig...myself and Wesley [Rustin] shared that kind of work amongst the youngsters...between the two of us and Peter [Ndala]...I'm very grateful, that's why I keep saying...I'm actually very spoiled.

GK: I was in the same position. I played with our big guy that knew the stuff...

SJ: I just copied him. I just watched his left hand...I just eyeballed it...

GK:...that's the secret. [even] if I don't know the song...

SJ: I learned that now doing 'Swingers'...[it] was a great lesson for me...after Eddie [Jooste] passed away I got asked to take over which was a honour in itself...two years of watching Alvin's hand [with] bar chords I learned songs fast. Even now...it's such a great thing...[that] I can learn a tune after having played one cycle badly, I would know the form but that's just from doing that 'Jam' where you've got to learn it fast...

GK: I played with Alvin's father...a guitarist...the last time a played guitar...[was] when I did a recording with Errol [Dyers]...I tried my best to accommodate him...but it's all of these guys...I'm grateful to all of these guys in my life that I've played with. Great guys, weak guys, all of them they contributed...even listening to you.

SJ: Thank-you very much

GK: You're welcome.

**TOTAL RECORDING TIME:**

**71 minutes, 03 seconds**