

# Sounds Like

John  
Matshikiza's  
Jazz Wri-



# Sounds Like

ting for  
Drum  
Magazine,  
1951-1957



by Brett Pyper

# If

jazz has often been held  
up as a quintessentially  
American art form, one  
corollary of this assertion  
is that many people out-





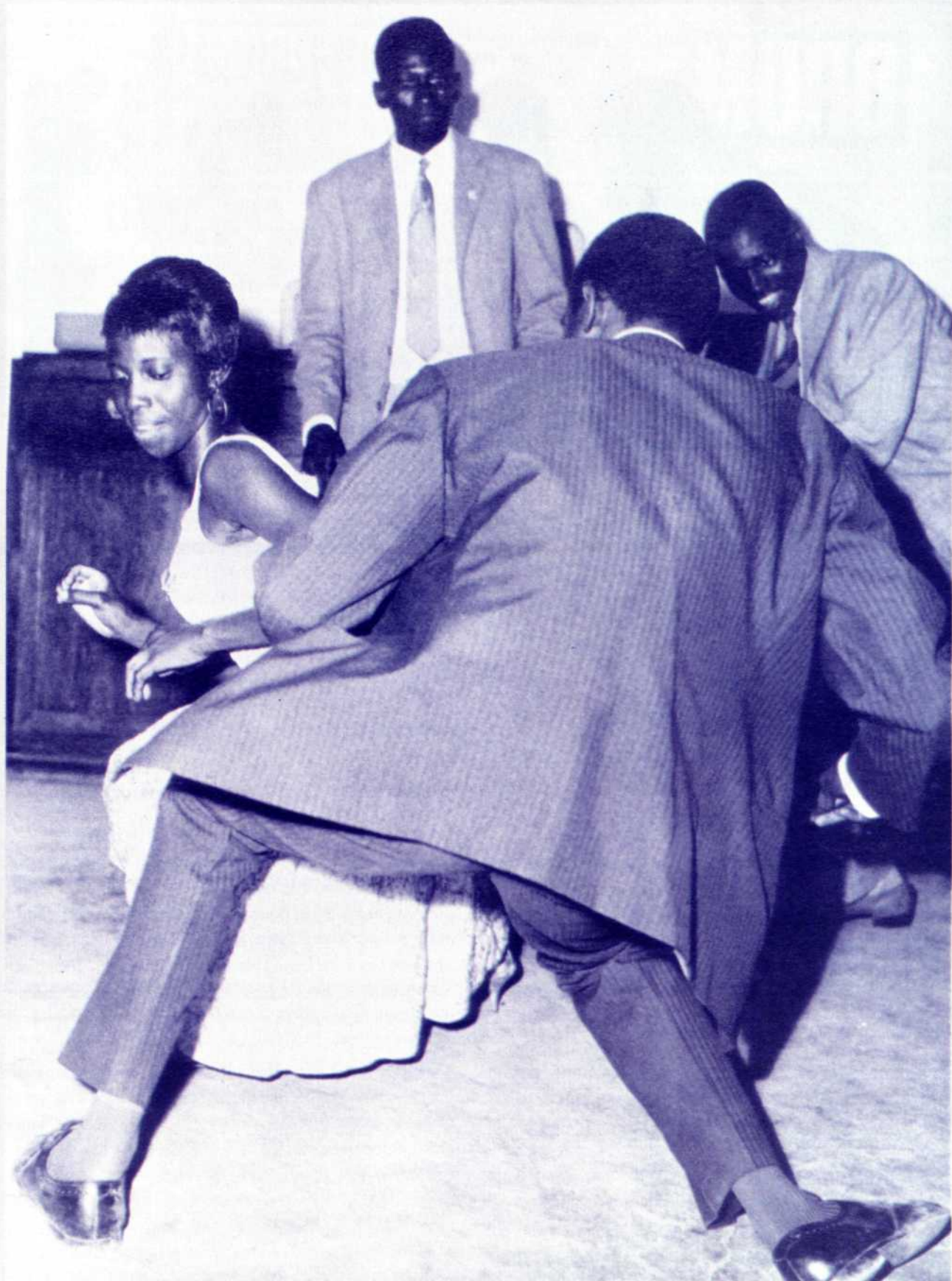
side the United States have come to know, or at least to

imagine, America through the prism – or rather the rhythms – of jazz.<sup>1</sup> Few national settings demonstrated this with greater clarity than South Africa in the middle of the twentieth century, where the music had taken on a life of its own, spawning a distinctive local jazz culture. In the black townships that fringed segregated cities across the country, the sounds of swing and bebop were in the air at the very moment that the newly-installed Afrikaner nationalist government was implementing its apartheid policies. As the cultural asymmetries of British colonialism were overlaid and reconfigured by new forms of white domination, many South Africans of color, especially young people within the rapidly expanding urban middle and working classes, looked to America for ways of being in a world that could be reduced

neither to the canons of English decorum nor to apartheid's imposed tribal ethnicities.

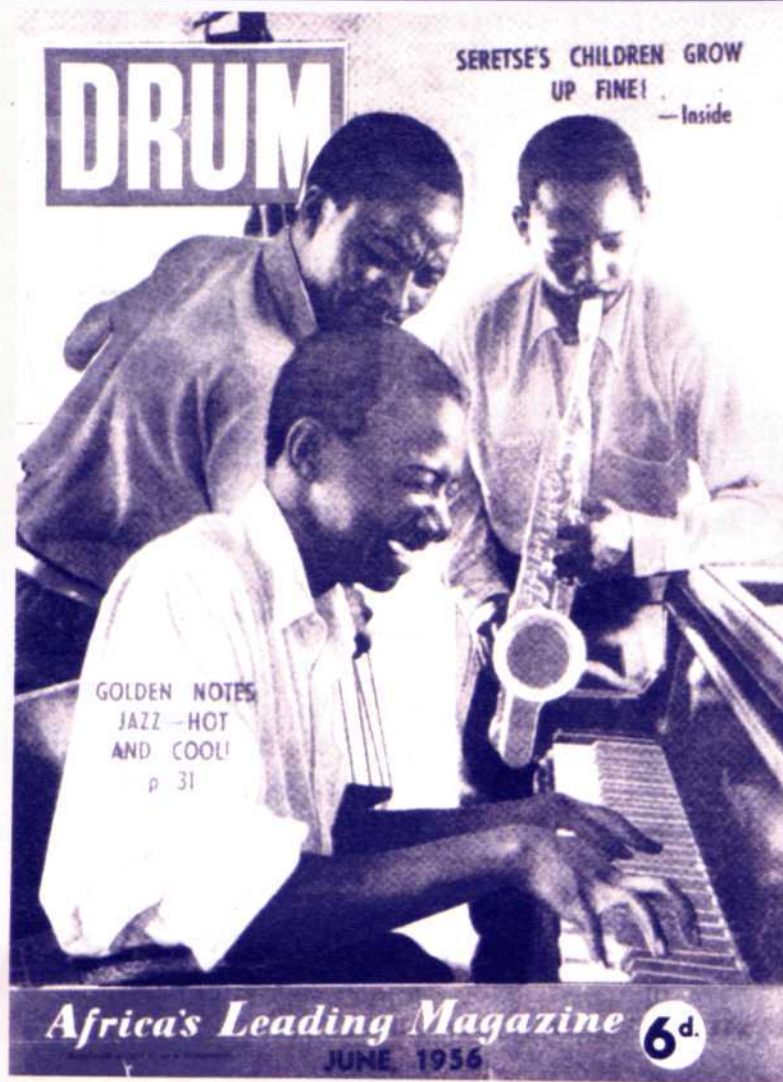
Looking back over the past half-century, it is hard to miss the 'jazz cadence' of the urban black South African culture that has endured as a poignant countermelody set against the consolidation and, belatedly, the disintegration, of the apartheid state.<sup>2</sup> The literature, journalism, images and music passed down from the townships of the pre- and early apartheid eras are saturated with American references, quotations and allusions. When the first film produced locally for 'natives' was premiered in 1949, Dolly Rathebe sidled onto the silver screen in the persona of a jazz singer, fronting a locally enlisted big band and singing about "Jo'burg, the Golden City" to the tune of *Salt Lake City Blues*.<sup>3</sup> America was invoked in the names of a plethora of local performing groups like the Harlem Swingsters or the Manhattan Brothers, and then there were figures like Emily Kwenane, who not only





Photographs taken from Drum magazine, 1962





Drum magazine, cover pages.

sang Ella Fitzgerald's numbers but also styled her hair in the same manner, and whose fans called her "onse Ella" (Afrikaans for 'our Ella'). Jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela recalls referring to his idol, Louis Armstrong, in a vernacular term of endearment that somewhat reverently connotes both a specifically African respect for elders and a conjectured intimacy:

*And guys like Louis Armstrong we referred, you know, like affectionately, as the Old Man, die topi, you know. We never said Satch, always said die topi, the Old Man. And like we talked about this and that like we knew them almost.<sup>4</sup>*

Rich local reframings of American (or, more accurately, African-American) culture like these resonate in numerous anecdotes, images and quotations bequeathed to history by the 1950s, many of which were famously memorialized in the pages of the landmark pictorial and literary South African publication first published in March 1951 as *The African Drum*. After a somewhat faltering start, *Drum* went on to be pub-

lished, in regional editions, in much of anglophone West, Central, and East Africa, lending credence to its publishers' claims to being "Africa's leading magazine". Since its demise as an independent publication in the mid-1960s, the magazine has been the object of extensive literary and scholarly commentary. It has also provided music scholars with a notable source of primary historical material, coming to inform significant portions of existing accounts of black South African music of the mid-twentieth century. What I will highlight here is something that remains implicit in the extant literature: *Drum's* status as perhaps the major progenitor of music historiography pertaining to jazz in South and Southern Africa, most notably in a series of interviews, reminiscences, and historical pieces written for the magazine by Todd Matshikiza during the course of the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

A gifted musician and writer who, in former *Drum* editor Anthony Sampson's words, "thought and spoke in jazz and exclamation marks," Matshikiza was a figure who would not only significantly reshape musical coverage in the fledgling



magazine, but would himself become a major protagonist of the developments about which he wrote. As a musician and composer, he is perhaps best known for his role in writing the music for the musical *King Kong*, which broke new ground for South African theater in the late '50s, running on London's West End and on Broadway. As a literary figure, Matshikiza has received relatively little attention from historians and critics who have examined the work of the so-called *Drum* writers, where the tendency has been to emphasize the short fiction published in the magazine, hereby overlooking his numerous feature and review articles (his novel, *Chocolates For My Wife*, was published in London in 1961). Between joining the permanent staff of *Drum* in 1951 and 1957, Matshikiza dominated coverage of music on the magazine's pages, leaving a body of historical information that is not only empirically valuable in providing extensive information pertaining to South African jazz musicians, but illustrative of what one might term the cultural reconstruction of jazz in the milieu about and for which he wrote. Matshikiza's writing, both in its content and in the inimitable style which his news-room colleagues dubbed *Matshikese*, illustrates an interpenetration of journalistic reportage and interpretive elaboration that can be regarded as emblematic of the emergence of the South African jazz tradition at large. On the pages of *Drum*, Matshikiza positioned jazz both as a means of transcending African ethnic particularity, and as a means of reclaiming it; as a multivalent marker of both American-derived cosmopolitanism and as a reincarnation of African tradition.

### The Concert and Dance

Despite South Africa's marginal position on the rim of what is currently labeled (to invoke Paul Gilroy's term) as the Black Atlantic, people of color in the United States and South Africa have in many respects faced comparable social, political and economic predicaments.<sup>6</sup> Given these parallels, over and above a common African ancestry, it is hardly surprising that the cultural expressions of Black Americans should have resonated with audiences in Southern Africa. Jazz was by no means the first American musical form to have acquired an enthusiastic local following in the region.<sup>7</sup> Some mission-educated Africans tended, at least initially, to weigh jazz unfavorably against the purportedly elevating effects of performing Western classical music and Christian choral music (the latter including concert versions of Negro spirituals made popular by touring minstrel troupes). Thus, in the published opinion of R.R.R. Dhlomo, one of South Africa's earliest black literary commentators, European concert music offered "soothing and inspiring effects," which could "tone" and "modulate" the "natural impulse of the young;" jazz, by contrast, was inseparable from "suggestive movements and passionate expressions." Moreover, the consideration that jazz reached

African shores as a mass-mediated, recorded commodity seems to have led to some uncertainties about the music's social origins. This is borne out in the words of one columnist in the black South African newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, who noted, with reference to the influence of jazz on black youth: "One of our best Native brains has said, 'Let us copy from the whiteman [sic] only that which is good', but it appears we are also entangling ourselves with his vices."<sup>8</sup>

Early reservations towards jazz such as these gradually gave way to greater acceptance, though not without this being rationalized, as Christopher Ballantine has pointed out, with the argument that, as the swing era dawned in the mid-1930s, it was the music that had changed. Nevertheless, the 1930s and '40s saw the consolidation of a social institution that was central to the establishment of a jazz scene in South Africa: the so-called "Concert and Dance" parties that took place in venues ranging from ramshackle township halls to fashionable centers such as Johannesburg's Bantu Men's Social Center or the Ritz Palais de Dance. Typically beginning with vaudeville entertainment which ran from 8 p.m. until midnight, followed immediately by a dance, the *Concert and Dance* was directly shaped by restrictions on the movements of urban black South Africans, since the structure of events exactly mirrored the curfew hours during which blacks were not permitted to be on the streets. Transforming these restrictions into an opportunity for recreation and social affirmation, these parties served, in Ballantine's formulation, as a crucible in which a black South African jazz tradition, modeled on American culture, emerged in a symbiotic relationship with both locally and internationally oriented theatrical idioms.<sup>9</sup>

The first feature article that Todd Matshikiza wrote for the December 1951 edition of *Drum*, titled 'Twenty Years of Jazz,' enables one to date these developments with considerable precision. In a four-column piece printed along with a large photograph of himself at the piano, Matshikiza traces local experimentation with jazz-like idioms back to 1928 and dates the appearance of 'the first African jazz band' in Johannesburg's music halls and fashionable circles to 1931.<sup>10</sup> The article also illuminates several important features of the local jazz tradition as it had taken shape in the decades leading up to the 1950s. To begin with, it cites the role of commercial recordings not only as a means of disseminating imported music but as a surrogate means of apprenticeship for musicians:

*The gramophone had made its debut and patterns of American Jazz music were available on record. We find at this time African musicians fiddling away at their squeaky violins or blowing their guts out on an ancient slide trombone in pursuit of the new style of dance music from America.*

Note that Matshikiza is explicit here about jazz coming "from America," and that he makes no reference to the mu-





## Matshikiza's Jazz Wri-

South Africa's Jazz Epistles  
From left, Jonas Gwangwa, Hugh  
Masekela and Kippie Moeketsi

sic's Negro patrimony; this is a distinction that goes unmentioned in the entire article, though it probably is assumed.<sup>11</sup> But whatever the position of jazz music in the cultural inventories of black South Africans, there is little question in Matshikiza's account that elements of the imported music were readily assimilable to indigenous aesthetic sensibilities:

*By this time, Jazz music had already won its way into the hearts of the African people. It was a new art and a new form possessing the rhythmic characteristics of traditional African music and plenty of excitement.*

Jazz is, then, identified here as an American music with African elements discernible in it, and it is not necessary to risk essentializing these elements by uncovering alleged African stylistic retentions in American jazz to make the case that the music resonated deeply in cultural and historical terms in South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

In the circles in which the *Merry Blackbirds* and their rivals played, Matshikiza continues, the music's status as an import definitely afforded it upscale connotations:

*They played the 'sweet' song-style jazz that dominated popular music in America in the early 'twenties. They were*

*entertaining selective audiences and the fashionable circles were dancing to their imported tunes. It was the vogue.*

There was potentially a contradiction, of course, in middle-class Africans signaling their desire for cultural and civic autonomy by mimicking an imported musical culture. This consideration was not lost on local black commentators, particularly as political prospects for urban blacks deteriorated through the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> There was, consequently, a political incentive for black South Africans to seek if not an alternative to jazz, then at least a way of grounding it more closely in African musical values and practices. And as has recurrently been the case in the U.S., middle-class socialites found this in the cultural expressions of the working classes with whom they lived cheek by jowl in South Africa's racially segregated urban areas.

### Marabi Culture and its Influence on the Emergence of South African Jazz

In the light of the political ambivalences following the strongly American identity of jazz music in 1950s South Af-



rica, it is significant that Matshikiza chose to begin his account of "Twenty Years of Jazz" not with references to the Merry Blackbirds playing at upscale venues but to a musician associated with Johannesburg's slumyard low life. The piece opens with the following personal recollection:

*Looking back on the progress of Jazz Music among the African People of South Africa, I am reminded of my first little Decca model gramophone from which issued the strains of a two-step dance tune of those days – a tune with the strangely quaint title of U-Tebejana ufana ne-Mfene (Tebejana resembles a baboon). Tebejana is the name of the man who composed what was perhaps the very first African dance tune after the idiom of American Jazz. He lived in a suburb of Johannesburg called Prospect Township, a place which was a typical outgrowth of a large city like Johannesburg. He, with other pioneers like him, has since sunk into oblivion, but the music that they composed then and entertained the crowds with has remained with us since the days of Marabi in the early 'twenties.*

In grounding his account of jazz in South Africa in Tebejana's marabi music of the 1920s, Matshikiza is making explicit a very different vernacular line of influence from represented by bands who modeled their uptown performances on American recordings. He, here, offers what in retrospect is one of the earliest and most authoritative definitions of a profoundly influential neo-traditional urban African style of music that effectively constituted 'the prehistory of South African jazz.'<sup>14</sup> Matshikiza emphasizes several defining features of the music:

*'Marabi' is the name given to the 'hot,' highly rhythmic repetitive single-themed dance tunes of the late 'twenties. The tunes were largely the illiterate improvisations of the musicians of the day. 'Marabi' is also the name of an epoch. A period when a variety of spontaneous music and accentuated rhythms were sweeping the African entertainment world like wild fire, and everybody was singing and dancing to a type of Jazz that flourished in the 'dives' and not so 'classy' places – the not-so-posh entertainment houses and private parties.*

The significance of the appellation 'jazz' to refer to this music cannot, I think, be over-emphasized, for it points towards American jazz coming to be understood as being akin to, or even serving as an umbrella term for, neo-traditional African musical practices that could be related to it indirectly, if at all. Much like legendary figures of New Orleans jazz, like Buddy Bolden, who lie just below the horizon of historical documentation, the musical styles associated with marabi were, as Ballantine has noted, never recorded in their original form, nor described in anything but the most cursory manner. Matshikiza's accounts of marabi are therefore doubly significant. They enable us to see that in the creative imaginations of black working- and middle-class South African musicians,

jazz offered a way of emulating and absorbing imported American influences while simultaneously accessing a wide variety of indigenous musical material.

This process of musical synthesis is hardly surprising when one considers the social context in which marabi emerged. As the discovery of diamonds and gold accelerated industrialization and cities sprang up virtually overnight, the majority of African workers were obliged to live under deficient, racially segregated conditions. Despite chronic overcrowding, lack of services, and exorbitant rents, most urban Africans preferred (as a sociological study of 1948 reported) to stay in what were known as the slumyards close to town, rather than in the municipal housing provided at some distance from the city centers. Commentators have argued that lack of official supervision in the slumyards gave the people who lived there, who came from a wide variety of backgrounds in Southern and even Central Africa, an opportunity to adapt socially and culturally to the urban environment with some degree of autonomy. Equally important, under regulations which largely proscribed black economic enterprise, the slumyards were the center of what was the most significant local home industry, the illicit preparation and sale of beer and liquor.

Anthropologists and historians have long recognized that beer is not only a food but an economic and social currency among many indigenous African peoples, and that it is used to thank, reward, reconcile, ritually cleanse, honor, entertain, and generally bind people together.<sup>15</sup> These traditional modes of sociability offered a means of maintaining a sense of social cohesion in urban centers, where official tendencies to pathologize and suppress the so-called liquor trade became a leitmotiv of municipal administration. Given the absence of legal recreational facilities where alcohol could be consumed, private rooms were turned into public drinking houses or speak-easies called *shebeens*, typically presided over by a female hostess, whose social and material status soon came to be represented in the slumyard persona of the so-called 'shebeen queen'.<sup>16</sup> The preparation of beer was, moreover, a gendered African tradition; custom prescribed that women should brew it for their husbands, and this was expected from those relatively few wives who were able to accompany their spouses to the cities, regardless of legal prohibition. In the urban contexts in which many women found themselves, performing this role for strangers in the context of a cash economy offered one of the few avenues for financial independence and advancement.

Matshikiza offers an evocative and informative description of a marabi performance in the first of a series of articles written for *Drum* in 1957 on "our Jazz and the Black stars who make it." He attempts here to provide a broader context for the developments which he had traced in "Twenty Years of Jazz" six years previously, and the piece also enables one to trace his development as a writer, both in the themes which he



chooses to emphasize, and in aspects of his style. Making an important point about the extension of South Africa's fledgling jazz culture beyond the urban centers with which it is primarily associated, Matshikiza begins this narrative away from Johannesburg in his home town of Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, a provincial center that exemplified the increasing interpenetration of urban and rural worlds, and whose conflicting cultural currents were embodied in the person of a local 'jazz organist' named Boet [Brother] Gashe. It is worth quoting Matshikiza's description of Gashe's playing at some length, not only for the additional information which it provides about the performance of marabi (or *Tswari* as it is called here; a creolization of "soirée"), but also because it conveys, from a middle-class child's perspective, the sense of forbidden fascination with the milieu with which the music was associated:

"He was the only jazz organist. No pianos in those days. His organ was carted on a donkey truck from house to house, and wherever it moved, the people went. Queenstown was happily situated for Gashe because every train bearing miners ('mine boys' in South African English) between the Eastern Cape and Johannesburg stopped there overnight. And the miners' veins were full with jazz, as they were with women, and they got both at Gashe's sessions. We looked upon the women Handjievul ['little handfull'], Nomadabi, Annatjie, Nodoli [Dolly] and others with awe. Us kids knew those women's names weren't clean, though we never knew why. But we knew they were the women that danced where Gashe played. Gashe's dances were called 'I-Tswari' where you paid 3d. at the door and entered into a dingy, stuffy room where the dust from the dancers' feet smothered the solitary paraffin lamp which flickered in the shadows of dancing partners who could hardly see or didn't know each other. The hostess hunched next to a four-gallon tin of beer in the corner. She sold jam tins full at 6d. a gulp and held her hand open for another 1s. if the client wanted to go into the room behind the curtain. But actually one saw nothing in that dust. Not even Gashe, who was bent over his organ in one corner, thumping the rhythm from the pedals with his feet, which were also feeding the organ with air; choking the organ with persistent chords in the right hand, and improvising for an effective melody with his left hand. He would call in the aid of a matchstick to hold down a harmony note, usually the tonic (doh) or the dominant (soh), both of which persist in African music, and you get a delirious effect of perpetual motion. Perpetual motion. Perpetual motion in a musty hole where a man makes friends without restraint. There Gashe plays 'I-Tswari' — a music consisting of three chords repeating themselves infinitely over four, five or six hours each night, punctuated only by murmurs and groans of deep satisfaction. Paragraphed only when Gashe stops for a draught of beer, which is part of his pay. In the morning, the men have pawned their papers, passes

and purses. But they've had their fun, and the women too. And Gashe trucks his organ to the next 'Tswari.'"<sup>17</sup>

### Writing Jazz

The association between marabi/jazz, liquor, and sex ("the miners' veins were full with jazz, as they were with women") had, by 1957, become a pervasive feature of Matshikiza's writing for *Drum*. This was, however, by no means exceptional by the standards of his colleagues, nor is it, of course, a departure from representations of jazz music in American film and other entertainment industries. This raises a set of questions concerning not only the gender and sexual politics of *Drum* magazine but also, I would suggest, its racial politics. Several commentators have discussed the objectification of women in *Drum*'s covers, photo features, and advertisements; the absence of women writers from its staff; and the sexism, sometimes bordering on misogyny, of some of its content.<sup>18</sup> These elements, doubtless, illustrate the strain under which rural patriarchal values came among black city dwellers, prompting a far-reaching renegotiation of traditional gender roles and relations, which the magazine both reflected and symptomized. But I would venture a consideration more specific to internal relations among the editorial staff: that shared patriarchal assumptions may have offered a means of male bonding across racial lines between the magazine's white editors and its largely black cadre of writers.

Whether one accepts this interpretation or not, there is little doubt that jazz emerged in South Africa as a gendered discourse and Matshikiza's writing amply illustrates this. On the one hand his fascination, in the description of Gashe's playing quoted above, with those aspects of marabi culture that took place "if the client wanted to go into the room behind the curtain" had long been a feature of middle-class representations of working-class jazz culture in South Africa (as they had, of course, been in the United States and numerous other settings). Beyond the mere prurient association of marabi/jazz with sexual license, one can discern some anxiety in his writing about the emergence around shebeens of modes of female autonomy unfettered by the canons of domestic propriety. In another striking characterization of marabi, which sardonically references Johannesburg's status as a 'Golden City,' he observes:

*Marabi. Tsaba-tsaba [another early South African jazz style]. Dark days when partners didn't dance cheek to cheek or nose to nose. That was too tame. The girl danced by herself. Wild. furious. Agitated. Shaking. Foaming. Sick. Announcing the modern age and golden pavements. To hell with home and shame!*<sup>19</sup>

Alongside such ambivalence, jazz articulates and authorizes a certain sexual playfulness in much of Matshikiza's writing. This highlights the extent to which both local and



American styles of jazz were closely associated with modern urban courtship rituals and the renegotiation of sexual norms:

Don't let this picture fool you. It is the sombre, dolorous and docile portrait of a lively living bubbling brook of a hep [sic] cat, Mabel Mafuya. The Jazzingest twenty-four-inch waist I've seen in a recording studio. And what can you get in a wiggly waggly twenty-four inch waist that heps and jives and dashes behind [a] partition to rehearse the next verse in the middle of the recording session? Lots. You get her Troubadour AFC 353 that paints the grim grime of a miner's life in jumping tones.<sup>20</sup>

The argument could be made that the exaggerated sexuality of Matshikiza's female subjects has a tongue-in-cheek quality about it, becoming another ironic Americanism that quotes and plays on existing mass-mediated representations of jazz even as it reproduces them. Parodying the language of American entertainment is undeniably a feature of Matshikiza's style, as illustrated in the following interview, where some slippage in the exact linguistic register being imitated seems evident as the dialog proceeds:

Then said Louisa Emanuel to Isaac Peterson, "Will you be my turtle dove, or not?" Isaac replied (in the English used in Show biznes [sic]), "No I ain't no turtle an' I ain't no durv. So I cain't be yo' turtle-durve." Louisa said, "I'm looking for a man to sing with me. He must coo as I purr. Coat as I fur. In other words, his voice must match mine." Says Isaac, "Baby I'se got ze voice. Dunno if I'se got ze figure anyhow." That's how this partnership started.<sup>21</sup>

But whatever one's assessment of the role that jazz plays in sexualizing Matshikiza's journalism (and vice-versa), it would be a mistake to leave one's analysis of jazz elements in his work at that. An equally significant feature of his mannerist writing can be seen (or, rather, heard) to follow from a self-conscious attempt to musicalize his prose. Here is one example among many:

There's a big surprise in the mixed "bag" of hits that Dotty came especially from Bulawayo to do for the Troubadour label. This "yippity - woo - biddy-hi-de-ho" crooning lass cast off her intimate night club style for two discs, to do ... hymns. It's always a pleasant shocker to hear a jazz voice doing the most modest pious Sunday morning fare and giving it a bang.<sup>22</sup>

Matshikiza's musical writing is not limited to onomatopoeic effects. His evident intention to write rhythmically has already been illustrated in his description of Boet Gashe's playing above, where "you get a delirious effect of perpetual motion. Perpetual motion. Perpetual motion in a musty hole where a man makes friends without restraint." Notice the more abrupt, call-and-response patterns of rhythm and rhyme in a piece titled "What They Say About Tandi!", where the opening interaction between interviewer and interviewee could be

compared with trading fours, and then twos, in jazz:

I said to Tandi, "Where you born, Sister?" She said, "Turffontein Mister." I said, "You're cute." She said, "Shoot." This is what I shot out of her. She's the biggest, heppiest, and jivest of a family of nine.<sup>23</sup>

Writing such as this is recurrently interwoven with Matshikiza's journalistic documentation of South Africa's nascent jazz culture, adding an element of swing not only to *Drum's* music features but to the magazine as a whole.

## Conclusion

With the aid of Todd Matshikiza and a few other South African commentators, I have attempted to trace the contours of the distinct jazz culture that had emerged in South Africa by the time that Matshikiza was writing for *Drum* in the 1950s. Narratives and visual images associated with music can sometimes obscure the complex origins of syncretic expressive practices, but a strong sense of the multi-stranded heritage of South African jazz emerges from Matshikiza's journalistic sketches. On one hand, he acknowledges the American ancestry of the music (the African-American patrimony of which is teasingly, perhaps vexingly, left implicit), while, on the other, he highlights the articulation of imported styles to a range of urban black South African musics that themselves drew upon and melded together a variety of traditional African elements. By the time that Matshikiza's pieces were appearing in *Drum*, these various lines of influence were becoming increasingly indistinguishable; orchestras like Peter Rezant's *Merry Blackbirds* were playing big band arrangements of marabi tunes, and township schoolboys were playing Ellingtonesque arrangements of American standards on hand-made guitars and pennywhistles.

What emerges from Matshikiza's writing, beyond the history that he recounts on the pages of *Drum*, is that jazz furnished black South Africans with a potent metaphor for reinventing themselves – in short, for improvising – in circumstances that seemed increasingly inimical to celebration and play. The jazz-like qualities that I have discerned in his writing communicate an ethos of risk-taking and experimentation that in some respects uncritically reproduced imported stereotypes, particularly those that reinforced indigenous patriarchal values, but in others entailed creative ways of enunciating modern African experiences in an international language. For all its contradictions, the jazz culture of and with which he wrote had come to express a distinctive South African sensibility. GR



## References Cited

- Allen, Lara Victoria. 2000. *Representation, Gender and Women in Black South African Popular Music, 1948-1960*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge.
- Ballantine, Christopher. 1993. *Marabi Nights: Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*. Johannesburg: Raven Press.
1999. "Looking to the USA: The Politics of Male Close-Harmony Song Style in South Africa during the 1940s and 1950s." *Popular Music* 18, no. 1: 1-17.
- Chapman, Michael. 2001 (1989). *The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s*. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press.
- Coplan, David. 1979. "Marabi Culture: Continuity and Transformation in African Music in Johannesburg, 1920-1940." *African Urban Studies*, no. Winter 1979-80: 49-76.
1982. "The Urbanisation of African Music: Some Theoretical Observations." *Popular Music* 2: 113-30.
1985. *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*. Johannesburg: Raven Press.
- Erlmann, Veit. 1991. *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1996. *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Martin, Denis-Constant. 1999. *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town, Past to Present*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Matshikiza, Todd. 1961. *Chocolates for my Wife*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Nicol, Mike. 1995 (1991). *A Good-Looking Corpse*. London: Minerva.
- Nixon, Rob. 1994. *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond*. New York: Routledge.
- O' Meally, ed. 1998. *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sampson, Anthony. 1956. *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa*. London: Collins.
- Woodson, Dorothy C. 1988. *Drum: An Index to "Africa's Leading Magazine," 1951-1965*. University of Wisconsin.

## Primary sources

- "Twenty Years of Jazz," *Drum*, December 1951, 26-7.
- "What They Say About Tandi!" *Drum*, December 1954.
- "Jazzmo" Antonio Saude. *Drum*, April 1955, 40-41.
- "Jazzing The Blues!" *Drum*, April 1955, 20-21.
- "Gramo Go Round by Hot Toddy." *Drum*, December 1955, 79.
- "Gramo Go Round by Hot Toddy." *Drum*, February 1956, 73.
- "Stars of Jazz." *Drum*, June 1957, 37-43.

## Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to Lara Allen, as well as the staff at the Schomburg Library in Harlem, for their assistance in obtaining copies of the out-of-print material discussed in this essay.
- 2 The reference here is to the phrase as employed by Robert G. O' Meally in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, which is in turn adapted from African-American literary critic Stephen Henderson.
- 3 The film in question was *Jim Comes to Joburg* (also known as *African Jim*), directed by Donald Swanson.
- 4 The references to Kwenane and Masekela are drawn from Christopher Ballantine's article "Looking to the USA: The Politics of Male Close-Harmony Song Style in South Africa during the 1940s and 1950s," 1.
- 5 Though a descendent of *Drum* still appears on South African news stands under the same title today, the magazine was marginalized and reshaped after suffering bans and other government restrictions from 1965 until 1979, when the original owner, Jim Bailey, finally sold it to a conglomerate of South Africa

publishing houses. For a concise history of the publication, as well as an invaluable guide to the magazine in its heyday, see Dorothy Woodson's *Drum: An Index to "Africa's Leading Magazine," 1951-1965*. For literary commentary on the *Drum* writers, who included Can Themba, Bloke Modisane, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Nat Nakasa, Lewis Nkosi, Arthur Maimane, Casey Motsisi, and Richard Rive, see Anthony Sampson's *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa*; Mike Nicol's *A Good Looking Corpse*; Rob Nixon's *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond*; and Michael Chapman's *The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s*, which contains a more extensive and updated bibliography.

- 6 See Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.
- 7 On the influence of African minstrel shows on Cape Town's vernacular New Year festivals, see Denis Constant-Martin's *Coon Carnival*; on the influence of the same on Zulu performance genres like *isikhunzi* and *isicathamiya*, see Veit Erlmann's *African Stars and Nightsong*.
- 8 Quotes in this paragraph are from Christopher Ballantine's *Marabi Nights: Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*, 80 & 81; 22-23; 82-3.
- 9 For more on the Concert and Dance, see Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, 11-38.
- 10 "This group," Matshikiza reports, "was curiously named 'The Japanese Express' band under George 'Makalman' Boswell. They had a violin, a trombone, piano and drums. Although this band was short-lived they had broken the ice and ventured into the new possibilities that this new music from America had to offer." "Twenty Years of Jazz," *Drum*, December 1951, 27.
- 11 On this point, Ballantine has pointed out that "the category of black American musicians was not entirely rigid in the minds of black South Africans: white Americans occasionally slipped in, perhaps because they were - rightly or wrongly - identified with the music made by 'Africans in America.' Indeed, alongside the strong, emotive category of 'Africans in America', the performance culture of black South Africans drew on another, looser category, a commercial pantheon, filled with images of the stars and styles of Western - mainly American - popular culture." Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, 17.
- 12 David Coplan makes the following case regarding these parallels: "That there is far more interest in American jazz [in South Africa] there than in Western and central Africa (the areas from which the black American community originated) is due to three major factors: (1) similarities in the sociohistorical experience of black Americans and South Africans, including rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, and racial oppression; (2) similarities in the kinds of musical resources available to both peoples in their urban areas, and in basic African principles of composition and performance; and (3) the value of black American models for black South African urban cultural adaptation, identity and resistance." See "The Urbanisation of African Music: Some Theoretical Observations," 123.
- 13 Ballantine also makes this point in "Looking to the USA."
- 14 The phrase is Ballantine's; see *Marabi Nights*, 25.
- 15 This formulation is quoted in Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, 51.
- 16 "Shebeen" is reportedly a Gaelic word meaning "little shop." Coplan avers that the term emerged in Cape Town in the early twentieth century among immigrant Irish members of the police force.
- 17 "Stars of Jazz." *Drum*, June 1957, 37-43.
- 18 See Nixon, *ibid.*, 20, and Lara Allen's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, *Representation, Gender and Women in Black South African Popular Music, 1948-1960*, 102-7.
- 19 "Jazzmo" Antonio Saude. *Drum*, April 1955, 40-41.
- 20 "Gramo Go Round by Hot Toddy." *Drum*, February 1956, 73.
- 21 "Jazzing The Blues!" *Drum*, April 1955, 20-21.
- 22 Matshikiza, "Gramo Go Round by Hot Toddy," *Drum*, December 1955, 79.
- 23 "What They Say About Tandi!" *Drum*, December 1954. The "Thandi" referred to in the title is Thandi Mpambani (later Klaasens).