



People dance at the graveside of a group of people killed during unrest in the township in 1988.

South African music is much more fun to listen to than to read about. Unfortunately, very little of it is distributed internationally. To get a taste of the South African sound, it is worth looking out for the following records.

Paul Simon, *Graceland*. (Warner Brothers) Ignore the pallid lyrics, and concentrate on the musical accompaniment by some of South Africa's most talented musicians, Joseph Shabalala and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Harry Belafonte, *Paradise in Gazankulu*. (EMI/Capitol) Another international star adopts the *amabaqanga* sound with a galaxy of talented South African backup artists. But the lyrics, in this case, are political.

Miriam Makeba, *Sangoma*. (Warner Brothers) "Mama Afrika" goes back to her tribal roots in this recently released album.

Hugh Masakela, *Tomorrow*. (WEA International) Another legendary South African artist revisits the *amabaqanga* sound in this recent album.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo, *The Journey of Dreams*. (Warner Brothers) This deeply religious choral group, the best selling recording artists in South Africa, won a Grammy for its first internationally distributed album, *Shaka Zulu* (Shanachie).

Johnny Clegg and Savuka, *Third World Child*. (Capitol) This gifted rock group is enormously popular in Europe, where Clegg is known as "le Zoulou blanc", but is not yet well known in North America. They deserve to be the first South African group to become international superstars.

Let Their Voices be Heard—traditional Singing in South Africa Rouser Records 5024.

Soweto Never Sleeps—Classic Female Zulu Jive Shanachie 43041.

Mbaqanga—The Indestructible Beat of Soweto Shanachie 43033.

Music of Black South Africa Shanachie 43018.

If you're very lucky, or have access to specialty music shops, records by any of the following: Letta Mbulu, Abdullah Ebrahim (Dollar Brand), Ray Phiri and Stimela, the Genuines, the Boyoyo Boys, and Mahlatini and the Mahotella Queens. And for a taste of music north of the Limpopo, look out for the Zimbabwe group the Bhundu Boys.

minstrel group came to Cape Town. Their catchy vocal sound, backed by banjos, harmonicas and accordians, immediately caught on in the Cape Coloured community. The annual so-called Coon Carnival has become an annual celebration of *Kaapse Klopse*—Cape Beat—music, featuring competing minstrel groups in flashy satin, marching bands, and spectacular dancing. Later, American jazz, the blues, the Motown sound, reggae, even disco music, captured large black audiences and spawned scores of South African imitators.

The characteristics that generally set South African music apart from Western pop are its rhythmic inventiveness, its sometimes jarring juxtaposition of musical instruments—where else is the accordion as important as the guitar?—the accomplished singing, and the content of its lyrics. Sung in a range of black languages, in English and in *township-taal*—a rich and vigorous slang which is the *lingua franca* of the townships—the songs are a faithful reflection and celebration of township life. They deal not only with the usual pop formula themes of love lost and found, and fortunes won and lost, but with hunger, separation, exile, unemployment, and humiliation, the common experience of black life in the land of apartheid. Politics and the impact of the current State of Emergency are common themes: as one of the best of the young black groups, the Genuines, explained on their debut album, their music is about *Oh ho ho de Struggle*. . . *mellow yellow en Buffel en de teargas en de purple rain en de pain*. (Translation: *mellow yellow en Buffel* are armoured troop carriers used by the Defence Forces in their military occupation of the townships; while *purple rain* is the purple dye police water cannons spray on township protesters.)

The line between popular music and protest music is increasingly hard to draw. These are the songs of the people, songs of protest, songs of hope, in praise of leaders and in condemnation of the present government. The music tends to be simple and rhythmic, often borrowed from traditional hymns and working chants created to ease the burden of ploughing the fields. The words change frequently, in response to political developments; new verses are frequently improvised on the spot. These songs are rarely written down, but new protest songs seem to sweep the townships, and travel quickly from one community to another. Needless to say, these songs are not allowed on state-controlled radio, so their rapid transmission from one end of South Africa to another is a tribute to the strong oral tradition of black music.

One of the first protest songs, called "iLand Act", was composed in 1913, in anger at the theft of black land by the white government. The song, one of the few from that time by an identifiable composer, combined traditional Zulu music and American ragtime. It is still popular today. (Unfortunately, the Land Act is still with us, so the song remains highly relevant.) One of the most famous protest songs, "Strijdom you have struck a rock" was composed as part of a campaign against the extension of pass laws to apply to women. In March 1956, 20,000 women sang it as they marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The song is now the anthem of the Federation of South African Women. Another protest song with a long and heroic history is "Hlangani"—"Unite"—the theme song of the black trade unions, the fastest-growing union movement in the world today. A traditional hymn which has been updated to political use

us "Somlandei uJesu"—"We will follow Jesus"—which has become "Somlandei uMandela." But most topical songs pop up suddenly and vanish just as quickly from South Africa's own unique version of "top forty" music.

I recently attended the 83rd birthday party of a veteran political activist, Helen Joseph, at which a new protest song was sung for the first time. The song, in praise of Mrs. Joseph's contribution to the struggle against apartheid, was composed by her old friend Winnie Mandela and sung by Winnie, her daughter Zinzie, and members of the "Mandela Football Club", who accompany Winnie everywhere. The group danced up the lane towards the house where the party was taking place, drawing in other visitors behind them who improvised new verses to the song as they streamed past. A very special South African gift for a very special lady. Within days, Mrs. Joseph's birthday song was being sung throughout the townships. The song contributed to South Africa's oral history, by recording the accomplishments of one of its national heroines.

In addition to protest songs, the crowds at political gatherings dance the *toy! toy!*—a fast shuffle known as the warrior's dance—while shouting political slogans. The repeated shouts of *Amandla! Awethu!* (power to the people) *Viva Mandela Viva! Viva Socialismus Viv!* to the sound of clapping and stamping feet have become a refrain at every popular gathering. At one recent church service, I watched the altar boys swinging the incense burners while doing the *toy! toy!* at the altar!

Protest gatherings and community celebrations, are, alas, few and far between under the present State of Emergency. While the world celebrated Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday, local gatherings in honour of Nelson Mandela, featuring leading black musicians, were all banned by the authorities. The Botha government even restricts the singing of protest songs at funerals. (Only "bona fide" hymns may be sung.) But union gatherings, church services, school celebrations and even commuter train rides are popular occasions for the singing of protest songs.

A train ride to the townships can be quite an experience. Hot, slow and desperately overcrowded, each train carriage has its regulars. One coach will feature rousing speeches and protest songs, while a fervent Apostolic church service resounds from an adjacent carriage. Passengers quite literally can make a political statement every time they get on the train! But then, everything is political in South Africa.

The music community is beginning to recognize the importance of these protest songs to the freedom struggle, and by extension, the importance of popular music to black life in South Africa. Increasingly, composers are experimenting with musical theatre as a medium in which to portray the reality of township life. Many of these plays have attracted an appreciative international audience. Two of the most successful—*Sophiatown* and *District Six*—are musical memorials to communities which were destroyed by the South African government's policy of forced removal. A more contemporary portrait of township life is *Sarafina!*, now enjoying a successful run on Broadway. South African music, forged on the anvil of ruthless oppression, is a vibrant celebration of musical creativity, a treasure-house of Africa's long musical heritage, and a dauntless affirmation of hope in a better future for us all.



Youths dance during a church meeting in Pretoria to discuss the killings of a group of people by police in Winterveldt in the 'independent' black homeland of Bophuthatswana, June 1986.

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika

Maluphakanysw' uphondo lwayo
Yizwa imithandazo yethu
Nkosi sikelela
Thina, lusapho lwayo
Woza Moya
Woza Moya oyingcwele
Nkosi sikelela
Thina lusapho lwayo
Morena boloka sechaba se heso
O fedise dintwa le matswenyeho
O se boloke—o se boloke
O se boloke morena
Sechaba se heso
Sechaba se heso

Hlangani

Hlanganani basebenzi
nibemunye
Ukuze sinqobe abaqashi
ngeningi
Siyanicusa basebenzi
Hlanganani senizonqoba
Hlanganani basebenzi
nibemunye

Asibadali irente

Asibadali irente
Asinamali Botha
Senzeni Botha?
Ngona asinamali Botha

Strijdom you have struck a rock

Wena Strijdom
wa'thinhabafazi
wathinh'embokotho
Wena Strijdom uzokufa!

God Bless Africa

Lord bless Africa
Let her horn be raised
Listen to our prayers
Lord bless
Us, her children
Come, spirit
Come Holy Spirit
Lord bless
Us, her children
God bless our nation
Do away with wars and trouble
Bless it, bless it
Bless it, Lord
Our nation
Our nation

Unite

Come together workers
And be one
So that we can defeat
the employers with numbers
We call on you workers
United you will conquer
Unite workers
And be one.

the Rent Boycott Song

We do not pay rent
We have no money Botha
What must we do, Botha?
Because we have no money Botha.

the Women's Anthem

You Strijdom
You have touched the women
You have struck against rock,
You, Strijdom, you will die!



Winnie Mandela with Helen Joseph.



Young people from Winterveldt, in the black 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana, dance in the street after a meeting at a church in Pretoria to discuss a spate of shootings in the township.

April 27, 1988

One of the highlights of the past few weeks was the 83rd birthday party of our dear friend and mentor, Helen Joseph. For over 40 years Helen has been a leading political figure, active in the trade unions, the women's movement and in a host of anti-apartheid groups. Neither treason charges, detention, house arrest, attempted murder, serious illness nor age have broken her spirit. Perhaps because of our training in history, we particularly enjoy her vivid accounts of the early days of the struggle, including the Congress of the People, the Women's March on Parliament, and the Defiance Campaign. She is still active, and her tiny house invariably overflows with visitors while the telephone rings off the hook. It was most impressive to see how many other people came to bear her tribute, a veritable who's who of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. One particularly memorable moment was the arrival of Winnie and Zinzie Mandela, with the "Mandela Football Team"—20 or so comrades, dressed in identical yellow and red tracksuits, who accompany Winnie wherever she goes. As a result, her excursions tend to be a cross between a royal progress and a circus. This was particularly the case at the Birthday Party, as Winnie had composed a new protest song in Helen's honour and trained her football team to sing it. In they bopped, in a *toy! toy!* procession, disrupting the whole proceedings and leaving Helen torn between tears and laughter. . . .

The other major event in recent days was our formal induction to the Security Services' roll of "enemies of the people". Admittedly, it doesn't take much to join this club; a black skin, after all, virtually guarantees entry. You know you've made it when you start getting harassed, by the authorities or their right-wing supporters. (Needless to say, neither we nor any of the other lucky recipients of their attentions have any evidence of who is behind this. But the pattern is quite clear.) While most of their actions are pretty crude—a favourite one is throwing a brick through your window, while tampering with cars and threatening telephone calls are equally popular—they can, on occasion, be quite imaginative. There was, for example, the photographer we know who came home to find a bulldozer preparing to demolish his darkroom. And the woman who received delivery of an unwanted casket. In our case, someone ordered delivery of a truckload of manure, which was, presumably, to be off-loaded on our front garden. We had quite a time persuading the irate gang-boss that we hadn't ordered it, as he had come a long way with the stuff and didn't want to bring it back. We can only assume that the manure was a left-handed compliment to Lucie's reporting.

Nov. 1987

One of the most amazing sights in South Africa is to see the more than 1000 buses which transport 70,000 workers to and from Kwandebele every day: a two-and-a-half-hour one-way journey. The average worker climbs on a bus at 4 A.M. and gets home around 8 in the evening. The community was located way out in the bushveld because the good burghers of Pretoria objected to a black community within 40 miles of the city. Canadian towns have green belts, South Africa cities, white belts. . . .
Tom and Lucie

Sept. 19, 1988

We had a superb 4-day weekend in Swaziland. . . . In a stroke of good luck, that weekend was the Reed Dance, Swaziland's most important tribal festival. The Reed Dance is both a fertility rite, celebrating the return of spring, and a renewal of loyalty to the Swazi royal family. The maidens of every village are summoned to the Queen Mother's Kraal, or family compound, to cut cane used to refurbish the traditional dwellings. After they cut the reeds, the maidens, led by their village elders, dance and chant praise songs for the royal family. The climax of the ceremony is the King's selection of one or two of the maidens as his new brides.

That description does not do much justice to the actual event. We were not prepared for the size of the crowd: between 5 and 10 thousand bare-breasted young girls, some little older than toddlers, regimented in clan groups and wearing distinctive, brilliantly coloured traditional costumes. Piercing penny whistles accompanied the singing, with every group performing their own clan song and trying to out-do their neighbours. Giggling girls, released from scrutiny by the village elders, stampeded to avoid the clutches of lascivious young men. And all the noise, colour and heat overlaid by a haze of rich, red African dust. The ceremony came to an extraordinary conclusion: at the very moment when the sangoma (shaman) signalled the king to go forward and pick his brides, the wind shifted 180 degrees and a cool, clean breeze streamed in from the mountains bringing clouds and the promise of rain. The best possible omen for fat cattle and rich crops in the year to come. It was easy to understand at that moment the contract, made up of equal parts of religion and tradition, between the Swazi king and his people. . . .

Lucie Edwards is Counsellor at the Canadian Embassy to South Africa. She has lived in South Africa for almost three years. She was previously assigned to the Canadian Embassy to Israel and has worked for the Department of External Affairs for over 12 years. In addition to the music of South Africa, she and her husband particularly enjoy exploring the more remote regions of Southern Africa. They don't miss the Canadian winter at all.

