

South Africa

(PUT 301 Liner Notes)

Over the past 50 years, South Africa has had a major impact on the world's popular music. "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" (written by Solomon Linda and made famous by The Tokens and *The Lion King*), Miriam Makeba's "Pata Pata" and Hugh Masekela's "Grazing in the Grass" are just a few of the South African songs that have become global hits. And, South African styles and instrumentation form the foundation of Paul Simon's hit album *Graceland*, which featured the South African group Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

When Dutch merchants first began setting up commercial outposts in South Africa in the late 1600s, joined later by British colonists, the Europeans quickly began to compete for territory with the Zulu and Xhosa tribes that inhabited the region. The colonial policy of racial segregation, which became the infamous apartheid system, was established early on. The struggle against this unjust system defined the history of South Africa for most of the 20th century until it was finally abolished in the early 1990s.



Contemporary South African music reflects the influences of indigenous tribal cultures, European colonists and African-American music, from jazz to R&B. An unmistakable jazz swing can be heard in popular styles such as *marabi*, *mbaqanga* and township jive. In the 1960s, exiled musicians Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba and Abdullah Ibrahim deepened the cross-pollination between American and South African music, and in the 70s and 80s, local groups like the Soul Brothers began incorporating the funk, soul and disco of the era into their sound. Also, one can't overlook Afrikaans folk, rock and pop music, which reveal a more direct European connection. South Africa's rich musical landscape continues to be the source of some of the most appealing and enjoyable sounds to be found anywhere on the globe.

1. Soul Brothers

Ujaheni

song: OO-jah-HEH-nee

For over 35 years, the Soul Brothers have been one of South Africa's most popular groups. Since its formation in 1974, the group has been a pioneer at blending soul, funk and disco with *mbaqanga*, a style of upbeat dance music with Zulu roots whose bass-driven grooves were introduced to the world by Paul Simon's seminal album *Graceland*. The band has had many members over the years and its current leaders are David Masondo and Moses Ngwenya. Brothers in spirit, not blood, their unique, wavery vocal harmonies also distinguished their sound, leading to a slew of imitators. Over their career the Soul Brothers have produced more than 30 albums, nearly half of which have gone gold and several platinum.

"Ujaheni" is one of the Soul Brothers' best-known songs. The song advises a man who has broken up with his lover not to worry, there are plenty of fish in the sea. "What's the rush, you'll find another one."

2. Bholoja

Mbombela

artist: bah-lo-jah song: mom-beh-lah

Bholoja is actually from Swaziland, a small country nestled between South Africa and Mozambique. Though politically they are separate neighboring nations, South Africa and Swaziland have close linguistic, economic and cultural connections. Bholoja sings in English and SiSwati, which is also one of the 11 official South African languages. Born in the Hhohho district in 1979, Bholoja's real name is Mbongiseni Ngubane, and he calls his acoustic, melodic style "Swazi Soul." Most of his songs focus on the social and economic struggles that dominate people's daily lives. Yet, even while addressing difficult subjects, Bholoja offers a message of hope, and his uplifting songs have helped him develop a growing following in Swaziland and South Africa.

Bholoja's "Mbombela" is an adaptation of a traditional Swazi nursery rhyme. The title "Mbombela" (which means "many people together in a small space") comes from this rhyme.

3. Mahube

Oxam

artist: muh-HOO-beh song: oh-thum

Mahube is a Southern African supergroup featuring an all-star lineup of some of the most acclaimed musicians from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and more. Founded and directed by South African musician Steve Dyer, Mahube means “new dawn” in the Sotho language. Recording since the late 1990s, the group made its international debut at the Out of Africa festival in Munich, Germany in 2007. “We have a tendency to work in isolation as musicians and that restricts us from being creative,” explains Dyer. “Mahube is about sharing ideas and exploring African sounds, reworking them and producing something uniquely African.” The final product of this collaboration is a mix of many African genres such as *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, *maskandi* and *jit* with flavors of jazz.

“Oxam” is from the first of two albums released by Mahube, *Music of Southern Africa*. Lead vocalist Phinda Mtya sings over the lilting rhythms of the *mbira* (thumb piano), “The traditional healer has a problem. His people have found out his treatments are fake.”

4. Blk Sonshine

Nkosi

artist: black sunshine song: n-kor-see

Blk Sonshine is a duo comprised of Masauko Chipembere and Neo Muyanga, who blend hip hop, jazz and folk with Southern African traditions. Chipembere was born in the U.S. to parents who were political exiles from Malawi, and he grew up listening to popular urban styles. As an adult, he returned to Southern Africa, where he met Muyanga, who grew up in the Johannesburg township of Soweto, and they developed a musical partnership. Blk Sonshine’s self-titled debut album was recorded in 1998 in California while on a U.S. tour that included a tribute concert to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, featuring Stevie Wonder. Chipembere now lives in New York and Muyanga in Cape Town, but they continue their collaboration while pursuing solo projects.

Partly because of this distance, it took Blk Sonshine over ten years to release a follow-up album, 2009’s *Good Life*, which features the song “Nkosi” (a respectful term of thanks to a master, chief or God). Performed in English and Xhosa, it encourages people to look beyond material needs and daily pressures to find joy in faith and the fundamentals of life.

5. Nibs van der Spuy

Beautiful Feet

artist: nibs fun der spuy

A leading singer-songwriter who grew up in the old mining town of Benoni, 20 miles east of Johannesburg, Nibs van der Spuy offers a contrast to the upbeat South African styles and artists best known abroad. Singing mostly in English and influenced by everything from British folk, Celtic, classical and a variety of African genres, van der Spuy has earned praise from numerous international publications. *The Birmingham Post* in the UK enthused, “Forget your preconceived ideas of South African music. If you like a bit of Nick Drake or Richard Thompson, with a little *Graceland*...you will be very pleasantly surprised.”

“Beautiful Feet” features a reggae-inspired acoustic guitar riff and is the title track from van der Spuy’s 2007 release and third solo album.

6. Steve Dyer

Mananga

artist: steve dye-er song: mah-nan-ger

Steve Dyer is one of Southern Africa’s most accomplished producers, composers and performers. After receiving a degree in classical music performance at the University of Natal, Dyer left South Africa for Botswana in 1982 and lived in Zimbabwe and the UK, before returning to his home country in 1992 as the apartheid system was coming to an end. Over the years, Dyer has worked with Zimbabwean stars Oliver Mtukudzi and Letta Mbulu, as well as South African artists Hugh Masekela, the Soweto String Quartet and many others. Dyer is an accomplished composer and producer for film, television and stage as well, having scored songs for the BBC and other television networks, numerous films, advertisements and theatrical productions. As a solo artist, he has released three critically-acclaimed albums that feature his compelling blend of jazz with strong African flavors.

“Mananga” is from Dyer’s first solo album, *Down South in Africa*, released in 2000. The track demonstrates Dyer’s silky sax playing (he also plays flute, recorder, guitar, keyboards and more) and features the guitar work of Zimbabwean virtuoso Louis Mhlanga.

7. Miriam Makeba

Orlando

artist: mee-ree-am muh-kay-buh song: or-lan-doh

Miriam Makeba, who passed away in November 2008 after a long and illustrious career, was one of Africa's most beloved musical exports. "Mama Africa," as she was called by her fans, gained worldwide renown as a recording artist, as well as an important figure in the human rights movements in South Africa and beyond. She was forced to spend much of her career away from her homeland, when the government refused to allow her to return after she gave an anti-apartheid speech at the United Nations in 1963. Makeba's song "Pata Pata" was an international hit in 1967. She courted controversy in 1968 when she married Stokely Carmichael, then the leader of the Black Panthers. Feeling harassed by the American authorities, she fled to Guinea, where she lived for many years. In 1990, Makeba was finally allowed to return to South Africa, where she was welcomed by Nelson Mandela, who had been released from prison that year.

"Orlando" was recorded when Makeba was a member of The Skylarks, a popular vocal group in the 1950s. The influence of American jazz is clear on this infectious track, which tells about life in the Soweto township of Orlando.

8. Phinda

Tiki Tiki

artist: pin-duh mer-cha song: tih-kee tih-kee

After performing for more than 15 years and with three albums under her belt, Johannesburg-based singer Phinda Mtya has been recognized as one of her country's most talented vocalists. Her 2005 release, *Mbheka Phesheya* (the Xhosa language word for a traditional ceremonial pipe), earned a South African Music Award (SAMA) for Best Adult Contemporary Album, and she is often mentioned in the same breath as legends such as Miriam Makeba and Sibongile Khumalo. Phinda spent two years in Toronto playing a leading role in the local production of *The Lion King*, and she is also a featured singer in the all-star group Mahube.

On "Tiki Tiki," Phinda encourages clear communication to avoid undesired problems in life and love. The title refers to the "tickey," a South African slang term for the British three pence coin used in the 19th century.

9. Johannes Kerkorrel

Halala Afrika

artist: yo-hah-nes ker-koh-rel song: huh-lah-lah uh-free-kuh

One of the unsung heroes of the anti-apartheid movement, Johannes Kerkorrel was a singer and songwriter who used his status as a member of the politically-dominant Afrikaner community to inject subversive social critique into the public sphere. Born Ralph John Rabie in Johannesburg in 1960, Kerkorrel worked as a journalist before being fired from his paper for criticizing then-president and apartheid hardliner P.W. Botha in his songs. Singing in Afrikaans, a language closely related to the Dutch spoken by early white settlers in South Africa, Kerkorrel was popular with the many Afrikaners who opposed the unjust apartheid system, although his work was often blacklisted on state-run radio stations. He achieved some success in Belgium and the Netherlands, where Dutch and Flemish speakers could understand his lyrics. Kerkorrel, who as a gay man and political outcast always struggled to find his place in South African society, committed suicide in 2002.

Sung in Afrikaans and Zulu, "Halala Afrika" (Hurray Africa) offers a critique of South Africa's harsh colonial history from an African perspective.

10. Zoro

Work

artist: zaw-roh

Zolile Matikinca, a.k.a. Zoro, was born in the township of Gugulethu outside Cape Town. Growing up under apartheid politicized the singer at an early age and he considered it his life's mission to fight the system. His uncle's collection of reggae vinyls provided inspiration for Zoro's future musical direction, which blends elements of Jamaican dancehall and American R&B with a distinctly South African flavor. In 1989, Zoro was shot when trying to intervene in the police beating of a woman and he was paralyzed from the waist down. After teaching himself to walk again, Zoro became a major figure in South Africa's reggae scene as part of the Chronic Clan. In 2003, Zoro moved to Sweden to work with the Breakmcanix production team in Malmö and has since become a star in Scandinavia.

On "Work," Zoro sings in both English and his native language of Xhosa, highlighting the struggles of South Africans to make a living in an unequal society.

11. Kaya Vulamasango

artist: kai-yah voo-lah-muh-sun-go

The Afropop band Kaya hails from Bloemfontein, a city of about 370,000 people that is the judicial capital of the country. (South Africa has three capitals: Pretoria (executive) and Cape Town (legislative) are the other two.) They released their first album, *Kunzima*, in 2005 and their follow up, *Vulamasango*, came out in 2009. With influences from gospel, township jive, *marabi*, *kwela* and a touch of the more urban flavored *kwaito* and African house, Kaya is part of a burgeoning scene of young groups that blend a sound inspired by traditional elements with a modern, cosmopolitan sensibility.

The lyrics of “Vulamasango” (Opening Doors) tell of a young man who has been unfaithful to his girlfriend. He pleads with her parents to “open the doors” to him after they reject his offer of *lobola*, the African custom of paying the fiancée’s family a dowry.

12. Soweto Gospel Choir Ngahlulele

artist: soh-way-toh gospel choir song: nguh-shloo-leh-leh

Formed in 2002 by David Mulovhedzi and Beverly Bryer, the Soweto Gospel Choir has quickly become one of Africa’s premier choral ensembles. Drawing on the best talent from churches in and around Soweto, the group specializes in emotionally uplifting music ranging from soaring African acapella to African-American spirituals and stirring versions of popular songs. The Soweto Gospel Choir has earned two Grammy awards for Best Traditional World Music Album and has performed around the world with artists like Celine Dion, Peter Gabriel and Josh Groban.

“Ngahlulele” (Redeem Me) is a traditional Zulu song that appears on the Soweto Gospel Choir’s 2010 release *Grace*. “Redeem me Lord / Set me free from the deceiver / Who creeps in like a snake / You are my refuge / Where I find life.”

Lentil Bobotie

Vegetarian rendition of a classic South African dish

Ingredients

2 cups, 3 tablespoons (500g) lentils, dried	2 medium carrots, grated
6 1/3 cups (1.5lt) vegetable stock	3 medium potatoes, cut into small cubes
1 medium onion, finely chopped	2 eggs
½ cup (100g) seedless raisins	2/3 cup (150g) tomato paste
2 medium garlic cloves, crushed	7 tablespoons (100ml) milk
3 heaping tablespoons (45g) curry powder	salt & pepper to taste
1 ½ tablespoons (20g) mild fruit chutney, such as apricot or peach	3 bay leaves

Directions

- 1) Soak the lentils overnight.
 - 2) In a large saucepan, heat oil and sauté onions until they are soft.
 - 3) Add garlic and lentils and sauté for about a minute.
 - 4) Add curry powder and bay leaves and stir until the mixture becomes dry.
 - 5) Add half of the vegetable stock and let simmer for 10 minutes.
 - 6) Add carrots, potatoes, tomato paste and raisins, and mix well, being careful not to break the lentils.
 - 7) Add chutney and remaining stock to the pan and bring to a slow boil. Let simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, for about an hour, or until the lentils break easily when squeezed.
 - 8) Pour the bobotie in a medium casserole dish.
 - 9) In a small bowl, mix the eggs and milk using a fork and pour mixture over the bobotie.
 - 10) Bake for 15 minutes at 200° or until the “custard” topping is browned.
- Serves 6.

Recipe courtesy of Amos Dlamini, Moyo Chef from the Moyo group of restaurants in South Africa. www.moyo.com

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