

When Man and Bass Became One. Johnny Dyani 1947-1986.

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This article was originally published in *Mbizo - a Book About Johnny Dyani*. Edited by Lars Rasmussen. Copenhagen, The Booktrader, 2003. The illustrations have been omitted, since I have lost them and no longer have a copy of the book to scan from, but the captions are preserved.

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Johnny Dyani's life is in many ways surrounded by mystery. We cannot even be sure of the date of his birth. The whole area where he grew up has been demolished and most of the people he knew in his young days have passed away. Few are left to give evidence and they often tell very diverging stories. This article is an attempt to sum up Johnny's all too short life and career.

Johnny Dyani's parents were Ebenezer Mbizo Ngxongwana and his wife Nonkathazo. They lived in Zeleni Location near King William's Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. None of them were musicians. None of them had a profession.

In 1946 Nonkathazo became pregnant. It was her first pregnancy, and she was bearing more than one child; later in his life Johnny himself would recount that he was a triplet, whereas his nephews and step-brothers, Ntsikelelo and Fikile Dyani, both believe that he was a twin. Whatever the truth may be, only the first child was able to enter this world alive; the next child was stuck in the womb and, in a horrryfyng birthscene, both Nonkathazo and one or two unborn children lost their lives. Only the firstborn child survived.

Believing that he too would die, the people who were present immediately had him baptised. A woman came up with the name Johnny. This is why Johnny Dyani, unlike other Xhosa children, has only one first name, and not both an African and Christian first name.

We don't know where exactly Johnny was born, though it was probably in the home of Ebenezer and Nonkhatazo. We don't know who were present, and even the date of the event has been under discussion.

According to the Home Office in King William's Town, Johnny was born on June 4, 1947. This date will be new to anyone who has known Johnny Dyani. The date itself speaks about what was to be one of the main themes in his life: alienation. Not only did Johnny never know his biological mother, he didn't even know his own birthday. When he was to leave the country and needed a passport, it was issued with December 31, 1947, as his date of birth. Later in his life, after he had come to Europe, Johnny somehow got the idea that November 30, 1945, was a more likely date for his birth. I have not been able to find out who suggested that date to him or what made him believe in it. Johnny kept the 1947 date in his passports for the rest of his life but quoted 1945 in all conversations and interviews, and he celebrated his 40th birthday on November 30, 1985.

There doesn't seem to be anything to support the 1945 date. Johnny's relatives and schoolmates all state he was born 1947. I believe that June 4, 1947, is Johnny Dyani's birthday - or, at least, the most likely guess - and I am grateful to Stephanie Victor of the Amathole Museum in King William's Town for checking this information.

We don't know when Johnny was told the dramatic circumstances of his birth. No matter whether he learned the truth as a boy or as a young man, it will have caused an emotional earthquake, evoking feelings of loss, sorrow and perhaps even guilt. One will not be the same person after receiving such information. However, we do not know when this happened to Johnny nor exactly how he reacted. According to Fikile Dyani, Johnny was never told the story, which means that he left South Africa in the belief that he was the son of Minnah Dyani, his step-mother, and must have learned the truth sometime in Europe, no doubt from a phone conversation with Minnah or a letter from her. No such letter is known to have survived. On the other hand it seems that Johnny already as a child referred to Minnah as 'grandmother'.

Johnny survived his dramatic birth and was immediately adopted by his father's elder sister, Minnah Dyani, and her husband, whose first name is not known, and he grew up as one of their children. They both originally came from Zeleni, but had, since c. 1920, been living in a house on Main Street in Tsolo Location in Duncan Village (also called Gompo), a group of townships in East London, which later, after Johnny left the country, was partly demolished as part of the apartheid government's segregation programme.

According to an article in the Daily Dispatch, November 15, 1960, Duncan Village at that time had a population of 44,295, plus some 31,000 persons occupying a shanty area of 1,745 sites. 'Crime is almost non-existent. The properties are not only well-kept but most of them have been improved by their owners. Concrete pathways have been laid out. [...] Water is laid on to the properties, and where the power lines are available, electricity is supplied. The children are well-dressed and friendly. There is an atmosphere of contentness,' read the article.

Duncan Village itself was inaugurated September 1941 by Governor-General Sir Patrick Duncan, but the Dyani family's house was a remnant of an earlier settlement.

Johnny's stepfather worked as a driver in Johannesburg and, at other times, as a clerk in the mines in Springs, and was rarely seen in the home. Johnny's stepmother took care of the children. She is the one Johnny refers to in song titles like *Grandmother's Teachings* and *Heart with Minnah's Face*. As the female head of the Radebe clan, she was often referred to as Ma Radebe. She was the mother of at least seven children, and Johnny grew up as her youngest child.

Johnny's childhood home was an eight room, one storey building, situated on Main Street no 854 in Tsolo Location. No pictures of this house seem to exist. Main Street was the only tarred street in the area. Here Minnah ran a boarding house with thirty-two beds. Black people from other parts of South Africa stayed here when they visited East London. Local musicians like Eric Nomvete and David Mzimkhulu were among the patrons, and also, at a certain time, Johnny's close friend, trumpeter Mongezi Feza.

The family kept cattle to supply the guests and people in the neighbourhood with milk. Johnny's first job was as a herdboys. One day, when Johnny was hugging a newborn calf, the mother cow attacked him and gored him severely in the heart region, and, for the rest of his life, he bore a frightening scar on his breast.

Johnny was a happy and playful child, liked by both the other kids and by his teachers in the Methodist school. The Dyani family were members of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and Johnny liked going to church.

The Dyanis were a musical family. There was a piano in the house so that the guests could be entertained. All the kids in the family played the instrument, but especially Johnny's step-brother, Nuse, was engaged in playing the piano and singing with vocal groups.

Apart from singing in the church, Johnny's first musical adventures were playing two self-made instruments, a guitar, made from an oil tin, and a one-string bass, made from a teacheast and a broomstick. He played the guitar at home and performed in the streets on the bass. Those were the days of kwela music, a popular, swinging style, which had developed in the late forties and became incredibly popular in the fifties. It was centered around the penny whistle, and an average band of kwela playing kids would consist of one, two or three penny whistlers, a guitar player and a one-string bass player.

One of the boys Johnny played with, guitarist Big Daddy, will tell his story in this book.

Johnny started playing drums and trumpet with the boy scouts and, as he grew older, with a church boy brigade.

It was Johnny's brother, Nuse, who got him into singing. Nuse played piano for two vocal groups; one was called The Boogie Brothers, the other The Five Slickers. Noticing that Johnny showed great talent for singing, he was invited to join the two groups, even though was much younger than the other Boogie Brothers and a couple of years younger than the other members of The Five Slickers. He sang in the two groups at about the same time. All members of The Five Slickers have passed away, but I managed to trace the last survivor of The Boogie Brothers, Sydney Thobile Ngxokolo, and have a short talk with him; Sydney was ill and hardly able to speak, and he passed away shortly after our conversation, which was taped and is transcribed later in this book.

PICTURE CAPTION: The picture, the only one from Tsolo Location I have been able to find, shows the funeral procession of trumpet player David Msinkhulu, c. 1959. Msinkhulu received his musical tuition from the army and was a regular member of Eric Nomvete's bands. The funeral procession walked from Duncan Village Community Centre to the graveyard. The band was a mixture of musicians from East London and Port Elizabeth. The trombonist in the middle is Mike Ngxokolo, brother of singer Sydney Ngxokolo, who sang with Johnny Dyani in The Boogie Brothers. David Msinkhulu is one of the musicians who stayed at Johnny's house, and as the Community centre was right opposite of the house of the Dyani family, Johnny is likely to have seen this procession.

Singing with these groups was on an amateur level. It was in one of the neighbour houses that Johnny would encounter jazz music on a more ambitious level.

Duncan village was quite a large area, the second largest black location in South Africa, after Soweto, but, funny enough, within walking distance of each other lived three families who would produce musicians of international recognition; the house of Dyani, the house of Mbambisa, which produced pianist / composer Tete Mbambisa, and the house of Saul, which produced singer Pinise Saul. Johnny came to the houses of the Mbambisa and Saul families as a milk delivery boy.

The Mbambisa house was about eight units away from Johnny's house. Mrs. Ida Mbambisa had a butcher shop where alcohol was served in the back room; it was what you call a shebeen. The house was quite big and also served as an informal boarding house and many touring musicians from Johannesburg and other cities would stay here when they visited East London.

In order to entertain the customers, Mrs Mbambisa had acquired a selection of instruments which were played by her sons, Fats and Tete.

When Johnny came to deliver milk, he would hang around and fiddle with the instruments, first the drums, then the bass and the piano, he even played violin. The bass became Johnny's favourite instrument, and he

and Fats formed trios with various drummers. They are not known to have performed outside the house of the Mbambisa family.

While still in school, Tete Mbambisa, who was the more ambitious of the brothers, formed a vocal group called The Four Yanks. Vocal groups were very popular in South Africa. They were modelled upon American groups like The Four Freshmen and The Hi-Los and performed the repertoire of those groups, with the addition of traditional South African tunes and compositions by contemporaries like Mackay Davashe and Ace Boya.

Tete is a highly talented musician and singer, and his group became very popular¹. To meet up with the demand, Tete eventually formed a junior version of the group, called The Junior Four Yanks. Probably at the age of eleven, Johnny Dyani joined The Junior Four Yanks as lead vocalist.

The two formations of The Four Yanks often appeared together at a show. At other occasions, the junior section would be sent to arrangements where the payment was low, or they would even perform for free. The senior Four Yanks performed a program of African and American tunes, whereas the juniors were restricted to an African repertoire.

There were three main halls for entertainment in Duncan Village, The Peacock Hall, Duncan Village Community Centre, opened in 1950 by Helen Keller, and situated right opposite of Johnny's house, and the ICU Hall (also referred to as the Kadalie Hall), in Mekeni Location. These halls housed film shows, concerts, talent nights, boxing contests etc. Johnny performed in all these halls with The Four Yanks.

He was ambitious and determined on becoming a musician. His family was very much against this idea. They thought that he neglected his school work and his duties at home and called him selfish and irresponsible. His elder brother, Fikile, would frequently turn up in the middle of Four Yanks performances and grab Johnny from the stage and drag him home, blaming him that he didn't finish his chores or that he was staying out too late.

Alongside of his stage appearances as a vocalist, Johnny would continue to practise the bass with Fats Mbambisa. The fact that Johnny was able to handle a bass at the tender age of twelve or thirteen years, tells us that he was not only a natural born musician, but, indeed, a born bassist. You don't necessarily have to be tall to be a bassist (as a grown-up, Johnny measured 165 cm or five feet five inches), but you do need to have strong fingers. It is not any boy of twelve who can play a bass. Johnny was born to become a bassist.

Two young musicians from Port Elizabeth, of coming importance to Johnny, often came to stay for weeks or even months in the Mbambisa house. They were Nick Moyake and Dudu Pukwana, both at that time shifting between alto and tenor saxes. Dudu and Johnny occasionally performed together as a duo.

A third musician who would become very near to Johnny, trumpet player Mongezi Feza, came to East London from his birthplace, Queenstown, in 1957, at the age of twelve, and started playing in a jazz band led by tenorist Eric Nomvete². He stayed with relatives in Duncan Village at would for a certain period live in Johnny's house.

PICTURE CAPTION: Andrew Gamnga training The Junior Four Yanks. From left: Gandi Galeleki Nonqgokwa, Thozamile 'Toy' Matutu, Mzwandile Andrew Gamnga, Johnny Dyani, at the Community Centre in Duncan Village. The pianist is unidentified. Camnga later became a reverend in Johannesburg and jokingly called himself 'Saint Andrew' in a letter to Johnny Dyani.

Mongezi also played with a band called Soul Jazz Men. The drummer of that band was also a promoter and was very active in the music scene of East London. He had come to South Africa from Malawi after the Second World War and was called Mwana Jono. In South Africa he was known as Dick Khoza.

In the beginning of 1961, Dick Khoza invited the senior Four Yanks to Cape Town. They took Dudu Pukwana with them as a backing musician. He would play piano and alto sax alternatively. At a show in Cape Town's Langa township, he was discovered by the white pianist Chris McGregor, who grabbed him from the show and had him join his small band.

After a successful trip, the Four Yanks returned without Dudu Pukwana.

The next year, sometime in July, August or September 1962, they were invited to Cape Town once more, and this time it happened that the soprano singer Andrew got mentally ill, and Tete Mbambisa sent a telegram to Johnny Dyani to come and replace him.

Johnny was now a member of the senior Four Yanks, by far the youngest, and with them, he enjoyed an incredibly popularity. Their repertoire, their arrangements, and dance routines were far more advanced than those of the local vocal groups in Cape Town black districts.

Cape Town was a mecca of jazz at that time, and Johnny met musicians like Chris McGregor, Cups Nkanuka, Don Tshomela, Ronnie Beer and Christopher Columbus Ngcukana. At some Sunday afternoon jams in the Langa township, drummer Louis Moholo was backing The Four Yanks. The most famous Cape Town musician, Dollar Brand, later to become known as Abdullah Ibrahim, had left the country some months before Johnny arrived.

This was to be the last formation of The Four Yanks. After a while, Tete decided to dissolve the vocal group and form a band for the coming jazz festival in Johannesburg in October 1962.

Johnny went back to East London. Like Tete, he felt torn between singing and playing. While he himself was a soprano singer, his fascination was with the voice of bass and the role it plays in the South African choir tradition. Since the early thirties, the bass had been the most important voice in the male vocal groups and choirs. Up to fifty percent of the members of a male choir could be bass singers.

A large part of the repertoire of the early South African jazz bands consisted of traditional choir songs that had been transposed to jazz band arrangements with the horns playing the parts of the various voices. Even in recent years, Abdullah Ibrahim in his septet Ekaya has used a line-up of four hornplayers to recreate the performance of a four-voice vocal group.

Johnny Dyani decided to give up singing and become a bass player.

It is often stated that Johnny made an early stage debut as a member of Eric Nomvete's ad hoc-ensemble Eric Nomvete's Big Five at the Cold Castle National Jazz Festival, held in October 1962 at the Moroka Stadium in Johannesburg, and that he is heard on the album that was issued with highlights from the festival. There is, however, no doubt that the bassist was Dannyboy Sibanyoni.³

After returning to East London, Johnny joined Eric Nomvete's band, The African Revellers Review. Mongezi Feza was in that group too. Johnny was now a regular bass player and stayed with Nomvete for

most of a year. They played a mix of dance music and African improvised jazz, mbaqanga. One of the few survivors of that band, guitarist and singer Bobby Phillip, contributes to the present book.

In 1963, Eric Nomvete picked Johnny to perform as an actor in a local variety show called *Xapa Goes to Town*. Xapa is a Transkei country boy who goes to Johannesburg in order to learn world manners so he can impress his lady teacher. The story was written by actor Hope Phillip, who himself played the title role, and the score was by Eric Nomvete, who had composed the theme *Xapa Song* as early as in 1951. Johnny played several roles, including that of a pickpocket, in the play.

The actors and musicians rehearsed for several months, until the show's first performance in King William's Town in September. In October, shortly before the show was to be staged in East London's Town Hall, a larger production from Johannesburg, *Back in Your Own Backyard*, came to East London, led by some of Johnny's personal heroes, two singers from the vocal group The Woody Woodpeckers. In the band backing the singers and dancers were pianist Pat Matshikiza, trumpeter Elijah Nkwanyana, drummer Early Mabuza, and a number of Cape Town musicians, like tenor and baritone saxophonist Christopher Columbus, trombonist Blyth Mbityana and bassist Martin Mgiijima. Johnny's friends, Dudu Pukwana and Nick Moyake, were also in the band. The show had been running in Johannesburg for some time - with Tete Mbambisa replacing Pat Matshikiza as pianist for a short spell - and was now touring the Cape Provinces.

When the show came to East London, it was deserted by the bassist and the female star, Letta Mbulu. They were replaced by *Xapa* actors Johnny Dyani and Pinise Saul, who went with the show to Cape Town, where the troupe stranded.

Johnny was sixteen years old when he left his family.

Shortly after he left East London, the demolition of Duncan Village started. The plan of the fascist government was to remove the original population of the country from the cities. Section 63 of the Bantu Law Amendment Bill removed all African rights in urban areas. The residents of Duncan Village were gradually removed to a newly developed area, Mdantsane, separated from the city by the Wilsonia industrial area, and linking up with the so-called native reserves of Ciskei. The first move from Duncan Village to Mdantsane took place in June 1964.

Back in Your Own Backyard disbanded in Cape Town, and Johnny stayed in that city for a couple of months. Singer Don Tshomela remembers him as a young dandy, the first in town to wear bellbottom trousers. He started playing with local musicians, like Ronnie Beer, without becoming a regular member of any band. He would compete with a number of very skilled bassists, George Kussel, Martin Mgiijima, and Lami Zokufa. The most famous Cape Town bassist, Johnny Gertze, had left the country in 1962. Another masterful bassist, Sammy Maritz, had been playing with Chris McGregor's Blue Notes in Johannesburg since the jazz festival in September.

The Blue Notes had won the band competition at the festival, sharing the first place with another Cape Town band, The Swinging City Six, led by tenor player Ronnie Beer. Chris McGregor got an invitation to take his band to the Antibes Jazz Festival in France in July next year.

After the jazz festival, both The Blue Notes and The Swinging City Six disbanded. When Ronnie Beer returned to Cape Town, Chris grabbed Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo and bassist Sammy Maritz from The Swinging City Six, and with Dudu and Nick already in the band, the classic line-up of The Blue Notes was almost complete.⁴

As Sammy Maritz showed unwilling to leave the country, Chris started looking for a new bassist.

Johnny was not Chris McGregor's first choice for a bass player. He tried a musician from Johannesburg, Mongezi Samson Velelo, who had done occasional stints with The Jazz Epistles, and he contacted a bassist from Cape Town, Basil Moses. Ernest Mothele also auditioned for the band but was unable to join them because of his engagement with a musical show. Louis Moholo, Dudu Pukwana and Nick Moyake recommended Johnny Dyani to Chris McGregor, and at some point in February 1964, Chris went to Cape Town to make Johnny join The Blue Notes.

After only a few weeks in the band, Johnny took part in his first recording session. The Blue Notes recorded fifteen tracks on three so-called transcription records for SABC, South African Broadcasting Corporation. These recordings have recently been made available on a bootleg CD, titled *Township Bop*.

The Blue Notes went on a nation-wide tour. A concert in Durban in April was recorded and has been released on CD a few years ago. In East London, the band performed two evening shows at the Milner Hotel (now Milner Centre). Johnny handed free tickets out to his friends and was proud to be seen and heard playing with this famous band in front of friends and family members. The band's last concert, in Cape Town, was also recorded, but remains unissued.

The recordings from this period give little warning that Johnny was going to be a world class bass player. Several sources state that he easily outplayed Chris McGregor's former bassist, Martin Mqijima, but when you compare Johnny's playing on the tune *Now* on the SABC transcription records with Sammy Maritz' playing on the Castle Lager Big Band recording of the same tune, dating just a few months before⁵, Sammy stands out as the more advanced and powerful player. One can only guess where Sammy Maritz would have gone if he had stayed with the band. On the other hand, both he and Basil Moses today praise God they didn't follow Chris McGregor to Europe, considering the fact that five of the six musicians in the band were to die an untimely death.

While Johnny yet lacked some skill, he had an enormous self-confidence and he knew he would go far.

PICTURE CAPTION: The Blue Notes leaving Cape Town after their last concert, in June 1964. Between the girls are seen Johnny Dyani, Nick Moyake, Mongezi Feza, Timmy Kwebulana (not a member of the band; Timmy was at that time a bassist and would later become a drummer and an actor), and Louis Moholo.

In July 1964 the band went to Europe. They went via Lourenco Marques, not as sometimes stated because of Johnny Dyani being under-age, but simply because they were able to obtain cheaper tickets by going from Mozambique.

The Blue Notes that left South Africa had not yet found the style that would make them famous. Their style was hard bop with Mongezi Feza being the only one showing tendencies towards free style jazz. They sounded very much like such American bands as The Jazz Messengers, but they had their own repertoire, mainly composed by Chris McGregor and Dudu Pukwana.

At the Antibes festival, the band was well received by the audience and critics, but after the festival they were stranded and survived only by busking. With the introduction of the Mixed Entertainment Act in South Africa, which forbade integrated bands, they had no intention of returning.

It was Dollar Brand, who was living in Switzerland, who managed to bring them to Zurich where he got them an engagement at the Club Africana.

After a short time in Zurich, tenorist Nick Moyake decided to return to South Africa. The Blue Notes continued as a quintet and, in the beginning of 1965, Chris managed to land an engagement at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London. Here Nick Moyake was replaced by another Cape Town musician, tenorman Ronnie Beer.

PICTURE CAPTION: The Blue Notes, as a quintet, making their official London debut. ICA, Dover Street, April 26, 1965.
© Val Wilmer

In April 1965, the band moved to London and started performing at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club. The same year they were invited to perform for a month at Copenhagen's Jazzhus Montmartre.

Influenced by meeting musicians like Albert Ayler and Don Cherry, the band's style developed into free jazz. Their fresh attitude soon gained them a following.

They did, however, not stay together for long. Johnny formed a duo with Mongezi Feza, and he started playing with people like Derek Bailey and Gato Barbieri.

In 1966 Johnny went to Rome with soprano sax player Steve Lacy, where the two performed with Aldo Romano, and later that year Lacy invited Johnny Dyani and Louis Moholo to go with him and Enrico Rava to South America.

They recorded a fine album in Argentina, *The Forest and the Zoo*, showing the enormous potential of the band, but there was no audience for their music, and the group split. With Lacy moving to New York and Rava returning to Europe, Johnny and Moholo were left behind with no money to return.

The remaining Blue Notes helped them get back to London and invited them to join their new band, The Chris McGregor Sextet, which included Dudu, Mongezi and Ronnie Beer.

Johnny was rubbing shoulders with the big names. On one occasion he sat in with Charles Mingus, whom he both considered as a hero and a rival, and he also performed with Rahsaan Roland Kirk, whose composition, *They Did It*, he entered into his own repertoire.

Johnny stayed with Chris McGregor through 1967 and 1968. The band recorded an album, *Very Urgent*, in 1968.

After leaving Chris McGregor, Johnny had shorter engagements with a variety of musicians in London, including Leo Smith, Evan Parker and Derek Bailey, John Stevens and Mike Westbrook. He was member of Dudu Pukwana's Spear and the first formation of Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath where he played bass opposite Harry Miller.

He married a British woman, Pearl, and moved in with her in the house where Evan Parker was living. The marriage didn't last long, and Johnny would eventually follow Mongezi Feza to Scandinavia.

When Johnny Dyani moved to Sweden in 1969, he was a transformed musician. Fully his own, commanding, no longer just a backing musician. A prolific composer and arranger, a self-confident person with explicit

opinions. He had been very young when he came to Europe, and the years in London had matured him. They had also been quite dangerous years that saw him delve deeply into drug and alcohol abuse, factors that may have been instrumental in opening his mind and letting his creative potential burst out in full flame. They were, however, also the factors that eventually would kill him.

From October 1969 to the early summer of 1971, Johnny played with Don Cherry. They went to Don's place in Sweden, and Johnny met the Turkish percussionist Okay Temiz. They formed a trio called Eternal Ethnic Sound. Don Cherry was the leader, and their material consisted of Don's compositions and various ethnic material; Johnny supplied them with at least one tune, a South African traditional called *Amazwe*.

In the winter 1969 / 1970, Johnny was artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, along with Don Cherry and Okay Temiz. Here he jammed with Archie Shepp, Gato Barbieri and others.

Back in London, Johnny led a quartet of himself, bass and piano, Mongezi Feza, piano and trumpet, Peter Lemer, piano, and Churchill Jolobe, drums, but he also continued to work with Don Cherry and Okay Temiz. A television appearance in Paris have been issued on two double albums, recently made available on CDs.

In december 1970, Johnny appeared as member of no less than three bands at the Baden-Baden New Jazz Meeting in Germany. He played with the seventeen piece Baden-Baden Free Jazz Orchestra led by Don Cherry (and including such musicians as Steve Lacy, Paul Rutherford, John Tchicai and John Stevens), he duelled with two other bassists, Dave Holland and Barre Phillips, in a ten member band led by Joachim Kuhn, and he played opposite Barre Phillips in a sextet led by Kuhn.

Johnny spent 1971 in London and in Paris, where he recorded an album with Al Shorter. In London he joined London's Musicians Co-Op, and led his own ensemble, Earth Quake (Johnny spelled this word Queke) Power Call, with various line-ups. On at least one occasion they performed as a trio of Johnny himself, bass, Dave Holland, cello, and A. Dunn, drums. On February 1, 1971, a constellation of Earth Quake Power Call consisting of Johnny Dyani, bass, Mongezi Feza, cornet, Paul Rutherford, trombone, Rene Augustus, drums, and singer Cynthia Lee performed Johnny Dyani's most ambitious project so far, a suite in two movements: *London (Go Home, Pickaninny, They've Got Juju on You)* and *Tanani of Z'punziville*, at the New Arts Lab in Robert Street. The subtitle of the first movement suggests that life in London wasn't to rosy for Johnny. It is uncertain whether *Tanani* is a person from Johnny's childhood. *Z'punziville*, which elsewhere is spelled *Zipuntz'ville* and *Zipunz'ville*, is probably the East London township named Ziphunzana.

The same year, Eternal Ethnic Sound performed in Copenhagen's Bristol Music Center, with Makaya Ntshoko replacing Okay Temiz on drums.

In 1972 Johnny Dyani moved to Denmark, where Mongezi was living with his Danish wife, and where Dollar Brand had built up a following and had gained status of cult hero at the local Jazzhus Montmartre. Dollar had in the meantime converted to Islam and changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim, and he persuaded Johnny to follow him.

Converting to Islam has for some people proven to be a way out of drug and alcohol abuse. This was not the case for Johnny who was fighting these habits until his last years. Johnny was a religious mind, and one of his personal prayers to God is reproduced elsewhere in this book. Wherever he went, he kept with him a well-worn copy of the Penguin Books edition of N.J. Dawood's English translation of the Koran.

He also owned Idara Ishaat-E-Diniyat's *Teachings of Islam*, and subscribed to *Muslim News Scandinavia*. He took the Moslem name Akhir, through he rarely used it. While living in London, among the black South Africans in exile, he had, in order to strengthen his African identity, taken his father's African first name, Mbizo (a Xhosa word meaning 'gathering'), noticing that it also formed a word play on 'bass'.

He moved in with a Danish girl, Janne Dirch Petersen, and adopted her son, Thomas, who has later become a well recognized percussionist under the name Thomas Akuru Dyani. With Janne, Johnny had two daughters, Hasannah, born 1975, and Tandi, born 1977.

Johnny started playing and recording with local musicians and visitors like Khan Jamal and Joe Bonner. In 1972 he toured Germany with Abdullah Ibrahim, Sathima Bea Benjamin, Don Cherry, Carlos Ward and Nana Vasconcelos in a band called Universal Silence. This band was led by Ibrahim and performed mainly his repertoire. Despite the name they were quite loud. Abdullah Ibrahim explained the name with this sentence: 'What you hear is only the sound of your inner ear.'

At the end of the year, Johnny and Mongezi Feza played in a trio with Abdullah Ibrahim in Copenhagen and did a session for Danish Radio. When Ibrahim left Europe to return to South Africa, Johnny and Mongezi formed a trio in Stockholm with Okay Temiz. The band was called Music for Xaba - Xaba means God in Xhosa - and they performed an exciting mix of Johnny's compositions and South African traditional songs. Music for Xaba was one the hottest trios the world has ever heard. Mongezi's wife, KiJo Feza, who occasionally sang with the group, explains their music as 'the South African heart beat, transposed to jazz'.

They were a different trio from Eternal Ethnic Sound. Mongezi Feza didn't take over Don Cherry's role as bandleader. When Mongezi played in big bands, the bigger musicians would often push in the background. Music for Xaba was an ideal context for him. No one would push him away. He was exactly one third of the ensemble, and he didn't want to be more than that.

Instead, it was Johnny, Mongezi's junior, who started developing abilities as a leader and main supplier of material for the band. He was now far from the shy bassist of The Blue Notes he once was. He had become a very dominant musician and was responsible for most of the band's compositions. Music for Xaba released three LPs, none of which have yet been reissued on CD.

In the beginning of 1973, Music for Xaba went to Okay Temiz' homeland, Turkey, and they were supposed to play at some Scandinavian festivals that summer, but they split when Mongezi returned to London where Chris McGregor wanted him for some gigs. This is where he would die two years later.

Johnny recorded an album with Okay Temiz in Turkey, and it was here he got the idea to form a band called Witchdoctor's Son, originally the title of a composition of his.

From 1973 until his death in 1986, a main part of Johnny's energy was used on different quartets, quintets, sextets and septets who all appeared under his leadership and under the name of Witchdoctor's Son.

These bands would include Scandinavian musicians like Pierre Dørge, Ulf Ådaker, Krister Andersson, Jesper Zeuthen, Palle Mikkelborg, John Tchicai, South Africans like Jonas Gwangwa, Ernest Mothle, Makaya Ntshoko, Gilbert Matthews, Peter Radise, Bheki Mseleku, and Dudu Pukwana, and people from virtually every part of the world, Mohammed al-Jabry from Kenya and South Americans like Alfredo do Nascimento and Luiz 'Chuim' Carlos de Sequeira. Johnny got Don Cherry under his wing, as well as Harry Beckett and Doudou Gouirand.

In 1973, Johnny toured Europe with Abdullah Ibrahim's big band African Space Program, and the same year he recorded the first of two duo albums with Abdullah. The constellation of Johnny, deeply rooted in a Xhosa background, and Abdullah, who grew up in the middle of the musical syncretism of Cape Town, both now being united in the Moslem faith, produced music of remarkable, perhaps unsurpassed beauty.

In 1975, Mongezi Feza died at the age of 30, leaving Johnny and the other members of The Blue Notes in shock, and the band reunited to record a tribute album to him. This double album consists of a several hours long improvised session and was by one critic described as one of the best jazz albums ever.

At around the same time, Johnny became part of a band in Copenhagen called United Nations. Johnny played a Fender electric piano and probably also bass, Jesper Zeuthen played tenor saxophone, Hugh Steinmetz trumpet, Mohammed al-Jabry congas, Georgeo Musoni African drums, Ivan Krill a regular drum kit - though with an African drum as bass drum. They performed a mixture of Johnny's and Mohammed al-Jabry's compositions. They did a few gigs in Copenhagen and, in February 1975, recorded a yet unissued album at Hugh Steinmetz' studio.

In the winter 1976/77, the ANC invited Johnny to join the World Festival of African Arts and Culture (FESTAC), in Lagos, where Johnny met people like Sun Ra and Milford Graves, and South Africans like Jonas Gwangwa and Miriam Makeba. Johnny's own recollections about this event are reprinted in the section of interviews in this book. Later in 1977, he toured Tanzania and Zambia with Louis Moholo.

Back in Europe in 1977 he performed at The Workshop Freie Musik in Berlin with three other bassists. He went to USA with Abdullah Ibrahim and recorded a big band album with him and Don Cherry.

In the late seventies, he occasionally toured Europe with a new incarnation of The Blue Notes, now a quartet of Johnny, Chris McGregor, Louis Moholo and Dudu Pukwana. Chris McGregor was no longer considered leader of the group. On one occasion, probably in 1979, Johnny, Chris and Dudu went into a studio in Belgium and recorded a whole album under Johnny's leadership, an outstanding album that still remains to be issued.

In the same period Johnny toured and recorded with musicians like David Murray, Lawrence 'Butch' Morris, Kees Hazevoet and Han Bennink. Even though Johnny's music was based on repetition and the typical South African fondness for simple and beautiful melodies, he had no trouble playing with free style jazz musicians. Johnny's bass would become the fixed point around which the other musicians revolved.

The avantgarde is usually believed to be creating new concepts and exploring new space. When looked at more closely, the avantgarde experiments often reveal themselves as nothing else than the rediscovery of ancient principles, an awakening of primordial layers. So, at the same time as Abdullah Ibrahim, Don Cherry and Johnny Dyani were being hailed by the European jazz avantgarde scene, Abdullah and Johnny were busy rediscovering the fundamentals of Xhosa chanting, and Don Cherry was seen playing on ancient tribal instruments, like the doussn'gouni.

Johnny didn't regard himself as a jazz musician, but as a folk musician, and his music became more and more difficult to label. He often explained it as a mix of everything and developed the term sk'enke (Afrikaans for giving) to signify his music as a mix of elements like soul, funk, jazz, African tribal music, and even punk rock.

He was able to express virtually any human emotion with his instrument. His bass playing developed into something incredible. Few bassists have explored their instruments like he did. He didn't restrict himself to the strings, he could play on the body of the bass and he could play for a long time on the neck only. Pictures like the one on the front cover of the present book and the one facing the titlepage show him and his bass as one living organism.

Johnny Dyani was a peaceful and friendly person but he did have a large amount of aggression which at certain times would explode. We have at least two reports of Johnny leaving the stage in the middle of a concert to walk down among the audience and knock down a drunk and noisy person.

At another memorable occasion, after a concert in Aarhus, Denmark, Johnny, after an argument over money grabbed his brand new tape recorder which had been donated to him by Sony, and smashed it completely. After finishing with the tape recorder, he took his own bass, the very bass that had been given to him by Dick Khoza and which he had carried with him all the way from Africa, and started smashing it. When he was unable to break it any further that way, he started jumping upon it until it was all splinters. He then started gathering paper and furniture in a pile, wanting to burn down the house.

In Sweden he once attacked his friend, the artist Harvey Cropper, with a broken bottle.

Johnny was a traumatized person, like all black South Africans who have experienced apartheid. Eventually, he would suffer a nervous breakdown, and finally, in 1980, he left his family and moved to Sweden, where he was based for the last six years of his life. He found a new girlfriend, Magdalene Andersson, with who he stayed until his death.

Based in Sweden he continued to perform with various incarnations of Witchdoctor's Son. They played at most of the major European jazz festivals. He also became a regular member of Swedish saxophonist Christer Boustedt's trio, with another South African-in-exile, Gilbert Matthews, on drums. This ensemble can now finally be heard on a double CD with live performances, released earlier this year.

Johnny did stints with many other musicians, like guitarist Derek Bailey in his one-time ensemble Company, at the ICA in London, 1978, and he sat in with Steve Grossman in Paris the same year, where he, according to a reviewer, left the scene after two tunes with the words: 'Play yourself, man, don't play politics!'

During the years 1982 to 1986, Johnny played in a trio called Detail, with Norwegian sax player Frode Gjerstad and British drummer John Stevens of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. The band was sometimes augmented with musicians like Eivin One Pedersen, Paul Rutherford, Courtney Pine, Bobby Bradford and Harry Beckett.

Detail is a much neglected band, perhaps because their records are badly distributed. But, in fact, Johnny made more recordings with Detail than with any other band.

Even though the set-up of a horn, bass and drums, resembles that of Music for Xaba, Detail was a completely different ensemble. First of all, their music was much more varied. They didn't only play loud, and they didn't only play up-tempo. Their music was often cool, rather than hot; it could be both very loosely structured and very contemplative. Where Music for Xaba restricted themselves to a certain repertoire, mainly consisting of Johnny's compositions, Detail never played the same thing twice. There were no melodies, no recurring themes, it was all improvised music, born on the spot.

They released no less than nine recordings, some of which only came out as privately produced cassette tapes.

In 1982, ANC invited Johnny to come to the Festival of Culture and resistance in Gaborone, Botswana. This was the closest he ever came to his homeland.

PICTURE CAPTION: Barney Rachabane, Jonas Gwangwa, Johnny Dyani, Dennis Mpale. Botswana 1982.

Even at a time when Johnny had gained a position as a highly respected bandleader, he was still able to appear as a top-reliable backing musician for musicians like vibraphonist Khan Jamal, never trying to steal the picture from the leader. He would often play a very simple bass figure of two, three or four notes, and after a while start elaborating it, until he was allowed to take a solo.

He was a remarkable soloist. He could play solo for fifteen minutes or more, and would never show tendencies towards mannerism. Occasionally, like at the Zürcher Jazz festival in 1981, he would simply appear on his own, as solo player. Or he would invite Makaya Ntshoko to take part in a bass-and-drum duet, like it happened at the festival just mentioned, and during their last USA tour in 1986.

Johnny had problems. He felt neglected and even though he constantly received fine reviews and was much in demand as a musician, he didn't make a lot of money.

He started shifting to piano. The piano had been his second instrument since his young days in South Africa, and he had developed into a very skilled pianist, even though the reviewers kept comparing him unfavourably with Abdullah Ibrahim.

When he led his own ensembles, he would frequently simply add a bassist or bass guitarist to the line-up and himself stick to the piano. He may have felt that his original instrument, the bass, was becoming a hinderance. Pianists simply get more attention than bassists.

There was one exception: Charles Mingus. Johnny was probably beginning to realize that he would never be able to achieve what Mingus had done.

His feelings towards Mingus were split between admiration and rivalry. There is little doubt that he had tried to model himself over Mingus and dreamed of gaining a position similar to that of Mingus. Johnny felt he deserved it.

Johnny was an outsider, coming from a background that was obscure to most Western audiences. Mingus, however, had from an early point been part of a scene that was the focus of the whole jazz world. Johnny would never be able to reach Mingus' status, no matter how good a bassist he was.

Another thing that increasingly worried him was the situation in South Africa. The country was getting close to a state of civil war, and Johnny constantly received news of how his family and friends were being forcibly removed and imprisoned, and how many of them died an untimely death. Among them was his brother Nuse, who died around New Year 1981. Johnny became political engaged and was, during the last years of his life, the cultural attaché of the ANC in Stockholm. In 1984 he was co-founder and committee member of the Swedish Artister mod Apartheid (Artists against Apartheid).

Dick Khoza had invited Johnny to come and join his big band, which included fellow East Londoners Tete Mbambisa and Aubrey Simani, but Johnny didn't go. He no longer held a South African passport, and his

activities within the ANC would have made it impossible for him to return to his home country. The Apartheid government kept a close eye on the exiles.

In 1983 he appeared at the memorial concert in Stockholm for Ghanaian conga player Anthony 'Reebop' Kwaku Baah, who passed away at the age of thirty-nine - like Johnny himself would do, just three years later.

In 1984-85 Johnny was a member of Pierre Dørge's New Jungle Orchestra and played opposite bassist Hugo Rasmussen. Hugo played a traditional bassline, whereas Johnny was free to improvise. In the Jungle Orchestra, he also played the role of the clown, appearing with Elton John-like sunglasses with windscreen wipers. A Danish reviewer called him infantile.

In 1985 Johnny wrote and performed the soundtrack for a Swedish TV film, *Apartheid*, produced by Anne Percy and Judy Scott.

That year, on October 30, he celebrated what he believed was his 30th birthday.

His health was by then deteriorating. Many years of drinking and drug abuse had taken their tolls, and even though he had given up those habits completely, they had already caused him fatal damage. And when the symptoms began to show, he neglected them. He knew he was ill, but he was afraid of doctors. More than once he told his Swedish girlfriend, Magdalena, that he one day would come home in a box.

1986 was to become Johnny's last year.

He toured extensively. He was in Germany with Chris McGregor's big band South African Exiles' Thunderbolt, and he was in England with Detail and Chris McGregor's quartet Azania.

He went to America as member of New Jungle Orchestra and had barely returned before he went on a similar tour to USA and Canada with Witchdoctor's Son. When he returned to Europe, he went directly to rehearse with his new band, The Johnny Dyani South Africa Project, which included Ernest Mothe, bass, John Tchicai, saxophone, Harry Beckett, trumpet, Thomas Dyani, percussion, and Makaya Ntshoko, drums. He had sent invitations to South Africa to get his old mates, Dennis Mpale, Tete Mbambisa, Winston Mankunku, and guitarist Sandile Shange to come to Europe to join the band, but Johnny's planning was bad, the invitations were sent with so short notice that there wasn't a chance for the musicians to get their passports ready, and, furthermore, the financial part of the project was uncertain.

Before leaving Sweden, Johnny was chocked to hear that his close friend, saxophonist Christer Boustedt, had passed away suddenly.

The Johnny Dyani South African Project's Germany tour was arranged in cooperation with the Jazz gegen Apartheid project, led by Jürgen Leinhos in Frankfurt. Jürgen is a contributor to the present book. The tour was planned to run from October 15 to November 11.

PICTURE CAPTION: Last picture. On lit-de-parade in Germany. © Anne Percy

On the tour was also singer Pinise Saul, Johnny's childhood friend. She was to experience the strange fate of performing with three members of The Blue Notes at their very last concerts, first Johnny, and four years later, Chris McGregor, and, a month after him, Dudu Pukwana.

The tour opened in a location called Quartier Latin in Berlin, as part of the Berlin Festival, on October 16. The day before the first concert, Johnny had locked himself up in his hotel room, complaining about stomach pains.

On the day of the concert, he conducted the rehearsals lying on the floor. But in the evening he was in great shape, and the concert went well, a video recording exists and shows no sign that Johnny was on the edge of dying.

After the concert, Johnny collapsed backstage, and before the ambulance arrived, he had gone into a coma from which he only woke up occasionally.

He was brought to the Elizabeth Krankenhaus. The band continued the tour, while Thomas Dyani stayed with his stepfather. After ten days in coma, Johnny Dyani died on October 26, 1986. He had been diagnosed with hepatitis B, but the cause of death was a throat haemorrhage. Johnny Dyani was thirty-nine years old.

PICTURE CAPTION: The funeral. From left Thandi Dyani, Magdalena Andersson, Minnah Dyani, Janne Dirch Petersen, Hasannah Dyani, unknown.

Johnny's body was taken to East London, followed by his Danish and Swedish girlfriends and his three children. His father, Ebenezer Mbizo Ngxongwana, had died earlier the same year. The local press, as well as the Johannesburg papers and magazines like Drum, covered his death and funeral extensively. Even though the majority of the black and coloured population, even in his home town, had little idea of the extent of his fame and career, he had now achieved the status of a hero, and the fact that his body was escorted by two white wives (some no doubt believed him to have been a bigamist) was a joyful experience in the midst of apartheid's hell.

Johnny was buried in Zeleni Mbaxa on Sunday, November 16. He was given a Christian funeral, despite the fact that he was a Muslim. The ceremony, led by Reverend R. Qaba, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, took place in Mdantsane Civic Hall, in the township where his family was now living.

Reverend Qaba started his sermon with quoting Psalm 71, verse 21, 'You will increase my greatness and comfort me on every side,' and he spoke of being a Christian in a non-Christian world, no doubt a theme that was popular among the black people suffering under apartheid's false Christianity, but, with Johnny being a converted Moslem, perhaps a bit out of place.

Simo Mjo was Master of Ceremonies. Among the speakers were Douglas 'Sax' Manuel, Dr. Msauli, playwright Julius Mtsaka and Sydney Ngxokolo. It was an unusual funeral where many of the speakers made the audience laugh as they recalled merry incidents from the past.

A number of vocal groups performed, among which was Tete Mbambisa's quartet who sang *It's a Blue World Without You*, and The Black Voices, an ensemble which included Johnny's fellow-Four Yank, Tsurie Mahashe. They had composed a tune to Johnny's memory, titled *Oh, Johnny Dyani*. Earlby Ngquisha appeared with The Wayback Sound, and the big band Vuka, featuring tenorist Tally Goduka, played.

Some years after the funeral, Hazel Miller of Johnny Dyani's British record label Ogun Records and Dudu Pukwana's widow, Barbara, had a stone erected on Johnny grave.

Back in Europe, memorial concerts were held at Pub Sparta, Lund, in Stockholm, and in Copenhagen's Jazzhus Montmartre, on November 16, with performances by musicians like Per-Henrik Wallin, Ed Epstein, Doug Rainey, New Jungle Orchestra, Anders Bergcrantz, Håkan Rydin, and Ulf Rådelius. Joe Bonner, Khan Jamal and Marilyn Mazur were among the eleven members of an ad hoc band called Friends of Johnny. At the Jazz Fest Berlin, October 30 to November 2, Johnny was remembered by both Abdullah Ibrahim, Don Cherry and Louis Moholo. On December 2, 1986, Chris McGregor met with Dudu Pukwana and his band, Zila, and with Louis Moholo and his band, Viva la Black, in a memorial concert in London's Club 100.

Johnny died at the height of his career. He was filled with ideas and deeply engaged in developing his new concept of sk'enke music.

Johnny Dyani appeared on about seventy records, and a lot of recordings still remain unissued. He composed over two hundred tunes, only some sixty of which have been made available on records. Since Johnny was reluctant to write his music down, a large number of these compositions must be regarded as lost.

The early demise of Johnny Dyani and his fellow Blue Notes, Nick Moyake, Mongezi Feza, Chris McGregor and Dudu Pukwana, is one of the greatest tragedies to happen to South African jazz. Had those gifted musicians been able to return to their country, they would no doubt have brought a vast contingent of lost musicians back to the stage and helped revive the whole music scene of South Africa.

Instead, that once so powerful scene is becoming the same as in most other countries: just another industry. The extensive use of synthesizers has pulled the teeth out of the music, and the old musicians are given little chance to perform and record their original compositions. Especially neglected is the Eastern Cape scene.

It is now the eleventh hour for these musicians. South Africa is about to lose a treasure worth more than all its gold and diamonds. We must therefore deeply appreciate the recent founding of a jazz society in East London.

The Dyani-Pukwana Foundation was created in East London in 2001 on the initiative of a local dynamo, record dealer and promoter Albert Spaargaren. The first Trustees of the Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation are Island Siqithi Maqoma, Nosipho Damasane, Derrick Ian Swartz, Lesley Ann Foster, Michael Frank du Toit, and Albert Arend Spaargaren.

The objects of the Foundation are defined thus:

'The principal object of the Trust is to promote the development and appreciation of jazz music in the Province of the Eastern Cape, Republic of South Africa, especially among previously disadvantaged individuals and communities.

The principal object shall be realised through, but not limited to, the following activities:

Making funds available for informal education in jazz music to deserving candidates, who have no means of enrolling in established institutions;

Making funds available for the promotion of jazz music education in formal institutions, such as schools and universities;

Making funds available for events and venues at which jazz music shall be performed and which will lead to a greater appreciation of jazz music by the public, especially among previously disadvantaged individuals and communities;

Receiving and distributing allocations from various institutions, such as the National Lottery, Arts and Culture Departments and the business community.

Fundraising by means of voluntary grants, contributions and donations by public bodies, other organisations and/or members of the public.'

I wish the Foundation the best of luck with their activities.

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NOTES

¹ Some of The Four Yanks' recordings are found on various South African CD compilations, such as *Township Jazz 'n' Jive* (Music Club 50041), including Tete Mbambisa's compositions *Ubuhlungu* and *Dudu Wam*, and *From Marabi to Disco* (Gallo CDZAC61), including Tete's composition *Msenge*. Johnny Dyani is not heard on any of these recordings

² The best source to Eric Tile Dinsdale Nomvete's life (1920-1999) is Yvonne Huskisson's book, *Bantu Composers of Southern Africa*, Johannesburg, SABC, 1969. Eric Nomvete was a social worker in East London. He was taught saxophone by Gwigwi Mrwebi. From 1955, he lead a music school, The Tileric Music Studios, and led bands like The Rhythm Swingsters, The Hi-Tide Harmonicats, The African Quavers, The Havana Swingsters, The Jazz Giants, and Eric Nomvete's Big Five. According to Fikile Dyani, Eric Nomvete stayed in the Dyani family's boarding house for some time, along with trumpeter David Msinkhulu. By 1960, Nomvete was residing in Welsh Street, Duncan Village.

Eric included Johnny in his lunch-hour band, The African Revellers Review. According to Yvonne Huskisson, he led this ensemble from 1957-59. Bobby Phillip's contrary statement in the present book, that the band was in existence in the early sixties, seems to be confirmed by Huskisson's statement that the musical play, *Xapa Goes to Town* (staged in 1963), was composed for this ensemble.

³ Johnny's participation in the festival has been under debate. Speaking for his participation is Pulle Twaku, who remembers him going off and returning triumphantly, musician and jazz historian Enoch Gqomo, and Mongezi Feza's widow, Kirsten Johanne Feza Sonne, who states that Mongezi told her that he and Johnny played together at the festival. Speaking against is Pat Pasha, Louis Moholo and Tete Mbambisa, who all appeared at the festival, and Johnny himself, who in an interview recalls that he refused to participate in the jazz festivals because he didn't like the idea of competing (the jazz festivals were basically competitions, with several trophies to be won).

The Big Five were formed for the occasion and consisted of Eric Nomvete on tenor sax, Mongezi Feza on trumpet (his first big stage appearance), 'Shakes' Mgudlwa on piano, Dick Khoza on drums, and a bassist. In his liner notes to the album from the festival, Julian Beinart states that Eric Nomvete's Big Five actually

were a sextet, but no sixth instrument can be heard on the record, and Enoch Gqomo, a P.E. musician who is currently writing the jazz history of the Eastern Cape, only recalls five musicians appearing. Newspaper reviews also mention the band as a quintet. Eric Nomvete's regular bassist was Daniel Morolong, and he would later use Tych 'Big T' Ntsele as bassist. Tych, who is still active with The Soul Jazz Men in P.E., states clearly that he didn't play at the festival. Tete Mbambisa, however, remembers that the bassist was Dannyboy Sibanyoni, as actually stated on the album cover.

On the record that came out with highlights from the festival, The Big Five are featured with a Nomvete composition titled *Pondo Blues*, no doubt inspired by the white-against-black massacre that took place in Pondoland, around the time of the more known Sharpeville Massacre.

The bass playing on this tune is very rudimentary; the bassist delivers a short figure in the beginning, right after the horn intro, and then seemingly stalls. *Pondo Blues* is a quite simple composition. Apart from the trumpet and sax solos, the whole performance basically consists of the repetition of a seven note figure. Does the sound of the bass drown in the unison playing of the other musicians, or was the bassist unable to provide a regular bassline for the tune?

Dannyboy, who would later play with Elite Swingsters, was definitely no amateur at that time, but he had been absent from the scene because of an unsuccessful burglary attempt in Cape Town, in 1959, that left him with two broken legs and kept him hospitalized and in jail for a couple of years. His return to the Johannesburg jazz scene shortly before the festival triggered an unfavourable review in Drum Magazine (the reviewer, obviously unaware of what had kept him away, stated that Dannyboy's time in Cape Town had done nothing good to his playing). He was later to perform regularly with 'Shakes' Mgudlwa, and I find it likely that it is him heard on the record.

Pulle Twaku remembers Johnny returning from the festival, bursting of pride of the ensemble winning the third price in the band competition. On the other hand, Pulle states that Johnny and Mongezi appeared at the jazz festival after having left East London after the staging of *Xapa Goes to Town*, an event that took place one year later, in 1963, so I believe that he - a most reliable eye and ear witness to Johnny's early career - is mistaken at this point.

All other coming members of the classical Blue Notes line-up appeared at the festival, but in different ensembles. Mongezi played with Eric Nomvete, Chris McGregor, who had not yet coined the right name for his group, appeared as leader of Chris McGregor and His Septet (with Sammy Maritz on bass), Louis Moholo played drums in The Jazz Ambassadors, another Cape Town ensemble, led by 'Cups and Saucers' Nkanuka, and Dudu Pukwana and Nick Moyake appeared with Tete Mbambisa in The Jazz Giants, a quintet which had Makaya Ntshoko on drums and Martin Mgijima on bass (this band has nothing to do with the band of the same name that at a certain time was led by Eric Nomvete).

The album *Cold Castle National Festival Moroka Jabuva Jazz 1962* was released on LP by New Sound in 1962, and on CD by Teal in 1991

⁴ On the formation of the Blue Notes, see my previous book, *Cape Town Jazz 1959-1963. The Photographs of Hardy Stockmann*. Copenhagen, The Booktrader, 1999. The following musicians are known to have appeared under the name The Blue Notes: pianist Chris McGregor, altoist Dudu Pukwana, tenorists Nick Moyake and Ronnie Beer, tenorist and baritone saxophonist Christopher Columbus Ngcukana, trumpetists Elijah Nkwanyana and Mongezi Feza, singer KiJo Feza, bassists Martin Mgijima, Sammy Maritz, Mongezi Samson Velelo and Johnny Dyani, drummers Monty Weber, Early Mabuza and Louis Moholo. The

predecessor of The Blue Notes, The Chris McGregor Septet, included other musicians, such as altoist Danayi Dlova and trombonist Willie Nettle

⁵ The album, Chris McGregor and the Castle Lager Big Band: *Jazz The African Sound*, recorded September 16-17, 1963, was released on LP by Gallo in 1963, and on CD by Teal in 1991

