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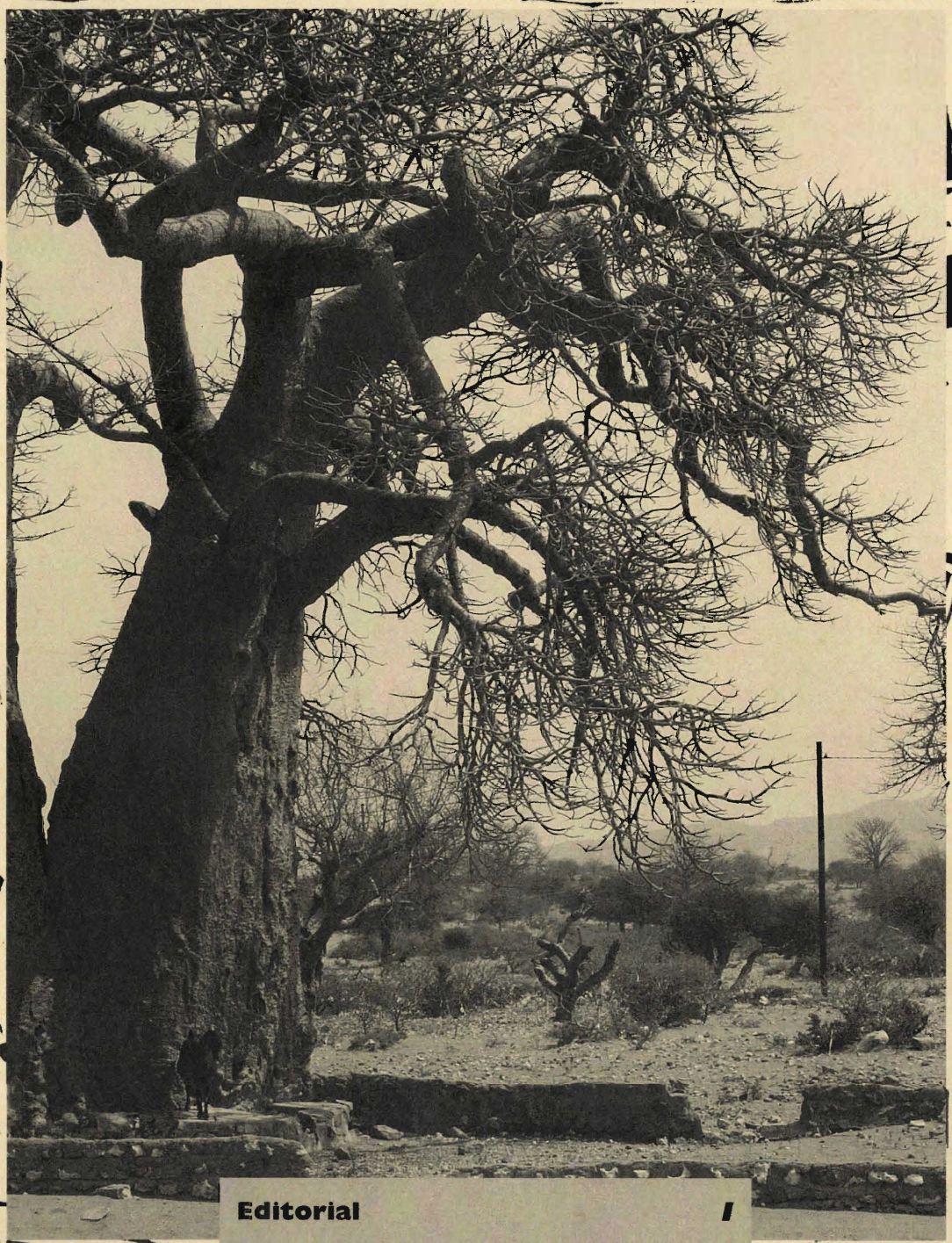

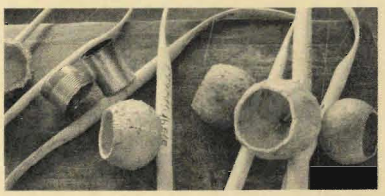

The Talking Drum • **Newsletter Issue No. 32** • **December 2009** • **ISSN 2073-3968**
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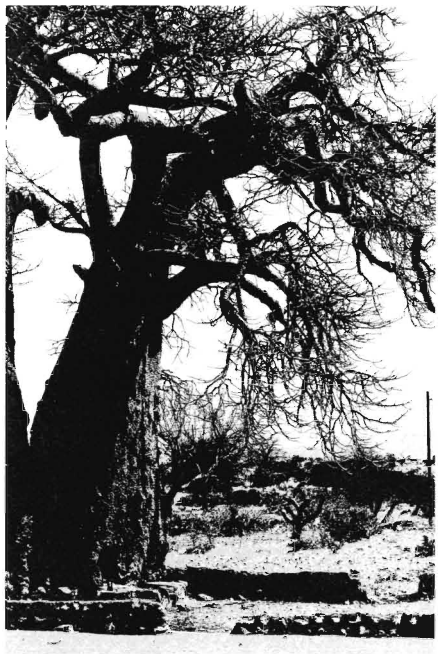
Editorial

South Africa's matriculants of 2008 were the first products of a controversial outcomes based education (OBE). Described by some as deeply flawed, even outlandish, OBE is blamed for prioritising the shaping of attitudes and dispositions over the development of (even basic) skills. In addition, it not only is charged with imposing an excessive administrative burden on teachers, but also confusing them with a maze of learning outcomes and assessment standards.

In response, changing policy now emphasises the importance of numeracy and literacy, and of a return to prescribed texts. Learning outcomes and assessment standards are to be replaced by a more concise and coherent framework structured according to content, concepts and skills.

The impact of this policy change on musical arts education is becoming evident only gradually. Initially combined with life orientation in the intermediate phase (grade 4–6), the creative arts (formerly arts and culture) now form part of general studies. This learning area also includes moral education, religious studies and physical education. While the motivation for and nature of this somewhat amorphous learning area is debatable, the cohabitation of the creative arts with moral education and religious studies is serendipitous, given the role of the musical arts in interpreting and shaping human worlds.



In this role lies an educational challenge, namely to generate socially relevant, innovative teaching-learning material. The production and dissemination of such material is one of the objectives of the research project *Musical Arts in South Africa: resources and applications*. This project was launched in the School of Music at North-West University in 2008. The overall objective of the project is the documentation of selected forms of indigenous musical knowledge and their application in musical arts education, musicology and teacher training. This issue of *The Talking Drum* accordingly is sponsored by the project, and it aims at disseminating ideas for creative teaching.

The roads mapped out by *Musical Arts in South Africa* have direction, but they are bumpy and extensive. They cannot be traversed successfully by a small group only: we are dependent on all other travellers with the same destination. Please join us by writing to project leader Hetta Potgieter (Hetta.Potgieter@nwu.ac.za).

The material in this issue mostly derives from Tshivenda-speaking communities living in the Limpopo corridor. The cover of this issue of *The Talking Drum* features a striking local natural feature, namely the majestic baobab tree. Both of prehistoric origin, baobabs and music-making sustain life in this neglected corner of the world: the tree provides shelter, food and water to its impoverished inhabitants, while music-making helps them to make sense of their existence. I hope you enjoy the lessons that this part of our country has to offer.

Jaco Kruger
Issue Editor

Lessons for life: music, history, mathematics and literature

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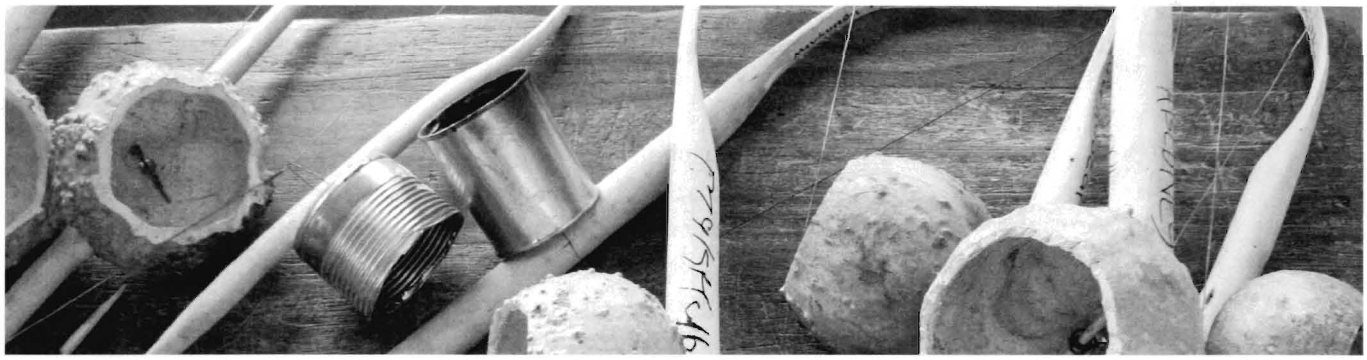
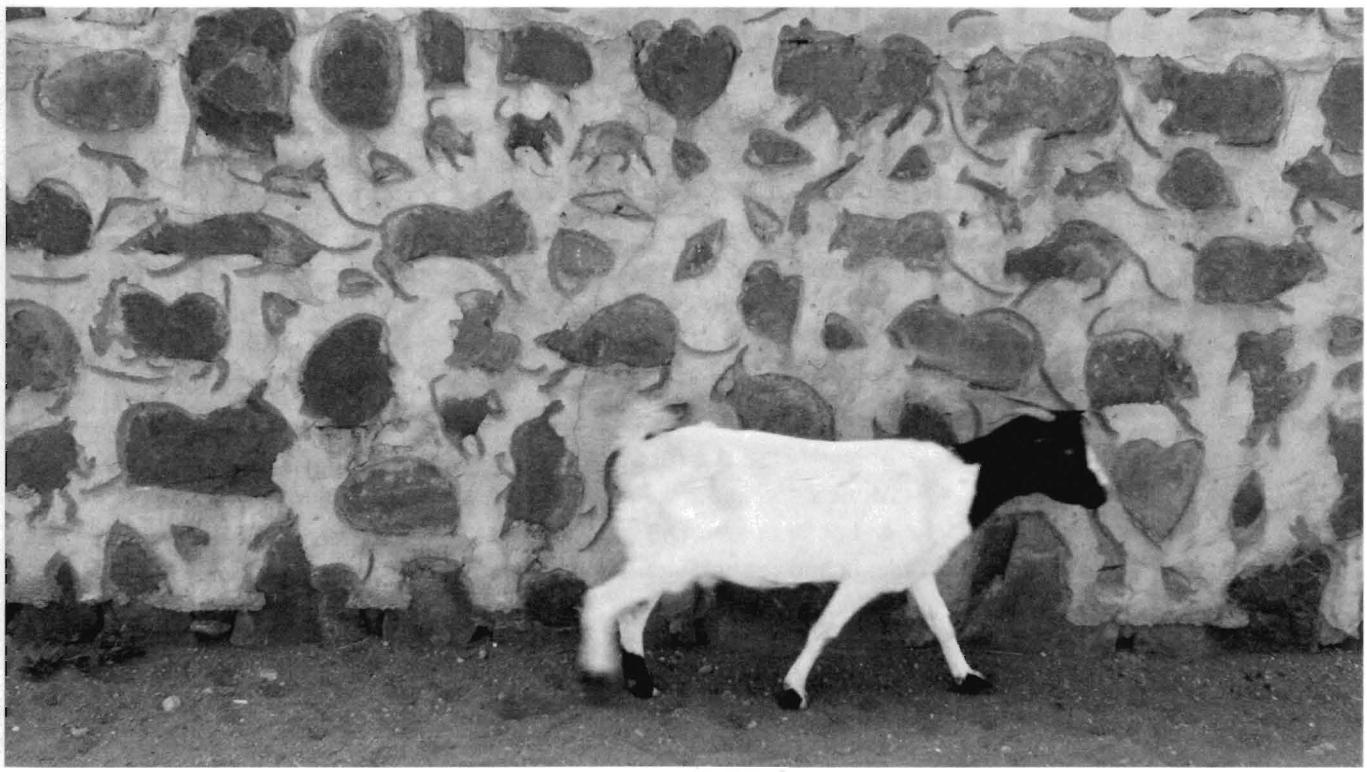


In keeping with the placing of the creative arts in the general studies learning area, this issue of *The Talking Drum* links musical knowledge with other systems of knowledge and experience. Ironically, this objective aligns itself with a valuable critical outcome in OBE, namely understanding of the world as a set of related systems. Accordingly, the first lesson links with history, and it investigates songs as historical documents; the second lesson describes a musical game, and it explores links with basic memory and mathematical concepts; the last lesson deals with music and literature, and it reveals a form of moral education.

The lessons are aimed broadly at the intermediate phase (grade 4–6), and the pursuit of objectives and presentation of lesson material is relative to requirements for the respective grades, local conditions and the preferences of teachers. Also, given the many uncertainties currently accompanying curriculum change, lesson objectives and activities are generic. For the lessons that involve mathematical concepts and literature, teachers may consult the Department of Education's detailed Foundations for Learning Assessment Framework and Lesson Plans for numeracy and literacy (www.education.gov.za). Also, as part of the interim phase, lesson objectives and activities retain some useful terminology and teaching strategies from OBE.



Music and history

This lesson series explores two songs that are historical documents. These songs are *President Brand*, an Afrikaans song about a series of events from 19th century South African history, and *Tshakutshatsha*, a Tshivenda song that is part of an oral testimony about precolonial African farming practices.

This presentation starts with information for the teacher. This is followed by a presentation and analysis of the songs. The presentation concludes with a lesson plan.

1. Information for the teacher

1.1 Definition of key concepts

History

History simply may be described as a sequence of past social and/or natural events.

Historiography

Historiography is the recording and critical writing of history.

Historiography is part of a general concern to understand the world we live in. Such understanding is necessary in order for us to lead meaningful lives. Historiography specifically interprets past events so that we better may be able to understand the present and even predict the future.

In its crudest form social historiography involves a chronological record of the dates of important political events. However, contemporary historiography has become a diverse and nuanced form of knowledge gathering. Political history now is only one of many forms of history that record social life. Accordingly, history is viewed through lenses like the economy, health, the arts, sport, religion, warfare, gender, migration patterns, clothing, climate changes and urbanisation. Secondly, history decreasingly is treated not as a mere succession of important events, but rather as sequential events within particular contexts, without whose study the full meanings of these events will not emerge.

Musical history

Musical history refers to a sequence of musical events from the past.

Music historiography

Music historiography describes the nature and role of music in historical processes. This area of study focuses on how musical performance accommodates and participates in social change.

Written and oral history

Written and oral forms of history are not mutually exclusive. The former relies predominantly on written sources such as correspondence, diaries, agreements, court records, proclamations and laws. But literate societies usually also have strong oral traditions, so that historical accounts may be based on both written and oral sources (see the discussion of the song *President Brand*).

Oral history in turn relies mainly on the verbal transmission of knowledge. In societies where the latter predominates, history, social customs and laws are contained in the collective memory of people. These forms of knowledge are deposited in initiation school laws, healing rituals, songs, dances, oral narratives and in visual codes like dress, beadwork, masks, wall art and sculpture.

1.2 Lesson objectives

General objectives

Main objective:

Learners must be able to show basic understanding of the world as a set of related systems, with particular reference to the links between musical performance and history.

Specific objectives:

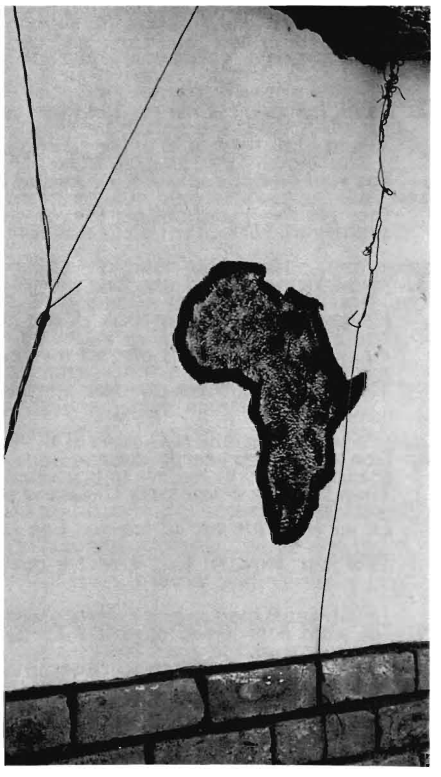
Learners must be able to

- demonstrate basic critical thinking in explaining the histories and song lyrics provided;
- display basic self-management by answering questions and finding their own examples of musical histories;
- collaborate in performing (communicating) two songs.

Learning objectives

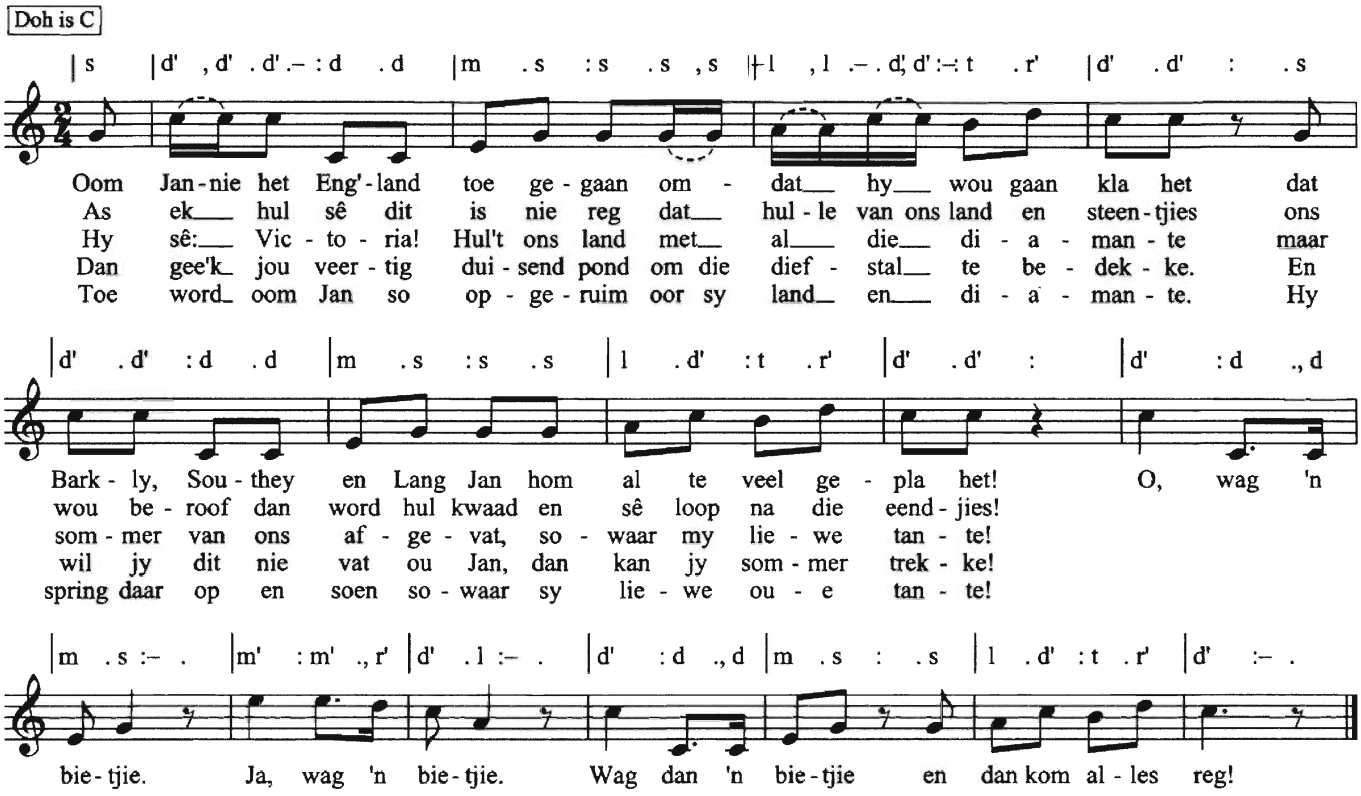
On completion of this lesson series learners must be able to

- demonstrate elementary critical understanding of history as
  — a series of events within particular social contexts;
  — unfolding in political as well as other social domains, specifically musical performance.
- discuss the nature and role of the songs *President Brand* and *Tshakutshatsha* (and its accompany oral testimony) as historical representations;
- perform the songs *President Brand* and *Tshakutshatsha*;
- identify and explain other songs that deal with aspects of history.



2. The songs

2.1 *President Brand se reis na Engeland*[1]



2.2 The lyrics of *President Brand*


Queen Victoria


President Jan Brand

1. *Oom Jannie het Engeland toe gegaan omdat hy wou gaan kla het*
   Uncle Jannie went to England because he wanted to complain that
   dat Barkly, Southey en Lang Jan hom al te veel gepla het!
   Barkly,[2] Southey[3] and Lang Jan[4] too often have treated him with disdain!

2. *As ek hul sê dit is nie reg dat hulle van ons land en steentjies*
   When I tell them it is unfair to rob us of our country and its little stones,
   ons wou beroof dan word hul kwaad en sê loop na die eendjies!
   they get angry and say: get lost or stop your moans!

3. *Hy sê: Victoria! Hul't ons land met al die diamante*
   He says: Victoria! They took all the diamonds from our country.
   maar sommer van ons afgevat my liewe tante!
   They just took them my dear aunty!

4. *Dan gee ek jou veertig duisend pond die diefstal te bedekke.*
   Then I will give you forty thousand pounds to make amends.[5]
   En wil jy dit nie vat ou Jan dan kan jy sommer trekke!
   Take it or leave it! This is where our offer ends!

5. *Toe word oom Jan so opgeruim oor sy land en diamante,*
   Then uncle Jan became so cheerful about his diamonds and country,
   hy spring daar op en soen sowaar sy liewe oue tante!
   that he jumped up and kissed his dear old aunty!

(Chorus): *O, wag 'n bietjie.*
Oh, wait a bit.
Ja, wag 'n bietjie.
Yes, wait a bit.
Wag maar 'n bietjie en dan kom alles reg!
Just wait a bit and all will be well![6]

1. The complete title of the song is: *President Brand se reis na Engeland om te protesteer teen die anneksasie van die diamantvelde* (President Brand's journey to England to protest against the annexation of the diamond fields). The song appears with incomplete verses in the Jo Fourie Afrikaans folksong collection, while the *FAK-Sangbundel* (p. 405) contains a complete version.
2. Henry Barkly, Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner of South Africa, 1870–1877.
3. Richard Southey, Cape Colonial Secretary, 1864–1872, and subsequently Lieutenant-Governor of Griqualand–West (the diamond fields).
4. Lit. Long John, a reference to Colonel Owen Lanyon, who was in charge of the annexation of Griqualand-West in 1878.
5. Lit. to cover up the theft.
6. This is a reference to the utterance by Brand for which he is best remembered today: *"Alles zal recht komen als elkeen zijn plicht doet"* (all will be well if everyone does his duty).

2.3 Jan Brand and the annexation of the diamond fields

Johannes Henricus Brand (b. 1823; also known as Jan Brand and Sir John Brand) became president of the Republic of the Orange Free State (now Free State Province in South Africa) in 1863. He served for five terms until his death in 1888. The Orange Free State was proclaimed a republic in 1852, after an agreement (the Sand River Convention) with Britain. The area attracted Afrikaners who resisted British domination in the Cape Colony.

The song describes events following the discovery of diamonds in the western border area of the Free State (where Kimberley is situated nowadays) in the late 1860s. This area became known as the diamond fields and subsequently Griqualand-West, a name that refers to local aboriginal Griqua people. This area was contested by the Cape Colony, the Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, as well as a grouping of Griqua people under Nicholas Waterboer. Waterboer was an astute politician who applied for and received British citizenship for his people in 1871. The Transvaal Republic relinquished its claim, leaving the Free State and Britain finally to contest the diamond fields.

The claims on the diamond fields by the Free State undermined Britain's imperial ambitions in Southern Africa, and, despite protracted communication between the colonial administration and the Free State volksraad (parliament), Governor Barkly annexed the diamond fields in 1871 on behalf of Britain. This annexation was described scathingly in a report by advocate Andries Stockenstrom of a special court of the Cape Colony (1875) as a form of "selfishness, treachery and fraud" (Scholtz, 1957:179).

Brand travelled in 1875 with his family to England to try and settle the dispute over the diamond fields. He met Queen Victoria and wrote that he was received in a very cordial (*"zeer vriendelijk"*) manner by her. His negotiations, however, were conducted with Lord Carnarvon, the Minister of Colonies. Brand was unable to negotiate for the return of the diamond fields and then declared himself in favour of compensation. Britain agreed to an amount of £90 000 (and not £40 000 as suggested in the song).

2.4 The song *President Brand* as history and art

The song *President Brand* has its roots in oral history, and it has become part of written history due to the efforts of pioneer 20th century Afrikaans music historians like Jo Fourie and Jan Bouws.

The song shows how intricate the process of historical reconstruction often is. It refers to actual historical figures and events that have been recorded in a large number of archived documents, including letters, minutes of the parliament of the Republic of the Orange Free State and the Cape High Court, as well as newspaper reports (see Scholtz, 1957). However, we know that Brand's negotiations in Britain were with Lord Carnarvon, the Minister of Colonies, and not with Queen Victoria. The references in the song to compensation as a way to cover up theft, as well as the kiss that sealed the deal, therefore are not based on fact.

There is a clear mocking tone in the song meant to ridicule both Jan Brand and Queen Victoria. However, Brand was highly respected during his presidency and it is unlikely that the song came into being during this time. It is more probable that the song originated during the time of the first Afrikaans language movement *(die eerste Afrikaanse taalbeweging)* that was founded circa 1876. This movement rallied Afrikaner nationalistic sentiments against English colonial domination (and to a lesser extent the colonial Dutch heritage) on the basis of an evolving shared language, namely Afrikaans.

It is clear that the song serves as an historical as well as artistic resource. As an historic document it describes certain actual events, but as artistic expression it looks back critically on these events and reconstrues them freely on the basis of nationalistic objectives from a later period. Musical performance accordingly not merely reflects historical events, but also

participates in *shaping* them. History therefore is not merely a sequence of political events, while its presentation may conceal subjectivity and the manipulation of facts.

While the song is not an accurate reflection of historical events, it does reveal some of the feelings underlying the Afrikaner struggle against British colonial domination. The lyrics express a sense of frustration and even powerlessness, even though this is conveyed in a humorous tone. As integrated words, melody and rhythm, the song provides history with emotional energy. As such, history "stands up" from print and becomes available for reflection on the past as well as the present.

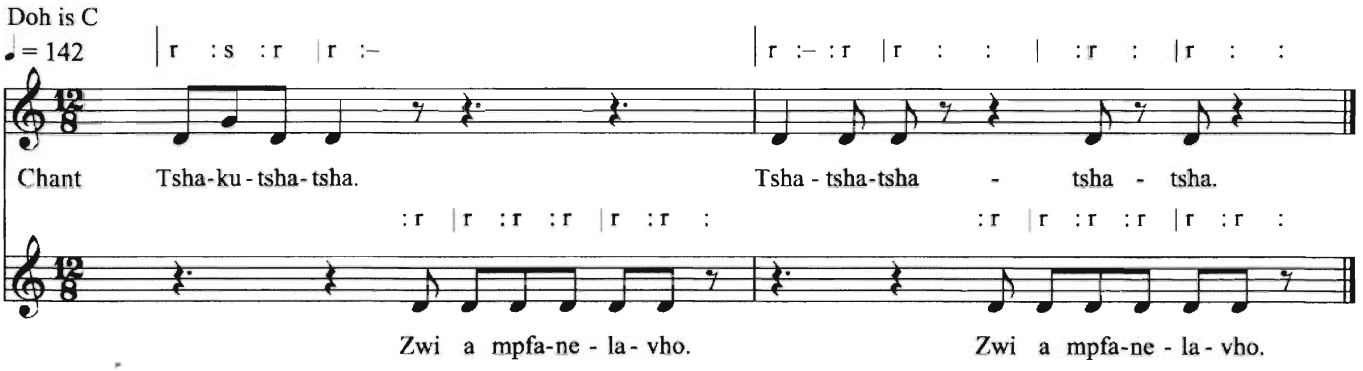
There is more than a sense of tragi-comic defeat in the lyrics of *President Brand* – they reveal an undercurrent of resistance in the derisive way that the queen is referred to (aunty) and the suggestion that the compensation paid by Britain was really no more than a concealed form of robbery. Although this resistance is symbolic only we should not under-estimate its importance. Such resistance (especially in the arts) constitutes the breeding ground of discontent which may become a resource for actual resistance at some future point. Here we could point to some of momentous events to follow in the history of Afrikaners and the British, such as the First and Second Anglo-Boer (South African) Wars (1880-1881 and 1899-1902 respectively), the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the formal recognition of Afrikaans in 1925, the coming to power of the Afrikaner National Party in 1948 and the founding of the Republic of South Africa in 1961. These events were partly the result of longstanding bitterness and resistance by Afrikaners against colonial domination. Songs like *President Brand* may become part of a collective subconsciousness: they are a form of thought and action aimed at shaping the world we live in.

To summarise: The song *President Brand*

- is a form of documented history;
- is historically accurate in some respects only;
- shows a reconstruction of history;
- reveals some of the emotions accompanying domination;
- constitutes a form of symbolic resistance.

Land cultivation on the bank of the Nwanedi river at Folovhodwe, 2008.

2.5 *Tshakutshatsha*



"Long ago people used to farm in the mountains. They cultivated open areas in valleys. They did not work with tractors. They had to watch out for marauding baboons. Now, we worked with young men. I sat on top of a rock watching out for the baboons coming through the fence to raid the maize. Now, this one started to come into the maize. I got up. When I saw it, I called this young man over to me. Now, when the baboon came into the field we started to sing:
Nde tshakutshatsha.
(Apparently an imitation of the sound of ankle rattles)
Zwi a mpfanela-vho.
It suits me.

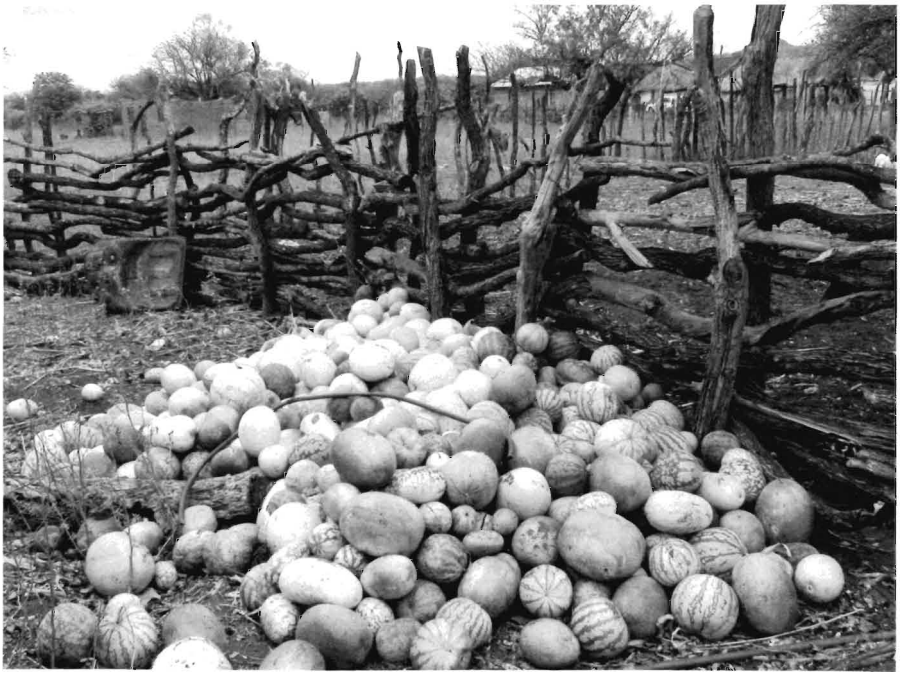
Now, from there it went back through the opening in the fence. There it is! It left and ran away. That baboon left for good."

Oral historian Marcus Vhengani, Tshiungani, 2008.

2.6 A brief history of farming

This short oral narrative describes an aspect of farming among Venda people who live in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province in South Africa. It was narrated by Mr Marcus Vhengani who lives in the village of Matangari (recorded at Tshiungani, 28 Sept. 2008). Mr Vhengani is a pensioner who used to work as a dipping official for the Department of Agriculture. He is one of a dwindling number of elderly people who still have knowledge of old farming practices.

The narration places farming in the Soutpansberg (lit. mountain of the salt



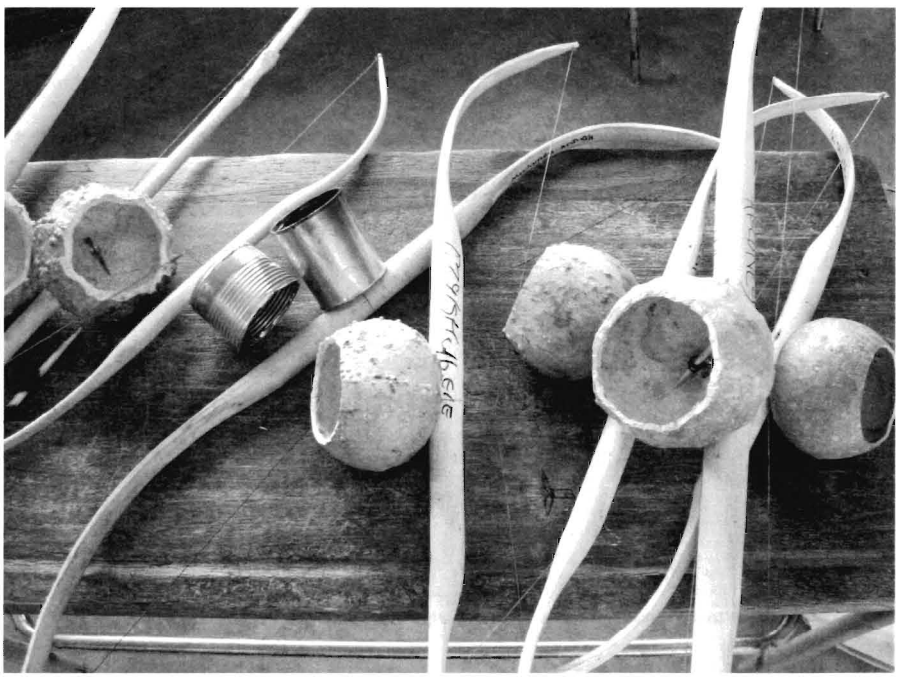
Pumpkin and water melon harvest, Tshiungani, 2009.

Venda *thuzwu* leg rattles, Hamutsha, 1983.

Below: Tswana ankle rattles made from plastic pouches, Wolmaranstad, 2009.

pan) that dominates the Vhembe area. The Soutpansberg for very long helped to protect Venda people against enemy attacks. However, arable land is limited in the mountains, and while people could hide on hilltops and in ravines, they had to clear land for cultivation in valleys between the mountains. Their staple crops were millet and maize, supplemented by a large variety of vegetables and fruit. All work was done by hand. For tilling and weeding people used hoes (sing. *dzembe*, pl. *malembe*).

The Venda oral arts abound with descriptions of the problems caused by wild animals that raid precious crops. Apart from baboons, crops also are utilised by animals such as antelope, bush pigs, porcupines, a variety of birds and, more recently, cattle and goats. People often construct a temporary shelter (*thumba*) in fields in which they live until a crop has been harvested. They also construct fences made from interlocking logs and branches around their fields.



2.7 *Tshakutshatsha* as history and art

This short narration takes the form of oral history. What makes it unique is that it has been merged with a genre of story-telling called *ngano* (see the last lesson in this issue). *Ngano* (pl. *dzingano*) are stories that have one or more songs as part of their plot. Ngano is performed in antiphonal form: the audience responds at short intervals to the narrator by exclaiming *salungano!* (lit. like a song story), a function of which is to ensure audience participation. The songs of *ngano* also are in antiphonal form. Most *ngano* narrators are women, and the *ngano* genre is an important form of expression for them in a patriarchal society. It is clear therefore that historical representation is creative and that it can take on various forms.

While music-making was part of a number of magical practices employed to protect crops and promote fertility, it is unlikely that song performance was actually used to chase marauding

animals away: the best practice simply was to shout loudly. *Tshakutshatsha* appears simply as historical representation in an attractive, entertaining form. Yet, as participatory art it makes history-telling a practical experience imbued with feelings of a shared past that, as in the case of *President Brand*, can provide in some small way a resource for contemporary living.

The song in this short history itself points to an aspect of weakening musical practice and memory. The song appears to be of the *malende* genre. *Malende* songs are performed by adults in a variety of situations associated with family and other communal rituals usually accompanied by eating and drinking. The beer historically consumed at these rituals was made from millet or maize. In addition, the call of the song portrays the sound of *thuzwu* ankle (or leg) rattles worn by *malende* dancers. These rattles are made from the small globular fruit of the *mutuzwu* (*Oncoba spinosa*, the snuff-box tree) that are filled with light seeds. This form of ankle rattle has become scarce, and it increasingly is being replaced (as in other rural communities in South Africa) by ankle rattles made from a variety of plastics.

To summarise: This short history

- takes the form of an oral narrative;
- addresses an aspect of economic (farming) life;
- creatively merges an historical account with a performance genre;
- as in the case of *President Brand*
  - — provides an awareness of a shared past;
  - — may serve as a resource aimed at shaping social existence.

3. Lesson plan

The lesson plan (and those following) is based on the established principle that musical skills and experience are a preferred basis for successful education through music. Such experience helps to introduce learners to the basic content of a lesson and provides an enjoyable, playful context for learning. This means that the theme and objectives of the lesson are introduced only after learners have achieved some degree of familiarity with the songs.

As indicated, the pursuit of objectives and presentation of lesson material is relative to requirements for the respective grades.

3.1 Introductory phase: Practical skills and content

On completion of this phase learners must have achieved such a level of knowledge and skills related to the lyrics and music of the songs *President Brand* and *Tshakutshatsha* that the teacher is able to pursue the theoretical objectives of the lesson.

Activity 1

The teacher performs the songs for the learners.

Tshakutshatsha (an antiphonal song) may be performed with the help of another teacher or a learner. It is also possible for one person to sing both the call and response in the first cycle (bar) of the song, and by singing the call and response alternately when repeating. Some skilled classes may be able to sing the response pattern soon after a first hearing.

> **Useful resource**
> The notated form of the songs and/or their lyrics can be made available in some suitable form (a hard copy or on a writing board or projector screen).

Activity 2

The teacher divides the class into groups, and presents them with the following questions and instructions related to the basic nature of the lyrics and the music:

- In what language is the song?
- What is the theme of *President Brand?*
- Identify the start of the refrain in *President Brand.*
- Indicate when the song melody repeats itself.
- Identify pauses (rests or silents beats) in the melody of *President Brand.* Explain the link between these pauses and the lyrics.
- How many voices appear in the song *Tshakutshatsha?*

Activity 3

The teacher helps the learners to reach a basic level of competence in performing the songs. The songs are rehearsed during subsequent lessons until an acceptable performance level has been reached.

Learners with dance skills can devise their own movements in *Tshakutshatsha.* The rhythm of the call-melody in the second bar indicates foot beats. Learners may perform these beats by stamping their feet. Learners who are able to dance well can teach movements to other learners.

3.2 Middle phase: Concepts, content and analytical skills

On completion of this phase learners must have a basic understanding of the nature and role of the following concepts (see information for the teacher):

- history;
- history writing (historiography);
- music history;
- music history writing (music historiography);
- written history;
- oral history.

To achieve this objective the teacher divides the class into groups, and presents them with the following questions and instructions. The instructions may take the form of individual home work or group assignments. In schools without libraries the questions may be limited to oral history.

- Name and explain any historical event you are familiar with;
- Find and show the class any example of written history (use your school library);
- Find any oral historical narrative. Present and explain it to the class. (These narratives can refer to any

event. They abound in local communities, especially among elders.);
- Find and show the class any example of written musical history (use your school library);
- Find and explain to the class any song that contains references to history.
- Perform the song to the class if possible.

3.3 Concluding phase: Assessment and application of skills

The general and learning objectives of this lesson series are assessed as follows:

Practical assessment

The class (or groups in the class) performs the songs, adding dance movements if possible.

If an acceptable standard of performance has not been achieved, the songs may be rehearsed during subsequent lessons.

Theoretical assessment

The activities carried out during the middle phase become the basis of homework projects. These projects
- are carried out by individual learners or groups;
- involve the identification and explanation (and performance if possible) of any song containing historical information;
  — this explanation must show a basic awareness of the role of songs in the historical imagination;
- must provide basic definitions of key concepts (see information for the teacher);
- may be carried out in poster form and displayed in the classroom or during appropriate school functions.

4. Teaching resources

- Photos or pictures of
  — the historical figures in *President Brand*;
  — diamonds;
  — a hoe;
  — a tractor;
  — a person in 'traditional' Venda dress;
  — ankle rattles.
- A map showing South Africa (especially the Hopetown, Kimberley and Barkly-West area) and Britain.

5. Other activities

The class can make their own ankle rattles from any small fruit with a hard shell, or from plastic (see p.8; also Kirby, 1968, plates 1–3). Pieces of soft, thin plastic that are sown into pouches and filled with gravel make good ankle rattles.

6. Pronunciation guide

Nde tshakutshatsha.
Nde-cha-koo-cha-cha.
Zwi a mpfanela-vho.
Zee-aah-mfaa-ne-laah-wo.

7. Bibliography and futher reading

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sand_River_Convention

Music and mathematical thinking

This lesson investigates the presence of mathematical thinking in a Venda musical game called *A hu na silo* ("There is nothing").

The presentation starts with information for the teacher. It is followed by the song and a description of the game. The presentation ends with a lesson plan.

1. Information for the teacher

Ethnomusicologist John Blacking, who studied Venda children's songs during the late 1950s, identifies *A hu na silo* as belonging to the category *nyimbo dza u vhala*, or counting songs (see Blacking, 1967:52–62). However, there is some doubt about the validity of this category as it is not recognised by Tshivenda-speakers. As Blacking in fact notes, "very few of the counting songs have any relation to the Venda numbers" (1967:52). In addition, so-called finger counting songs seldom employ the names of the fingers, so that 'finger naming songs' would also not be an accurate description. Perhaps all that is beyond doubt is that there is an awareness of sequences, repetitions and collections in Venda oral culture, and that various songs and recitations are used to conceptualise them.

Blacking (1967:55) notes that *A hu na silo* was known widely and "with very little variation," and goes on to explain how the song was used to 'count' fingers. It appears that the song in fact functions to represent sequences in various forms. The version presented in this lesson involves a particularly challenging game played with stones. This game requires musical skills as well as a good memory and the ability to concentrate hard and on different things simultaneously. Structurally, the variations of the game are the same, since they all involve a collection of ten objects and the same number of repetitions (6) of a particular song line (line 8 in the figure).

2. Lesson objectives

General objectives

On completion of this lesson learners must be able to

- collaborate and communicate effectively in their performance of *A hu na silo*;
- have elementary understanding of the world as a set of related systems, with specific reference to
  - — the presence of mathematical thinking in musical performance;
  - — the existence in many world cultures of 'finger naming' songs and recitations.

Learning objectives

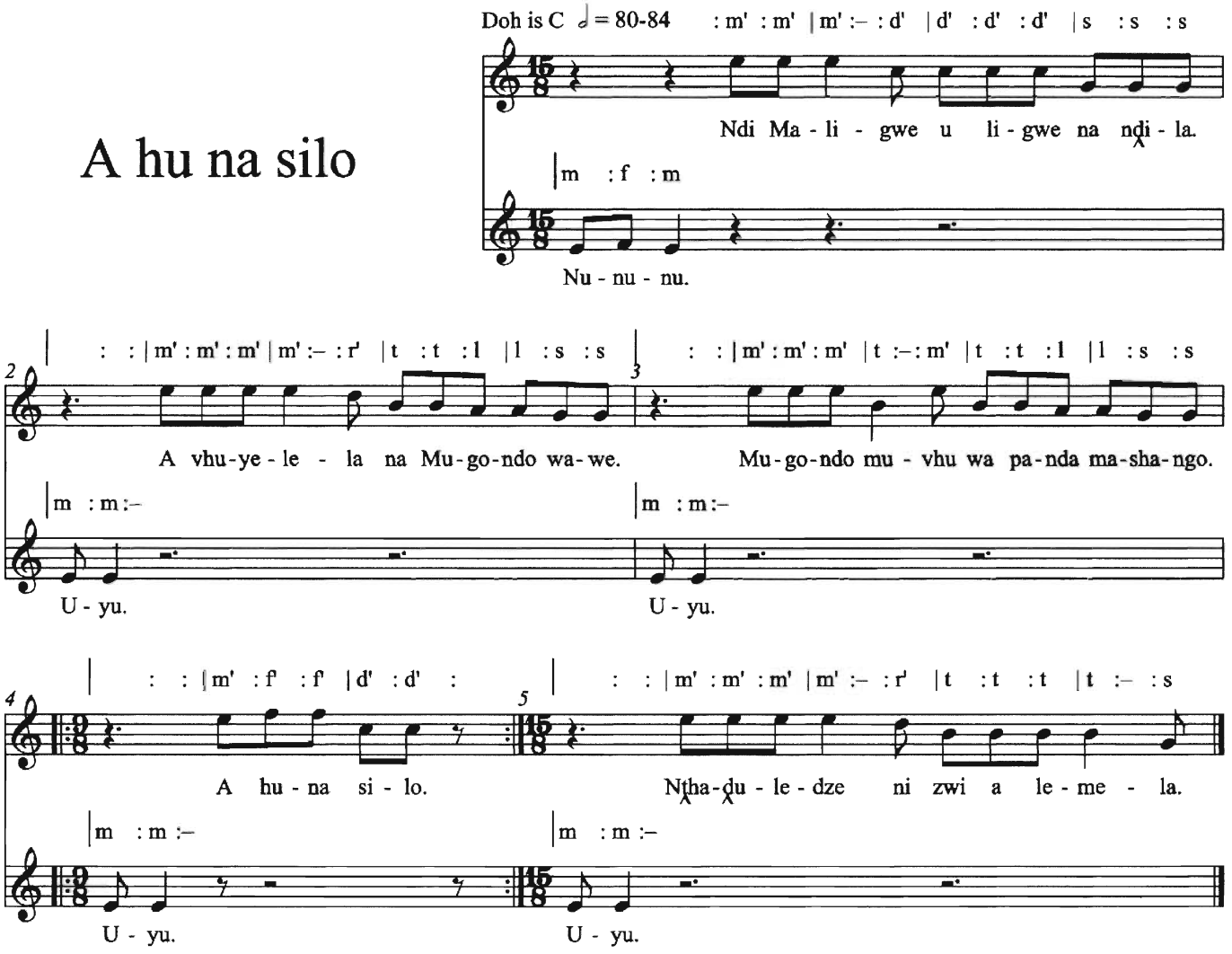
On completion of this lesson learners must be able to

- perform the song *A hu na silo;*
- explain the lyrics of *A hu na silo*;
- play the accompanying stone game;
- explain why the song and its stone game may be called a 'mind game'.

A performance of *A hu na silo*, Muswodi, 2008.

3. The song[1]

A hu na silo



3.1 The lyrics

1 (Chorus) *Nununu.*
Little finger.[2]

2 (Leader) *Ndi Maligwe u ligwa na ndila.*
It is Maligwe who goes off on his own.[3]

3 (Chorus) *Uyu.*
This one.[4]

4 (Leader) *A vhuyelela na Mugondo wawe.*
There he goes again with his Mugondo.

5 (Chorus) *Uyu.*
This one.

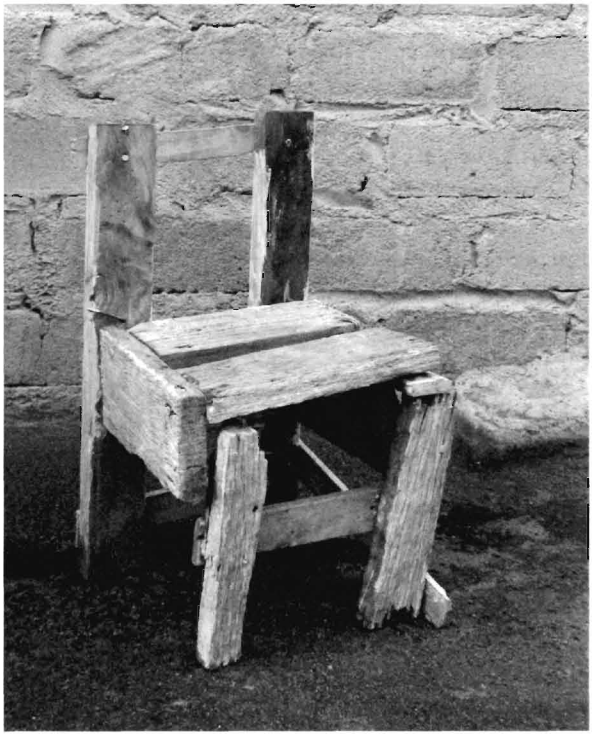
6 (Leader) *Mugondo muvhi wa panda mashango.*
Bad Mugondo, you who wander all over.

7 (Chorus) *Uyu.*
This one.

8 (Leader) *A hu na silo.*[5]
There is nothing.

9 (Chorus) *Uyu.*
This one.

10 (Leader) *Nthaduledzeni, zwi a lemela.*
Relieve me of my load.



1. As demonstrated by Samson Nenzhelele, Selinah Mavhetha, Johannes Mavhetha and Annie Nenzhelele at Muswodi-Tshisimani on 30 Sept. 2008.
2. The little finger features prominently when the song accompanies 'finger-counting' (see Blacking, 1967:54-56).
3. Blacking's translation (Blacking, *ibid.*)
4. I.e. the stone
5. *Silo:* the Sotho version of *tshithu,* which is sung most often (Blacking, *ibid.*)

Blacking (*ibid.*) explains that this song "could refer to a herdboy who is anxious not to lose any of the animals in his charge." Maligwe consequently "is a name usually given to a goat who likes to leave the herd and wander off on its own." The reason for this is that it is controlled by a bad spirit, called Mugondo. An alternative interpretation (provided to Blacking by Rev. Diether Giesekke) is that Maligwe refers to an expert tracker whose success in hunting is ensured by a spirit called Mugondo. This may explain the last sentence, since people with exceptional ability often are targets of jealousy (hence the "load").

3.2 How the game is played

Ten flat pebbles are placed in a line. Another pebble is placed on top of pebbles 5–10.

The song leader sits with her back to the pebbles, so that she cannot see them. Another player points sequentially to the pebbles as each chorus line is sung. The last chorus line (line 9) brings the pointing finger to the 5th pebble, and its top pebble is then removed. The song is performed again, but with lines 7 and 8 (bar 4) repeated, bringing the finger to the 6th pebble. Again, its top pebble is removed. With every repetition of the song another repetition of bar 4 added until the last top pebble is removed.

The challenge of this game is to sing the correct increasing number of repetitions of line 8. A person who omits or unecessarily adds a repetition is disqualified and the winner is the person who completes the game.

Summary of the game

1. Sing and count to pebble 5
   Sing line 8 (x1)
   Remove top pebble
2. Sing and count to pebble 6
   Sing line 8 (x2)
   Remove top pebble
3. Sing and count to pebble 7
   Sing line 8 (x3)
   Remove top pebble
4. Sing and count to pebble 8
   Sing line 8 (x4)
   Remove top pebble
5. Sing and count to pebble 9
   Sing line 8 (x5)
   Remove top pebble
6. Sing and count to pebble 10
   Sing line 8 (x6)
   Remove top pebble

The performers emphasised the effort involved in playing the game. There was among them a clear awareness of mental operations and their location in the brain. The second line of the song was interpreted by them as "that which shows the way." Here, "the way" (*ndila*, road) refers to the row of pebbles, while "that" refers to the mind. The fourth line was described as "think some more!" In other words, singing, and being aware of the number of stones and the repetitions of line 8 all require intense concentration which takes place in the mind.

4. Lesson plan

4.1 Introductory phase: content and concepts

On completion of this phase learners must have basic knowledge of the music and lyrics of *A hu na silo*.

Activity 1

The teacher performs *A hu na silo* for the learners. Another teacher or a learner is needed for this performance.

Useful resource

The notated form of the song and/or its lyrics can be made available in some suitable form (a hard copy or on a writing board or projector screen).

Activity 2

The teacher divides the class into groups, and presents them with the following questions and instructions related to the basic nature of the lyrics and the music:

- How many voices appear in the song?;
- What is the basic shape of the melody?;
- Indicate when the melody repeats;
- Explain the names Maligwe and Mugondo.

4.2 Middle phase: Skills

On completion of this phase learners must show a basic proficiency in performing *A hu na silo* as a whole.

Activity 1

The teacher helps the learners to reach a basic level of competence in performing the song. The song is rehearsed during subsequent lessons until an acceptable performance level has been reached.

Activity 2

The teacher helps the learners to reach a basic level of competence in playing the stone game.

> **Useful resource**
> Pebbles may be replaced by small flat disks, such as those used in draughts and checkers.

Activity 3

Learners are divided into groups. They combine their singing and playing skills in a complete performance of *A hu na silo*.

4.3 Concluding phase: Assessment and application of skills

The general and learning objectives of this lesson series are assessed as follows:

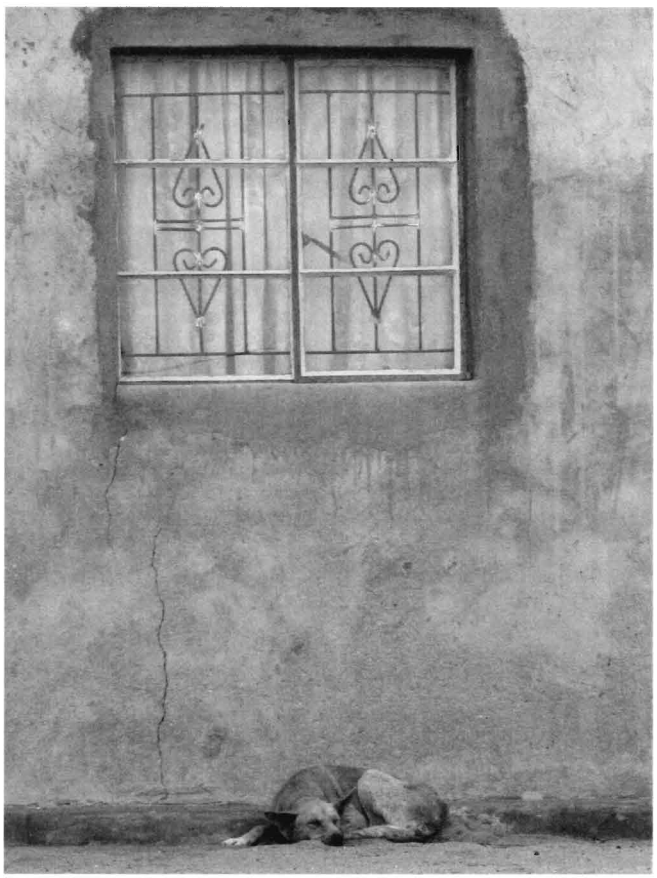
- Groups present their performance to the class. The presentation may be rehearsed during future lessons to ensure a high level of proficiency.
- Groups provide elementary explanations of how the notions of the mind and mathematical thinking are conceptualised in the lyrics of *A hu na silo* and their interpretation by Venda musicians.
- Learners bring finger naming songs and recitations to class: they are performed, explained and compared.
- Learners bring 'mind games' to class and demonstrate them. These games may include verbal and mathematical riddles, optical illusions, puzzles and magic squares.

5. Pronunciation guide

Nununu.
Noo-noo-noo.
Ndi Maligwe u ligwa na ndila.
Ndee-Mah-leegwe-ooh-leegwa-nahn-deelah.
Uyu.
Ooh-you.
A vhuyelela na Mugondo wawe.
Ah-woo-yeh-leh-lah-nah-Moo-gondo-wah-weh.
Mugondo muvhi wa panda mashango.
Moo-gondo-moo-wee-wah-pah-ndah-mah-shahngo.
A hu na silo.
Ah-hoo-nah-see-lou.
Nthaduledzeni, zwi a lemela.
Nthah-doo-le-dze-nee-zee-ah-lemela.

6. Bibliography and further reading

Blacking, J. 1967. Venda children's songs. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
Kruger, J. ed. 2004. *Venda lashu:* Tshivenda songs, musical games and song stories. Potchefstroom: North-West University.



Leah Madzhie.

Music, literature and moral education: *Ngano* song stories

Ngano are Tshivenda oral narratives of pre-colonial origin. Their nature and functions are discussed in several previous issues of *The Talking Drum* (no. 6, 17, 19, 23 and 26).

This presentation starts with a definition of key concepts for the teacher. This is followed by the stories "What happens to orphans" and "A selfish man." The presentation concludes with a lesson plan.

1. For the teacher: Definitions of key concepts

Ngano

Ngano are oral narratives of precolonial origin that are mainly narrated by adult women for young children during winter around a fire in the kitchen.

***Ngano* songs**

Songs are central to *ngano* performance practice: they are antiphonal and therefore require listeners to participate; they also are key elements in plots.

Spoken antiphony in *ngano*

Every phrase or sentence in the narrative is responded to with *salungano!* by the audience. This literally means "like a song story". It forces the audience to concentrate on the narration and ensures a measure of participation.

The plots of *ngano*

The plots of *ngano* unfold on two levels. The surface level is literal: it portrays actions and events with apparent clarity. However, there is also a deeper, figurative level. This is the level of hidden meanings, of symbol and metaphor that affirm and undermine the social order.

The plots of *ngano* not only subvert the powerful but also offer moral instruction. They are sometimes described as *milayo nyana*, or "small laws." While the morals they uphold often serve vested interests (particularly those of men and traditional rulers), they also oppose all forms of exploitation as well as murder, rape, jealousy, greed and promiscuity.

Symbol

A symbol may be defined as that which suggests something else by way of relationship, association, or convention. In African narratives orphanhood is a symbol of hardship (see the song story "Trouble like pouring rain").

Metaphor

A metaphor (meta = beyond, phor = bearer, carrier) is a type of meaning in which one concept or phenomenon is put directly in the place of another to deepen meaning. Thus, in the first song story the concept of pouring rain is a metaphorical represention of the force of ongoing life crises.

2. Lesson objectives

General objectives

On completion of this lesson learners must be able to

- collaborate and communicate effectively in terms of all aspects of *ngano* performance as well as in creating their own song stories;
- identify and critically address moral issues dealt with in the song stories;
- have elementary understanding of the world as a set of related systems, with specific reference to
  - — music and literature as allied modes of communication;
  - — the role of song stories in upholding social norms.

Learning objectives

On completion of this lesson learners must be able to

- perform the song stories "Trouble like pouring rain" and "Pumpkin seeds";
- provide basic explanations of surface and hidden meanings in the stories;
- give an elementary explanation of symbols;
- explain the role of songs in the stories;
- create their own song stories in response to personal experiences.

3. The stories

3.1 Trouble like pouring rain

Narrated by Leah Madzhie, Muswodi-Tshisimani, 27 Sept. 2008

Now, there was a certain old woman and her husband who hired a young man to look after their cattle.[1] That young man took the cattle out to graze early in the morning and returned with them at the end of the day.

Now, on a certain day the old people started to treat him badly. They took cattle dung and put it in his food. They took urine and poured it there. When he said he wanted to eat, they took this food and gave it to him.

Now, he stood inside the byre and sang:

(Leader) *Vhakalanga a vha na maano.*
The Karanga people are not clever.

Vha dzhia mulisa wa nombe.[2]
They take a cattle herder.

Vha mu bikela malovhe.
They cook cattle dung.

---

1. The narrator indicated that people who were hired as cattle and goat herds in the distant past were compensated with the second calf or kid born from every cow or she-goat in the herd.
2. *Nombe:* cattle; an archaic word that occurs in proverbs and the extinct *Tshitwanamba* language (Blacking, 1967:119).

Muroho vha ita mirundo.
For vegetables there is urine.

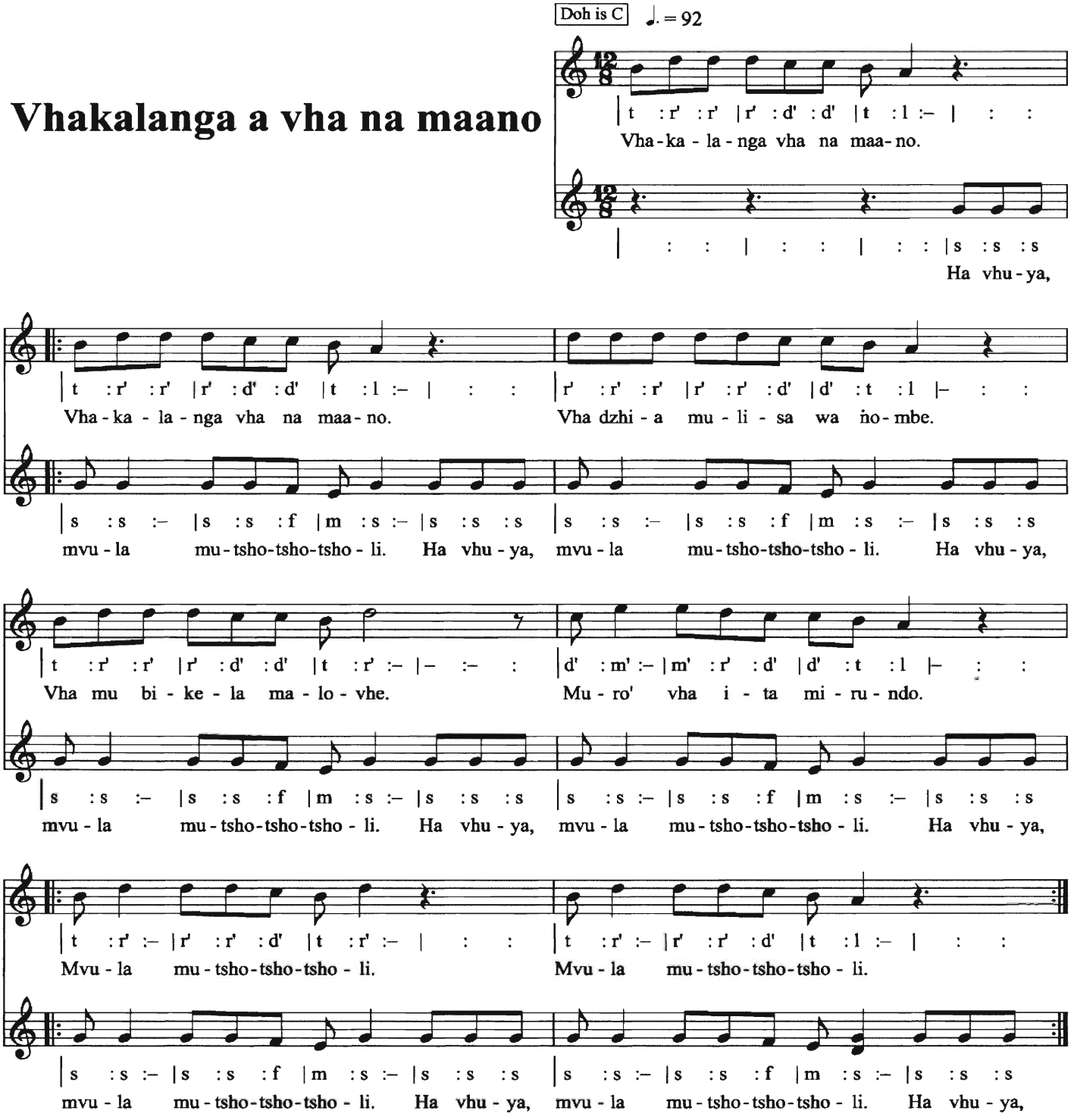
(Chorus) *Ha vhuya, mvula mutshotshotsholi.*
It returns, the rain that pours.

3.2 An interpretation of "Trouble like pouring rain"

This is a short but powerful indictment against orphan abuse. African narratives and songs abound with links between orphanhood and suffering. The reference to the Karanga people is both literal and figurative. The Karanga live in southern Zimbabwe. During their migration from the north to South Africa (from 800 AD to the 18th century) many Venda people settled among the Karanga before entering their present location. Many *ngano* originate from this period of co-habitation and contain traces of the Karanga language. However, the term arguably predominantly functions here to refer to an entrenched, historical pattern of oppression.

As indicated in the above definitions of key concepts, the addition of dung and urine to food is not to be interpreted literally but as a metaphor of general abuse. Similarly, the reference to rain in the chorus line is not concrete. The image of pouring rain represents the force of the abuse from which there seems no escape.

Vhakalanga a vha na maano



3.3 Pumpkin seeds

Narrated by Elisa Madzanga, Folovhodwe, 29 Sept. 2008

There was a man and a woman and their two children. One of the children was a baby.
Now, that year there was big famine. People wanted to know, "What will we eat?" That man went out to look for food. He found a pigeon pea tree.[1] It had ripe seeds. He climbed to the top of the tree. He lay down on his back on a branch and feasted on the peas.


Elisa Madzanga.

He sang:

(Leader) *Mundoze, mundoze-i.*
Pigeon pea, pigeon pea.

Ndi tshila nga muri mundoze.
I live from the pigeon pea tree.

(Chorus) *Ha vhuya mundoze.*
The peas have returned.

Those peas were falling down. They carpeted the ground down there. The man picked them up and devoured them.

He arrived home. That woman and her children said, "Now, we are dying of hunger. What will we eat?" The husband answered, "I do not know."

Now, that woman left and picked blackjacks.[2] She returned home. She cooked them and ate with the children. When she gave some to her husband, he said, "No thanks, I do not eat weeds."

The man left again. Those peas lay thick down on the ground. He ate and ate!

Mundoze, mundoze-i.
Ndi tshila nga muri mundoze.
Ha vhuya mundoze.

That woman followed his tracks to see where he was. When she arrived there under the tree, she looked in amazement! She exclaimed, "Ah! All right! So this is why you say you do not eat blackjacks!"

A time came when there even no longer were any pigeon peas. The woman went to a certain place and found people pounding their maize. They gave her the bran from the maize. She pounded the bran. She returned with it and made soft porridge for the baby. Then they all went to sleep.

That father woke up and ate the porridge of the infant. His wife woke up and asked, "Where is the porridge of the child?" He answered, "It was eaten by the cat." "Really?" "Yes!"

She made porridge again. They went to sleep. The man woke up during the night. He ate all the soft porridge. Hey, that father!

The mother asked, "Could it be that the cat eats the porridge day after day?" The father said, "Yes."

The woman went to certain people who said, "Listen you, take pumpkin seeds, put them on your eyes and sleep on your back."

Now, that father woke up. His wife appeared to be awake because of the seeds on her eyes. He said, "Ah! No, my wife, why are you not sleeping? What is wrong?" She answered, "Nothing, I am just awake."

The next morning the porridge of the child was still there. That night the mother again slept with pumpkin seeds on her closed eyes. That man was becoming very hungry. He said: "Ah, you wife, why don't you sleep nowadays? What is the matter?" She said, "I am not sleeping because I want to watch this cat."

The following night the mother took those seeds off and went to sleep. The next morning that porridge was gone.

This is the end of the song story.

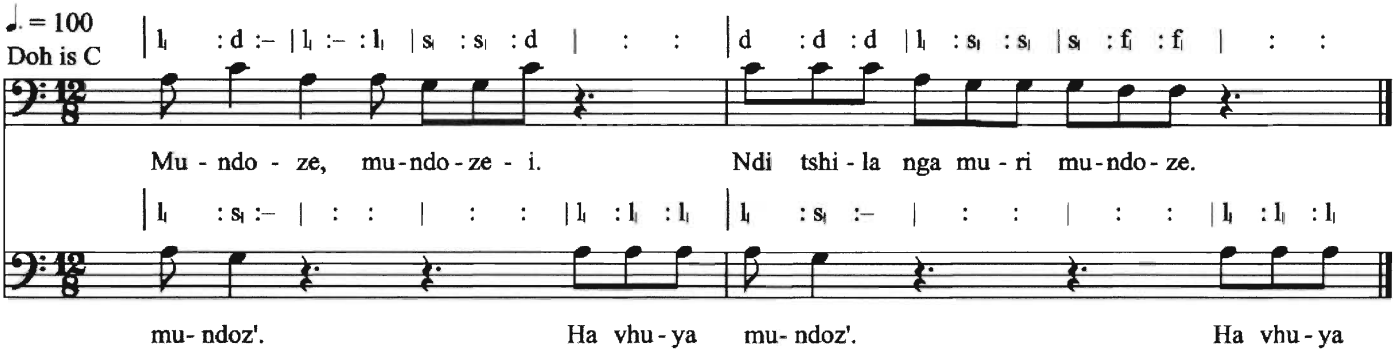
---

1. *Mundodzi: Cajanus cajan,* a grain legume.
2. The weed *Bidens pilosa L.* whose leaves are cooked in water and eaten during times of famine.

3.4 An interpretation of "Pumpkin seeds"

Men often receive short thrift by the female narrators of *ngano*. They are habitually portrayed as neglecting their duties and their families. Excessive dereliction of duty by a husband is a matter for a tribal court and may lead to divorce.

In a similar story documented by folklorist Ina le Roux (1996), a man hides milk from his family during famine. They punish him by putting ash into his milk jug. However, in "Pumpkin seeds" there is resigned failure as the errant husband keeps on stealing his baby's food. However, his patriarchal status and selfishness is quietly undermined by his wife's trick with the pumpkin seeds.



4. Lesson plan

4.1 Introductory phase: Skills

On completion of this phase learners must be able to perform the song stories in "Trouble like pouring rain" and "Pumpkin seeds".

Activity 1

The teacher helps the learners to reach a basic level of competence in pronouncing the lyrics.

Activity 2

The teacher helps the learners to reach a basic level of competence in performing the songs. If necessary, the song may be rehearsed during subsequent lessons until an acceptable performance level has been achieved.

> **Useful resource**
> The notated form of the song and/or its lyrics can be made available in some suitable form (a hard copy or on a writing board or projector screen).

4.2 Middle phase: Content and skills

This phase serves to familiarise learners with the content of the stories and with *ngano* performance practice.

Activity 1

The teacher narrates the stories. The learners participate with spoken and sung responses.

Activity 2

The teacher divides the class into groups, and presents them with the following questions and instructions related to the basic nature of the lyrics and the music:

- In what language are the songs?
- Indicate when the song melody repeats itself.
- How many voices appear in the songs?
- Explain the basic plots of the stories.
- Explain the role of songs in the stories.
- Provide basic explanations of symbolism in the stories.
- Explain the moral content of the stories.

Activity 3

One or more learners are selected to retell the stories, with class participation. In practice stories seldom if ever are repeated in exactly the same form. It is acceptable that learners retain the basic plot of the stories, and vary their narration.

4.3 Concluding phase: Assessment and application

The general and learning objectives of this lesson series are assessed by means of a homework project. Depending on circumstances, the project may be carried out individually or in groups.

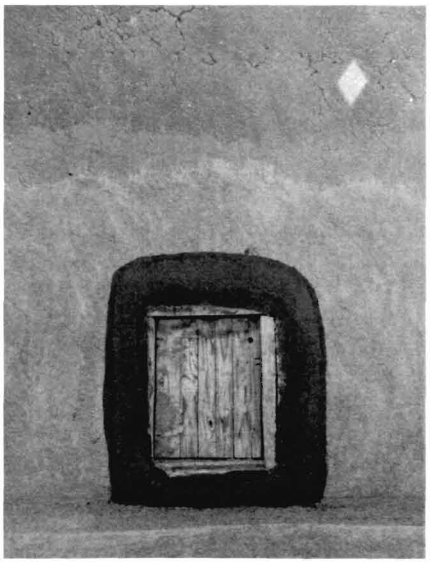
Theme of the project

Learners create their own short song stories

Requirements

The story

- ideally should be based on personal experience, but learners have total creative freedom;
- must promote one or more moral values;
- must include at least one song;
- ideally should be in antiphonal form;
- may be in any mutually intelligible language;
- must include spoken and sung audience response;
- may be documented and performed at some appropriate event like a school concert, an Arts and Culture day or a literature evening.



5. Pronunciation guide

From "Trouble like pouring rain":

Vhakalanga a vha na maano.
Wah-kah-lah-ngah-ah-wah-nah-mah-nooh.
Vha dzhia mulisa wa nombe.
Wah-jee-ah-moo-lee-sah-wah-noh-mbe.
Vha mu bikela malovhe.
Wah-moo-bee-keh-lah-maa-law-weh.
Muroho vha ita mirundo.
Moo-raw-haw-wah-eata-mee-roo-ndu.
Ha vhuya, mvula mutshotshotsholi.
Hah-woo-yah-mvoo-lah-moo-cho-cho-cho-lee.

From "Pumpkin seeds":

Mundoze, mundoze-i.
Moon-doh-ze-moon-doh-ze-ee.
Ndi tshila nga muri mundoze.
Ndee-chee-lah-ngah-moo-ree-moon-doh-ze.
Ha vhuya mundoze.
Hah-woo-yah-moon-doh-ze.

6. Bibliography

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Stories op die wind: 'n Veeltalige bloemlesing van Noord-Kaapse volksverhale. n.d. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. [A multilingual collection of folk tales from the Northen Cape with guidelines for teachers].

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- Amanda-Marié van der Merwe for helping to translate the lyrics of *President Brand*.
- Tshifhiwa Mashau for translating the Tshivenda texts.

DVDs

Except for "Rhythms of the Tabla", all the following historic video recordings are relative to aspects of music making in Africa. See previous issue, *The Talking Drum* #31, for a detailed listing of these DVDs itemised here. Produced by E. Oehrle solely for educational purposes. Copyright controled.

1. **DANCING: V. GODDARD**
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3. **MASKANDA COMPETITION** (1993)
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5. **TRADITIONAL AFRICAN MUSIC and BARBER-SHOP SINGING** (1994)
6. **RITUAL DANCERS: SHANGAAN, MAKISHI AND NYAU** (1994)
7. **SPOORNET GUM BOOT DANCERS with Blanket Mkhize and Johnny Hadebe and introduction by Carol Muller** (1994)
8. **WEST AFRICAN KORA MUSICIANS and MASTER DJEMBE DRUMMER: Dembo Konte & Kausu Kuyathe from the Gambia and Adama Drame from Cote d'Ivoire** (1994)
9. **PANPIPE WORKSHOP with ALAIN BARKER** (1994)
10. **INTRODUCTION TO UHADI, ISANKUNI, UMRHUBHE, and ISITHOLOTHOLO by Dr. Luvuyo Dontsa from the University of the Transkei** and **CHIPENDANI MUSICIAN** (1994)
11. **MBIRA DZAVADZIMA PLAYERS: MUSEKIWA CHINGODZE and WILLIAM RUSERE from Zimbabwe** (1994)

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