Editorial

In celebration of The Talking Drum’s tenth year an upgrading of this publication is in order. Further the time is right to call upon ethnomusicologists, and others working in the field, who regard applied ethnomusicology as important in Southern Africa to contribute to this and future issues. Thus, invitations were sent to key people requesting them to share their wealth of relevant musical knowledge and materials. Submissions for The Talking Drum were requested. This issue features articles by Dave Dargie, professor of music at Fort Hare University, Sazi Dlamini, musician and graduate student at the University of Natal (UND) - Durban, and Vicky Goddard, graduate of UND and innovative teacher of the musics of Africa.

The Talking Drum continues to aim to promote intercultural education through music/dance. It began as a database and resource on publications and people in the know. Gradually it evolved into a collection of resource materials and ideas which are used extensively in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions throughout South Africa and beyond.

Feedback indicates that The Talking Drum's impact is positive. From South Africa: "...may I compliment you on The Talking Drum. I have seen more interesting stuff in it than anywhere else in the SA education circles. We need to spread the word". From the United States of America Patricia Shehan Campbell writes: "...an impressive effort". In addition librarians in many parts of Africa request copies of The Talking Drum, the latest being Mkoba Teachers’ College in Zimbabwe.

Southern African educators/musicians form most of our readership (South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and Malawi). We also reach Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Gabon, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zambila, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Scandinavia, the UK and USA.

Our thanks to Dargie, Dlamini and Goddard. We look forward to submissions from others who regard applied ethnomusicology as important in Southern Africa. Your contributions will help to bridge the gap between the available, but largely untapped, research materials sitting on shelves round the country and the very real needs voiced repeatedly for such materials by those in the field of music/dance education.

Elizabeth Oehrle
I. ORIGINS

I.1. From Weapon to Musical Instrument

Some of humankind’s most important inventions were first developed as weapons—for example, the rocket ships with which people explore space. The same type of origin is indicated for one of Africa’s most important families of musical instruments.

Imagine yourself as one of the little people, the hunter-gatherers who inhabited this part of the world many hundreds of years ago. For providing yourself with food, you use a weapon passed down to you by your ancestors: a small bow, which shoots small arrows tipped with poison. The poison itself is perhaps not so dramatic—more soporific than deadly. You have to spend hours stalking some edible animal, and then when at last you get a shot into it, it runs off at great speed. You have to follow it until the poison takes effect enough to slow the prey down and make it sleepy. Then at last you are able to come up to it and give it the quietus with (probably) a large rock.

By now you are maybe a long way from home. So you have to drag or carry your prize all the way back, and there you and your family skin it and cook it, and—at last—you can enjoy your well-earned meal. And having eaten, like human beings everywhere, you can do with a bit of entertainment.

When you fired off your arrow, you heard your bow produce a musical tone. Maybe that could be the basis of some organised music. So you try to amplify the sound a bit—to make it louder and easier to use. Hold your bow down on a hard patch of earth, and tap the string with an arrow, and there you are! The tone is much louder. Now you have the basis of a musical instrument.

1.2. The Mouth as Resonator

Sticking a bow firmly into the ground increases the sound coming from the string, when the string is tapped or beaten. The next step is to find a better way to control that sound. Holding the bow firmly against the side of the mouth enables the player to use the mouth as a resonator. In this way the player not only amplifies the basic sound or fundamental tone, but now the overtones or partial vibrations of the string become audible. By shaping the mouth the player can select which overtone to amplify, just like someone playing that ancient European and Asian instrument, the Jews Harp.

It is interesting that the Bunun people of Taiwan use a mouth bow on which a seven-note scale can be played, as with the Jews Harp (Illustration B). Mouth bows are made in Southern Africa, and work somewhat differently. In our part of the world the bow string is short enough, and strung tightly enough, to make it possible as a rule only to obtain the first five overtones easily. These are all notes of the same major chord. However, it’s easy to
alter the fundamental tone by touching or holding the string to shorten its length. Then a higher fundamental tone is obtained, and a different set of overtones can be heard and used. The player can follow a melody by touching or not touching the string, and resonating the chosen overtones with the mouth. Different peoples in southern Africa may use different intervals between the bow fundamental tones, producing different chords and scales.

1.3. Artificial Resonators

It's an easy step from using one's own mouth as the resonator for an instrument to using an artificial mouth. One can use the mouth to resonate the overtones of a relatively small musical bow. But if one wishes to obtain a bigger sound from a bigger instrument, the human mouth is too small. All over Africa, and in Asia too, calabashes have been found to be ideal resonators for musical bows. Undoubtedly, the use of natural materials as resonators is very old. The ancient Greeks actually built lyres into tortoise-shells. But calabashes are very special and useful, and they work well for musical bows.

The most important Xhosa musical instrument is the uhadi (Illustration C), a large bow with calabash resonator. In Xhosa umhadi means a hole. So one could call the uhadi the "singing hole". The strange mellow sound of the uhadi comes clearly from the hole in the calabash. In Zulu, the same instrument is called ugbutho, a name apparently referring to the hollowness of the calabash resonator.

Kirby and others have written about bow players who use holes in the ground as resonators. Apparently that does not happen any more. Five-litre oil tins are used as resonators for the bow type instruments called in Lesotho, sehankule and sekotara. If necessary, bow makers will use whatever works when calabashes cannot be obtained such as jam tins or even plastic containers; however, it's hard to beat the calabash sound.

2. Features and Structures of Musical Bows

2.1. Types of Resonators

So far we've noted three types of resonators used for musical bows: the mouth, calabashes, and other artificial resonators. (These days it seems nobody sticks bows into the ground to improve the sound, or uses holes in the ground as resonator.)

2.2. Braced & Unbraced Bows

The hunting bow is an arc of wood with a string stretched between the two ends. This type of construction is used in many musical bows. However, a further variation in structure is frequently used: the bow string is braced by a tie or a loop attached to or passing around the bow stick.
The brace may be placed near one end of the bow, in which case it serves mainly as a method of constructing the bow (e.g., for attaching the calabash). Or the brace may be placed near the middle of the bow, so that the player can use either open portion of the string, and also stop the string by touching it. In this way the player uses two open fundamental tones, plus one or more stopped fundamentals.

Therefore a calabash bow may have its calabash attached directly to the bow stick, or attached to the brace. Bows which use other artificial resonators may be made in the same way, but some bow-type instruments may either be built onto a five litre oil (or other) can as resonator, or simply hang such a can on the end.

2.3. Ways of Sounding the Bow String
Bows may be played by tapping or beating the string. Use something suitable to the bow such as a light reed or stick or a piece of thatch grass. Some mouth-bows are played by plucking the string. Some bows and bow-type instruments are played by friction. Playing bows by friction is done either by bowing or scraping the string, or by rubbing a stick across notches cut into the bow stick.

2.4. Ways of Amplifying and Selecting Bow Overtones for Melody
The way one can use the mouth to play selected overtones has been described. The mouth can change its size and shape, but not a calabash. The performer on a calabash bow will hold the opening in the calabash towards the breast, and open and close the calabash against the breast: a fully open calabash produces its maximum output of overtones; as the calabash is closed so the overtones are damped, from highest to lowest. It takes a bit of controlling, but the player manages to follow melodies (or at times melodies parallel to the voice melodies) exactly.

It’s much more difficult to follow a melody with some of the bow-type instruments. The player’s control of the sound depends entirely on how the string is bowed and the use of hand pressure. Some players show extraordinary skill in following the melody (and some even manage to produce rich chords as well).

2.5. Why not “collect” Musical Bows for yourself?
So when we take all these differences into account, it is clear that many different types of musical bows can be found. And with some bows, different people may play the same instrument in different ways, giving a fascinating variety of sounds and types of music. It would be a very fine thing if students interested in music “collected” bows. It’s still possible to experience bow performances. There are still performing musicians around, from the Ngqoko group, to Madosini with Amampondo down in the Cape, to Brother Clement Sithole of the Vryheid Benedictines, and many others. It’s possible to find illustrations of many types of bows. It’s also possible to hear recordings of many bows. And it’s also possible to make and learn to play one’s own bows. It’s more than fun. The bows give musical satisfaction, and bow playing is very soothing to tired nerves and stressed souls!

So “collect” bows: get to know and learn to identify the looks and sounds of different bows, and make and play one or more for yourself.

Regarding what I’m offering here: students who would like the fullest possible catalogues of musical bows
and bow type instruments will find Kirby invaluable. For this article, I don’t have space to be exhaustive. I would like to share with readers the bows I have personally experienced and recorded. In fact, my experience covers the great majority of bow types, and also bows among many different peoples; but not all the bows those peoples used to have, and also not always all types of bows presently used by those peoples. Some of the old bows may now be extinct, and sadly others show signs of also becoming extinct. There’s still need for further research on bows. Let’s hope there’ll be interested students to follow this up, before it’s too late.

3. Types of Musical Bows

3.1. Mouth Bows

3.1.1. Unbraced mouth bows

a). A bow played by percussion or friction; Umangqo/umrhubhe

The same small mouth bow (50–60cm) used by Xhosa and Zulu people may be played in different ways. If it is played by percussion, tapping the string, then in Zulu it is called umqangi, and I personally have no doubt this was the instrument documented in the past as umqangi in Xhosa, (Illustration D) The click consonant (q) indicates its Khoisan origin. Similarly the guttural (5h) in its constructed in two ways, with either a single arc of bow, or with a small bent piece of wood inserted into a straight stick or reed.

Recently I recorded, women in the Hopsack district playing the same bow rugoma is (5h small umqangi) and it goes “qangi-qangi-qangi”. But play it by friction, scraping the string with a dried reed, and it goes “rhu-rhu-rhu” and becomes umrhubhe. Incidentally, umrhubhe/umqangi may be constructed in two ways, with either a single arc of bow, or with a small bent piece of wood inserted into a straight stick or reed.

Recently I recorded women in the Hopsack district playing the same bow umrhubhe (by friction) and as umqangi (by percussion). However, they called both forms of the instrument simply inkinge – a misnomer.

3.2. Bows played by plucking

The inkinge of the Xhosa is structurally the same as the rugoma of the Kavango. Both are made of a piece of bamboo or reed, and played by plucking. But, these days at least, the inkinge (which is now very scarce) uses a wire string like uhood, but rugoma uses nylon fishing line (Illustration F). The resultant sounds are rather different. Inkinge is plucked with a piece of ox horn. Rugoma is plucked with a finger. However, both use overtones to follow the melody. Inkinge uses the same scale as uhood, created by using one stopping position (upper fundamental being a whole tone above the lower). But with rugoma the player may use several stopping positions, following melodies using the different Kavango scales (see kaworongongo, in the next section). Inkinge produces relatively soft sounds, but rugoma can lead group singing with its clear tones.

This bow is (I hope) still around, among the Venda, the Tsonga and maybe the Zulu and others in our region. Students, how about looking for examples?

E: Playing the Xhosa umrhubhe, a mouth-bow played by friction.

The performer on the umrhubhe (Illustration E) may produce truly amazing results. The technique used by some players is to use the bow overtones to follow the melody of the lead singer(s), and at the same time whistle the melodies of the answering singers. The famous umrhubhe player Madlosini Qoseqiq makes umrhubhe music of unforgettable beauty. Years ago she was recorded by David Marks of Third Ear Records. Recently she has produced a CD together with the Amampondo music group. Madlosini is not the only one. Nogcinile Yekani of the Ngqoko music group has taught the technique to a number of other women in the group. And Johnny Clegg has used the umrhubhe to striking effect in many Juluka songs.

To my amazement I have also been able to record inkinthwe played in duets back in 1983 at old Lumko, and lately very fine performances given by members of the Ngqoko group. The bows were perfectly tuned together, and clearly take different parts in the song. On one video of mine one can see the hands of the two bow players moving in crossfire, one based on the apparent 10 beat pattern of the voices, the other playing the 8 beats (against 10) of the clap/dance rhythm. Bow duets were something new to the “ethnomusicologists”.

Singing the umrhubhe

A remarkable technique called umngqokolo is practised by Tembu Xhosa women. It is a form of overtone singing which imitates the rich overtone chords and melodies of the umrhubhe. One of its leading exponents, Nwanyithi Mbyaziwa of the Ngqoko Group, calls her version Umngqokolo umngqokolo – overtone singing in the style of umangqo (see the Ngqoko area). The instrument umngqo is no longer found, only the umrhubhe. Umangqo is the name applied to a certain unfortunate beetle which naughty boys impale on a thorn, and then use the mouth to resonate overtones from the loud buzzing noise as it tries to fly away. The click ngq in umngqokolo also indicates a Khoisan origin for this technique.

b). Bows played by plucking

The inkinge of the Xhosa is structurally the same as the rugoma of the Kavango. Both are made of a piece of bamboo or reed, and played by plucking. But, these days at least, the inkinge (which is now very scarce) uses a wire string like uhood, but rugoma uses nylon fishing line (Illustration F). The resultant sounds are rather different. Inkinge is plucked with a piece of ox horn. Rugoma is plucked with a finger. However, both use overtones to follow the melody. Inkinge uses the same scale as uhood, created by using one stopping position (upper fundamental being a whole tone above the lower). But with rugoma the player may use several stopping positions, following melodies using the different Kavango scales (see kaworongongo, in the next section). Inkinge produces relatively soft sounds, but rugoma can lead group singing with its clear tones.

This bow is (I hope) still around, among the Venda, the Tsonga and maybe the Zulu and others in our region. Students, how about looking for examples?
3.1.2. Braced Mouth Bows

a). Bows played by plucking

The braced mouth bow played by plucking, and which I have recorded, is called kipongomana in Zulu (a click word which may hint at KhoiSan origin) and tshihwana in Venda. The Zulu performer I recorded used the bow as a musical background to the recitation of oral poetry, softly whistling with the bow when he was not declaiming. The Venda performer was an elderly blind man. He not only performed traditional songs with his bow, but he also composed religious songs with it. He was a devoted member of an indigenous Christian Church. At times he would concentrate on the overtone melodies while his wife sang with him, and at times he would sing while still plucking the bow. Both Zulu and Venda performances were very moving.

This braced mouth bow may be constructed with a loop stretched around string and bow stick, or with the string tied to the bow stick with a single strand. The bow stick itself is made by shaving down the two prongs of the bow, leaving a complete section in the middle for holding and attaching the loop or strand. This bow is called, in southern Sotho, setolotolo. This word finds its way into Xhosa (as isitolotolo) as a name for the Jew’s harp.

b). A braced mouth bow played by percussion

Among the Khoi (Damara, Nama) of Namibia, when I was there with...
Andrew Tracey in 1982, we found a man playing a braced mouth bow by tapping on the string with a little stick. The string was nylon fishing line. The sound was very soft and gentle. Unfortunately I was unable to record him. As far as I remember, he was too shy. But he sold me the bow, which I still have. He called the instrument khos, which is simply the term for a bow.

3.2. CALABASH BOWS

3.2.1. Unbraced calabash bows

There are apparently three versions of this bow still around: the Xhosa uhadi, the Zulu ugubhu, and the thomo of Lesotho. I have done quite a lot of work with uhadi, and also had the great good fortune to record different performers on ugubhu in 1981, 1982. As mentioned, uhadi, the “singing hole”, sings through its calabash. Before metal strings were available, bow strings using twisted ox tail hair and animal gut were documented. Back in the 1980s Xhosa women made bow strings for uhadi, umrhubhe and other instruments by heating and stretching out the brass wire used for making ankle bangles. These days this wire is very scarce in South Africa, but easy to obtain overseas. I have been able to supply both Nofinishi Dywili of the Ngqoko group, and Madosini, with brass wire from Germany.

Unfortunately musicologists sometimes create or propagate mythology about bows which may prove to be incorrect. No doubt musicologists base their assertions on what they learn from the performers they encounter, but sometimes the performers themselves may either be misinformed or have their own agenda in providing information. The researcher does well to check everything six times or more! Contrary to the dogmatic assertions of some researchers, I have met three Xhosa men who played uhadi at one time, and I recorded one man (Mr Mpharholo Mfanzi of Ngqoko) in 1981. I also recorded an elderly man, Mr B. Mpanza, near Nongoma in 1982, playing ugubhu. Mr Mpanza was a marvelous musician, who also performed with umakhweyane and isiqomqomana. In addition, I have recorded not only group singing performances with uhadi on many occasions, but in 1982 at Nongoma I was also able to record Mrs N. Mhlongo leading a group singing marvelous old amahubo songs with the ugubhu bow.

My experiences with uhadi and ugubhu were especially significant for me. In 1979, after some months hunting for bows, I met the marvelous Nofinishi Dywili (Illustration H) of old Lumko. Since then I have recorded dozens of her songs—which means there are probably only several hundred still unrecorded. She is now 82, still hale and dancing, but time for
research is running out. In 1981 I had the good fortune to "discover" the first survival of Ntsikana's Song as an uhadi song. The version I recorded then I trace back as a freedom song version dating back to the War of Mlanjeni of the early 1850s. Other uhadi songs also seem to be historically datable. One re-enacts the casting out of a small-pox victim from the village, and I believe probably dates back to the dreadful epidemic of 1770.

In 1981, thanks to the invaluable assistance of Brother Clement Sithole, I first met and recorded Mrs P. Mpanza, near Nongoma. Like Princess Magogo, she was a princess as she was one of the daughters of Zulu King Solomon. With ugubhu she sang a song mourning people killed in war against the whites - a freedom song maybe more than a hundred years old. In 1982, while I was again recording her, her husband, Mr B. Mpanza, came in, and he could not wait to be given a chance to play ugubhu (illustration I). Some people tried to chase him out, saying he was a nuisance, but fortunately I was able to prevent that. He was magnificent. With ugubhu he sang a song recounting the killing of people by police, a song probably dating back to the early part of the twentieth century. He sang other songs too, with ugubhu and umakhweyane. When I returned later that year he sang more songs with those bows, and also performed with an azipomqomqo he made for my visit. At that time he was already 81, and his wife 81. His bows had been silent for a long time before my visits. People told me his son had broken his bow because he created a disturbance when people wanted to listen to the radio. It reminded me of the lady near old Lumko who, in 1979, told us that she used to play udulag, but now they had the FM, so she didn't have to play any more.

The third ugubhu player I recorded in 1982, Mrs Mhlongo, was 79. Since then Brother Clement told me he had found a younger player, but I was not able to return to the area. How I wish some keen student would follow that up with Clement!

Another remarkable fact about uhadi/ugubhu is the differences between how these instruments are played. The Xhosas use a whole-tone interval between the fundamental tones, producing a six-note scale (which may be written F-G-A-B-C-D) based on two major chords. This scale and its chords are relatively well-known from the famous "Click Song", and from Ntsikana's Song. The Zulus, on the other hand, use a semitone interval, producing a strange scale which may be written E-F-A-B-C. The bow produces also the tone G sharp, but singers tend to use G natural. (It's no use just talking about these bow scales: one needs to hear the music to appreciate the results. Xhosa men's rhythms are marvelously subtle, with intricacies of cross-rhythm and additive rhythms. Mr Manisi, with udulag, however, used a simple rhythm, not so different from those used by Mr Mpanza.

As for the Stho throm, it can be found in the mountains of Lesotho and produces a result very close to the Xhosa udulag. This seems to indicate Xhosa influence.

3.2.2. Braced Calabash Bows

a). The first type concerns bows which are braced towards the middle of the bow string. The calabash is attached to the brace, which is a loop passing around the string. Placing the loop/braze near the middle of the string gives the possibility of having two open fundamental tones. The Zulus, who call the bow umakhweyane, tend to use a difference of a whole tone between the two string lengths. This means that the umakhweyane has two lower overtones (up to the fifth of the resultant chord), the third of the chord is not so powerful, so the fundamentals and thirds are available from the open sections of the string. These tones may be written as F-G-C-D for umakhweyane, and (say) G-F-A-C for xitende. The bow is held with the shorter section of the string down, so that the player can then obtain one or more further fundamentals by touching fingers of the hand holding the stick to the string. In this way with umakhweyane it is easy to use the note A, and thereby the pentatonic scale F-G-A-C-D. Similarly, with xitende, it is...
easy to touch the string at the note G; which again produces the same pentatonic scale F-G-A-C-D. Once again, it's not much use just talking about this bow theory. The student should get hold of a bow, practise tuning it to the whole-tone and minor third positions, and then find out how the fundamentals and scales are obtained. It's very interesting and great fun. In addition, some bow players play rapid scale passages by touching two or three fingers to the bow string to obtain further tones. Note that when the longer section of string is struck, and a finger touched to the shorter section at the right place, the resultant tones reinforce the chord produced.

Sometimes I try to make my own “rules” of musical development. This rule, for example: the louder instrument tends to put the softer out of business. When the umakhweyane found its way among the Zulus, coming from the peoples to the north, it tended to put the ugubhu out of business. Similarly, the guitar tends to do likewise to the umakhweyane. Now amplifiers are blowing us all away, to the grave detriment and impoverishment of our music.

Brother Clement Sithole composes church music with his umakhweyane, with lovely settings of the psalms. He recorded one for me in English. Among the Tsonga, in 1988 elderly Mr Piet Mabasa (illustration J), a devout member of an indigenous church, recorded some of his church compositions for me, with his two metre xitende bow. As a resonator he used a cut-off plastic container, and successfully performed church and traditional songs with a group of singers and dancers, plus drumming group and kudu horn. Wonderful stuff! Yet another performer on this bow (called in SiSwati makhoyane) is a Swazi Servite nun, Mother Adelia Dlamini. In the 1980s she was producing some fine church songs with a giant (more than two metre) makhoyane: the Ave Maria, psalms and so on. A particularly fine performer on xitende was Mr Peter Chuma from up north beyond Tzaneen. I hope he’s still around and singing!

b). Calabash Bows braced near the end of the String

Maybe the most famous bow of this type is the Brazilian berimbao. The berimbau is a bow taken to South America by African slaves long ago. Berimbaos are on sale in shops in Europe. Some years ago I saw a performance with three of them by young men from Brazil in the Marienplatz in Munich. All the bows were played simultaneously and the group of young men acted out a stick-fight dance, as is done in Angola. In 1982, working in Namibia with Andrew Tracey, I had the chance to record an original form of this bow, called by the lovely name okamburumbumbwo by the Ovambos. The name is again apparently imitative of the bow sound.

These days berimbao is a large bow using a steel string. The calabash is on a loop near one end of the bow; the player hooks the little finger around the loop to hold the bow, and holds a coin (originally a stone) against the string to obtain the raised fundamental tone. In many cases today in Brazilian popular music it seems berimbao is used as a rhythm instrument with bands, playing only two tones: the tonic (raised fundamental, up a semitone) and the leading tone. Recordings I have heard seem to show no sensitivity towards the sound of overtones. However it’s quite different with okamburumbumbwo. The one Andrew Tracey and I recorded in Ovimboland in 1982 was quite small, and had a nylon fishing line as string. The player held it across his breast, holding it by his little finger in the bracing loop, and held the string to obtain a raised fundamental a whole tone up, as with the Xhosa uhodi. The overtones were soft, but heart-rendingly clear. The player was Mr Emanuel Namuro, a blind man who earned his living playing his bow in the market place in Ombalantu (Illustration K).
At our workshop he composed some touching songs for the Mass, either singing or at times whistling softly with the bow.

### 3.3. Bow Type Instruments played by "bowing"

Sankule and sekatara are two forms of a bow type instrument which use usually a 5-litre tin as resonator. They are played by bowing the string with a small bow strung with animal hair or plant fibre.

#### 3.3.1. Sankule

As the instrument is called in Lesotho, it is made usually of a long piece of wood, hollowed out in the shape of an elongated bowl. The string is attached to the back end of the stick, and then to a tuning peg stuck into the front end of the "boat". The instrument is held over the shoulder, and a five litre or similar tin is hung on the back end of the wood as resonator. The player uses a small bow to sound the string by friction, as does a violin player. However, there is a similarity with the violin ends. This instrument also works by using overtones of the string. The only control the player has with regard to amplifying the overtone is by the pressure and direction applied to the small bow, and by using the thumb of the hand holding the instrument. The thumb is free to touch the string to obtain the raised fundamental tone. Despite the difficulty, some players achieve extraordinary control, following melodies exactly and with clear overtones.

Some musicologists feel that this instrument was developed by people who observed Europeans playing violins. That may be so, but instruments played in this way are also found further north in Africa. What is quite certain is that both the method of playing, and the musical result, are very different from the method and result of playing the violin.

This instrument is still quite widespread in southern Africa. I have recorded it as seankure (Ihual illustration L) or segankuru (or as apparently incorrectly seleqapu or segapu) in Botswana, as onizwini among the Northern Sotho, and as gorto, played by an elderly Damara man in Gobabis, Namibia, in 1981. The Damara man's singing was a type of yodelling. He was the dearest of men, already quite old and weak. He had to rest after every few phrases of his song. Sadly he passed away not long after I recorded him. He licked his small bow every now and then to give it a grip on the string. It was always men whom I recorded playing this instrument.

Among the Zulu the instrument is called isiiseke. I heard of a man who played it, and I was fortunate to obtain a carving depicting it. Unfortunately, I did not see or hear it in the Zulu area.

#### 3.3.2. Sekatara

Sekatara is a form of the same instrument made by inserting a bow into the five-litre tin, and attaching the string from the end of the bow to a corner of the tin. The tin is held by one arm, with the thumb free to touch the string to obtain the raised fundamental(s). The small bow is applied by the other hand. Sekatara is what the instrument is called in Lesotho. Xhosa boys also play it. In Xhosa it becomes isikutari. The name isigonkuri has also been found among the Xhosa. The name inkinge is also sometimes used for this instrument, but of course inkinge is really the plucked mouth bow.

The ikatari (and presumably also sekatara) is a herd-boy's instrument. I've seen a lad standing on an anthill, watching his goats, playing away on ikatari. Some musicologists feel that this instrument of performance are found in playing this bow type.
bowing in a circle one can influence which overtones are heard, but it's not easy. In the 1980s, in Ngqoko, the noted marimba player Mlamli Dlangamandla recorded for me with ikatari. He played with wonderful accuracy — not only the melody, but rich chords as well.

3.4. A Rhythm-only Bow: Lipuruboro

Of all the bows I have had the joy of hearing and recording, only lipuruboro was a purely rhythmic, non-melodic instrument (illustration M). In 1981 in Sambiu, in Kavango people were composing songs in traditional style for use in church. A man brought in a great hunting bow. One man held the bow onto a reed mat placed on top of a cooking pot, holding a tin mug containing mielie seeds ready in his free hand. A second man then drummed on the string (of leather) with two small sticks, and the bow holder applied the mug of mielies to the string to add to the rhythm. The name lipuruboro gives a good idea of the sounds that were produced.

4. Conclusion

Those are some of the instruments that have given me a lot of pleasure in my encounters with African music. I wish all my readers to share in that pleasure — by hearing musical bows, studying them, and (let's hope) playing them. I have based this article on the bows I have experienced. The same bows may still be found among other peoples under different names. I certainly hope that there are plenty of musical bows still around, including all kinds of bows which I didn't come across. Happy bow hunting and collecting, and happy music making to you all!

5. Short Bibliography


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Booklet and Recording Collections for use by Students, produced by and obtainable from D. Dargie, include:

Sing an African Song (Song book with recordings);

Nguwe lo! (Collection of Xhosa traditional music);

Umngqokolo (Xhosa overtone singing);

Make and Play your own Musical Bow.

Sources of Recordings:
The ILAM (Sound of Africa Series plus);
Lumko and other music collections rec. by Dave Dargie; Third Ear and MELT productions have both produced recordings of Madosini.

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This paper pays attention to the popularity of home-made tin-guitars, their production technology, tuning system and harmonic approach commonly utilised by black children in KwaZulu-Natal.

The popularity of the guitar in KwaZulu-Natal has earned the region a considerable reputation for producing the finest exponents on the instrument in Southern Africa. There are no official records to support this widely-held belief but, alongside an unsurpassed neo-tradition of maskandi guitar musicianship, it is worth noting that the country's leading jazz-guitar exponents since well before the 1960s into the present era, have consistently emerged from KwaZulu-Natal. In this regard several names are worth mentioning: the late Cyril Msagbabe, Sandile Shange, Allen Kweha, Alomo Memela, Elias Ngidi, Bhabha Mokoena, Vusi Thusi, Bheki Khoza, Enoch Mthalane, Johnny Chonco, Sipho Gumede, Themba Mokoena, Mshaks Gasa, James Mbambo, Joshua Sithole, Spirit, Duze Moholo and the late Robert "Doc" Mthalane. These and many other unrecorded guitarists past and present, all started playing music on tin-guitars.

The predominance of the guitar in performance and composition in the region's neo-traditional repertoire has yet to be fully explained. Both oral and documented evidence point to early influences of the ramkie-type tin-guitar on neo-traditional performance as a widespread phenomenon among African children in both urban and rural environments. Some of the postulations advanced by leading scholarship in the field include:

- a possibility, as a result of the port's situation on the principal route of the pre-17th century Asian-European mercantile trade, of the guitar's introduction by Portuguese seamen to the coastal Natives (Clegg 1981:3)
- a pervasive influence of the three-stringed ramkie, said to have been brought to the Cape by Malay slaves from the Malabar coast of India, and subsequently adopted by Africans. (Coplan 1980:439)
- a legacy of widespread colonial, late 19th century industrial and post-World War II nationwide advertising media campaigns, the latter largely capitalising on the prominence of the guitar as a solo instrument within the American big band swing movement. (Ilanga fcaleNatali, Oct–Dec 1951, Jan 1952; Edwards 1997:119).

Whatever the reasons were for the popularity of the guitar in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere, one result of this was the development of diverse indigenous musical sensibilities and neo-traditional musical developments on an instrument, that had come to symbolise the essential musicality of Africans caught up in the flux of urbanisation and industrialisation. The celebrated mid-20th century urban music and dance styles such as kwela, tsaba-tsaba, phatha-phatha, mbaqanga, mgqashiyo, simanye-monje and neo-traditional maskandi guitar styles were popular cultural products of itinerant and unsettled post-colonial African cultural development. However, it is these styles' direct relationship to sustained accessibility of the guitar to large sections of the African community that is of significance to this paper.

The "Nikabheni" musical social performance practice

Older African guitarists both amateur and professional, especially those residing within the greater Durban metropolitan region, invariably attribute their formative performance experiences to the nikabheni street musical performance practice of the early 1950s. By way of a brief explanation, nikabheni comprised a set of social musical performance practices of the urban proletariat in the city's sprawling shanty lands. A juvenile reinterpretation of this practice in Mhumbane (Cato Manor) settlement on Durban's periphery included formations of "gangs" of performing
youngsters. Tin-guitars provided the main instrumental musical background for such itinerant youthful performances, whose members went around the city and shantytown entertaining passersby in return for coins. Reminiscing about his childhood in the 1950s Cato Manor, neo-traditional guitarist Madala Kunene related in an interview: ‘Nikabheni’ was when we got together, a gang of young boys all growing up together. One of us would play guitar..., a three-string guitar; another one would dance as money was thrown for us to the ground by spectators... I played on a tin-guitar. If you performed ‘nikobheni’, it was on that kind of guitar, and a tambourine made out of discarded bottle-tops... then there would be dancers... (Dlamini 1998:65)

The tin-guitar

The tin-guitar or ramkie as it is commonly referred to by scholars of South African black performance culture is perhaps emblematic of African children’s introduction to neo-traditional instrumental musical practice. The use of tin-guitars by black urban, mission and rural children has been amply documented (Kubik 1974; Rycroft 1977; Coplan 1980, 1985; Dargie 1988). ‘Ramkie’ - A small, three or four-stringed plucked guitar... (Coplan 1980:439).

Kunene related a similar experience of making ramkie-type guitars from discarded materials: ‘...when I was about six years old, I made my own tin-guitar. We used a kind of wire for strings; I wouldn’t know the name, but that wire used to come in a tight bundle... and we used to undo it; each bundle yielding six or five single strings which we tied apart...’ (Kunene M interviewed by Dlamini 1998:66)

My brothers learned to make and play tin-guitars from a cousin who fashioned excellent six-string tin-guitar. This was around 1964 when my family had a home at a Christian mission station a little way up the Umkomaas river on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. My cousin had experimented with various tunings which enabled him to formulate original chord voicings and fingerings. My brothers, however, normally tuned their tin-guitar’s intervals corresponding to the standard Western tuning of E A D G B E.

The three-string tin-guitar

There are a great variety of tunings, intervallic relationships that are possible, utilising the three strings. Indeed, individual self-teaching guitarists develop their tunings to suit particular compositions, and their own interpretations of popular songs. There exists no one particular fingering of even the same chord voicing, as this will depend on the individual guitarist’s choice of the basic open-string intervals. Being fretless, a tin-guitar is played chiefly in the open and first positions. Further positions up the fingerboard present problems with intonation. If for example, the three strings are tuned at intervals corresponding to D, G, b of the standard guitar tuning system, it is possible to voice the three primary triads in the key of C major using the following inversions:

The principal chord (CEG) in its first inversion: 1 (EAC).

The dominant chord (FAC) in root position: IV (D GB)

The dominant chord (GBD) in its second inversion: V I (DB)

The fingerings for the chords above are shown in Fig.2, overleaf:
A tin-guitar harmonisation of a popular marabi 'type' melody

The basic harmonic framework of marabi, kwela, mbaqanga and other related sub styles utilises tonic – subdominant – dominant progressions. In Fig.3 is used a popular marabi melody broadly identified with recordings of mbaqanga (African jazz) of the 1950s. The marabi basis of these progressions and melodies has led Ballantine to comment on their widespread popularity.

The melodies superimposed on these endlessly repeating patterns sometimes became legendary; sometimes lyrics were invented as well, and in some instances the lyrics contained political commentary or protest (Ballantine 1993:26).

Three-string tin-guitar accompaniment employing the basic strumming technique of ukuvamba enabled juveniles to imitate popular music styles heard on gramophone records, and radio after 1945. The above melody derives from a 1950s tune entitled "Engine Fire", which appeared on the B-side of a 78-rpm recording by the Radio Bantu Orchestra (His Master's Voice JP 647). Its composition was jointly credited to E. Themba - then leader of the band called Harlem Win'sters, and recording studio talent-scouts M.Vilakazi, and R.Bopape. Being as it was one of the SABC's 'inhouse' productions, the tune's melody became widely recognised in most parts of the country, with various lyrics being composed to it. The cyclic, repetitive nature of marabi invited this kind of meta-improvisation from the wider public. I first heard a pennywhistle version of the "Engine Fire" melody when I was no more than knee-high in the middle 1960s, and to which the older boys sang the following lyric:

Hello Spoki Mashiyon,
Hello Spoki Mashiyon

An earlier melody to the same harmonic chord progression, as remembered by my mother (born 1930) was "sung to" with the words:

Dansa Mgumuli
Dansel'uleyo
(Dance Mgumuli
Dance for Leah)

In Fig.3 is superimposed the two melodies over a 'marabi' type chord progression. The result bears a striking similarity to the tunes in the same style as "Engine Fire", that is, their melodies are interchangeable.

(a) the possibility of a grassroot interpretation of a popular musical stylistic sensibility such as marabi, and thereby

(b) a deep, and perhaps subconscious assimilation of an idiom that has become emblematic of abroad South African neo-traditional musical expressivity.

An earlier tangible outcome of this assimilation was kwela, a music whose emergence might well have been impossible were it not for the widespread availability to the slum and township youth, of the tin-guitar technology. Equally important for the evolution of this most popular urban African music style was the accessibility of marabi to interpretation by African children on their tin-guitars.

Bibliography


[This paper is dedicated to the memory of my cousin Fando "Aron" Khuzwayo, who was born in 1927 at Dududu Mission Station, KwaZulu-Natal, and who passed away in April 2001.]

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VUMA!

© Vicky Goddard, St. Mary's Diocesan School for Girls

This percussion piece was workshopped by Vicky Goddard and her students of the African Music Ensemble at St Mary’s Diocesan School for Girls, Kloof. The group meets weekly to explore rhythms and dances from various African countries and create their own pieces. This is one such piece, the Zulu title meaning "to agree", "to be in strong agreement". As the girls state it is also a word that evokes much energy and as such the piece is aptly titled. This piece is one that was entered for performance in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, Wales, where the African Music Ensemble, Choir and Orchestra toured as part of their Music Tour 2001.

The key to the rhythm transcription is as follows:

- Cowbell (struck with a stick)
- Cowbell (scrap-ed with a stick)
- Shakers (shaking)
- Shakers (shake on beat)
- Log Drum
- Bass drum
- Djembe
- Shouted or spoken

1+2+3+4+ etc = Quaver note values

The transcription reads across following each alphabetical letter. Bracketed sections are where there are multiple instruments playing. Repeats are indicated as:

\{ x2 or \} x4

For example: follow the direction of the arrows.

It should be noted that more than one Djembe or Log drum may be used. Drummers should experiment with all types of drums and find a suitable tone balance.
Vuma!

Repeat D section above

Repeat E section above
PASME now PASMAE!

The Pan-African Society for Music Education (PASME), first mooted at the 1998 ISME (International Society for Music Education) Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, recently acquired a new letter in its acronym: PASMAE. This in no way implies a move away from ISME (International Society for Music Education) and its links with the IMC (International Music Council) and UNESCO. It signifies a recognition of the fact that, for Africans, music encompasses more than simply a Western view of "music". Hence our name now embraces "Musical Arts Education".

At the first conference in Harare, Zimbabwe (August 2000) a PASME executive committee was elected:
Caroline van Niekerk (South Africa) — President
James Flolu (Ghana) — Secretary General
Mitchel Strumpf (Zimbabwe) — Treasurer.

At the second recently concluded PASMAE conference in Lusaka, Zambia (21–25 August 2001), a new executive committee was elected:
Meki Nzewi (Nigeria) — President
Caroline van Niekerk (South Africa) — Secretary General
Plaxedes Vimbai Chemugarira (Zimbabwe) — Treasurer.

This executive will function until the next PASMAE conference in 2003. From now on, PASMAE conferences will be scheduled in the years in between ISME conferences. The next ISME conference is due to be held in Bergen, Norway, in August 2002. It is a pleasure to announce that the next PASMAE conference will be in Kenya in 2003. We are most grateful to Dr Hellen Agak, Head of the Music Department at Maseno University, who extended the offer to host the 2003 conference, assisted by her colleague, Christo Caleb Okumu.

Grateful thanks is due to Joseph Ngandu, the conference chairman for last month’s Zambian conference, and his organising committee. PASMAE is making plans for its future — watch this space!

Caroline van Niekerk
Secretary General