

## BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN MUSIC SINCE THE 1890's: SOME REMINISCENCES OF ALFRED ASSEGAI KUMALO (1879-1966)

by

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### Introduction

The main body of this article deals with personal reminiscences and anecdotes – many of them relating to music – recounted to me by the renowned Zulu musician, choir-master and composer, the late Mr A. A. Kumalo during two tape-recorded interviews in Edendale, Natal in 1964. This was some two years before he suffered a stroke (in July 1966) from which he never fully recovered. He died peacefully at his home on 9 December 1966, aged 87.

Alfred Assegai Kumalo was born at Edendale (near Pietermaritzburg), Natal, in 1879, and received a sound mission-school education.<sup>1</sup> In 1894 he moved with his family to the newfound Witwatersrand goldfields where he was exposed to a wide variety of Western musical influences. Music-making occupied much of his leisure time: he recalls frequently playing the concertina for dances, and also playing the guitar and banjo.<sup>2</sup>

Later in life, he composed a considerable number of choral pieces, with Zulu words. Though he was not rated as the foremost Zulu composer of his time – that honour being justly held by Reuben Tholakele Caluza<sup>3</sup> – many of Alfred Kumalo's songs were indeed published. Some became very popular with African choirs and are still sung today. A list of A.A. Kumalo's compositions appears in *Appendix 2* below.

### Black South African music styles

South Africa has a wide variety of languages and music styles. Nine major African languages are recognised (and taught in schools).<sup>4</sup> Except among traditionalists in rural areas, however, music-making has been deeply affected by Westernisation and urbanisation.

Western influence has a long history in South Africa. It was already an active force long before 1879 when A.A. Kumalo was born. Indigenous cultural practices, though still surviving to a limited extent today in rural areas, were vehemently condemned by Christian missionaries, from the early nineteenth century onwards. Education, as brought by the missionaries, was a 'package deal': Western culture, values and life-style were inseparable from it. Generation upon generation of African converts, dressed in Western clothes, were taught to despise and totally reject their own customs and musical traditions, which the missionaries damned as heathen and barbaric. Indigenous music and dancing was replaced by hymns and choir singing, modelled on current European practice and taste, and that form of music-making came to be universally adopted and perpetuated as the civilised norm among educated blacks throughout the whole of South Africa.

Against this background, and under the irresistible impact of Western popular music through the gramophone, radio, films and television, the position of traditional performing arts in the Republic of South Africa is a peculiar one. The revival of interest in folk music that swept the world in the 1950s made scarcely any impact at all on black South Africans. Elsewhere in Africa the position was mostly quite different: each newly emerging independent state, when once established, began to view its cultural heritage in a new light, as a focus of common identity and solidarity; and the missionaries quickly began to revise their former policies (though whether from conviction or expediency is perhaps not always clear). But in South Africa just at that time, the newly installed Afrikaner National Government decreed that 'Separate Development' along tribal lines was to be implemented through Bantustans and Bantu Education. For educated blacks who had for generations aspired towards citizenship without racial discrimination, this was anathema. They strove instead to cherish all the more strongly their Western connections in order to compete more adequately with the whites. Some parallels may be seen here with the position of American blacks before the time of Martin Luther King.

Later, in the 1970s, there was eventually an upsurge of 'Black Consciousness'. But to cherish one's own cultural roots is a very delicate issue in South Africa. As there are nine principal black ethnic groups, each with a distinct language and cultural background, the fostering of culture along ethnic lines can easily be a divisive rather than a unifying force. How this impasse can finally be resolved remains to be seen.

Some positive steps have recently been taken in the field of church music, however. During the past two decades many of the established churches have made a complete U-turn: now, instead of banning indigenous music as in the past, there is a strong current in quite the opposite direction, favouring the Africanisation of church music. The Lutheran Church pioneered this trend in Zimbabwe in the 1960s, while in South Africa, Dr David Dargie of the Lumko Missiological Institute of the Catholic Church has been active in running African composition workshops since the late 1970s, to revive interest in traditional instruments, for use in churches (see Axelsson 1982; and Dargie 1982).

### Choral music

But despite these new ideals, what still continues to hold its place as a favourite form of music-making among the majority of educated blacks throughout the whole of South Africa is mission-inspired choral music with vernacular words, drawing upon the old nineteenth-century missionary style, with formal Western four-part harmony, notated in tonic sol-fa – the Curwen 'doh-ray-me-fah-soh' notation system introduced in 1855 by a London missionary, Christopher Birkett. American Negro Spirituals also made their mark.

By the early years of this century, however, missionaries and African clerics became increasingly alarmed at the growing practice of using hymns out of their proper context. In 1911 this concern was forcibly expressed by Dr J.L. Dube in the preface to his songbook, *Amagama Abantu*. This was the first Zulu secular songbook, and it was expressly produced in order to 'bring an end to the bad habit that has been spreading within the black community, of taking the Lord's music and dancing to it because of a dearth of recreational music'.<sup>5</sup> From that time onwards, secular vernacular texts were increasingly used, though the music (often referred to as *makwaya* music – from

'choir') has mostly remained fairly close to the familiar mission hymn style. As Bongani Mthethwa has remarked (Mthethwa 1988, p.28):

Repression of musical activities in mission stations, leaving the people with the hymn as the only choice for all their musical activities, led to the modification of the hymn. The hymn therefore had to become a work song, a love song, wedding song and many other ceremonial situations, including sheer performance of music for pleasure.

In the pioneering days of ethnomusicology this 'Europeanised' style of music was anathema to the purists, as is evident from Hornbostel's comment, in 1928, on some Zulu recordings he had heard:<sup>6</sup>

How dangerous this influence is in music... can be judged from present conditions among the Zulus, who have hardly preserved any African characteristics even in their melodies.

Certainly, *makwaya* music largely ignores the traditional influence of speech-tones upon melodic movement: these languages are 'tone languages', in the sense that a rise or fall in pitch between spoken syllables may sometimes alter the meaning (though to a lesser extent than in Chinese). The early missionaries were unaware of this and just grafted vernacular texts onto Western hymn tunes. For aspiring African composers, Tonic sol-fa, based as it is on the Western major scale and a few rudimentary time signatures, cannot adequately cope with the exotic subtleties of traditional music. Diatonic tonality and stultified rhythm is almost inevitable; and Western I-IV-V chord alternations have replaced indigenous root-progression systems (often I-II, see Rycroft 1967 and 1980).

Nevertheless, closer investigation reveals a certain amount of syncretism in other respects. In secular vernacular choir pieces one often finds textual syncretism, either by the use of traditional proverbs or sayings, or through allusions to traditional topics and ways of life. Regarding musical intonation, certain characteristic non-Western nuances are often noticeable (though less so with the most rigorously trained choirs), no doubt due to the fact that local indigenous music did not employ the Western major and minor diatonic scales, and modulation was absent. Also, it is clear that deep-rooted local pronunciation habits have an effect on pitch. For example, in spoken Xhosa and Zulu, syllables beginning with certain voiced consonants (d, g, v, z, etc.) normally tend to commence with a brief rising portamento on-glide, and this is automatically carried over into song, even when singing in another language, such as English. Similarly, when syllables end with such consonants, they tend to glide downwards in pitch. The great use made of portamento in traditional songs (such as those of the Zulu) is often directly attributable to this linguistic factor: the relation between so-called 'depressor' consonants and lowered pitch.<sup>7</sup>

An early pioneer in the composing and arranging of vernacular Christian hymns was the Xhosa minister of religion, John Knox Bokwe (1855-1922). In 1876 and 1884 he transcribed and published four hymns by the first Xhosa Christian convert, Ntsikana Gaba (died 1820), which had been transmitted orally for half a century (reproduced in Coplan 1985, pp.33-60; see also Gérard 1971, pp.21 ff.; Opland 1983, ch.7). Best known of all, however, is the Xhosa hymn, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (God bless Africa), composed in 1897 by the Rev. Enoch Sontonga. Officially adopted in 1925 as the anthem of the African National Congress (outlawed by the South African Government between 1960

and 1990), it serves as an unofficial 'Black national anthem' throughout the whole of Southern Africa. Its tune has also been used for the national anthems of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Transkei 'Homeland' (see Reed and Bristow 1985).

This much-loved music deliberately overrides ethnicity. The original text of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* is in Xhosa – but through skilful choice of wording it could in fact be taken for a Zulu text – and it serves equally well for either of these two closely related major languages (of the Nguni group). But whenever *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* is sung publicly in South Africa, it is immediately followed by its counterpart, *Morena Boloka Sechaba Sa Hes0*. The almost identical text of this song is in the third major local language, Sotho. Its musical setting is very similar though not identical.

Since the late nineteenth century when mission-trained African musicians began to compose, a great amount of sacred and secular choral music with vernacular texts has been written – mostly in Xhosa, Zulu or Sotho.<sup>8</sup> As a large proportion of choir members are multilingual, these and other languages – including English – are all equally acceptable. Moreover, ever since the turn of the century, leading figures in the African community have striven to neutralise ethnic discrimination, in the interest of achieving national solidarity. An early instance of this ideal was expressed in the song, *Wonk' Um'nt' Onsundu* ('The Whole Brown Community'), in Dube's Zulu Songbook, *Amagama Abantu*, of 1911:

Let the whole Brown Community become one!  
Let the whole Brown Community be of one moulding, like cement!  
We say this to the Sotho, to the Xhosa, to the Shakan [Zulu],  
To the Mozambican, by the Zambezi river.

Public performances and competitive festivals of choral music have long been a dominant cultural feature among educated blacks – though the late 1950s saw the unfortunate dissolution of the eminent Johannesburg Bantu Music Festival.<sup>9</sup> It has long been common practice for black choirs, stage companies and ensembles who achieve local acclaim, to go on tour to other centres, and sometimes even overseas: 1892 and 1893 saw the first tours of Britain, America and Canada by black South African choirs. Such local and overseas performing tours have by no means diminished since those early days. Recently, throughout Europe and the U.S.A. during the 1970s and '80s, a common activity of the ANC's 'Cultural Front' was to stage performances by South African exiles to promote the anti-Apartheid cause (see Dontsa 1988 and 1990).

In South African urban centres, besides the hundreds of church choirs, school choirs and independent choirs who read from tonic sol-fa notation, there are also a large number of musically illiterate groups who nevertheless devise their own brands of music and strive to emulate their more sophisticated peers. A great many of the numerous independent or so-called African separatist churches have their own particular styles of orally transmitted hymns and religious dance-songs.<sup>10</sup> Also, since the time of the First World War, unskilled Zulu and Swazi migrant labourers in South African towns have continually formed small male-voice choirs, devised and rehearsed their own part-songs entirely orally, and held weekly all-night competitions. Their style of music is known variously as *ingoma'busuku*, *isicatamiya*, 'bombing', or *mbube*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, workers' choirs (like brass bands in Britain) are a very common feature of large commercial and industrial firms, hospitals and other institutions; and latterly, African



trade unions have been actively proclaiming their solidarity and ideals through this medium.

### Indigenous precedent

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the predilection for choral singing among these people solely to missionary influence. There is in fact a strong indigenous precedent for choral singing. Traditional music in South Africa, unlike the instrumental and percussion-based music of more northerly Africans, has always been predominantly vocal. In formal group dances (still practised today in rural areas), the performers sing their own dance music while dancing, without any accompaniment; and their dance songs are polyphonic. The basic form is antiphonal. A leader supplies calling phrases. These elicit choral responses, but the leader re-enters before their conclusion, producing an overlap, with resultant polyphony.<sup>12</sup> This 'staggered entry' principle for different voice parts tallies to some extent with that of the Elizabethan madrigalists and of classical choral writing, as in Handel's oratorios, which are in fact firm favourites with black South African choirs — particularly the Messiah, and especially the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

A fondness for competitive choir singing does not lack precedent either. For example, the central feature of a traditional Zulu wedding comprises an elaborate programme of choral dances. Decked out in all their finery and exquisite beadwork, first the bride and her family entourage hold the floor; then in their turn the bridegroom's party responds with an effusive display — each family striving to outdo the other in artistic excellence and to prove their superiority. Young people's dancing contests were also much in vogue.

Throughout Africa, since pre-colonial days, singing has of course long served as a vehicle for expressing criticism. The role of political protest songs was notable in Zambia in the 1950s, in Zimbabwe in the 1970s (with *chimurenga* liberation songs)<sup>13</sup> and particularly, over many years, in South Africa, where the message is often camouflaged in innuendo and *double entendre*. Especially after Apartheid was introduced, the practice of adapting the words of respectable vernacular hymns or school songs in order to express veiled political protest or to call for concerted action in boycotts or resistance has proved to be a very effective political strategy (see Dontsa 1988 and 1990). Apparently the South African Security Branch became seriously concerned about this in the 1980s. But there was little that could be done about it, short of banning music altogether.

### A. A. Kumalo's life history

All those who share the surname, Kumalo (or 'Khumalo', in modern spelling) spring from the same clan lineage as Mzilikazi, a captain who deserted from King Shaka's Zulu army in 1822 and moved northwards, to become the founder of the Ndebele nation of Zimbabwe. Other branches of the clan remained behind in Zululand and Natal, however, and from as early as the mid-nineteenth century some became Christian converts. Alfred Assegai Kumalo was born at Edendale, Natal on January 4, 1879, of Christian parents who were both musical, and were members of the Edendale Church Choir. Alfred was their fifth child.

Though forbidden by his Christian Zulu parents to play with 'heathen' Zulu boys of his own age, the young Alfred occasionally did so, secretly: shedding his Western clothes and donning an *umutsha* (loinskin), he joined in traditional dances such as the *indlamu* and *ukushikisha*, thereby gaining his first experience of African/Western cultural contrasts — for apart from these encounters, his early musical background had been mainly restricted to mission hymns. He was educated at Edendale and at the Nuttall Training Institution where he completed Standard IX in 1893.

In 1894 the family moved to the Witwatersrand: first to Krugersdorp, and then in 1895 to Johannesburg. Alfred served for a while as an ox-wagon driver in his father's cartage business, transporting goods from the railhead at Charlestown to Johannesburg; but he also took several other jobs, such as office-boy, interpreter and clerk, during the 1890s, besides devoting much of his leisure time to making music — as he recalls in his reminiscences recorded below.

At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 he returned to Natal — mostly on foot, but partly in a whites-only railway truck in the company of an Englishman whom he had impressed by his musical skills. In 1903 Alfred Kumalo joined the Edendale Choir which performed in Durban City Hall, and in 1908 in Pietermaritzburg City Hall before Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands. Kumalo worked for some years as a clerk in Pietermaritzburg, where music (including mastery of the banjo) continued to be one his favourite pursuits. In 1906 he served with the Natal Native Horse Regiment in the Bhambatha Rebellion. But he was back in the Transvaal from 1912 to 1916, in Krugersdorp, where he established himself as a building contractor. However, 1917 saw him back in Natal once again: from 1917 to 1928 he was employed at the Municipal Affairs Department, Durban; though he still found time to conduct several choirs and to compose a considerable amount of music. He formed the Zulu Male-Voice Party in Durban in 1923, and later led a close-harmony group, the Kings of Harmony. As a founder member and first secretary of the Bantu Social Centre (now YMCA) in Beatrice Street, Durban, he served for many years there as Assistant Superintendent, and later as Superintendent. In 1950 he was selected to play a role in the film, *Cry the Beloved Country*. Finally, he returned to his birthplace, Edendale, working as telephone operator at Edendale Hospital from 1954 until his retirement in 1961 at the age of 82.

Having heard a lot about Mr Kumalo and his achievements, and being familiar with his music, I had long wanted to meet him in person. Happily I was able to do so in 1964, through the kind auspices of my old friend Professor C.L.S. Nyembezi<sup>14</sup> who lived in Edendale near Mr Kumalo and his wife. Our first encounter was at a very pleasant social evening on 11 February 1964 at the home of Professor Nyembezi, whose father was also among the guests present. I was able to conduct a brief informal tape-recorded interview with Mr Kumalo on that occasion, and also to arrange for a further, more extended session on 23 March 1964 at Mr Kumalo's own home. The text below has been transcribed from the recordings made on those two occasions. Besides the incredible range and accuracy of his memory, he had a superb command of English, with scarcely a trace of anything like a foreign accent at all. He was a man of infinite charm and integrity whose memory I shall always cherish.

### A. A. Kumalo's recollections: a transcript of two interviews <sup>15</sup>

D.K. Rycroft: Mr Kumalo, when were you born, and why is your second name Assegai?

A.A. Kumalo: I was born on the 4th of January, 1879; and according to Zulu custom, I was given a name recalling what took place at the time [i.e. the Anglo-Zulu War]: my second name is actually Mkhonto. But I wasn't baptised under that name; it had to be the English translation of it: Assegai; Alfred Assegai. Though of course my people used to call me Mkhonto. To this day I am still known by the name of Mkhonto. And my father gave me another name: Sihayo. Sihayo was the father of Mehlokazulu, who pursued two women who had crossed the Buffalo river [into Natal, and had them executed for adultery], and they took him in and had him killed. That was one of the reasons for the Zulu war.<sup>16</sup> Very few people know that I bear that name.

#### Father's occupation

D K R: And what did your father do?

A A K: My father was a carpenter; he was in fact a wheelwright. He was brought here to Edendale, from Aliwal North, by my grandfather, for higher education. But he found that the education didn't exist. So he was apprenticed at J. Merryweather and Sons in Pietermaritzburg in 1861, and he became a wheelwright. He was one of those who built up this Edendale Wesleyan Church, in 1866. And he was also responsible for building part of the altar, which is made out of mahogany. That was long before he was married. He was married in 1869.

#### Musical career

D K R: What about your musical career?

A A K: My mother told me that, from childhood, I never used to ask for a slice of bread in the way that children usually do. 'Well, how did I get my bread?' I asked my mother, and she said, 'Oh, you used to sit down on the doorstep and start singing: [EXAMPLE 1] *Ma, ngifun' isinkwa; Ma, ngifun' isinkwa!* [Mother, I want bread; Mother, I want bread!]. 'And then the bread was handed over, and that was the end of the programme,' she told me. When that took place I think I must have been about two and a half years old. Later on there used to be an ox-wagon driver named Jiza Sikhakhane. He was very friendly to me, and whenever I saw him I used to sing: [EXAMPLE 2] *Jiza Sikhakhan', Jiza Sikhakhane*. Then he used to pick me up. I was told all this by my mother; I didn't remember anything about it. When I was about twenty years old I met this old driver again, but when people asked me if I knew him, I said 'no'. They said, 'Don't you remember a man who used to drive an ox-wagon of your father's?' Then it came back to me; I just looked at him and straight away I sang, *Jiza Sikhakhane!* He was amazed. That was the last I saw of him, the poor fellow. He has gone to rest.

#### Indlamu dancing

A A K: When I was on Willif [?Wilf ?Willis] Short's farm, as a young boy, before I went to school (it must have been about 1885), there was a gang of Native boys we used to have dances with — of course we were always forbidden by our parents to mix with those boys! We used to do it stealthily! And I remember one of the songs we used to sing when we were dancing what was called *indlamu*: [EXAMPLE 3]:

*Oyidlayo, Oyidlel' ekhishini,*  
*Oyidlayo, Oyidlela phezulu.*

Then the others would sing:

*Kahle mfana! Kahle m'..*

*Oyidlela phezulu, ka—hle mfan'*

*Oyidlel' ekhishini, Kahle ....*

[The one who's eating it (?meat); The one who's eating it in the kitchen;<sup>17</sup> The one who's eating it; The one who's eating it up above. (Others sing:) Careful, boy! (or 'nicely, boy!'), etc.]<sup>18</sup>

### Experiences in the Transvaal

**D K R:** Can you tell me about your boyhood experiences after that time?

**A A K:** I was born right here in Edendale. But when I left school I went up with the transport wagons, from Edendale. This was in 1894. And I was trained as an ox-wagon driver by the late Azariah Msimang, who was a cousin of my father. When I got to Joh'burg, my father and mother were at Krugersdorp [about 25 miles west of Johannesburg], so I went and lived there. Then I was employed at Krugersdorp, by a stationer; I used to go out selling periodicals. And later on I did a little transport for my father, with a scotch-cart. I remember going to Krugersdorp one day, with my elder brother. We didn't know which particular street to go to, so my brother went to some miners who were conversing. He took off his hat and said: 'Excuse me Sir, could you tell me where such-and-such a street is, please'. One of them turned round and spat on the ground and said: 'Go to hell!' My brother said: 'Yes Sir. Can you tell me which is the way to hell?' We all laughed at the miner. He was a very humorous fellow, my brother. And what was very peculiar: years afterwards I was taking a choir to Randfontein, from Krugersdorp. We had to cross the railway line to get on the train. I asked the man to give me 10 return tickets to Robinson, Randfontein. And he says to me: 'Will you have them now, or will you wait until you get them?' I said, 'Well Sir, it all comes to him who waits!' And the other clerk who was in the office laughed like hell. He gave me the tickets; and he became my friend after that. Wonderful how a bit of humour will soften up a man!

**D K R:** Did you stay long in Krugersdorp?

**A A K:** No, there was the outbreak of the Jameson Raid, in 1895, and we removed to Johannesburg. My first job there was at the Jubilee Gold Mining Company, first as an office boy, cleaning up the office; and later on I was transferred to the gangs that were sorting out stones — quartz that had gold in it.

### Exploring a mine shaft

There was an old disused shaft where I used to see boys going down the mine to drill holes for placing dynamite, for blasting, before the other workers started, and they used to get well paid for that. So one day I thought I'd take a chance too. I took a piece of candle and some matches, and followed someone who had just gone down. I went down the first ladder, then the second ladder, and then I got to a tunnel leading to the right. But after five or six yards I suddenly fell: there was another shaft leading down, with a plank bridge across it. Luckily I fell onto the bridge! But I dropped my candle and matches and was left in pitch darkness. I groped around to find my way back but kept on losing my way: it was about two and a half hours before I finally got out. [His account



has been shortened, here.] Later I was employed as an office-boy at the Ferreira Gold-mining Company.

### **Back to Natal**

And then my grandfather died on the first of June, 1896 — there's a picture of him over there; my father couldn't get down, so he sent me down with my eldest sister for the funeral of my grandfather. We were just a day late. We got the telegram late; it was sent on Monday and we got it on Wednesday; we entrained on Thursday morning and got to Pietermaritzburg on Friday at about 4 o'clock in the morning. He was buried on Thursday, the previous day. Then twenty days after that I was asked by a man to go and substitute for him at New Hanover, at a lawyer's office, a Mr Stuart [or Stewart?]. I was there for a year. Then my father came and took me away, to come and look after his wagon here. Well I drove that wagon, doing transport work as far as Kranskop. It was on my return from Kranskop that the Rinderpest started [1897]. When I got home, the oxen started dropping.

### **Johannesburg again**

Then I went up to Joh'burg with my elder brother; and I was employed as an office-boy at the Village Main Reef. My brother was sent to Mafeking to collect some Basutos for the City and Suburban Gold Mining Company; and while he was in that part of the country he died, at Palapje. My father came up from Natal; though my uncle said 'It's no use going there, brother; the land is not settled at all; best to go home. You can't find your son, he's gone'. That same year, my younger brother died. And then the South African War started.

### **Guitar and concertina**

**D K R:** Mr Kumalo, I believe you said you played the guitar in those days, even before the Anglo-Boer War. Did you buy your guitar in Johannesburg?

**A A K:** Yes, as a matter of fact I was advised by my late uncle, who had just returned from England. I believe he had heard them played in England, and he wanted me to learn the guitar — in fact I believe he bought it for me. But I couldn't get a tutor, a proper tutor; so I just learnt the old-fashioned way, you know, like it was played at that time by those Cape people. That's how I came to play the guitar; I wasn't an expert.<sup>19</sup>

I believed more in the concertina. When my uncle wanted to switch me onto the guitar, I was already a bit of an expert on the 30-key concertina; and I used to make a bit of money out of that. I used to play for dances, for which I used to get a fee of a guinea a night. I generally played from 11 at night, until 4 in the morning.

**D K R:** It must have been hard work! Where was this?

**A A K:** In Johannesburg, at George Gogh [township], and somewhere near Jumper's — Jumper's Gold-mining Company. This was in 1898 and 1899, just before the outbreak of the South African War. I had been playing for two or three years before that, in Joh'burg.<sup>20</sup> I lost my concertina in 1919.

### **Uncle went to England**

**D K R:** And what was your uncle doing in England?

**A A K:** My uncle acted as private secretary to a Mr Allen who was a Manager of the City and Suburban Gold-mining Company. He had gone to England [with Mr Allen] in 1892, and came back in 1894. Well, he had parted company with Mr Allen; he was

married in 1894, and he went back to his old trade, as a teacher. As a matter of fact when I was a little boy he taught me for about a year, in 1887. When he advised me to learn the guitar, I didn't care much for it. My sister tried to teach me the organ [probably a harmonium in the local church] – this was later, a bit later. I liked the organ, but I didn't like to study staff notation! I had just left school and I hated studying anything, or committing anything to memory. So when my sister got her first child, after having taught me for about three or four months, she was interested in her child, and I got a chance of getting off from studying music, and I got onto my concertina again. I didn't care much for the guitar. There was a guitarist in Johannesburg by the name of Charles Molefe. Oh, he was wonderful. He died about four or five years ago, I think.

### **Anglo-Boer War**

**D K R:** I think you said you had some interesting experiences during the Anglo-Boer war.

**A A K:** Yes, I was in Joh'burg when the South African War started. They closed down all the shops; and we requested Mr Marwick to get us permission to walk down to Natal. The railway had been commandeered by the Transvaal Republic, so Zulus who needed to get back to Natal from the Transvaal had no choice but to walk most of the way. We had to hike all the way from Johannesburg to Hattingspruit [near Dundee]. We did over 200 miles in nine days. There were about 25,000 of us, walking in groups of four, six, eight, ten and twelve. We had no stores, nothing. All we lived on were scanty mealies [maize], red mealies, that we cooked in pannikins. It was fortunate that I had a pannikin and a wooden water can; I don't know where I got them from. When we were near Standerton we surprised a rabbit; the country in the Transvaal is all flat. The rabbit ran backwards and forwards until it collapsed; then we just picked it up. When we got to Hattingspruit, all the trucks were already full, so I had to remain there till the following day.

### **His guitar gets him a rail ticket**

I had a guitar, and just to while away the time I started strumming it and singing old songs that were popular at the time. And what is peculiar is that I still remember the song that gave the advantage of getting into the truck which was used by the railway staff. One of the officials, a young man from England took an interest in my singing. He said: What! Do you sing this song? Where did you get it from?' I said 'Yes, I learnt it in Joh'burg.' Then he sang some other song, and I played the accompaniment on my guitar. Then he said: 'Look here, you'll have to get into our truck!' I still remember part of that song:<sup>21</sup> [EXAMPLE 4]:

"There'll come a time some day,  
When I have passed away;  
There'll be no father to guide you,  
From day to day;  
Think well of all I said,  
When, as a man, you wed;  
That is the end of my story,  
There'll come a time!"

This was on the 16th of October, 1899. It was a popular song of the time, in England and South Africa.

### Siege of Ladysmith

After entraining at Hattinghspruit, I got off at Ladysmith; and there I met a man who was a correspondent of *The Daily Mail* in England, a Mr Bennett. I had known him in Johannesburg; I was working next door to where he had his shop — he had a stationers shop. And he asked me to carry his camera while he was going to the front, and he'd pay me ten shillings a day: which was as good as, say 3 Rand, today. So I carried this camera. We went to a place called Modderspruit, I think. And then the order came around for all of us civilians to clear out. The ambulance wagons were all drawn by mules and were already on their way to Ladysmith. Some of these ambulance wagons were shot at by Long Toms, from a hilltop.

And as I was walking along, an Indian went past me and he evidently had some cash in his pocket. He called out to me: *Vlieg! Baleka!* (flee!). But I said: 'Where the hell can I go to, when the Long Toms are striking all over the place?' And just before I got to the end of the road another shell came along and injured a soldier, an officer in charge of the ambulance I think; and he dropped off his horse. And a soldier ran after the horse to catch it. He brought it back to the ambulance wagon. I said to myself, 'what bravery!'

And then some shrapnel dropped about fifty yards from where I was, and one splinter dropped just a few feet from me. I had a good mind to take it with me; but I left it, and we went into Ladysmith. But the orders were that every civilian must clear out of Ladysmith. This was on a Monday. The Long Tom [cannon] had started shelling Ladysmith on the Sunday. So Mr Bennett said to me, 'Kumalo, best thing, clear off home, if you can!' So on the Tuesday I entrained for home. On the Thursday, just two days after I left, there was the siege: the Siege of Ladysmith. When I got home, my intention was to join up as a Scout,<sup>22</sup> but my father wouldn't have it. I was his only remaining son, then.

### Pietermaritzburg

So I eventually got a job as a clerk at the Municipal Native Affairs Department in Pietermaritzburg — this was in 1900. I left there after two or three years and took on a job as a dairyman, employed by the Natal Creamery; I was making good pay there; until an advertisement appeared for an instructor in Zulu to the Borough Police. I got that job. And while I was there, the Bhambata Rebellion broke out. I joined the Natal Native Horse, under the command of Major Moe; and Captain R.C. Samuelson was Adjutant.<sup>23</sup> I've got my medal here. When I came back, I went again into the Borough Police and stayed until 1910, when the Municipality couldn't afford to employ a Zulu instructor for the Police any longer. Then I did some work under a Mr Kemp, in charge of a gang that was loading mine props, at Victoria Road Station; but that didn't last long.

### Banjo lessons

**D K R:** Was it there that you took up the banjo?

**A A K:** Oh yes, I learnt the banjo in Pietermaritzburg. I've got it here, my old banjo. It's a 5-string model, what they used to call a zither type. I learnt that from music. I was taught by Mr Oliver Hesketh, and I had a few lessons from Mr Dawson; he was employed at the bank; and a few lessons from Mr Stevenson [?Stephenson]; he was in the CID, and in exchange I taught him Zulu. He later became a very proficient Zulu speaker. I don't know if he is still alive. He was in Pietermaritzburg. I was interested in the banjo, and I got down to learning staff notation — though I've forgotten it since! I haven't

played the banjo much now since 1948 or 1949, I think. I used to play several pieces but I've forgotten most of them, and I can't even do the fingering properly now. [Here, he began to play a tune called *Dusky Dandy*, but soon gave up the attempt, being dissatisfied with his efforts.]

### **An old Zulu song**

**D K R:** Besides English and American music, do you remember any more Zulu songs you heard when you were young?

**A A K:** Yes, there was an old traditional Zulu song I remember hearing in Pietermaritzburg in 1900. It was sung by a group that came from Kranskop: [EXAMPLE 5]:

*Mkhoz', umhaw' usuk' esweni, A-ho-hom!*

*Umhaw' usuk'esweni, Uyotshel'inhliziyi.*

[O father of my daughter-in-law, Jealousy starts from the eye, A-ho-hom! Jealousy starts from the eye, And goes on to tell the heart.]<sup>24</sup>

### **Back to Joh'burg**

After that I went back to Joh'burg, and in 1912 I was employed as a clerk under a Mr Whitridge at the Cinderella Gold Mine; and when my contract expired, I went over to ERPM. Mr Marwick and Mr Morris had another contract there, and I was employed by them, until I discovered the difficulty of working there. I approached one of the men and asked if I couldn't draw up a time-table so that some of the men could get off — because we used to start at about 3 o'clock in the morning, and work the whole day, with no shift. So I drew up the plan and gave it to him. He was pleased, and he accepted it. But just on the very first day when the plan began to operate, I got off at 7 in the morning. I was off for a few hours, and sat by the fire because it was terribly cold. Then the Compound Manager came along and said: 'Look here, go and get me three boys from the compound.' But I said, 'I'm sorry Sir, I'm off duty now.' But he said, 'Off duty indeed! Go and get me three boys!' I said, 'Sorry Sir, I'm terribly cold, and I'm off duty.' So he said, 'All right then, you'll get the sack!' — 'Well, I might as well get the sack then!', I said, and sat down. I was fed up. I got paid off that day; and went off to Krugersdorp.

### **Krugersdorp and Randfontein**

My uncle was there now, as a minister — the very same uncle that had bought me a guitar. He said: 'You're a bit of a carpenter'. I said, 'Yes, uncle, but I haven't got any tools, and I can't afford to buy any'. So he got me a hammer, a square, a rule, and a pencil, and said: 'You go and put up a little closet for me in the New Location'. He gave me an order for the wood and iron that was needed; and in two days I had finished it. He said, 'Oh, so you are a carpenter!' I said, 'Well, a bush carpenter, my uncle!' Then he got me a job, to put up a little cottage for another man, with two rooms. I had to make the foundation, of rough stones from the mines. I got about 16 pounds for that job. Then I carried on, as a contractor, from 1913, when they started putting up a location at Randfontein; I moved over there, and put up a lot of cottages for people, up to the end of 1916, when materials got scarce. During that first World War, supplies cost so much that I got less and less jobs.



## Durban

Then I got an offer of a job as a clerk at the Native Affairs Department in Durban, under Mr Marwick. That was in January 1917. I resigned towards the end of 1928; and I was given a contract to build a church, of my own denomination [i.e. Wesleyan Methodist] at Briardene. That church still persists to this day; a wood and iron structure. During the time of the Great Depression [1932-3] I suffered a great deal; at one stage I worked under Mr Brokenshaw as a labourer.

## Ladysmith

My father and mother died, in succession, in 1932, and I went up to Ladysmith where they were buried. The Wesleyan minister who was in charge there, Mr Msimang, died in April, the same month as my father. I was requested to act in his place, by issuing tickets and attending to the different meetings of the societies, until they appointed a minister. I was given a little payment for that. I carried on for about 4 months.

## Bantu Social Centre, Durban

**D K R:** I met a Mr Ngwenya recently at the YMCA in Beatrice Street, Durban who said he knew you very well there, when it was still called the Bantu Social Centre, before the YMCA took it over. I went along on a Saturday night when there was a male choir competition, and I met him there.

**A A K:** Yes, he was on the Executive Committee of the Bantu Social Centre, when I was acting as Assistant Superintendent (and eventually as Superintendent) and I had a choir there. That was in 1948. Later on I had another choir. Of course, the choir members used to come and go.

It was in 1933 that I was approached and asked to act as Assistant Superintendent at the Bantu Social Centre in Durban. I acted in that capacity, under different superintendants: the first was Mr S.W.B. Shepstone. He got promotion as a Welfare Officer. There were about four superintendants. The last was W. Johnson [or Johnston or Johnstone?]. He died in December 1946. I was then appointed as Superintendent.

It was during my early days there that I did most of my composing, to while away the time; and when I got tired, the late Dr B.W. Vilakazi encouraged me to write more songs.<sup>25</sup> Then I continued. He gave me some words to use. I believe there is a song, with his words, which I never completed. Some day I believe I'll have the time to finish it.

## First composition

In about 1899 I remember asking my sister to try out a piece I had written.<sup>26</sup> I was always very musical. Later, when I was in Durban, I started composing seriously. One of my first songs was *Wayaphi uThandiwe?* [Where did Thandiwe go?]<sup>27</sup> I was trying to recapture the Zulu idiom and rhythm and modernise it into a Western musical form.<sup>28</sup>

**D K R:** Can you sing the soprano part of that song? [EXAMPLE 6]:

*Wayaphi uThandiwe, bantu? Wayaphi u Thandiwe?*

*Bath' usenyangeni, entashingeni; ekudeni, A-ho! A-ho! A...*

[Where did Thandiwe go, O people? Where did Thandiwe go? They say she's at the doctor's; etc.] Of course the other parts resemble the original Zulu air: *Maye Maye, Awo! Awo!* ... Something like that.

**D K R:** Was this a particular Zulu air that you remembered from somewhere?

**A A K:** No, it is just original; I composed it.

**D K R:** You mean you captured the flavour, the atmosphere, of traditional Zulu music? You didn't copy any specific tune?

**A A K:** Yes, that's what it is. But my wife is an expert in copying some of those traditional Zulu songs. There was one she sang for Mr Hyslop, who came here from Kenya.<sup>29</sup> She would sing it for you if she were here. It was used while they were hoeing.

#### Commissioned works

Then later on there was a Mr Edward Jali, he's in Durban I think; he was employed at the Beatrice Street Clinic, McCord's Clinic. He was writing a Nativity Play, but with different names and localities; and he asked me to write out the music. Well, I wrote, I think, three pieces. His text, for one of them, was about where the three wise men met, and had breakfast; and before they had breakfast they sang this song: [sings a phrase, but words are not clear]... something like that. And before he finished writing that play, he got a scholarship to go to Fort Hare, where he trained as a medical aid.

One of the songs I wrote is a very popular song, *Intokozo*. Even to this day, I think it is one of the leading songs: [EXAMPLE 7]:

*Nans' intokozo, kubantu bonke bomhlaba,  
Nans' indab' imtot'imtoti, imtot' imtoti kubantu bonke;  
Nans' intokozo, kubantu bonke bomhlaba,  
Kuvel' izindaba ezimnandi;*

[Here is joy, To all people on earth; Here is a lovely story; etc. (Christmas theme: Angels appear to the shepherds, etc.)] Mtoti, of course, is a *hlonipha* word [i.e. respectful substitute] for the word *mnandi*, from the days when they had to avoid the name of Tshaka's mother, Nandi.<sup>30</sup> Once Tshaka said of the water: '*Ho, amnandi amanzi!*' [Oh, the water is sweet!]. But the people had to say: '*amtoti*' – not '*amnandi*'. That was at Amanzimtoti, and that's how it got its name. [At this point, we were joined by Mrs Kumalo, who agreed to sing me the traditional hoeing song that she knew.]

#### Traditional Zulu weeding song

**D K R:** Mr Kumalo tells me that you know a weeding song. What do you call that in Zulu? And where did you learn this song?

**Mrs K:** *Elokuhlakula*, or *iculo lokuhlakula, ensimini* [song for weeding in the field]. I learnt it at Inyanyatho, near Dundee: [EXAMPLE 8]:

*Isoka lakhona nguMagwegwane, Gwe-gwe!  
Isoka lakhona nguMagwegwane, Gwe-gwe!  
Sithand'okweshisa-tshisa, Mbhemi, 'tshisa!  
Sithand'okweshisa-tshisa, Mbhemi, 'tshisa!  
Heleza! Heleza! Heleza! Heleza!*

[The dandy of that place is Magwegwane ('Little bandy-legs'); Crooked! We like tea-rooms, chum! Make it hot! Blow! Blow!]<sup>31</sup>

[Interview with Mr Kumalo resumed:]

#### Male choirs

**D K R:** What can you tell me about the history of male-voice choirs?

**A A K:** Well, I started a male-voice choir in 1923 in Durban. I don't know any history really, except that I had heard a male-voice choir in Pietermaritzburg; and I was so

struck by the harmony that I said, if I ever get a chance, I'll start a choir like that. But it was a hard job because at first I couldn't get people who were interested in singing. Oh it was a terrible job! When I started my choir in Durban, I got two brothers, Maurice Mkhwanazi and Charles, and I got a first tenor, Prince Hlophe – Oh he was a wonderful tenor. He had also had training in Cape Town. And he used to sing *The Holy City*; wonderful! Then later on I got others who were interested in music, like Edward Matiwane, a tiny little fellow but very musical, and a critic, in music. He used to correct me sometimes; and I liked it. He died about 16 years ago (he gave himself to drink).

**D K R:** Did you read from tonic sol-fa notation?

**A A K:** Yes, tonic sol-fa; and we still do, up to this present day.

**D K R:** And what about those illiterate Zulu male choirs who sing without any music?<sup>32</sup> Did they in fact copy the idea from the sophisticated, literate male choirs?

**A A K:** No, they started on their own, before I even started. I first heard of them in about 1914; I was in Joh'burg at the time. I didn't quite like the way they were singing. Of course it was in Zulu, it wasn't English, and the words were often a kind of gibberish. I heard some of them in Johannesburg in 1914, and there were quite a lot of them in Durban. It was called *Isikhwela Bhantshi* or *Isikhwela Jo*, or something. They used to have competitions in the Municipal Hall in Taylor Street, Durban. I was asked on one occasion to adjudicate at one of their competitions. That must have been some time between 1938 and 1940.

**D K R:** I first encountered them in Johannesburg, holding their Saturday night 'Bombing' competitions (as they called them) at the Polly Street Adult Education Centre, when I was in charge there in the late 1940s [see Rycroft, 1957]. Each choir had an impressive name and a distinctive and spectacular style of dress. But nowadays they seem to wear sophisticated lounge suits. What sort of costumes did they wear in Durban in earlier days?

**A A K:** Oh, various different uniforms. They seem to have made a lot of money; I don't know how. They had very expensive uniforms. Each choir had its own uniform. In their songs, they generally followed the trend of events at the time; they always tried to tell the people what was taking place.

**D K R:** Do you feel that political sentiments and strivings have been expressed in these songs, over the years?

**A A K:** Well, that I very much doubt; because, unfortunately for us, there's no such a word as 'politics' in our language! All that they expressed was just the actions that were taking place.

#### **From 1949**

I carried on as Superintendent of the Social Centre till 1949. Very difficult! I had to be responsible for everything in that building: the servants, the tea-room, hiring the rooms, and all the moneys that were paid by the members; and I had to keep a record of all the members' names; and work out the amount of entertainment tax to pay to the Provincial Government. It was so strenuous! I felt if I continued I would die. So I resigned in 1949.

This photograph (Fig 1) was taken in 1950 when I first grew a beard. At that time, I was preparing to go and take up farming; but then Mr Zoltan Korda came along, picked me up, and took me for a test in Johannesburg; and he asked me to grow a beard!

### Film: Cry the Beloved Country

I was asked to grow a beard by the Director of the film, *Cry the Beloved Country*, Mr Zoltan Korda. I was the only one who was selected in South Africa. But I was not a professional; and in the end they decided to use only professionals in the leading roles, and we got only very minor parts. Originally, I was supposed to represent a priest who was called Reverend Stephen Kumalo. The screen test was on January 21, 1950; it was a Sunday. I was in a minister's garb, and we saw the picture of our acting on the following Tuesday, before it was flown to England, to the experts. But they decided against it. A lot of people wrote to the press that they were disappointed that our local talent was not taken on. I was sorry too: I would have been well off! The actor who got the part got a thousand pounds a week, all found, for six months. I just had a very small part, as the Chairman



Fig 1: A.A. Kumalo in 1950.

of the Shantytown Committee, that went to show its sympathy with the man who had lost his son: Mr Jarvis, I think it was. And when I stretched out my hand, telling him that his son was a good man, he was reluctant to shake hands with me, and he looked around at the people; but later on did shake hands with me. That was at Brixton Cemetery in Johannesburg. And of course it was my choir that gave a sort of background of music, and my composition *Intokoza* came into the film.

### After 1950

From there, after the film, I got a job as a liaison officer at Amalgamated Packaging Industries. That's where this picture was taken (Fig 1) where I had a beard. But I couldn't agree with the man who was in charge of the boys; he was jealous because I was very popular with the managers of the different departments: they always called for me; and he tried to get me into trouble. So I thought the best thing to do was to quit, and I left, and came up here. And since they retired me from the Hospital in 1961 I've just been having a nice loaf!

**D K R:** Well, not exactly! What about this extension to the house that you built; and your garden, and your workshop? When I arrived I saw you sawing wood.



**A A K:** That's just to keep the home fires burning! Since we came here, I have never bought any wood. Whenever I can find any, I always cut it up for burning. I've still got a wagon and two horses. It's lying at the auctioneers' now, but there are no buyers.

**D K R:** You've got a nice view behind here.

**A A K:** Yes, I've had mealies, and some Zulu beans, *izindlubu*, and cabbages, and carrots, and sugar cane, and I've had mangoes, and this year we're going to get some loquats, and lemons, and guavas — do you like guavas? Let the wife give you some! And I've got 12 chickens; we have to bring them in every night in case they get stolen.

### **Retirement**

**D K R:** You're still busy composing, are you?

**A A K:** Well, not very much, because I haven't got the time; I have to find a living. Whenever I get a job I have to get on with it, and I have very little time to compose. And the lights — having no electric light here. And I've lost one eye: I can only see with one eye; that's a great handicap to me. Unfortunately the Social Centre, being a charitable institution, had no means to provide pensions or a supernumerary fund, so that's why I decided to leave, since I was getting on in years. My intention was to go and do farming up at Ladysmith. Then I discovered that I first had to settle up the old place here; there was an Indian living in this property, and he didn't want to shift. So I took the matter up, and had him shifted; I pulled down the old house and put up this little cottage.

**D K R:** Do you mean to say that you built this house yourself?

**A A K:** Yes, I put up the skeleton; but the dagha [plaster-work] was done by my wife. We put it up ourselves, in 1954. And then, while I was here, in 1954, I was asked to act as a temporary operator of the telephone exchange at the Edendale Hospital. So that's where I went, instead of going farming! And I stayed on until 1961, when I was retired by the Department [at 82]. Of course I was an old man [of 75] when I was taken on; but it was fortunate for me to get something to do, to keep the wolf away from the house!

### **Still composing**

**D K R:** So your composing has always been a part-time occupation for you, or more or less a hobby?

**A A K:** Yes. As a matter of fact I've composed quite a lot of music for the Roman Catholic Church. This hymn book is done by that gentleman who was here a few minutes ago. There are six of his songs that he hasn't claimed yet. I don't know what his intention is. I suppose they want to milk the cow as much as they can! Some gentleman told me that proper professional beggars have got to put up with that!

### **Questions of copyright**

**D K R:** When you were living in Durban, were you duplicating your own music?

**A A K:** No, I used to write it; I didn't have any means of duplicating it. I got a friend — he died about five years ago — to print it, to blueprint it; but he did me down: he sold a lot of it for himself! But I never took any action against him. Then later, four of my songs were printed without my permission in a school song book. But I have since had that settled by the publishers. I didn't want to go to court about it.<sup>33</sup>

### **Diploma for compositions**

**D K R:** What is this diploma I see up here on the wall?

**A A K:** Oh, the Eisteddfod — I suppose it was just a whitewash!<sup>34</sup> I wrote two songs for a competition held throughout the Republic, and that is what gained me the diploma. One of the songs, called *Potoloji*, was sung by the teachers, all over the Republic; and the other, *Woza lapha mfana!*, was sung in secondary schools all over.

### History of Edendale

**D K R:** You were going to tell me something about the history of Edendale.

**A A K:** Yes, these people first congregated in Basutoland [now Lesotho]. It was through Mzilikazi, with whom I am connected [i.e. through the Kumalo clan], who intended invading Basutoland; but he found the Sothos too strong. My wife comes from the Basuto [Tlokwa] chieftainship: Sikonyela [son of Mantatisi of 'Mantatee Horde' fame — see Morris 1966, pp.57-8]. They sent our people cattle. They said: 'We see you Kumalo people must have been starving, where you came from.' So the chief said: 'Would you kindly have these cattle, so that you can have a feed on your way home.' So Mzilikazi went on, to the Transvaal. My ancestors decided to remain in Basutoland, and *khonza* — that is, pay respect to the Basuto chief. They were there only two or three years — my great-grandfathers — when the missionaries came: Mr James Allison; he was called 'Mneli', or 'Maneli' — a corruption of the Dutch word, '*meneer*'. And my great-grandfathers were converted; they were buried here at Edendale.<sup>35</sup> And there was a delegate sent from Swaziland, to hear about this Christian belief, called 'Jokova' (meaning 'Jehovah'). So twelve young men were sent. The leading man was my great-uncle, Johannes Kumalo.<sup>36</sup> He was sent to preach in Basutoland [?], at a place called Mahamba [incorrect: Mahamba is in southern Swaziland]; they started a mission there. And while they were there, the Basutos had a war: Moshweshwe fought against Sikonyela. All the Basutos, being a very wise people, went over to Moshweshwe, because he was a very clever man. He wasn't a Mosuto; his father had come from Zululand. Mkhashana was the name of his father. And so, Sikonyela's people were driven out of Basutoland — that is my wife's people.

And in Swaziland there was a civil war amongst the Swazis — I don't know what the trouble was; I think it was jealousy because the Christian people were with the Kunene tribe, which was the leading tribe of that particular part. They fought, and they cleared off to Natal; and when they got to Natal they didn't know what to do. These people were penniless, homeless, led by this missionary. When they got here, Theophilus Shepstone gave them a place at Richmond: Ndaleni. While they were there, this farm [now Edendale] was offered for sale by Andries Pretorius; and he told the men to buy the farm. Some said: 'How can we buy land that belongs to a chief? Land belongs to a chief; you can't buy land!' But about a hundred men decided to buy it; and they collected money and bought it in 1851, and completed it in 1861. Isn't it strange that these people who were penniless, homeless, should buy such a farm, that is over 6000 acres!<sup>37</sup> And they built up a church, a Wesleyan Methodist church. The bricks were carried from the kiln from hand to hand; they call that '*isikhamelelo*'. The church was finished on May the 5th, 1866. All the other denominations came here only about thirty years ago. I believe it was part of God's work that these people scattered all over. We were not allowed to mix up with the surrounding heathens. We always kept together, and tried to get the heathens to come in.

I remember when I was a little boy, at the Institution here, we used to be sent out in batches of four or six, to the outskirts, to preach. And we got questions from the heathens, I can tell you! But we were prepared. You find no heathens around here now; they are all dressed up – and are better off than we are! It all came about through people who had nothing – but just faith.

**Appendix 1: Music examples cited in the interview text**

1

*d* = 80 M.M.  
 Transposed a whole tone higher

Ma, ngifun' i - sinkwa, Ma, ngifun' i - sinkwa!

2

*♩* = 120 M.M.  
 Transposed a semitone lower

Ji - za Si - kha - khan', Ji - za Si - kha - khane.

3

*♩* = 92 M.M.  
 Hand-clapping

Oyidla - yo, Oyi-dlel'ekhwi - shini, Oyidla - yo, Oyi-dlela phe - zulu!

**CHORUS**

Kahle m - fa - na, Kahle m', Oyidlela phezulu, Kahle m-fan', Oyidlel'ekhwi-shini, Kahle m'...

4

*♩* = 72 M.M.

There'll come a time some day, When I have passed a - way; There'll be no father to  
 guide you From day to day; Think well of all I said, When as a man you  
 wed; That is the end of my sto - ry, There'll come a time.

5

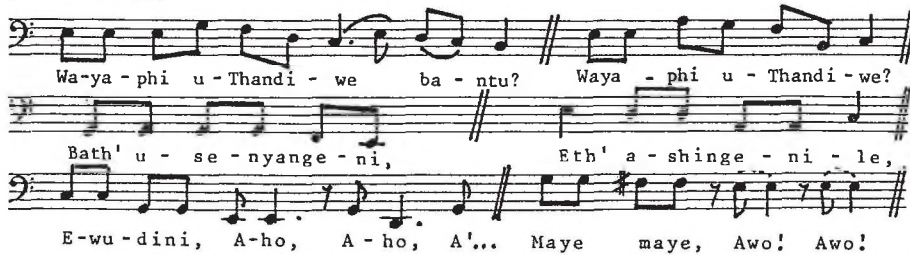
♩ = 76 M.M.

*Transposed one semitone lower*


M-khoz' um-hawu u-suk' e-swe-ni, A-ho, Hom!  
Um-hawu u-suk' e-sweni uyo-tshel' inhli-zi-yo.

6

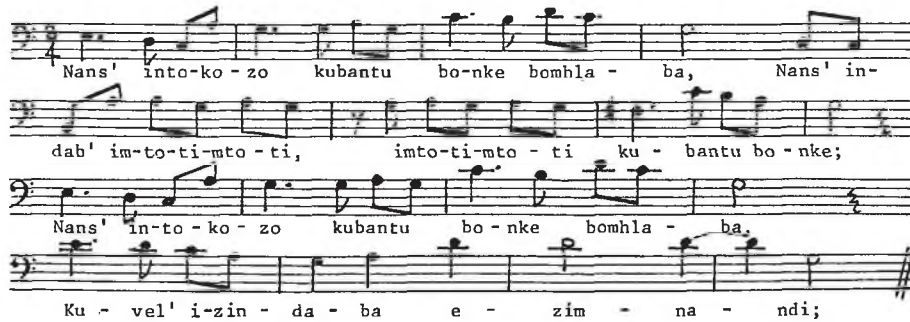
♩ = 82-96 M.M.



Wa-ya-phi u-Thandi-we ba-ntu? Waya-phi u-Thandi-we?  
Bath' u-se-nyange-ni, Eth'a-shinge-ni-le,  
E-wu-dini, A-ho, A-ho, A!... Maye maye, Awo! Awo!

7

♩ = 100 M.M.

*Transposed one semitone higher*


Nans' into-ko-zo kubantu bo-nke bomhla-ba, Nans' in-  
dab' im-to-ti-mto-ti, imto-ti-mto-ti ku-bantu bo-nke;  
Nans' in-to-ko-zo kubantu bo-nke bomhla-ba.  
Ku-vel' i-zin-da-ba e-zim-na-ndi;

8

♩ = 200 M.M.

*Hoëing movements*


I-soka la-khona ngu-Ma-gwe-gwa-ne, Gwe-gwe; Si-  
thand' okwe-tshisa-tshi-sa, m-bhe-mi, Tshi-sa; He-  
le-za, He-le-za, He-le-za, He-le-za.



## Appendix 2: Music Composed by A.A. Kumalo

Items marked here by an asterisk were mentioned or discussed in the interview text above.

(a) Four children's songs in *Amaculo Ezingane Zesikole* (ed. S.S.Ngubane, 1959), pp.29-37.

1. *Ubucubu Obuhle* (Good hornbills). 2-part, in F. (Good hornbills go in pairs / So said those of old / warning children). Zulu proverb or saying, implying 'safety in numbers'.

2. *Batheza Izinkuni* (They're gathering firewood). 3-part, in B flat. (They're gathering firewood in the forest / They're carrying bundles / In the veld they're clearing the ground / In the cattle byres they're preening themselves up / The treasure of the women / This is the treasure of the bride in Africa. / Thump! Here's the firewood / Here's the cattle dung [for fuel]).

3. *Inkwali* (Grey-winged partridge). 2-part, in D. (There's no partridge that forages for another / This is a good lesson to learn / Knowledge is yours alone / Which is not taken away by anyone / Take, take this lesson / Crave after acquiring knowledge.) The first line is a well-known Zulu proverb.

4. *Sesifikile* (We have arrived). 2-part, in E flat. (Now we're waiting for our lessons / We take these books / We greet our teachers / We are all happy with good health / We sing, we are happy / Then we go back home / We're happy because of the books / And the lessons and explanations.)

In his interviews (transcribed above) Kumalo mentions that these four children's songs were published without his permission, but that the matter was settled later by the publishers. The texts of items 1 and 3 are derived directly from traditional Zulu proverbs or sayings. In the third song, the implication that one must do things for oneself and not rely on others, is given a specific twist: later lines stress the importance of acquiring knowledge for oneself through education. The second song is a nostalgic reference to traditional Zulu marriage customs – though nowadays such customs are followed only by traditionalists, not by educated Christians. 'Clearing the ground' implies preparing a dance-floor for the long series of formal wedding dances. Cattle were highly prized: to secure a bride, the bridegroom had to supply a specified number to the bride's parents. The text of the fourth song is a straightforward recounting of a day at school, and 'how happy we are'.

(b) Twenty-four songs in *Izingoma zikaKumalo* (1967)

I have been unable to locate a copy of this book. However, eight of the twenty-four songs have been cited and discussed in a paper by Bongani Mthethwa (1988, pp.29-31) from which I have extracted the following details:

Many of Kumalo's songs are known as school songs among those who perform them. There are quite a few editorial errors in the book, which was published after his death. Considering the date of publication of his book, 1971 – the published songs were probably those that would be acceptable to the Bantu education bureaucracy.

Items 2, 7, 11 and 14 are virtually hymns:

2. *Baba Wethu Ophhezulu* (Our Father who is in Heaven) – hymn, of two stanzas. Based on the hymn, 'O God and Father of Mankind'.

*Bongani Bakithi Bongani* (1963) (Give thanks my people, give thanks) – praises white people for bringing Western Civilization to South Africa (in contrast to no.9).

\*7. *Intokozo* (Joy) – Used in the film, *Cry the Beloved Country*. It tells of the birth of Christ. Huskisson (1969, p.64) writes of it as follows:

Story of shepherds abiding in the fields when angels appeared unto them telling of birth of Christ child. Song opens in hymnal style, emphasizing peace and beauty of veld. When angels appear and shepherds are 'sore afraid', tempo quickens with words chanted. Then a return to choral style while words praise the Lord and tell of happiness of all nations.

9. *Lomhlaba* (This land) (1929) – regrets acceptance of Western ways. Mthethwa (*loc. cit.*) notes that this is a Baca text:<sup>38</sup> 'In this land of Baca where we have lived for centuries, came white people who told us to stop our ways of life and indeed we did so!'

11. *Menzi Wento Zonke* (Creator of all things) (1950) – Mthethwa reports ABC structure: F major - A major - F major. Rigidly Western harmony. (Creator of all things and of the Heavens/ Open our mind so that we may praise Thee / Bless us, and the whole world / All creatures praise Him with hymns and instruments / Hallelujah.) Huskisson (1969, p.65) comments as follows:

DEVELOPMENT [section] is in prayerful mood and has three changes of style. Female voice begins third EPISODE alone as if to create feeling of world as it would be without sun. Gradually male voices join in and momentary feeling of emptiness and void filled in and built up to flow into RECAPITULATION. Glorious CLIMAX in jubilant HALLELUJAHS.

14. *Nkosi Busisa iAfrika* (God bless Africa) – hymn, 2 stanzas.

\*22. *Wayaphi uThandiwe?* (Where did Thandiwe go?) (1929) – Part of the text is given in the interview recorded above (translation by DKR). Mthethwa (*loc. cit.*) claims 'musical syncretism' (but 'textual syncretism' would seem more appropriate here). He notes that the form is AAB, 'with dialogue between sopranos, basses and tutti... popular with choirs because the text is socially relevant and not attached to the Church.'

Soprano: 'Where did Thandiwe go, O people? / Where is Thandiwe? / Whereabouts did Thandiwe disappear to? / We wonder where Thandiwe is!

Bass: You ask me about her! I don't know her. / For a long time you've been asking me! I don't know her. / They say she's at the witch-doctor's, at so-and-so's, far away, Aho! / They say that one in the township.

Soprano: Oh, indeed!

Bass: They say she's possessed by evil spirits! / At a witch-doctor's at Umkomaas.

Chorus: Now we've found Thandiwe / She is indeed at Umkomaas, at the witch-doctor's / It is good, about Thandiwe!

24. *Woza Ngikutshel' Indaba* (Come and I'll tell you a story) (1950) – Huskisson (1969, p.65) claims that the text of this song represents a 'light-hearted conversation between brothers-in-law (male-chorus and chorus), the one insisting that he is telling the truth, the other not believing him'. However, Mthethwa (*loc. cit.*) gives a different account of it:

The lyrics of the song portray a dialogue between a man and his sister-in-law, that is, the wife's sister. In Zulu cultural practice, flirtations between the husband and the wife's sister are expected and therefore tolerable. The man invites the woman to come quickly closer to him so that he can show her a dassie [hyrax] on the rocks. The woman knows that he is telling a lie, and that he wants to fondle her. Eventually the woman comes.

Her pseudo-innocence comes as a choral response in highly Western hymnal chords [Zulu text quoted]. It is popularly known as a male-voice piece, but this is not the composer's prescription... Being personally convinced that this was a folk song, I asked Mrs Kumalo in 1969 how the composer produced such an un-Christian song; the answer was that Kumalo had some 'barbarian' friends who were musicians. The song according to her was a 'cleaned-up version' of what 'barbarians' sing.

(c) Other songs, cited in Y. Huskisson: *Bantu Composers of South Africa* (1969, p.62):

*Asigeze Izandla Zethu* (Let us wash our hands)

*Bavela eNyakatho* (They came from the north) Baritone solo.

*Bayete Zinyane leMbube* (Hail, Royal cub of the Lion!)

*Emasangweni* (At the Gates)

*EThekwini* (In Durban)

*Hamba Kahle* (Go well). Male voices.

*Izwa Ukukhala* O Nkosi (Hear our cry, O Lord). Words by Alan Paton.

*Khuluma Mvelinqangi* (Speak, O God)

*Ma! Ngifun' Isinkwa* (Mother, I want bread)

*Namhla Sifikile* (Today we have arrived)

*Ngithetheni* (Scold me)

*Ngiyeke, we Sathane* (Leave me, O Satan)

*Nkulunkulu Baba Wethu* (God our Father)

*Owa, Owa* (Lullaby)

\**Potoloji*. Won a competition award; widely performed by teachers.

*Salani Kahle* (Stay well)

*Sisibonile Isitimela* (We have seen the train)

*Sithokoza Ngezifundo Zethu* (We are glad about our lessons)

*Siyafukuza* (We are burrowing)

*Ubani Ongasisho?* (Who didn't mention us?)

*Uthando Aluboni* (Love is blind)

*Vukani! Vukani!* (Get up! Get up!)

\**Woza Lapha Mfana* (Come here boy). Won a competition award; widely sung in secondary schools.

## Notes

1. The semi-urban African Freehold township of Edendale was originally a farm, 'Welverdiend', purchased from the Trekker commandant, A.W.J. Pretorius in 1851 by the Wesleyan missionary Rev. James Allison. After quarrelling with the Mission organisation and separating from the Wesleyan communion, he settled there with a number of his African followers and laid the foundations of the Edendale Mission. He erected a water-mill, trained African as skilled carpenters, masons, thatchers and hedgers, and permitted them to own their own village allotments, each with a cottage and cultivated garden plot. By 1864 there were 600 inhabitants. (See Whiteside 1906, pp. 359-62)
2. Coplan (1985) provides a well researched historical account of urban music-making in South Africa. On the growth of 'town' music, see also Tracey 1948; Rycroft 1957, 1959 and 1977; Sithole 1968 and 1979; Anderson 1981; and Stapleton and May 1987.
3. In 1930 a group led by Reuben Caluza recorded 120 items in London, many of them composed by Caluza himself, who was an adept at blending tradition with innovation like ragtime. See Huskisson 1969, pp.23-6; Erlmann 1983, pp.138-9; Coplan 1985, p.70 ff.
4. These languages are Zulu, Xhosa ('x' denotes a lateral 'click' consonant), southern and Northern Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Tsonga, Swazi (or siSwati), and Transvaal Ndebele.

5. See Dube 1911. The American-educated Zulu leader, John Langalibalele Dube was at that time the principal of the Ohlange Institute at Phoenix, Natal, a Christian industrial school which he had founded. He was also a distinguished Zulu author, first editor (in 1903) of the Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatal*, and in Congress, forerunner of the ANC (African National Congress). See Marks 1986, pp.42-73.
6. Hornbostel 1928, p.42.
7. These features have been discussed in detail elsewhere: see Rycroft 1982.
8. Regarding composers of choral music of this kind who have attained recognition, see Hansen 1968; Huskisson 1969; Mngoma 1982; and Coplan 1985, pp.29-37.
9. See Coplan 1985, pp.169-70. Between 1948 and 1952 I was closely associated with the JBMF, as member of the Executive Committee and as Hon. Treasurer.
10. See Sundkler 1948 and 1976; Coplan 1985, pp.79-84.
11. In the early 1950s, while in charge of the Polly Street Adult Education Centre in Johannesburg, I witnessed many of these male choir competitions — see Rycroft 1957; also Sithole 1968; and Coplan 1985, pp.65 ff. Since the 1980s, of course, a Zulu male choir of this provenance, the Ladysmith Black Mambazo, has achieved not only local but also worldwide acclaim.
12. For extensive discussion and analysis see, *inter alia*, Rycroft 1967.
13. See Finnegan 1970, p.272 ff; Kahari 1981; Pongweni 1982.
14. Formerly Professor of Bantu Languages at the University of Fort Hare, C.L.S. Nyembezi is a celebrated author and novelist; also a director of the publishing firm, Shuter and Shooter, and chief editor of their Zulu publications.
15. Transcriptions of the music examples cited in the text are reproduced in Appendix 1, below.
16. For an account of this incident see, *inter alia*, Morris 1966, p.287ff.
17. On the tape, what we have written here as 'ekhishini' (locative form of i(li)khishi, 'kitchen') sounds rather like 'ekhwishini', but no such form is traceable in standard Zulu.
18. The response by 'the others', here, probably comprises only 'kahle, mfana'; juxtaposed against the 'oyidlayo', etc., of the leading part. In Zulu antiphonal songs such as this one, it is common for an individual singer, when demonstrating alone (without other singers), to attempt both parts, jumping from one to the other whenever a new phrase entry occurs (see Rycroft 1967, p.90).
19. Referring to guitar playing by Africans in Johannesburg in those days, Coplan (1985, p.49) notes that: 'They strummed a simple three-chord accompaniment to traditional songs or picked up the Afrikaans-influenced styles of the Cape Coloured and Xhosa... Their music became an important resource for developing inter-ethnic urban African styles.'
20. Fr. F. Mayr noted in 1908 that 'European music is rapidly penetrating into every part of the country, and harmonicas, concertinas, etc., are taking the place of the original primitive instruments' (Mayr 1908, p.257). For some more recent writing on the subject, see Rycroft 1977, p.211 ff.; and Clegg 1981. Coplan (*ibid.*) has a brief reference to A.A. Kumalo's 'playing his concertina for dances...' (acknowledging, as his source, the present taped interview, which I had made available to him). Regarding Zulus in Johannesburg Coplan notes that: 'The Coloureds, Xhosas and Sothos who lived outside the mine compounds were soon joined by Zulus from Natal and the recently defeated kingdom of Zululand. Refusing to work underground, they came to dominate the relatively well-paid field of domestic service.' (One should add here, however, that A.A. Kumalo, being well educated, was one of the fortunate few who were able to find 'white collar' employment). Coplan notes further, that: 'After long hours of isolation among whites, they sought entertainment in the new locations where drinking, gambling, sex, and, of course, music and dancing were regular weekend activities.'
21. After first singing this song, unaccompanied, Mr Kumalo was persuaded to repeat it while accompanying himself on a guitar (which I had brought along). Despite protesting that he had not played the guitar since about 1903, he soon managed to recall the chord positions for C, G7, and a semblance of D minor. He strummed in waltz-time (3/8 + 3/8 in each measure), brushing downwards loosely with the backs of his finger-nails: lower strings on first beat; upper strings on second and third beats. His chord sequence for the 16 measures was: C G7 G7 C C Dm Dm G; C G7 G7 C C Dm G7 C.
22. Regarding these Scouts, in 1989, R.C. Samuelson reports: 'I was appointed as O.C. Scouts, and ordered to go to Driefontein, a Native Christian Settlement, under Chief Johannes Kumalo [A. A. Kumalo's great-uncle — who moved there from Edendale, about 1865], to raise 150 Native Scouts, and scout the Drakensberg from Tintwa to Cundy Cloig, where the Biggarsberg shoots out of the Drakensberg. This



- settlement is twenty-one miles from Ladysmith and four miles from the Drakensberg... I put into use the system of scouting I had learned from the Zulus in Zululand...' (Samuelson 1929, p.138).
23. Regarding the Natal Native Horse, at that time, See Samuelson 1929, pp.194-9.
  24. This text is a variant of a Zulu proverb which is cited as follows in C.M. Doke and B.W. Vilakazi, *Zulu-English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1948/1953) under the entry, 'umhawu': 'Umhawu usuk' esweni uhla' enhliziyweni (Jealousy arises from the eye and abides in the heart; i.e. Passions are never satisfied).'
  25. Dr Benedict Wallet Vilakazi (1906-1947) is best remembered for his magnificent poetry, and for his doctoral thesis: "Oral and Written Literature in Nguni" (University of Witwatersrand, 1945). He was also co-author (with C.M. Doke) of the *Zulu English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1948). I was privileged to be one of his undergraduate students at 'Wits', in 1942-3 and 1946.
  26. Huskisson (1969, p.64) gives the title of this song as 'Saibona', with the comment: 'Destroyed by fire, 1913. Never rewritten'.
  27. Referred to in Huskisson (loc. cit.) as 'written in early 1920s'.
  28. Regarding the blending of styles by African composers, see Mngoma, 1982.
  29. Graham Hyslop served for many years in Kenya, as Colony Music and Drama Officer.
  30. The use of 'tsh' in place of modern standard Zulu 'sh' in 'Tshaka' (for 'Shaka') is typical of speakers from that area, of the 'older generation'. My own maternal grandfather, A.W. Baker (1856-1951, born and bred in Pietermaritzburg and a very fluent Zulu linguist) also spoke in that way — as also did his contemporary, James Stuart.
  31. The word *okwetshisa-tshisa* is not found in Zulu dictionaries. The translation, 'tea-rooms', was supplied by Mrs Kumalo herself. A likely (and jocular) derivation seems to be from the verb *etshisa*, 'chew the cud' (rather than from *-tshisa*, the local dialectal pronunciation for *-shisa*, 'make hot, burn', which occurs in the next line). For *mbhemi* (vocative form of *umbhemi*), Mrs Kumalo gave 'chum'; but the dictionary gives: 'smoker' [-bhema, 'smoke']; or 'man of striking personality' (Doke and Vilakazi, 1948).  
[Ed.: *Mbhemi* does indeed mean 'chum' in Mpondo of eastern Transkei.]
  32. In this connection, see Tracey 1948; Rycroft 1957; Sithole 1968 and 1979; Coplan 1985, pp.65-7; and Mthethwa 1981.
  33. See Ngubane 1959, pp.29-37 — referred to in Appendix 2, below.
  34. Erlmann (1983, p.142) notes that: 'From its nationwide acceptance in 1934, the *eisteddfod* became the spearhead of middle class musical nationalism. Today numerous similar provincial and local competitions take place annually which attract hundreds of choirs and form the main focus of school musical activities.' Besides schools, however, hundreds of adult choirs — from churches, and various institutions throughout South Africa — eagerly participate in festivals and competitions (see Rycroft 1959, pp.25-30; and Coplan 1985, pp. 116-7 *passim*).
  35. See note 1 above regarding Edendale.
  36. For notes of James Stuart's interviews with Johannes Kumalo, and also John Kumalo, see Webb and Wright 1976, pp.213-4 and 215-72. There are also references to Johannes Kumalo in Samuelson 1929, pp. 138-41.
  37. In an interview with James Stuart in 1900, John Kumalo (an uncle of A.A. Kumalo) made the following comment: "There are numbers of *kolwas* [African Christians] who live on land they have purchased for themselves. Natives were first advised to buy land by Mr Allison, Umneli... He said, "Beware, the white people are coming". His words have turned out truly and *kolwas* feel very grateful for the advice he gave." (Webb and Wright 1976, p.238). Regarding the term '*kolwa*' — from the Zulu, *i(li)kholwa* (modern spelling; plural *amakholwa*): 'believer, or Christian convert' — Stuart quotes John Kumalo as saying: 'We belong neither to the Europeans nor to the Natives. We are a people apart... The natives do not care for the *amakholwa*, and the *amakholwa* do not care for the natives.' (*ibid.*, pp.218-9)
  38. Why it should be so, rather than Zulu, is not clear. The *Baca* (or *Bhaca*) are a minority group living mainly at the extreme south of Natal, near the Umzimkulu river, and also further south, in the northern Transkei.

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### Nondel'ekhaya/uVedinga

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

He!Nondel'e- kha- ya, wath'u-tywalabuphelil'. He!Nondel'e-kha-

Yewu, ye,ndi- nesizi nga-ma- nka-zan' Yewu

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

Yiyoi bandibambel',yiyoi bandi-li-ngen',yiyoi bandi-

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

He! Nothobi-le,ma! Ho! amandl'akali-ngan'. He! No-

Ho!Vedinga, ma! Ho!Veding'andi- go- dol-1,ma!

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

He! Nothobi-le,ma! ye- e, 1 2

Yewu, hayi, ma! Ye ye, yewu, hayi,ma! Yewu, hayi ma!

ma! Yewu, ye - e ma! Yewu, ma! yewu,

Yewu,ye he, ye-wu,ha ha, ye- wu ha ha! Yewu,ye he,

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

umngqokplo } melody (overtones)  
ngomqangi } fundamentals

(sing)

Ye! Notho-bile,ma! A- siva-ni ngomthetho... Ye! No-