

Cape Town, its Musical Spatiality and Apartheid: The Case of Zayn Adam, Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler

Harry Sewlall

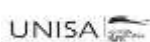
Summary

Cape Town, apart from its famed New Year festive season jamboree once known by the moniker “Coon Carnival”, is arguably the most musical city in South Africa due in no small measure to its exposure to international cultural currents flowing from across the seas to its renowned harbour. Drawing on musical influences from Africa and the USA, the Mother City has given birth to some of South Africa’s most gifted musicians who emerged out of the grim shadow of apartheid to shine in the galaxy of music superstars. Reflecting on the careers of three sons of this city, Zayn Adam (also Adams in some sources), Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler, this article endorses what Martin Stokes has said about music, namely as “the means by which this [social] space can be transformed” (Stokes 1994: 4). In focussing on these three artistes, this article spotlights a historic moment in South Africa’s cultural production – its popular music of the 1970s and 1980s and how these cultural ambassadors transcended the ontology of their race and the apartheid structuration of the city to make their presence in the world of popular entertainment both in South Africa and globally.

Opsomming

Kaapstad is waarskynlik die mees musikale stad in Suid-Afrika – afgesien van die bekende feestydbyeenkoms wat met Nuwejaar daar plaasvind en vantevore as die “Klopsekarnaval” bekend gestaan het. Die stad het hierdie status grootliks te danke aan die blootstelling aan internasionale kulture wat die bekende Kaapstadse hawe van oor die see binnegestroom het. Musikale invloede uit Afrika en die Verenigde State van Amerika het bygedra tot die vorming van sommige van Suid-Afrika se mees talentvolle musikante, wat uit die sombere skadu van apartheid verrys het om saam met ander musikale supersterre te skitter. Deur ’n blik te gee op die loopbane van drie manne van hierdie stad – Zayn Adam (ook Adams in sommige bronne), Richard Jon Smith en Jonathan Butler – onderskryf hierdie artikel wat Martin Stokes oor musiek gesê het: dat dit “die middel is waarmee hierdie [sosiale] ruimte getransformeer kan word” [eie vertaling] (Stokes 1994: 4). Hierdie artikel fokus op dié drie kunstenaars om klem te lê op ’n historiese oomblik in Suid-Afrika se kulturele produksie – sy populêre musiek van die 1970’s en 1980’s en hoe hierdie kulturele ambassadeurs die ontologie van hul afkoms en die apartheidstrukturering van die stad oortref het om naam te maak in die wêreld van populêre vermaak – nie net in Suid-Afrika nie, maar wêreldwyd.

JLS/TLW 33(2), June/Junie 2017
ISSN 0256-4718/Online 1753-5387
© JLS/TLW
DOI: 10.1080/02564718.2017.11799



Introduction: Cape Town, its Musical Spatiality and Apartheid

Theorising the modern city, Michel de Certeau (1984: 93) has written that the city is not simply a “‘geometrical’ or ‘geographical’ space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical” construction but is also an anthropological space in which the visitor has a poetic and mythic experience. Thus we speak of Paris as the city of love, or New Orleans as the Big Easy where life is laid back and casual, or Memphis (Tennessee, USA), the abode of B.B. King and Elvis Presley, as the “home of the blues, the birthplace of rock ‘n’ roll” as the city is emblazoned in tourist promotional literature. In some respects the city of Cape Town bears comparison with the American city of Memphis situated on the eastern bank of the mighty Mississippi River and where the civil rights leader Dr Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated on 04 April 1968. Built with the labour of slaves and racially segregated for the better part of the twentieth century, they are both geographical and strategic entities serving the commercial interests of their respective nations. And what is of pertinence to this article is that Cape Town and Memphis are, in the popular imaginary, also musical constructs. Just as Memphis nurtured the talents of black and white artistes such as Riley B. King, Isaac Hayes, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash and others, the city of Cape Town, home to the Coon Carnival minstrels, has nurtured the talents of musicians across the racial spectrum, from Robin Auld, a white musician, to Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), Sathima Bea Benjamin, “Little” Ronnie Joyce, Jonathan Butler and a host of others, all classified as “Coloured” – one of the four descriptors of racial identity carried over from the apartheid era to the present, post-apartheid South Africa. Testifying to the musical character of Cape Town, Iain Harris has aptly captured its spirit in an online source: “Cape Town is a musical city. There are twenty guitar players per square kilometre joke some people, and saxophonists behind every bush. Music is our holy communion” (Harris 2016).

The musical space of Cape Town, in common with the social and personal space of every South African, was circumscribed by the laws of the apartheid government which was in power from 1948 to 1994. Carol A. Muller, in her study *South African Music: A Century of Traditions in Transformation* (2004) writes:

... it is surely apartheid that has had the most profound impact on all South Africans, and certainly on all musical traditions and production in the past century. Apartheid, legalised racial discrimination, was established by a body of laws made by a minority of people of European and British descent in response to their fears of living in a country where the majority of its people were of black African descent.

(Muller 2004: 9)

Apartheid officially came to an end after the democratic elections of 1994, although certain aspects of petty apartheid, such as the Group Areas Act, had been gradually disintegrating prior to that epochal year. After more than two decades since the statutory end of apartheid it might seem sensational or even perverse to revisit the “old” South Africa and reflect on the day-to-day lives of black people, but such an exercise is germane to this article. Besides, the facts of apartheid, oftentimes tragic and absurd, need iteration and re-iteration just as the facts of the Holocaust are recuperated periodically by the Hollywood industry to remind the world of a singularly horrendous chapter in modern history.

The philosophy of apartheid is indexed by the Afrikaans word “apartheid” (a keyword in the title of this article) which denotes segregation and discrimination based on racial difference. It was not just a social ideology to keep the races apart but also an all-encompassing strategy to invest economic power in the hands of a powerful minority. Writing about the production of social space, Henri Lefebvre refers to the violence implied in the idea of nationhood:

... nationhood implies violence – the violence of a military state, be it feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, or some other variety. It implies, in other words, a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market or the growth of the productive forces in order to maintain and further its rule.

(Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 112)

The social consequences of living in an apartheid state were that people were clustered into group areas designated for them according to race. There were separate but unequal amenities for the different races, with black people invariably receiving inferior education, inferior housing and inferior health care facilities. There were separate beaches, separate public toilets and even separate benches in public parks. Infringement of any law was punishable by a fine or imprisonment, depending on the severity of the crime. Sexual relationships between whites and non-whites (the latter, a politically incorrect term, denoting Blacks, Coloureds and Indians) were considered serious enough to warrant a prison sentence for both parties involved. Black people (including Indians and Coloureds) could work alongside white people but they could not mix socially with them. Needless to say, social engineering on such a vast scale could only be enforced by an efficient army and police force.

Against the backdrop of such a repressive regime that was South Africa during the apartheid era, it is nothing short of a miracle that some black people would excel in the arts or sport or education. But excel they did even if their talent, in most cases, was destined to “blush unseen” and “waste its sweetness on the desert air” – to quote from a famous poem by Thomas Gray. A common strategy to suppress black talent was to deny the person a passport, or alternatively, to grant the person an exit visa as was the case with the gifted young journalist Nat Nakassa who committed suicide in New York. A classic

case of the sheer iniquity of discrimination and the absurd application of the apartheid ideology in sport and popular culture could be briefly exemplified in the aborted career of the golfer Sewsunker Sewgolum, popularly known as “Papwa”. This self-taught prodigy with an unorthodox grip who hailed from the (minority) Indian community in Durban, won the 1963 Natal Open Championship by beating Bobby Verwey (brother-in-law of the legendary golfer Gary Player) and Denis Hutchinson by one stroke. Because non-whites were not permitted to share the “Whites Only” clubhouse where alcohol was served, Papwa was handed his trophy in the pouring rain. The photograph of this milestone sporting event made international news and intensified the anti-apartheid campaign against South Africa. In 1965, Papwa beat the formidable Gary Player (who had already won the US and Australian championships) by one shot in the Natal Open Championship at the Durban Country Club. Papwa’s biographer, Christopher Nicholson, writes: “There was still to be drama when Player challenged the correctness of Papwa’s card. The marshals conferred for some time, but the card was accurate” (Nicholson 2005: 123). In 1966 the apartheid government clamped down on mixed sport in South Africa thus preventing Papwa, who was functionally illiterate, from effectively earning a living in the country. He suffered a double blow when his passport was withdrawn and he was not able to play overseas. Impoverished, he died at the age of 48, becoming just another statistic of the apartheid juggernaut that rode indiscriminately over the human rights of black people.

Cape Town as a Metonym for Musicality

It was against this socio-political backdrop that musicians such as Zayn Adam, Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler, all members of the Cape Coloured and Malay community who constitute the majority ethnic group in the city, blossomed and transcended the perverse logic of apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s. Locally, these musicians of indigenous origin had to compete with a legion of talented white artistes such as Clive Bruce, Lance James, Barbara Ray and Johnny Clegg, as well as with popular groups such as The Four Jacks and a Jill, Rabbit and the Julian Laxton Band. Internationally, this was the era of American and British icons such as Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Diana Ross, Tom Jones, Cliff Richard and, of course, Elvis Presley who was in the twilight of his recording career but still making the occasional hit on Billboard. Some of the popular bands of this period were the Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Beach Boys, The Bee Gees and The Eagles.

Cape Town’s musical character derives historically from the New Year celebrations when groups of minstrels would parade through the streets of Cape Town singing and dancing to the sounds of banjos, guitars, ghoema

drums, trombones and tubas. The annual jamboree, historically named the “Coon Carnival”, is said to have begun in 1887, after the influence of American minstrels who visited the Cape around mid-nineteenth century. One such group was the renowned Christy’s Minstrels who visited the Cape in 1862. This was a Caucasian group of men and women who had blackened their faces to impersonate African American slaves. In 1890, a group of African American performers called the Virginia Jubilee Singers, led by Orpheus McAdoo, arrived in the Cape and they were to spend the next five years in South Africa. It is likely that through their contact with the Coloured population in the Western Cape they contributed to the evolution of the “Coon” minstrelsy in the city of Cape Town, the term “coon” deriving from the American rodent the racoon with its distinctive white marking around the mouth, a feature that forms part of the facial makeup of the present-day Cape Town minstrel.

Renamed by local politicians The Cape Town Minstrel Carnival on account of the offensive connotation of the word “coon”, the carnival is to Cape Town what the annual Mardi Gras is to New Orleans and the Carnival is to Rio de Janeiro. The difference is that while the Rio carnival and the New Orleans festivals have their historical roots in Christian tradition, the Cape Town festival derives from the history of slavery in the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when slaves from Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India and Madagascar added to the distinctive cultural mix of contemporary Cape Town, not excluding its Malay culture. Today, the historical Coon Carnival festival is also referred to as the *Tweede Nuwe Jaar* (Afrikaans for the Second New Year) or 2 January festival which celebrates the abolition of slavery in the Cape Colony on 01 January 1835. Modern Cape Town’s musical character has absorbed several influences, among them “American songs of the 1930s, jazz, rock, soul music, Latin music, and today rap, disco, and techno” (Martin 2000: 373). Also known by another Afrikaans term, the *Kaapse Klopse* (Afrikaans for the Cape clubs or troupes), the annual festival, according to one source, is said

to give participating children the opportunity to learn the art of performing music and dance and exposed them to practising music three times a week in preparation for their performances. These activities paved the way for world famous [Cape Town] musicians like Taliep Petersen and Jonathan Butler who both received the “Juvenile Sentimental Trophy” awards in previous competitions. (Kaapse Klopse).

(Martin 2000: 373)

Jonathan Butler and the late Taliep Peterson¹ were not the only performers of their generation who cut their musical teeth as children participating in the

1. On 2 December 2008, Petersen’s wife and two male accomplices were convicted of his murder. The motive had been robbery.

Coon Carnival festival. The late Zayn Adam, the first of the three artistes showcased in this article and the eldest of the three musicians, was also associated with Cape Town's minstrelsy. His father and brother were leaders of a Malay choir, and according to the obituary on Zayn Adam in the *Sunday Times*, March 1, 2015, he began playing the guitar when he was eleven and "turned 'pro' at the age of 15 when he joined the Golden City Dixies carnival show" (Barron 2015: 23).

The racial segregation of Cape Town, which had been instituted by the early Dutch settlers, reached its apotheosis when the National Party came into power in 1948. People were classified as Black, Coloured, Malay, Indian and White and the "railway line became an important line of spatial demarcation based on race" (Cape Town the Segregated City 2017). The three Capetonians I have profiled for this offering – Zayn Adam, classified Malay, and Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler, classified Coloured – grew up in the group areas demarcated for their respective racial identity. According to their chronological birth dates, Adam was born in Salt River in 1947, Smith was born in Craddock in 1950, and Butler, the youngest of the trio, was born in the shantytown of Athlone in 1961.² Despite the racial and social structuration imposed by the government at a macro level, people, by their very nature, are bound to defy social boundaries at a micro level. This is perhaps what De Certeau has in mind when he observes while "walking in the city" (a sub-title of Chapter VII of *The Practice of Everyday Life*), that even though the city "serves as a totalising and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies", it "is left prey to contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power" (De Certeau 1984: 95). How some performers were able to negotiate around, if not escape from, the all-seeing eye of the apartheid "panopticon" (a concept

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2. One of the challenges facing the researcher in the field of popular culture, when information is not readily available in books, is that he or she has to depend on uncorroborated and conflicting, even erroneous, information in the public domain. As an illustration, one source states that Jonathan Butler comes from a family of seventeen children (Butler 2016), whereas another source says it was a family of thirteen children (Jonathan Butler 2016). One source states that he spent seventeen years in the United Kingdom (*The East African* 2016) while another mentions twelve (Butler 2016). The latter source also states that Butler won the Best New Artist Grammy in South Africa at the age of 12. The Grammy is an American award. What Butler received was the SARIE Award, bestowed by the South African recording industry. Such inaccuracies and misrepresentations notwithstanding, what is of salience is that all three musicians featured in this article are from the Coloured communities around Cape Town; that they flourished as musicians in the years when the laws of the country aggressively separated the different races in social spaces; and that two of them, despite their status as second-class citizens in the land of their birth, left the country and reconfigured their identity and career in culturally alien and exilic spaces far away from home.

derived from the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham and espoused by Michel Foucault to whom De Certeau is indebted), will be evinced in the careers of the three Cape Town artistes adduced for this article.

Zayn Adam

Legend has it that Zayn Adam's pop career began at the age of fifteen when he was standing on a ladder cleaning windows. Someone heard him singing and gave him a telephone number to call. Three weeks later Adam was on a train to Johannesburg to join Majiet Omar's Golden City Dixies. The next phase of his career saw him back in Cape Town where he joined the popular jazz/rock band Pacific Express as the lead vocalist. This band was formed on the Cape Flats in the 1970s by founder members Paul Abrahams (bass), Jack Mople (drums) and Issy Ariefdien (guitar). Over the years the band members changed, with Jonathan Butler also contributing his talent to it at one stage. It was with Adam that Pacific Express recorded their biggest success with the soul ballad "Give a Little Love" which entered the Springbok Radio Hit Parade on 13 October 1978 and remained there for ten weeks, peaking at #7. Springbok Radio was a creation of the apartheid era South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) which catered for mainly English-speaking White South Africans. How conservative this station could be is evidenced in the banning of the Beatles music in August 1966 after John Lennon's infamous remark that they were more popular than Jesus at the time. That a national radio station would feature a Black artiste such as Zayn Adam redounds not to the credit of Springbok Radio but to the popularity of Adam across the racial spectrum of South Africa.

When Adam died of a heart attack on 23 February 2015 at the age of 67, Kurt Egelhof (2016), the National Coordinator of the Performing Arts Network of South Africa, wrote in the *Cape Times* of 25 February:

On Monday I stood in the Tennyson Mosque in Salt River to pay respect to the legendary Mogamed Zayn Adam, a man who, during the height of apartheid, lit the torch and paved the way for Cape Town to become known as it is nowadays – the most prolific home of jazz on the continent of Africa. ... So our most famous son dies struggling, on the eve of his first performance at the Cape Town Jazz festival. (Why did legendary Adam die poor?)

The fate of popular musicians to live out their lives in penury is not uncommon, given the capricious nature of the popular music industry. Even international superstars such as Elvis Presley and Ricky Nelson, though far from poor, had to spend their latter days on the road giving live performances to keep pace with their stretched financial resources.

In the case of a local performer such as Zayn Adam, the dice were stacked against him and his band Pacific Express right from the start. There were two

reasons for this. First, jazz was a long way from taking off in Cape Town where it competed with dance music which was popular in restaurants and night clubs. Second, and more importantly, apartheid spatial planning made it difficult for them to get gigs in white areas. Every so often clubs would be raided and if they did not have the necessary permit, the band would be evicted even in the middle of a show. The importance of performance in the life of a popular musician cannot be overemphasised, as Simon Frith avers:

Performance is the central *ritual* [Frith's emphasis] of local rock, a special setting for music for which the audience is as important as the performers. It is in performance, as the musicians of Liverpool and Milton Keynes explain, that they experience the most intense feelings of achievement. To be on stage, the object of public attention, is to have confirmed the glamor [Frith's emphasis; orthography in line with the US publisher] of their chosen musical role.

(Frith 1992: 175)

To be sure, the third phase of Elvis Presley's career, after his reign as King of Rock in the 1950s and as a successful star of formulaic Hollywood musicals in the 1960s, was based almost entirely on live performance till his death on 16 August 1977, the day before he could fly off in his private jet for another performance.



Zayn Adam in Concert

<http://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/zayn-adam-was-a-humble-legend-1822189>

On Zayn Adam's demise, the public was reminded of some startling, if not absurd facts about urban racial segregation when he and his band performed in Cape Town. When they had to provide backing for the African American vocal duo, Peaches & Herb, they needed a bigger group to support them. The group they brought in was Peanut Butter Conspiracy, a white group from Los

Angeles. Sharing the stage with whites was forbidden, so a thin curtain was erected across the stage at the Luxurama in Cape Town and Peanut Butter Conspiracy performed behind the curtain. According to Chris Barron, who penned Adam's obituary in *Sunday Times*, "Then they played at Athlone Stadium, where there was no stage and no curtain. The Peanut Butter Conspiracy had to wear black wigs and paint their faces. The police in the audience were none the wiser" (Barron 2015). When Pacific Express broke up in the 1980s, Adam continued his solo career and released "several hits in Germany and the UK" (Barron 2015). In South Africa Zayn Adam is best known for his single "Give a Little Love" which entered the Springbok Radio's Top 20 on 13 October 1978. However, the video clip of this song was "removed from the TV airways after the SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] realised that the group were ... of mixed race, which was against rules for so-called local artists in public performance at the time" (*The Pacific Express* 2016).

Richard Jon Smith

The discovery of Richard Jon Smith, the second of the three artistes showcased in this article, was no less serendipitous than the discovery of Zayn Adam. Smith was a porter at the Groote Schuur Hospital, famous for the first heart transplant in the world by Professor Chris Barnard. One day Smith happened to bump into two white males who were waiting to see a doctor. Little did he know that these were South African music producers Clive Calder and Ralph Simon who "had arrived in the Mother City two days earlier to scout for talent in a city known for its vast pool of creative performers" (*The Forgotten Man of SA Music!* 2016). Because of the cultural boycott of South Africa by international artists, Calder and Simon were on a mission to find local talents to do cover versions of popular songs. On seeing this lanky and good-looking young man with his trademark Afro hairstyle, Calder apparently told Smith that if he could sing as well as he looked he could make him a star. Richard Jon Smith is reported to have said, "I just started singing Percy Sledge's 'When a Man Loves a Woman' at full throttle" (*The Forgotten Man of SA Music!* 2016). Two days later Smith was at a recording studio where he made his first single "But I Do", a cover song first performed by Clarence "Frogman" Henry.

JLS/TLW



Richard Jon Smith

<http://capemetr.com/the-forgotten-legend/> 25 October 2016

Richard Jon Smith's success locally and in neighbouring African states was phenomenal. For the sheer dynamism he exuded on stage, he earned the sobriquet Mr Knockout. However, his career was dogged by the spectre of apartheid for his producers could only book him at venues designated for "non-White" people, the official designation of that time. The Richard Jon Smith Show also included the young talents of "Little" Ronnie Joyce, Lionel Petersen and the 13-year old Jonathan Butler. From 1973 to the 1980s, Smith had seven Top 20 hits in South Africa with songs such as "That's Why I Love You", in which his song writing ability was demonstrated, and "Michael Row the Boat Ashore", arguably his biggest hit in South Africa.

"Michael Row the Boat Ashore" which began as an African American spiritual sung by slaves had been modified and recorded over the decades by several prominent performers such as Lonnie Donegan, Harry Belafonte, Peter, Paul & Mary, Pete Seeger and Trini Lopez. In 1961, the American quintet The Highwaymen had a #1 hit with the song, titled "Michael", on Billboard. Richard Jon Smith's version of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" took on a disco beat and entered the South African charts on 27 April 1979 where it remained for seventeen weeks and, according to one source, spent nine weeks at #1 (Michael Row the Boat Ashore – Richard Jon Smith). The aura of Smith's version has been captured in the following terms:

Starting off with a loud cry of "Hallelujah!" and a chorus responding with a repeated "Hallelujah!" Smith's version soon has you tapping your toes along with the Boney M-esque beats. In fact later in the song there are some backing vocals that must have been influenced by Bobby Farrell (the guy in Boney M) which adds to this feel of the song. This interesting interpretation of the old classic is a good example of how South Africa embraced the disco craze of the late 70's.

(Michael Row the Boat Ashore – Richard Jon Smith)

When the American soul sensation Percy Sledge toured South Africa, Smith was the opening act. This was a mistake by the promoters because Smith upstaged the visiting star, to the extent that even the white press proclaimed, “A New Star is Born” (*Cape Metro Reporter* 2015). After Clive Calder and Ralph Simon sold their label Bullet Records and left for England, Smith followed them. In London he recorded “Live for You” and soon entered the London charts at #14. Smith continued with his international career until the 1980s when he fused American-inspired disco with reggae sounds, and produced politically relevant lyrics such as in the title track of *Shangrila* (1980) where he sings of bulldozers and forced removals, a theme that is still resonant in South Africa. Once, when Richard Jon Smith, alias Mr Knockout, was asked by a reporter if the thought of leaving South Africa for an international music destination had scared him in any way, his response, considering the socio-political situation in the country, was *en pointe*: “If you have experienced the hardships of apartheid like all people of colour had to back then, anything else like getting onto a pop music chart, is small fry” (The Forgotten Man of SA Music! 2016). Such was the enormity of apartheid in the lived space of black people.

Jonathan Butler

South Africa has produced many musicians – both black and white – who have made their mark internationally. Some names that come to mind are Lucky Dube (late), Spho “Hotstix” Mabuse, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba (late), Brenda Fassie (late), Soweto Gospel Choir, Trevor Rabin and Duncan Faure – the last two being the key figures in the most successful (white) rock group South Africa has ever produced, namely, Rabbit. When Duncan Faure left Rabbit he joined The Bay City Rollers, a Scottish group that once rivalled the Beatles in record sales. Some of these musicians never left South Africa while some returned after a brief sojourn overseas. Jonathan Butler, the third musician highlighted in this article, is one of those who left for foreign shores to pursue his career and, at the time this article was in its final draft in March 2017, continues to make a living as a musician abroad.

By all accounts, Jonathan Butler was a child prodigy as he himself has attested: “I was born poor, but richly blessed with talent and the gift to make music” (Jonathan Butler 2016). Born into a large, impoverished family on the Cape Flats, he manifested his musical talent as a child when he began to play the acoustic guitar. The tendency of some left-handed individuals to excel at music, sport and other fields of human endeavour, has long been documented by psychologists and Jonathan Butler is no exception. In the distinguished company of left-handed guitarists such as Paul McCartney, Jimi Hendricks and Dick Dale, who did not re-string his guitar but played the strings upside

down, Butler has mastered a musical instrument created for a right-handed world. To escape from a world of poverty, drugs and brothels and to bring in some much-needed income, Jonathan's mother organised a family singing group with Jonathan, aged seven, as the star of the musical troupe. By the time he was a pre-teen, he was already enjoying the status of a pop idol.

Like his peers Richard Jon Smith, Ronnie Joyce and others on the Cape Flats, not to mention famous international recording artistes such as Elvis Presley, the Beatles and Cliff Richard, Butler began his career doing cover versions. At the age of thirteen he had hits with songs such as "Please Stay" and "I Love How You Love Me", earning, what was then known as the SARIE Award, the South African equivalent of the Grammy Award, for the Best New Artist category. He also became the first black artist to be played on "white South African radio" (Jonathan Butler 2016). "I love how you love me" entered the SA Top Twenty in November 1975 and reached #4. By 1978 Butler was showcasing his ability as a composer and songwriter when he joined Pacific Express, Cape Town's renowned jazz/rock band. Despite his pop star status, Butler, in common with African American musicians of segregated 1950s America, was not spared the pin pricks of apartheid, as one online source has recorded:

Though a star, Butler was still subjected to the South African apartheid system. He was forced to play separate concerts for whites and blacks, and was refused restaurant service and lodging in some of the towns he played. He was not allowed to use the bathrooms in some of the theatres he performed in.

(Butler 2016)

Another source of frustration for him was the straitjacketed outlook of the recording industry itself. This was the era of pop music and this is what the industry was promoting, whereas Butler was transcending traditional musical genres to experiment with jazz, funk, gospel and fusion. Like the trajectory of many a pop star, Butler's was interrupted by substance abuse and as a consequence he stopped recording for several years. Picking up the pieces of his life after becoming a born-again Christian, he secured a recording contract with the British label Jive and in 1985 left with his wife and baby daughter for London where he enjoyed success across multiple genres: pop, R&B, contemporary jazz and gospel.

In 1987 he came to the attention of American audiences when he toured as Whitney Houston's opening act. In the America of the 1980s, he marvelled at the opportunities before him as there were no barriers, as in South Africa, to his creativity. His first US album was an all-instrumental effort, followed by a second US release, *Jonathan Butler*. He has written songs for artists such as Patti LaBelle, Billy Ocean, Al Jarreau, Kenny Loggins and George Benson.



Jonathan Butler, a left-handed guitarist

<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/jonathan-butler-mn000218709>

He has been nominated for Grammys in the categories Best R&B Song (“Lies”) and Best Jazz Song (“Going Home”). In 2004, his album *Surrender* went gold in South Africa. Presently based in Los Angeles, Butler is a frequent visitor to South Africa which he regards as home. He has launched the Jonathan Butler Foundation to assist aspiring young musicians so that they would overcome a life of poverty and drugs. In May 2016, when this article was being drafted for a conference, Jonathan Butler performed at a jazz festival in Sandton, South Africa. In summing up his career, an online source states:

His music has purpose, providing comfort and genuine inspiration. When he sings, he testifies to the glory and healing power of love. When he plays guitar, his fast fingers innately find notes of passion and divinity. Jonathan Butler’s recording career has carried him far, far beyond his wildest dreams. He’s living his dream and that is a blessing for us all.

(Jonathan Butler 2016)

Conclusion

Simon Frith, in his study *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* testifies to the aesthetics of popular music by invoking a spatial metaphor:

Music is the cultural form best able both to cross borders – sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races, and nations – and to define places: in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on headphones, radio, and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us.

(Frith 1996: 276)

While the city of Cape Town is famous for its New Year jamboree the *Tweede Nuwe Jaar* and its minstrels, it is also defined by an aesthetic of heterogeneity,

as Denis-Constant Martin terms it (Martin 2000: 373). Because of the power of music to cross borders and oceans, the city has always had its copy cats in the form of “Cape Town’s Charlie Chaplin; Cape Town’s Al Jolson; Cape Town’s Paul Robeson; the coloured Caruso ...” (Martin 2000: 374). Zayn Adam, Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler, apart from their exposure to the local music of their city of birth, were also influenced by the international currents that flowed from across the oceans to the Mother City. In their professional careers they were able to excel in different genres of music, be it rock, jazz, soul, reggae and R&B. Despite the stranglehold of apartheid on sport and other forms of cultural production by people of colour, all three of these performers, in the face of insuperable odds, were able to break the colour barrier and make it onto the national music charts on Springbok Radio.

The lives of Zayn Adam, Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler have intersected at various moments. Adam’s band, Pacific Express, has been likened to an informal jazz school which inducted young talent, one of them being Jonathan Butler who went on to become the most financially and internationally successful of the three artistes featured in this article. When Adam celebrated fifty years in the music industry in May 2012 at the Grandwest Casino Arena in Cape Town, he was joined on stage by several local stars including Ronnie Joyce (who died in 2013 at the age of fifty-two after a short illness), Vicky Sampson and Richard Jon Smith, who serenaded the audience with his well-known hit, “That’s Why I Love You” (Old Favourite Zayn Adams Still Wows Crowds). Poignantly, Smith was also present at Adam’s funeral service (conducted by Muslim rites) and in a short video clip of the funeral he pays glowing tribute to the late performer saying how excited he was when he, as a much younger singer, was called upon by Adam to join his show.

Since time immemorial, writers, artists, musicians and scientists in oppressed societies have sought refuge in exile or in diasporic spaces to practise their craft. Some have succeeded in highly competitive environments but most have fallen by the wayside especially in the frenetic and fickle world of popular music which is subject to strong global market forces. Commenting on some South African musicians in the diaspora, Es’kia Mphahlele writes in his second autobiography,

I have known musicians who left [South Africa] to try and make it in the big world. They had, by local standards, cultural and economic, given us superb entertainment. Out there where other standards operated, they became anonymous. Hugh Masekela, Dollar Brand [Abdullah Ibrahim], Miriam Makeba; Letta Mbuli, Caiaphas Semenya, Jonas Gwangwa are among the very few who have held out.

(Mphahlele 1984: 21-22)³

3. In May 2016, three of the musicians mentioned by Mphahlele performed together at the Emperor’s Palace casino complex in Johannesburg. The historic

Fame, especially in the realm of popular music, is generally transient. Even when performers are immortalised in Halls of Fame, this does not necessarily translate into lasting financial security. This, ultimately, was the case with Zayn Adam who died in poverty. There is a plangent irony in the fact that he died of a heart attack at the Groote Schuur Hospital where the world's first heart transplant was conducted and where the talent of Richard Jon Smith was discovered. If the kind of international fame that Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler once enjoyed eluded Zayn Adam, there was a time when all three of these young men from Cape Town's Coloured community emerged out of the grim shadow of apartheid and shone in the galaxy of musical superstars. In the concluding paragraph of his essay "Walking in the City", De Certeau alludes to a "metaphorical" city, "built according to all the rules of architecture and then suddenly shaken by a force that defies all calculation" (De Certeau 1984: 110). In the case of the city of Cape Town, built according to the rules of apartheid planning, it was the combined musical force of Zayn Adam, Richard Jon Smith and Jonathan Butler that once shook its segregated foundations in the 1970s and 1980s.

* The author acknowledges the financial support of the National Research Foundation (NRF) under whose aegis he conducts his research. The views expressed in this article are his own and are not to be attributed to the NRF.

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event, marking the 40th anniversary of the student uprising in Soweto, Johannesburg, was captured by Janet Smith, a reporter for *The Star* newspaper. Under the title "Three musical greats create sound that was ceremony", she writes,

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of June 16, 1976, we were watching a deluxe edition of the big shots: Ibrahim playing with Masekela, and Jonas Gwangwa, for the first time in six decades – Ibrahim at 82, Masekela at 77 and Gwangwa, the spring chicken at 75, created a sound that was ceremony – So beautiful, and finally, right here again, at one of the most dangerous moments in our political history, playing the ultimate anthem of resistance in front of a free people.

(Smith 2016: 10)

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Harry Sewlall
University of Venda
haripersad.sewlall@univen.ac.za