

THE LIFE AND WORK
OF
BENJAMIN TYAMZASHE
A CONTEMPORARY XHOSA COMPOSER

by
DEIRDRE D. HANSEN

OCCASIONAL PAPER NUMBER ELEVEN

Institute of Social and Economic Research

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Grahamstown

1968

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Rhodes University
Grahamstown

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I make grateful acknowledgment to the National Council of Social Research for a grant, made through the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University, which enabled me to undertake this research. Opinions expressed are those of the author and should not be regarded as expressing the views of the National Council.

I also thank Dr Y. Huskisson, who suggested the subject for this study, for her interest and her encouragement in this work.

I am particularly and personally indebted to three people: Prof. P. R. Kirby, Prof. G. Gruber of the Department of Music, Rhodes University, and Prof. W. D. Hammond-Tooke, Department of Social Anthropology, Rhodes University. They have made useful corrections and invaluable suggestions; in fact, they raised so many interesting points that I can only regret my inability to incorporate more than a fraction of them in this work. Progress in this study necessitated many additions and eliminations, shifts in perspective and rewriting, in all of which the advice of my supervisors helped me incalculably. In matters of anthropology I relied heavily on Prof. Hammond-Tooke, whose vast knowledge runs second only to his kindness.

I should like also to thank, even if I do not name them here, the many missionaries, teachers, and others, both European and African, who have helped me in collecting my material and in translating Xhosa texts. Likewise the various members of the staff of Rhodes University, and especially its Librarian, for assisting me in countless ways. All are given their due in my actual thesis.

November, 1968

Deirdre D. Hansen



B. J. P. Tyanizashe

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The present paper is a digest of the thesis submitted under the same title, by Miss Deirdre Hansen for the Degree of Master of Music of Rhodes University in 1968.

In its complete form it contains a considerable amount of historical material which, although quite appropriate in the thesis, is unnecessary in an occasional paper of this nature.

In addition, it includes a large number of musical illustrations, which illuminate in detail many aspects of the works of Benjamin Tyamzashe. The section containing these has been reduced to its essentials, but what is here given should enable the reader to understand the manner in which Tyamzashe's ability as a composer has developed, and to give him his rightful place among his contemporaries.

For those who wish to delve more deeply into the activities of this sincere and enthusiastic African musician, Miss Hansen's thesis is always available in Rhodes University Library, either for personal consultation, local borrowing, or inter-library loan.

Percival R. Kirby

The Institute of Social and Economic Research thanks Professor P. R. Kirby for preparing this precis of Miss Hansen's thesis, Mr B.E. Mahlasela for checking the Xhosa words, and Mrs I. Inggs for preparing the manuscript.

D. Hobart Houghton
Director

FOREWORD

Although I had occasionally heard Bantu music in the past, my interest in it as a subject for study was not aroused until Prof. G. Gruber, Head of the Music Department, Rhodes University, suggested it. His advice that I should confine myself to present-day Xhosa music presented both a challenge and a fascinating field for study. The decision as to what particular subject to choose was difficult to reach. Dr Mayr, senior lecturer in the Department, discussed the matter with Dr Y. Huskisson, Organiser of Bantu music, Radio Bantu, Johannesburg, and she suggested I write on the life and works of Benjamin Tyamzashe, whom she regards as the most worthy composer among the Xhosa, and indeed the only real pioneer Xhosa composer still living.

Tyamzashe is certainly the most prolific composer; he has been steadily writing for over half a century and continues to do so, in spite of his 77 years. Most important of all, in both his career and his works, he illustrates very well some of the problems which beset many contemporary Bantu composers. This is the main reason for this study.

In 1931 Prof. P. R. Kirby wrote an article on the influence of Western civilisation on Bantu music, in which he described the state of affairs in Bantu music as it was then. The position is not so different to-day. He pointed out that, although the Bantu had rapidly accepted a musical system completely foreign to their own, they had in no way grasped it properly. This system, which brought with it many problems is, in his opinion, quite wrong. He writes "... if further proof is required it may be found in the prolific writings of native composers ... they have been hampered in their musical work just as they have been hindered in a hundred other directions by the force of circumstances"¹.

Like many of them, Tyamzashe was brought up on four-part music of a religious nature, although largely because of the circumstances of his life he came into contact with other types of Western music which influenced his own. Realising that his acquired knowledge of musical form and grammar was far from sufficient, he took a correspondence course with the Tonic Solfa College, London. While I do not wish to condemn correspondence courses, in my experience they do not give the Bantu a firm grasp of musical principles. Also, many Bantu who undertake University Correspondence courses find it difficult to stay the course. But this was the best Tyamzashe could do, as music taught in the schools and institutions offered even less.

1. Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa, ed. I. Schapera, London, 1934, p. 138.

In this study I have tried to show what Tyamzashe has achieved without the solid musical training any composer worthy of the name should undergo. I have also tried to show the forming of his own musical style under the impact of outside influence. This study is therefore not to teach one anything new, but simply to communicate the results of three years' research. In it I have attempted to set the scene in which Tyamzashe's life unfolded itself under the influences of people and circumstances. In doing so I have tried to bear in mind the main theme - Tyamzashe himself.

Finally, the thesis of this study is that, as a result of the changes introduced into Bantu music by culture contact, one perceives in the works of Tyamzashe the beginnings of a new pattern of integration.

This study was sponsored by the National Council of Social Research. It was officially undertaken over a period of two years - from March 1965 to March 1967. In collecting material I moved about the Eastern Cape - Grahamstown, King William's Town, Fort Beaufort, Alice, Queenstown, Lady Frere, Indwe, Cala and Engcobo in the Transkei.

Deirdre D. Hansen

BANTU MUSIC AND EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

The encounter of the European and Bantu races in the Eastern Cape towards the end of the 18th century coincided with unparalleled missionary activities of European Reformed Churches. The missionaries brought with them not only their religion but also their entire culture. These missionaries were for a few generations the sole educators of the Bantu among whom they lived long before other Europeans settled beyond the Fish River which was then the eastern boundary of the European settlement in South Africa.

Benjamin Tyamzashe is a direct product of missionary contact and educational influence; his father was a missionary educated at Lovedale where he himself was also to study.

The influence of the European Christian missionaries marked a turning point in the cultural and especially in the musical history of the Cape Nguni. Musically, at any rate, the missionaries did a great deal of harm. D. D. T. Jabavu speaks of them as razing to the ground some of the Africans' best values.¹ Regarding the changes introduced in Bantu music, Prof. Kirby writes: "The work of the missionaries did a vast amount of damage, the more insidious as they did not realise it to be such. They attempted to put down systematically what they regarded as merely heathen practices, practices they did not realise were essentially a part of the natural development of the native".²

The tragedy, however, of missionary activity among the Cape Nguni was that the missionaries lacked all appreciation of what was good and useful and of what was genuinely valuable in the culture they encountered. William Shaw, one of the early missionaries to the South-Eastern Bantu, writing in 1829, asks "when will all this ignorance and superstition pass away?" and continues to lament "the frequent dancing, singing and debauchery of the natives".³ Debauchery there may have been: there certainly was if one is to judge all people according to the norms of pre-Victorian or Victorian standards of behaviour, but what is regrettable is that a missionary should see their entire culture as debauchery and evil. Shaw's sentiments were by all accounts those of all the missionaries at that time and of the subsequent century. Because they found little or nothing of what they themselves had been brought up to regard as religion, they were prone to classify 'primitive' people as godless - superstition, magic, ancestor cults and sacrifices were seen

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1. Jabavu, D. D. T. The Black Problem, Lovedale, 1920, p. 3
 2. Schapera, Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa, 1934, p. 132
 3. Extract from the Journal of Mr William Shaw, Wesleyville, Caffreland, from the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, September, 1829, p. 365

as totally evil and in some way the work of the devil.¹ But, to a large extent, the missionaries were the victims of the ideas current among their own cultural groups at the time, and this fact does make their actions more intelligible.

The musical changes introduced by the missionaries were far-reaching, and were introduced in the first place through the church service, of which singing was an integral part.

When the missionaries came to work among the Cape Nguni, they brought with them the liturgical and musical essentials of their church - their congregational hymns. European hymnody is constructed on a four-part basis in which a dominating melodic line, so to speak, prescribes harmonisation. This is totally at variance with the Bantu technique of harmonisation in which a melody is freely embellished and intensified by additional voice-parts, the number depending on the number of singers present. Our major-minor concept, tonality, and modulation were equally foreign to the Bantu.

The problem became even more complicated when the texts of the hymns were translated into the language of the people - in this case, Xhosa. There soon became evident the incongruity in the relationship between the rhythm of the texts and the melodies. The nature of the language gave rise to yet another problem. Bantu languages are tonal languages i. e. languages in which tone is as important in determining meaning as consonants and vowels. In singing therefore, the rise and fall of speech must greatly influence the melody, and even direct its course, if sense is to be retained. Often, in the fitting of translated texts to European hymn-tunes, it was felt that the texts became distorted because of this disregard of intonation.² The early Bantu composers of hymns were not unaware of this problem, and men such as Bokwe and Tiyo Soga drew attention to the matter and tried, with little success, to solve this problem.

It is true that the early missionaries devoted themselves to learning the Bantu language with admirable enthusiasm, but even when the words of the hymns were in the vernacular, the thoughts and indeed the music were European.

Perhaps even more important than congregational singing was education as a source of musical change. From the start the missionaries devoted themselves to the education of the

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1. Evans-Pritchard, E. E. The Institutions of Primitive Society, Oxford, p. 1.
 2. In the Cory Lib., Rhodes University, there is an original manuscript of Xhosa hymn-texts, which Soga has corrected in an attempt to retain the correct intonation and rhythm of the language. In the University of Cape Town Library there is an unpublished M. A. thesis on the relationship of speech and song in Xhosa (c. 1930).

Bantu. Soon every missionary agency managed its own schools, and in music the missionaries introduced the tonic solfa system into their schools, a system which has remained firmly fixed in the curriculum of educational institutions for the Bantu up to the present day.

Until after 1850 the educational institutions were mainly concerned with elementary education. There was one notable exception, Lovedale, which had already become a centre of higher learning in 1841, and after 1850 was turning out men like Tiyo Soga, his son John Henderson Soga, R. T. Kawa, Hilda Rubusana and John Bokwe, who began to compose their own music. This music comprised mainly hymn-tunes and sacred songs of the type in vogue in Victorian England. The musical education of these early composers hardly merits the name; they were merely taught the rudiments of music via tonic solfa. Moreover, the music produced by them was already far removed from traditional Nguni music.

Of the transition from a Bantu to a Western musical style we know little. We have no musical evidence of this period of change, but we have four melodies which mark its beginnings. These are the melodies of Ntsikana, who lived long before Lovedale came into existence. Being uneducated, Ntsikana was little under European influence, musically speaking, yet his melodies had a 'European' function in that they were used in Christian worship. These melodies were composed between 1816 and 1821. One hundred and thirty-one years were to pass before one of them, the Chant, and its text, was to be used in the works of Tyamzashe, who in recent years has drawn more and more upon it as thematic material for his compositions.

Ntsikana was one of the most important, and certainly the most colourful of the early converts to Christianity among the Cape Nguni. In many ways he can be considered to be the founder of the Christian faith among the Xhosa. The Xhosa in fact regard him as such, and keep his "feast day" on March 14th each year. He has become very much a legendary figure, surrounded with many stories of supernatural events among the Xhosa people who look upon him as a great Saint.

BENJAMIN JOHN PETER TYAMZASHE

HIS LIFE

"I am a Xhosa by birth, of the MaNgwevu clan, and of the amaNgqika or Gaika tribe".¹ Thus wrote Reverend Gwayi Tyamzashe, father of Benjamin, in 1881.²

In a letter dated April 29th, 1965, Benjamin Tyamzashe claims that the Tyamzashe's are of Royal Blood, by which he means no doubt that they are of the lineage of a chief.³

Mr Tyamzashe's forebears, renowned for their musical abilities, were the acknowledged Abahlabeli in their own social group. "Gwayi, son of Tyamzashe, son of Mejana, son of Oya, came from the people of music".⁴

1. The Cape Blue Books: Commission of Native Laws and Customs, 1883, p. 151.

2. This statement seems to be correct. cf. Hammond-Tooke W.D., The Tribes of the King William's Town District, Government Printer, 1958, p. 89.

3. There is, however, no evidence of this. It may be that he is descended from the lineage of some minor chief. Nonetheless, Tyamzashe is proud of this fact, as he is of his clan. Indeed he refers to it in the text of one of his favourite songs I-Bhisho (Xhosa = King William's Town). During a conversation with Tyamzashe in October 1965, he told me much about the history of his people, and about the amaNgwevu. "umNgwevu (sing.) means 'grey-headed one'," he said, "the amaNgwevu received this name because they tended to turn grey at an early age. Both my father and one of my sons did so. The amaNgwevu were originally of Zulu stock, but this side of the river they came to be called the amaNgwevu. They were renowned as fierce warriors, and had a set of military tactics which never failed. 'Brave and strong are these grey-headed ones' is what the people said of them". (Talks, Oct., 1965).

In June, 1967, I met Mr Yiba, of Bantu Education Dept., Queenstown, who is also of the amaNgwevu clan. He told me a story similar to the above, particularly about how the name originated. This is not surprising since such tales live on in tribal memory and are handed down from one generation to the next. Moreover, the Bantu love to speak of their clan origins.

4. His father, grandfather, great-grand and great-great grandfathers respectively. (Umhlabeli (sing.) - "a leader in song").

His father Gwayi was a minister of the Congregational Church, who had distinguished himself during his training at the Lovedale Institute. In the 1860's Gwayi "headed the list in a competitive examination open to all the colonial public schools. The subjects included were one or more of the so-called 'dead' languages - Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Gwayi was well up in all, and had a good head for higher mathematics as well. He carried off first prize - a gold medal - to the credit of Lovedale!"¹

Gwayi first served as a Congregational minister at Kimberley; then, towards the end of the 1880's, he was sent to pioneer missionary work among the Bapedi and other tribes of the Northern Transvaal, an area until then almost untouched by missionaries.²

Some years before his departure to the Northern Transvaal, Gwayi married Rachel MacKriel, the daughter of a colonial. Of Scottish and French descent, she was also a missionary. Gwayi Tyamzashe remained in the Northern Transvaal for some seven years. At first he encountered a great deal of hostility, and, if one can rely on accounts that live on in the family, he had one narrow escape from violent death at the hands of the Bapedi, who looked upon him as a foreigner, who was in every way European, except in colour. When he arrived in that area, the Bapedi regarded him with suspicion. Gwayi held open-air services under a huge tree, surrounded by the Bapedi chief and his councillors and followers. These sat around in groups, "talking and laughing and spitting at this foolish Letebele,"³ interspersing their derogatory comments with great draughts of beer.

But as their drinking increased, their contempt changed to anger; the chief had had enough; he raised his spear, as a sign that Gwayi be put to death, but grudgingly consented to the missionary's last request - that he be permitted to pray and

1. An article: "Jubilee of the Lovedale Literary Society", by Dr J.K. Bokwe, which appeared in the Christian Express of July 2nd, 1917.
In a letter dated April 29th, 1965, Tyamzashe makes the amazing statement that his father was proficient in 10 languages: Xhosa, English, Dutch, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Sotho, Pedi, Korana and Bushman.
2. du Plessis, J., A History of Christian Missions in South Africa. Very little work was undertaken in the Northern Transvaal before 1890.
3. 'Letebele' is a derogatory, contemptuous term. The Matabele had plundered and murdered the tribes in this region; hence anything bad pertains to the Matabele. "Letebele" - this "tebele" (information from Tyamzashe)

sing a hymn. Gwayi then sang "Wazithwal' izono Yesu".¹ The chief was so overcome that he put down his spear, and ordered Gwayi to be released. "Then he covered his head with his blanket and wept".² After this, Gwayi was allowed to go about his work freely; in time he succeeded in winning the esteem and the respect of the Bapedi, but apparently not many converts.

About 1895 he returned to Kimberley because of ill-health. He was, according to his family's account, a disappointed man. It seems that his missionary work had no lasting fruits as he was not replaced. But even greater disappointment awaited him in Kimberley, where the European missionary, who had replaced him there when he left for the North, refused to relinquish his office in favour of the former incumbent. A tedious law case followed and even though Gwayi won, he did not live long to enjoy it; broken by ill-health and disappointed in spirit, he died in 1897.

Gwayi Tyamzashe had seven children, Benjamin being the fourth. He was born on the 5th September, 1890, and was thus seven years old when his father died.³ Two years after his death, the Tyamzashe children moved to Mrgqesha, near King William's Town, where Peter Tyamzashe,⁴ brother of Gwayi,

1. This hymn has remained one of Tyamzashe's favourites. He cannot remember who wrote it, but his conjecture is Tiyo Soga. He told me there were many settings of the hymn. It was frequently sung in the Tyamzashe home. In recounting these events to his family, Gwayi also sang some Bapedi songs he had heard.
2. Letter from Tyamzashe, April 29th, 1965.
3. Benjamin Tyamzashe was born in the Malay Camp. The Tyamzashe children in order of seniority were: James, Kate, Mejana, Benjamin, John, Henry and Charlotte. Until the middle of 1966, Kate (Mrs Gwele) was a church organist in Kimberley, and Mejana a retired teacher and local Headman at Mafeking. Both died in July 1966 within two weeks of each other. The other Tyamzashes died several years ago, James as early as 1935.
4. Peter Tyamzashe is mentioned in the Blythswood Review May 1933, p. 56: The Mission Field-Jubilee of Dr W.B. Rubusana celebration at East London. "...next to Dr Rubusana himself, the outstanding personage was Mr Peter Tyamzashe, the well-known teacher under the late Rev. John Brownlee of King William's Town, who in spite of his 87 years had come to rejoice with his old friend who was being honoured on this occasion. The Xhosa poet-laureate, Mr S.R. Mqhayi, was also in the gathering. Tyamzashe paid tribute to Rubusana's work as a missionary".

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who had started a school there and earned a salary of £6. 10s. (R13.00) per quarter, gave a home to his brother's children, as is customary among the Nguni.¹ Rachel Tyamzashe returned to her people in Mafeking.

Benjamin Tyamzashe was nine years old when he left Kimberley and entered a social environment that was closer to traditional Xhosa life and music. His memories of Kimberley, however, and life there, are still vivid - exuberant music and vibrant rhythms emanating from gambling dens, saloons and dance halls; visits to the Mosque and the Malayan community, driven to do so by curiosity and the hope of sharing in the communal meal.² The Mosque was situated very near the Tyamzashe home, and within the colourful interior Benjamin and his friends, who were Europeans, Coloureds and Africans, were allowed to take part in the ceremonial, joining the throng of Malays who sat cross-legged on the floor, swaying to and fro singing songs and chanting, pausing now and then to take large handfuls of hot curry and rice. Tyamzashe remembers very well the following melody: (Ex. 8 in thesis)



It was sung to Malay words which he cannot recall, but, as he said to the writer, "it was a good tune, and when I sing it I can almost taste the curry and rice."³

The musical abilities of the Malay people impressed the young Tyamzashe very much; he heard them perform on a variety of instruments on various social occasions. "These amakhoboka were fine musicians; they were also very good with charms and medicines, and I saw them do some very strange things"⁴

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1. In many Nguni tribes a widow belonged to her deceased husband's brother, who also assumed responsibility for any children. Rachel Tyamzashe returned to her own people. The Tyamzashe children did not see her again for some time.
 2. "We not only wanted the curry, but we also liked to join in the singing".
 3. I have not been able to trace this melody. It is not in I. D. du Plessis' collection of Malay tunes.
 4. Conversations with Tyamzashe, November, 1965.

But there was also the somewhat staid Western music, which both his father and mother loved so much and which indeed was the basis of all their church music.

Diamond mining began in Kimberley only in 1867; immigrants of all races flocked to the diamond fields, so that in the 1890's Kimberley was still a polyglot town where not only many tribes, but indeed many worlds met. Tyamzashe's early years there must have broadened his mind and opened him to outside influence and new ideas.

The Tyamzashe children remained some six years with their uncle near King William's Town in a humble music-loving home. Despite their possession of a harmonium and their knowledge of different types of Western music, they were deeply rooted in the music of their people. "We sang the songs of the old people, and the boys' and the girls' songs".¹ Significant quasi-institutions in their life were the musical evenings, which with the more educated Xhosa had replaced the traditional beer-parties.² On these occasions the Tyamzashes entertained a few friends; they gathered round the harmonium and sang such songs as "Rwá Rwá Rwá", "Watsh' uNomyayi", and "Abafan' bas' eNgqushwa". English songs were also sung, old Victorian favourites such as "Sweet and Low", "How can I bear to Leave Thee". They even played and sang "Italian Salad".³ They also sang church hymns for pleasure, and it did not strike them as being in anyway incongruous to mix the profane music of the kraal with the liturgical music, which was of course European. When Tyamzashe speaks of church music to-day, it is quite clear that he has always enjoyed it.

Another favourite social get-together was the church tea-meeting; the emphasis here was on songs of a semi-religious nature, particularly some written by Bokwe. At these tea-meetings adults and children alike met, although the young people tended to group themselves apart from the adults. On one such occasion Tyamzashe made his earliest attempt at musical composition. The people had been drifting about the room (church hall) chatting and drinking tea. Tyamzashe went up to the piano and improvised a little jingle which he called a "break". It was an insignificant little number, merely a short, snappy melody with a refrain which the audience took up. He called it "Unomademfu".⁴ From then, Tyamzashe often entertained the gathering with his improvised melodies during a break in the performance of adults: he had indeed with very little instruction learned to blend the notes of the harmonium into

1. Ibid.

2. The school-concerts have also replaced them.

3. This was a mere burlesque. It was published by Curwen; the author's name was Genée.

4. "I-Denfu" :- a big toad; (also a corpulent person).

pleasing harmonies.¹

The elder children, particularly brother James, had been taught the rudiments of music by Gwayi. James passed on his knowledge to the younger children, and found in Benjamin an eager learner.

In 1905 the Tyamzashe children moved to Peelson, where they lived with Thomas Tyamzashe, another paternal uncle. From there Benjamin enrolled at Lovedale in the fifth grade. Dr James Stewart was the Principal of the Institution, and among the students were such well-known personalities as Samuel Mqhayi, one of the most notable of African literati, known as "Imbongi yesizwe Jikelele", with whom Tyamzashe's friendship extends beyond the Lovedale years.² There were also the sons of J. H. Soga, C. Falati and N. Falati³, John Knox Bokwe, and Rev. Mzimba who, says Tyamzashe, "brought such sadness

1. "Break" has not the same meaning as the Jazz term. In Jazz, "breaks" are a structural device; in a work of some length soloists may in turn stand up and perform a capella - hence the term "break" - a break, so to speak, in a broad expansive work. "Breaks" are a common feature of 'school' concerts, and other musical events among the educated Bantu. They are a means of singing in, or warming up before getting on with the show. Just as jazz players will "hot up" before plunging into the main number, so the singers warm up, accompanying the singing with swaying or some rhythmical movement. At school concerts I attended, this sort of singing often occurred between numbers which required some change of costume or set. But they almost always occur before (and between) "serious" choral songs i.e. "where we must look at the conductor and not move at all", as an informant told me. Among the Thembu in Lady Frere district these "breaks" are referred to as "I-Sound". These are almost always improvised, one singer beginning a song, the others falling in.
2. S. Mqhayi (1875-1945). Years later, Tyamzashe set one of Mqhayi's poems to music, one of two instances where he did not write his own texts. Mqhayi's contribution to literature (Xhosa) earned him the title of Poet-Laureate among his people.
3. In the Cory Library, Rhodes, there is an original manuscript, an account of Ntsikana by N. Falati, translated into English by his brother C. Falati, and C. Mpaki. The manuscript dated St Marks, 1895. James was friendly with the Falatis, being nearer their age, and Benjamin met them through him.

to Lovedale!"¹

Tyamzashe remained at Lovedale for four years, i.e. until 1909, and obtained a Third Class Teacher's Certificate. He was in fact a very good student and in his final year he assisted the teacher in the evenings with the Standard Six boys; he also assisted the Woodwork master. For his services he received a small salary. He took part in sport, particularly cricket, of which he was very fond.

Tyamzashe was an enthusiastic member of the Lovedale Male Choir, "The Troubadours". Under the baton of Mr Aitken, "a deep-voiced man,"² this choir gained some distinction and toured the Cape several years in succession, the proceeds of the concerts going toward the purchasing of music and musical instruments for the Lovedale vocal and instrumental ensembles, the latter of which included a brass band. Already steeped in Congregational Church music, as a member of the Lovedale Church Choir Tyamzashe became familiar with Presbyterian and Wesleyan hymns. But they sang, too, the "works of the Great Masters", and Tyamzashe still vividly recalls the choir's performance of the Hallelujah chorus from Handel's "Messiah", conducted by the Rev. John Lennox.³ A Mr Mocher, from Bloemfontein, whom Tyamzashe described as being a "fine tenor" also conducted the Lovedale Church Choir on several occasions.

During the first two years at Lovedale, Tyamzashe was a popular leader of a gang, the inevitable concomitant of boyhood. For this group he made up many little songs, generally born of events, personalities, or purposes. One of these he still sings with great enthusiasm. It was a "rebel song", composed as a form of protest against the college food - "the nasty-smelling horse-crush they gave us". The boys broke into their song as soon as the bell rang for 'grace' at meal-times. This song, says Tyamzashe, never failed to rouse the wrath of the boarding-master, Mr McPherson, and his successor, Mr Geddes.⁴ The tune was not original, being taken from the

1. Rev. Mzimba, Minister of Lovedale Congregation 1879-1898. The Congregation separated from the Institute in 1886. cfr. Lovedale, South Africa, R.H.W. Shepherd, pp. 245-247: the Mzimba Secession.

2. Tyamzashe, letter dated 5th May, 1965.

3. Rev. John Lennox, (O.B.E.), M.A.D.D., teacher and theological tutor 1892-1920.

4. Robert MacPherson, Boarding-master, 1903-06; Manager of the Bookstore, 1906-1926.

Alexander Geddes (Veteran of the Crimean War), Boarding-master 1878-1907.

Sankey and Moodie collection of hymns.¹Strike Song (Ex. 9 in Thesis)

There is a boarding house not far a - way, O! how the
 Where we murayo eat three times a day.
 boarders laugh, when they hear the bells for meals, O! what a
 nasty smell, three times a day.

"This was the only form of protest in those days, and we were successful to a degree, for the food became a bit more eatable".

There occurred at this time an incident which nearly ended in tragedy. Drawn into a quarrel with a Coloured youth, who attacked him with a saw, Tyamzashe struck the youth on the head with a hammer. Thinking he had killed him, Tyamzashe fled and hid himself for some time, before Mr Preston² could convince him that all was well, and that his actions were understandable in the circumstances.

Tyamzashe left Lovedale at the end of the 1909 school year and the family moved to Mafeking, where he continued to attend school at Mahonyane, about eleven miles from town. Now a young man of almost 20 years, he cycled to and fro every

1. This seems to have been a popular school-song at the time. The writer's mother remembers singing a similar song, with the same melody and only slightly different words, when a child of eight years of age at boarding-school. This song also complained of the food. This same song was sung by the writer also while at school, and as far as is known, it is still sung in many schools to-day. The Sankey and Moodie hymn-tune is that of the hymn "There is a Happy Land" - originally an Indian hill-tribe melody, and probably brought over by a missionary. The melody is pentatonic.

2. Mr Preston, technical instructor, 1902-1922.

day to Mahonyane.¹ The family circle at Mafeking admitted several other members of the teaching profession who taught in and about the town. "These were happy years; we made much music whenever we could, my brothers and sisters, and our friends."²

During his school years Tyamzashe received no formal training in music. As mentioned earlier, the older Tyamzashes had received some instruction in music theory from their father. James, being the eldest, benefited most from this. He soon began to acquire a reputation for his performance on the harmonium and his musical compositions; he was already outstanding during the musical evenings and tea-meetings at King William's Town, and by the time the family moved to Mafeking he was performing from Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart and other composers. James bought an harmonium at this time, and it was then, especially, that he instructed Benjamin and his younger brothers and sisters in solfa, staff notation and keyboard playing. James was always Benjamin's favourite brother. The latter admired his talent, and even to-day feels deeply indebted to James, who taught him so much when he was a youngster "and so made it easier for me later on". The two brothers taught concurrently at the same institute for a short while, James eventually being forced to move to a lower altitude because of ill-health (1916). He went to Uitenhage where he taught in a Coloured School. In 1925 the Prince of Wales visited South Africa, and James was chosen to conduct a massed choir assembled from the King William's Town district. James later moved to Pirie, was pensioned, and died in 1935. Benjamin felt his brother's death keenly.

Toward the middle of 1910, Tyamzashe embarked on a teaching career at a Methodist Mission school in Dordrecht where he remained only a little over a year. His arrival there was not without excitement. He slept in a room which had an imbawala (brazier-type) fire, and nearly suffocated. To-day Tyamzashe hates this type of fire. In 1911 he moved to Vryburg to take up another teaching post at a Methodist Mission school. While at Vryburg he studied Sechuana and learned to speak it in a short time, even though his study of it was to go on for many years.

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1. One incident which made a deep impression on Tyamzashe occurred when cycling home from school one day. He took a short cut across the veld and came unexpectedly upon a group of Bechuana initiation girls out for a walk. On seeing him, the girls gave chase, waving their arms and sticks which they carried and shrilling at him in their "special language". Tyamzashe told the writer that "had it not been for my bicycle, I would have been torn to pieces, because a man may not look on these girls at such a time."
 2. The Tyamzashes and friends shared the same house.

In 1913 Tyamzashe went to Tiger Kloof Institute.¹ His brother James was already Choirmaster and Church organist there, and his recommendation secured this post for him. For three years the Tyamzashe's were there together, Benjamin learning a great deal from James. Apart from his musical duties, Tyamzashe taught such subjects as geography, art and school singing. In addition he undertook a correspondence course with the Tonic Solfa College, Bloomsbury Square, London.² This course included, says Tyamzashe, "staff notation and tonic solfa instruction, musical and verbal expression, musical appreciation, history, harmony and counterpoint, form and style, and analysis of the former."³

Tyamzashe's first composition dates from this time; in 1917, when he was already a man of twenty-seven years, he produced his first song. Perhaps he had not committed himself before to writing down his musical ideas on account of his insufficient knowledge of musical theory and form. Now, his knowledge to some extent bolstered by the correspondence course, he must have felt better equipped to set down his ideas. Personal sorrow and regret inspired this song. Tyamzashe had already met his future wife, Mercy Xiniwe. Her people at one time owned a hotel in the Market Square, King William's Town, for non-Europeans. It was called the "Temperance Hotel" because no liquor was sold there. Mercy's father led a troupe of vocalists and instrumentalists with which he toured England and Scotland in 1895, apparently with some success. In 1917, Mercy's sister, Mrs Skota, of Kimberley, died, and Tyamzashe's first song was dedicated to her. The departure of his brother James from Tiger Kloof the year before was still fresh in Tyamzashe's mind, hence the great pathos and emotional content of the song.

In 1919 Tyamzashe married Miss Mercy Xiniwe, and the couple settled on a farm near the Institute, on which Tyamzashe grazed a few cattle, goats and donkeys.⁴ He now had his own harmonium which he played quite well, and in time he procured a violin.⁵ He loved the sound of the instrument from the moment he first heard it - played by skilled Malay performers in Kimberley in the dance-halls there, in Mafeking, and occasionally in King William's Town. Tyamzashe had heard performances of more serious music on it at Lovedale; he never received any real instruction in the playing of it. While at Tiger

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1. An early Mission station, established May 1830 by the London Missionary Society.
 2. The College later moved to Queensberry Terrace.
 3. Letter dated 5th May, 1965.
 4. In speaking about the few cattle, goats and donkeys he had on his little farm, Tyamzashe told the writer that donkeys were incredibly cheap - as little as 6d (5c) each.
 5. The violin belonged to a Miss MacSmith, who was for a while Principal of the Tiger Kloof Girls' School.

Kloof a film company visited the Institute, which was chosen as the location for a film on Dr Livingstone. Tyamzashe assisted them in the selection and performance of the background music.

Tyamzashe remained at Tiger Kloof until the end of 1924; shortly before this, he undertook a correspondence course with the University of South Africa, but because of his wife's ill-health he only completed the first year of the B.A. degree. In the hope that his wife would enjoy better health, he moved with his family to Cala, in the Transkei.¹ They arrived there on New Year's day, 1925. Tyamzashe explained that his departure from Tiger Kloof was more hasty than planned, due to the fact that he accidentally shot a Sotho witchdoctor's horse while hunting, and feared both the supernatural powers of the horse owner and the vengeance of the law.

Tyamzashe remained in Cala for 25 years; it was there that all but two of his six children were born, and it was there also that he buried his wife in 1938. But especially it was at Cala that he composed an enormous number of songs, in fact most of his long and fruitful life's output. These emerged rather late in life - he was 35 years old when he came to this little Transkeian village. The song referred to earlier, together with other experiments at Tiger Kloof, were but a preparatory cluster compared with the number he wrote during his years in the Transkei.

Cala, like so many other trading villages in Bantu areas, is far from inspiring with its uneven streets, flanked by the typically drab trading stores, dingy cafe and tired-looking buildings. But the countryside is beautiful with a wild, rugged and barren beauty. It is mountainous country, in an area where the Stormberg and Drakensberg meet, and where many little streams, which come tumbling down from the hillsides after the rather infrequent rains that quickly dry up during periods of drought, form such rivers as the White Kei, the Indwe and the Tsomo. Tyamzashe shut himself off from the tired-looking buildings, and made frequent trips into the countryside and into the imaginative world of nature. It was the inspiration of the Cala countryside that stimulated his imaginative mind; even more, it was the inner creative drive set free in an environment that he understood and loved that gave him that great facility in song-writing which resulted in a prodigious number of songs. There was, too, the fact that he was now a mature and self-confident man who understood something of the technique of music as a result of his brother's training, his long years as organist and choir-master and the knowledge he acquired from his correspondence courses.

At Cala Higher Mission School of which he eventually

1. There were now two children - Eleanor Mandisa, and Peter Wonga.

became Principal, in 1927, Tyamzashe taught various subjects, and he had a choir which, under his training, achieved many successes at choir competitions and elsewhere.¹ Despite a full-time post at the school, Tyamzashe bought a few acres of land on which he made his home. Whenever he could, he took his wife and children into the countryside he loved so much. The wild scenic beauty, the pinks and blues of distant ranges, the changing of the seasons, animal and insect life, indeed the whole panorama of Nature herself, is reflected in his songs. This aesthetic appreciation of Nature, as seen in his music, seems to have been absent in traditional Nguni music; it was, as it were, blind to the marvels of nature. Such natural phenomena as the sunrise, sunset, the heavens, the singing of birds, the flowing river etc., did not inspire the indigenous music in the way it has inspired Western music. From a Western point of view at least, this side of the Nguni aesthetic sense seems to have been undeveloped.²

In an article entitled "Behind the Lyrics", Dr Hugh Tracey writes of group characteristics and the outlook of the Africans as reflected in their music.³

African appreciation of the cycle of cause and effect in nature, the proper sphere of all the physical sciences, is often found to be slight and bedevilled with gaps that witchcraft and magic are calculated to fill . . . Their folk stories are full of awkward situations, which only magical songs or charms can resolve. From the evidence to be found everywhere in song, it would appear that most Africans live in an atmosphere of the total acceptance of natural phenomena which must be endured. . . the capacity to wonder. . . is a strictly limited faculty, for it requires a vivid sense of imagination, or one developed in a specific direction.

Referring to his own collection of folk-songs, Dr Tracey says that :-

The greatest number of African songs so far experienced in Central and Southern Africa are connected with human behaviour, and the problems

1. At the request of Mr Philip Britton, former Music Organizer for the Natal Education Dept., Tyamzashe frequently took the choir to Umtata to demonstrate at the teachers' courses. It was for this choir that he wrote so many songs.
2. This is not to say that the Cape Nguni were totally incapable of wonder about natural phenomena. These were sometimes subjects of interest and extraordinary ideas. Apart from this curiosity, these phenomena were taken for granted; they simply existed, they were there, and that was sufficient.
3. Tracey, Dr H., "Behind the Lyrics" in African Music Society Journal, 1963, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 17-22.

which beset any community... few remarks are to be found in song about the scenery or the natural beauty of the countryside... for the rest, their interpretation of 'beautiful scenery' is in terms of survival, the crops it will grow, the grazing for cattle, the game to be hunted, the presence of wild fruit trees, the poles and grass for hut-building - these are the features which determine beauty, a quality which someone once defined as 'suitability of purpose'.

Nearly all the songs written by Tyamzashe at Cala were inspired by his awareness of the beauty of his surroundings. The sun, moon, the river - their rather 'commonplace' aspect elicited at most some degree of awe from his forebears, while their existence and function was explained away by a mere "it is". In Tyamzashe's songs, these have evoked much poetic thought and vivid imagery. Music is no more a mere accompaniment to ritual or an expressive outgrowth of labour; it is an outgrowth of the scenery and beauty of the countryside and its effect on the composer.

For 13 years Tyamzashe and his wife lived happily at Cala; she bore him four more children, making the number six in all. But her health deteriorated, and she died in 1938. Some years after this, and shortly before Tyamzashe's retirement, Agnes Nomasango became his second wife.¹ Agnes, the grand-daughter of a Thembu chief, Bonkolo,² is a partially initiated iggira.³ Tyamzashe greatly respects her psychic powers, as do many people who know her.

In 1950, after being pensioned, the Tyamzashes retired to a small farm, Zinyoka, situated near King William's Town.⁴

Tyamzashe loves the King William's Town district; he spent only a few years there in his youth, yet he considers it his home which he frequently visited all his life, and to which he has now retired. Cala was his second home, and he still owns land there. In both places the environment was and is a little nearer to Xhosa tribal life, despite the proximity of European influence.

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1. Nomasango - "Mother of the kraal-gate". (Tyamzashe).
 2. After whom the Bonkolo Dam, a few miles from Queens-town is named.
 3. A doctor or diviner. She was secluded for awhile, as is customary for novices, but her parents then forbade her to continue with her noviceship. She occasionally practices her art.
 4. He took with him his harmonium which he had bought many years before at Tiger Kloof.

At Zinyoka, Tyamzashe continued to write music with his usual facility and assiduity, and the popularity and appeal of his songs began to grow; nor have they diminished with the passing years.¹ The number of songs written in the last seventeen years exceeds the Cala output; he had retired, and could lead a more leisurely life, consequently he found more time to compose. It is very likely that he will be remembered longest for compositions he began writing in 1965, which he completed in 1966. Certainly these compositions are important. For some years now, many of the Christian Churches in South Africa have been acutely aware of the need for an "African" Liturgy and music for use in African churches. Sometime in 1963 Tyamzashe was approached by members of the Anglican Church and asked to write some music for church worship, but nothing came of it. Toward the end of 1964 he was again approached, this time by a group of Roman Catholic missionaries actively engaged in missionary adaptation. They had been advised by Dr Y. Huskisson, of Radio Bantu, Johannesburg, who regards Tyamzashe as one of the foremost Bantu composers and a great musical personality. Tyamzashe was asked to assist in composing and compiling suitable music for use in African Churches. In April 1965, he moved to St Augustine's Mission (Mhlanga), situated at the foot of the "Table of the Thembus" about 15 miles from Indwe.²

His first task was to familiarise himself with the Catholic liturgy; until then he had no contact with it. Early in June, 1965, he completed his first major work for the Catholic Adaptation Committee, a musical setting of the Xhosa Mass. He followed this with several liturgical works, along with one or two 'school' songs for special occasions.

Early in 1966 he began work on a third setting of the Mass, after he had put aside a draft of Missa II. He had already completed more than half of this when he became critically ill and was forced to spend some time in hospital. On recovering from his illness, he returned to Mhlanga where he completed Missa III. Toward the end of May he returned once more to his home near King William's Town, after having been away for over a year, an absence broken only by a return to Zinyoka in July and December for a short holiday.

In August 1966 he was approached by the priest-in-charge

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1. At a fairly recent Bantu Music Festival held in the Transkei (c. late 1964-1965) I was surprised to learn that 90 per cent of the songs were written by Tyamzashe.
 2. Tyamzashe's own name for a mountain which overshadows St Augustine's Mission. 'Etafileni yaba Thembu'. "Mhlanga" is the Xhosa name for the mission. The nearest railway halt is only a half-mile or so away - Tafila Halt.

of Glen Grey Mission Hospital, Lady Frere district, who asked him to write a setting of Compline. Tyamzashe moved to the Hospital with his wife, and by the end of September he had fulfilled his commission; in addition he wrote two songs for special events. The following month he travelled to Umtata to adjudicate at a choir competition, after which he returned to his beloved Zinyoka. After a short but well-earned rest he began once more to turn out songs which prove that, despite his age, his mind is as keen as ever.

Benjamin Tyamzashe has already had a long life - he is now 77 years of age. His life-span bridges several stages in the social, cultural and economic development of his people. His ability to store up episodes against the course of time is not rare, yet the ease with which he can project himself into a particular period, drawn at random from his past, is, in the writer's opinion, quite extraordinary. Endowed as he is with such imagination and humour, for him time will never stand still. He lives very much in the present yet has in no way lost contact with the past, and can reminisce at length on events and incidents which occurred long ago. His output of music is considerable for a man who had to compose in the little time he had to call his own after he had fulfilled his duties as the very successful principal of a mission school. Even his more leisurely life at Zinyoka had its commitments.¹

His popularity was never greater than to-day among the Transkei and Ciskei people, and he is certainly the greatest Nguni songwriter living. Indeed, the younger generation of composers look upon him as the "Maestro". Yet it is not only the musician who had made an impact upon them; it is the man himself, his personality. To-day old and young alike call him "Teacher Tyamzashe" and "A! B. ka T!" with great affection.²

He is greatly respected and liked wherever he goes; he is known by many as the "Peacemaker". On several occasions where ill-feeling and misunderstanding have disrupted human relationships, he has quietly and unassumingly healed the breach.

He is indeed the "Grand Old Man" of Xhosa music today.

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1. He has adjudicated on numerous occasions, and periodically does some work for Radio Bantu.
 2. Salutation:- "Ah! Benjamin, son of Tyamzashe!"

HIS WORK

Introduction :

It has been impossible to obtain scores of all Tyamzashe's songs, and to draw up a complete list of them, thus the number of his compositions must remain approximate.

Only nine songs have been published, and these in solfa:

1. A group of five songs in booklet form, printed by the Lovedale Press.
2. Three separate songs, printed by the Lovedale Press.
3. One song which appeared in a Bantu Education Journal.

The majority of song-scores was obtained from Tyamzashe himself over a period of 18 months. More recently, Tyamzashe again provided me with as many songs as he could lay his hands on when all my own copies were stolen. Tyamzashe makes his own stencils and roneos his songs; these are sold to various educational institutions, churches, choirmasters, school-teachers and whoever wants them. Although he has been asked to write songs for various occasions and events, many songs are voluntary contributions; he composed them because it gave him pleasure to do so.

Tyamzashe went to a great deal of trouble to procure copies of his very early songs for me; in moving about and changing his occupation he mislaid many stencils, and so had to 're-write' his songs.

In the collecting of songs I received assistance from school-masters, choir-masters and other people in Grahams-town, King William's Town, Queenstown, Port Elizabeth and other places in the Ciskeian area. I obtained the addresses of these people from the Sub-Inspector of Bantu Education, Grahamstown, and wrote to them explaining my project and requesting songs by Tyamzashe and other composers. Private persons living in the area, and in the Transkei, also helped, as did some in the Indwe and Lady Frere districts. Again, a few songs were obtained by chance - unexpected meetings with individuals who knew persons likely to be of help.

Tyamzashe's songs have reached a comparatively wide public; several have been recorded by the transcription service of the S.A.B.C. The record library of Radio Bantu, Grahams-town, helped in drawing up a list of song titles, and offered some recordings of songs, although I was not always able to obtain scores of these. However, performances of songs at school-concerts, tea-meetings and choir festivals enabled me

to make my own recordings. Old concert programmes provided me with titles of songs which I was able to follow up.¹

Of the printed songs, it was a simple matter to obtain the year of publication from the Press concerned. It follows, however, that the year of composition and of publication do not always coincide. Thus the rough chronological order I have established must of necessity be accepted with some reservations although it has been corrected and approved by Tyamzashe himself. I have concerned myself with chronology only so far as to divide his songs into three main periods, corresponding to the places where he lived and worked. These are :

First Period: Tiger Kloof (1913-1924)

Second Period: Cala (1925-1950)

Third Period: Zinyoka (1950-)

Of the undated songs which fall mainly into the second period, these may be subdivided into "earlier" and "later" as the composer himself refers to them.

I have thought this explanation necessary as it shows the impossibility of establishing a strict chronological sequence of his works, a process further hampered by the fact that some of the scores which are dated are smudged and illegible.

The greater number of songs of the last 16 years are dated and recently Tyamzashe has moved about the Ciskeian area fulfilling requests for songs. These are dated and the locality of their composition noted down. He has been writing steadily since 1965, and it has been fairly easy to keep up with his works as I have been constantly in touch with him.

Tyamzashe's songs were written over a period of fifty years; with the exception of the church compositions of the last two years, these are mainly part-songs, three and four part, although he has written a few solo songs, duets and jazz arrangements.²

His first period (Tiger Kloof) did not see the emergence of many songs. At this time he was engaged in acquiring a formal musical education. His earliest song, Isithandwa sam (My Beloved), was composed in 1917 to mark the death of his first wife's sister. Several experiments preceded and followed this. The next completed song appeared in 1923 - Iindonga

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1. Knowing the titles of songs made it easier for me to obtain scores. I simply wrote to Tyamzashe requesting the particular song. This made it easier for him too. Also, I was able to keep a little ahead of him.
 2. These were recorded with Messrs H. Polliack, Jhb., 1939. (letter dated 23 Nov., 1966).

ze Tsomo (The Banks of the river Tsomo). According to a written account, this song gained rapid popularity and even to-day it is a firm favourite among the older Bantu generation. At this time Tyamzashe had not yet moved to Cala, by which the Tsomo river flows, but he had already visited the area. To-day this song recalls both pleasant and unpleasant memories for him - picnics on the banks of the river in which his eldest son, then a child, nearly drowned.

From the beginning Tyamzashe continually transcended the cultural limitations of his forefathers and wrote songs about nature. The greater number of songs of the Second period, (Cala), are nature songs, as the following titles indicate: Inyanga (the moon), Phumalanga (sunrise), Amafu (Clouds), Ilima (the hoeing party), Isibakabaka (the sky), linyosi (bees), and many others. In some of these songs animals and birds are endowed with human attributes e. g. Xalanga (vulture) which takes its name from the "vulture" district of the same name round Cala. This song is not in admiration of the countryside however, but tells a story about "the day the birds chose a king".

An important aspect of Tyamzashe's songs, and one which links him musically with his forebears is that he writes his own texts. In traditional Cape Nguni music, melody and text are generally conceived simultaneously - the result of a single inspiration on the part of the preliterate song-maker. With two exceptions, and of course apart from the church compositions, Tyamzashe provides his own words to his melodies. As he himself says, "They come together more or less at the same time". This will be discussed later on.

As Principal of the Cala Higher Mission School, Tyamzashe was subject to various social pressures; he had to attend many formal occasions and social events, which were inducements so to speak for the songs he wrote to mark them - farewell songs for eminent persons, songs of welcome for school inspectors, superintendents, ministers, teachers, songs for the opening of buildings, church synods and conferences, and funerals. If some of these songs never reached a wide public, the greater issues occupying the attention of the western world received some recognition in Cala; the Jubilee of George V was recorded in a song, a copy of which was sent to the King. Tyamzashe received a letter of thanks from His Majesty through his representative, the Governor-General. Similarly, the coronation of George VI and Elizabeth received a special song, as did the end of World War II. Perhaps the most important song, and certainly the most impressive, is the African Royal Welcome Song, Zweliyaduduma (thundering world), which is one of the composer's most extended works. The crowning glory of Tyamzashe's long and musically prolific life came in 1947 when he was chosen to conduct a massed choir of 3000 school children drawn from all over the Transkei for the performance of this

song.¹ After the performance, Tyamzashe was called to the rostrum and personally thanked by the King. Two well-known songs marking a particular event are Ivoti (the vote) and Hayi Abant' Abamnyama (Ho! the black people). In the 20's it was customary for Bantu choirs to sing only European songs at Departmental choir competitions. Tyamzashe was the first to be allowed to present a Xhosa song for such a competition. Music Inspector S. J. Newns granted him permission to do so, and his choir sang Ivoti. Both songs comment on the disenfranchisement of the Cape Africans in 1929;² Hayi Abant' Abamnyama, in particular, surpasses any of Tyamzashe's other works. It is full of patriotism but devoid of any bitterness; in fact, it exemplifies the sense of humour even in trying circumstances, which is so much a part of the African. Both Ivoti and Hayi Abant' Abamnyama were published by the Lovedale Press in 1929, the publishing being sponsored by Dr D. D. T. Jabavu.³

Many of the songs of the second period were re-arranged; different occasions demanded a different vocal arrangement, as for example, when Ivoti was sung by a children's choir, as were other four-part songs.⁴ This involved a change from a four to a three-part setting. Melodic passages were sometimes changed, and the text slightly altered to suit the new setting. Also, Tyamzashe did this partly because he wrote music with such facility, while new ideas were not always equally easy to find.

The songs of the third period comprise all kinds - nature songs, songs for special occasions, for the installation of chiefs, for church worship etc.,. In 1951, shortly after settling at Zinyoka, Tyamzashe wrote his favourite song, which is still very popular with choirmasters and teachers in the Ciskei. i-Bhisho likhaya lam (Biso is my home), which clearly reveals the composer's love for his home, and his pride in his ancestry.

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1. As we have seen brother James had been accorded a similar honour in 1925 when the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) visited South Africa.
 2. It has been difficult to determine the actual year of composition of these two songs. Tyamzashe could not recall exactly. Stylistically, I would place Ivoti as being earlier than Hayi Abant' Abamnyama, but again this may not necessarily be correct. The latter is so different from anything he ever wrote. Both were written probably within a period of five years (1924-29). These songs are no longer allowed to be sung in schools.
 3. Dr D. D. T. Jabavu, Professor at Fort Hare University College.
 4. This took place on 11th December 1965. The festivities lasted three days, and included an interesting mixture of traditional Xhosa/Thembu ritual singing and dancing, some praise-poetry 'sung' by an Imbongi 'school' singing, (which continued almost all night), and a beauty contest!

Songs followed in rapid succession - one celebrating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953), another the 100th anniversary of the Xhosa/English Bible, Inkulungwane yeBayibile yesiXhosa (1959). The Coalbrook disaster in 1960 was deeply felt by Tyamzashe, and he wrote a four-part song entitled Ezants'e Coalbrook (Down in Coalbrook). This is one of his most impressive songs. Along with several others he composed music for the installation of chiefs - notably that of Chief Velile of the Ngqikas, the Chief Zwelidumile of the Gcalekas, (Ah! Velile! Ah! Zwelidumile! 1961).

Up to 1965 Tyamzashe steadily turned out songs. He also adjudicated at several choir competitions and Eisteddfodau, and did some conducting himself. At this time he found in one choirmaster in King William's Town the "ideal interpreter of my songs". Another well-known song written for a special purpose is his SANTA¹ song, written at the request of a Mr Rontsch and his wife, Dr Schmidt, of Umtata. This could be called a functional song in that it was written for the purpose of combating tuberculosis among the people of the Transkei.

From April 1965 he began to write music for the Catholic Church; soon after he completed Missa I, he wrote a set of Antiphons especially suited to childrens' church services. After completing this work he began a second Mass. At the same time he wrote a Litany, and, on the secular side, a song commemorating the 60th anniversary of St Cyprian's Mission, Macibini, in the district of Lady Frere. He then composed a Meditation, (setting of a penitential psalm) and a Rosary, for solo voice with keyboard accompaniment. But Missa II never quite got under way; he found it difficult to get new musical ideas, the Missa I looming too large in his mind. As it was, he put it aside.² Missa III was completed in May, 1966. In the meantime he had written another Litany and a number of Baby Hymns, intended for mothers to teach their children. A musical setting of Compline (I-Komplini) was completed in September, 1966. This involved much hard work as Tyamzashe had to "try and get behind the meaning of the text".³ He still found time to write a farewell song to the people who had commissioned the liturgical work and had made life so pleasant for him and his wife at Glen Grey hospital. In addition he composed a special installation song for Chief Kaiser Matanzima, which was due to take place on October 8th, but was postponed because of the chief's illness.

He returned to his little farm, Zinyoka, and after a brief respite from the intensive composing of the year, he once more began to turn out music. Three songs marking the removal

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1. South African National Tuberculosis Association.
 2. Tyamzashe said later that it was a question of changing it drastically or starting again.
 3. Conversations: August 1966.

of Radio Bantu from Grahamstown and its establishment and opening in King William's Town, followed in quick succession. While these songs show the usual Tyamzashe musical characteristics, they also show that this old man has yet something more to say in music.

Tyamzashe's long period of song-writing culminated in two years of very intensive composing. In all this, he still foundtime for other musical activities, such as adjudicating at certain competitions, and being guest conductor on various occasions. In addition he attended a Music Conference held at Lumko Institute, Lady Frere district, in December, 1965. During the Conference the problems facing the Missionary Adaptation Committee involving "African music for African worship" were discussed, and examples of music were played. The Conference was attended by Prof. P. R. Kirby of Grahams-town, who has pioneered ethnomusicology in this country, and Prof. G. Gruber, of the Department of Music, Rhodes University. Others who attended were religious and secular people, both European and non-European, from the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State and Basutoland. The ethnic groups were represented by Xhosa, Zulu, Basuto and Coloured composers and amateur musicians. The discussions held during the Conference opened up new aspects of the musical problems confronting the African people, in particular the difficult position of the Bantu composer to-day. Throughout the Conference, which lasted three days, Benjamin Tyamzashe played a vital role.

TYAMZASHE AS COMPOSER

In 1965 Tyamzashe, in a letter to me, made the following statement, "My music is not Bantu music; it is not Nguni music; it is Xhosa music".¹ This statement, however, requires some qualification; and in order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, one must go deeper into the matter.

A critical survey of Tyamzashe's work must take the following facts into consideration:

1. The prominent Xhosa composer is the son of a Xhosa father and a mother of Scottish descent. His musical heritage will therefore include characteristics of both ancestral lines.
2. Musical influences during his childhood and youth, which were provided by family, church and school, were largely European (cfs. p. 46 ss).
3. His formal training in music consisted of a correspondence course with the Tonic Solfa College, London, which he took soon after his arrival at Tiger Kloof Institute, at the conclusion of which he was awarded a diploma. (A. T. S. C.²)
4. His professional career as a teacher at mission schools, however, brought him gradually into contact with traditional music.³ During the twelve years at Tiger Kloof, he was still to a considerable extent subject to European influences. As organist he had to play the hymns during Divine Service, and as teacher he was compelled by the prescribed syllabus to teach English and Scottish folk-songs as well as Bantu sacred and secular songs in Western style. The twenty-five years at Cala, situated in the Bantu homelands, however, brought him into an African environment, and provided him with the opportunity of listening to traditional music. He still maintains to-day that many of the traditional Xhosa melodies he remembers he heard during this time.
5. Although the extent of the influence of tonemes on melodic shape is still a somewhat controversial subject, the principle as such is definitely accepted. All of Tyamzashe's compositions are written on Xhosa texts. The mere use of the Xhosa language may therefore contribute some African characteristics to his personal style.

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1. Letter from Tyamzashe, April 11th, 1965.
 2. Tyamzashe cannot recall the exact year in which he took the course, nor can he produce the diploma. During 1965-66, I wrote four times to the college, but received no reply.
 3. Dordrecht-1910; Vryburg-1911; Tiger Kloof - 1913-24; Cala-1925-1950. He became principal there in 1927.

6. The influence of European music on his compositions can be traced to four main sources:

- (i) Church hymns.
- (ii) Victorian salon music, both sacred and secular.
- (iii) English popular song.
- (iv) Band music.

Tyamzashe's knowledge of church hymns is interdenominational. In childhood he learnt the hymns of the Congregational Church. At Lovedale he became immersed in Presbyterian and Wesleyan hymnody, of which the hymn tunes of early Bantu converts and notable churchmen such as Bokwe and Soga are still among his favourites. During his years at Tiger Kloof and Cala he became familiar with the music of the Anglican and Dutch Reformed churches, and the Apostolic Church, while in recent years he became acquainted with the Gregorian Chant of the Catholic Church.

From the aforesaid, it is not surprising that his music is largely Western European in style. But although this is so, Tyamzashe is not even 'African' in his use of a native melody in many works, nor is his harmonizing of such melodies, although the harmonizing of them is very traditional - a variation between two chords neither of which is resolved as is the case with diatonic harmonies, although the technique is similar. Tyamzashe is most African in his approach to music structure. The African concept of music and music structure is an harmonic one and Tyamzashe's approach to music is also primarily harmonic. His harmony is essentially the harmony of moving parts conceived melodically, and the result is great block harmonies much in the style of close harmony, but with freer movement within the harmonic blocks. Tyamzashe himself said that, in composing his songs, the words and the music come together more or less simultaneously. Since he composes on Xhosa texts one might expect the tone pattern of the texts and that of the melodies to be fairly close. However, in his songs, there is no evidence of such tonal relationship.

In order to assess Tyamzashe's contribution to African music it is essential to give a brief account of the nature of his technique as a composer. This is done here under the headings of Melody, Harmony, Counterpoint, Modulation and Form.

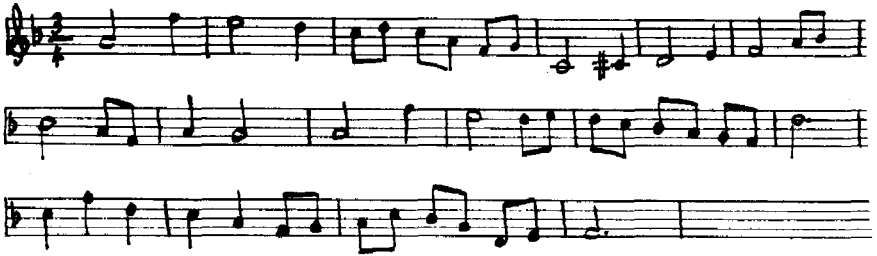
1. MELODY

In shape and structure nearly all Tyamzashe's melodies follow traditional European patterns.

With regard to the melodies of non-hymnlike songs there are two types:

- a. Those influenced by vocal salon music.
- b. Those influenced by instrumental music.

a. Intlakohlaza (Spring). (Ex. 28 of thesis)



b. Umlonji (The Canary). (Ex. 30 of thesis)



These melodies are essentially Victorian in type, and are usually 16 bars in length with a simple modulation to the dominant in the middle and a return to the tonic at the end.

With regard to metre, in songs on the subject of running water, of which he has written many, Tyamzashe prefers 6/8 or 3/4 with two-bar phrasing. These songs reveal perhaps the most amazing aspect of Tyamzashe's style, that is, his keen rhythmic sense.

2. HARMONY

I assume the following three points to be true:

- a. The inherent parallelism of indigenous Xhosa music developed after European contact into a kind of "block" harmony whereby the melody was accompanied by triads in root position. Elements of this style were inherited by Tyamzashe and still have a strong influence on his music.
- b. Tyamzashe had but little formal training in European music. His correspondence course provided him with only a limited knowledge of elementary harmony and counterpoint.
- c. Although Tyamzashe has some knowledge of staff notation, with one exception all his works were written in tonic solfa. The exception was his Missa III, which was written for a competition, and, according to the rules, had to be written in staff notation.

Tyamzashe described his method of composition as follows: "I get an idea, then I write it down, usually in the soprano. Then I add the other lines. At the end I try to get a good bass line and may afterwards change some notes in the alto or tenor". This utterance seems to indicate that he composes horizontally.

Tyamzashe's harmony is simple, consisting of the usual diatonic chords - triads in all inversions, Dominant 7th chords which he uses excessively, and occasional use of chords of the secondary 7th, and the 9th.

As an example of simple chordal writing in four parts, I quote the following passage from Ceba Lomthi: (Ex. 39 of thesis).

CEBA LO MTHI

Ce-ba lo m-thi ka-de nqongqo-tha

Ce-ba lo m-thi o-ve-la e-ma-hla-thin'

His scores reveal his liking for the sound of the chord of the dominant 7th, and his failure to use it correctly. Auxiliary

Dominants nearly always appear in cadential passages, giving the effect of interrupted cadences.

Another feature of Tyamzashe's harmony is his characteristic and regular use of consecutive fifths, generally between the bass and tenor parts. This may be either due to his lack of sufficient knowledge of Western European harmonic principles, or to the fact that he does not hear certain progressions and tone-combinations as being dissonant, which seems to indicate that his sense of consonance and dissonance is still rudimentary, despite his continual contact with Western European music and western musical training. Indeed I often attended several rehearsals at which he conducted one of his own works, and it became obvious that he was not at all disturbed by deliberate or unconscious alterations of certain passages on the part of the choir. Tyamzashe's judgement of singing is based on relative pitch, not absolute, and on pattern. Like all Africans, he tolerates great latitude in singing, but judges errors mainly on pattern. Thus he accepts such alterations and "new" or "different" notes, but is quick to pull up the choir when they introduce something which "does not fit in", in other words, disturbs the pattern. This is an important point, and one which indicates how musically "African" Tyamzashe really is.

His inherited parallelism of indigenous Xhosa music, as demonstrated by Kirby (1934).¹ "Tyamzashe's parallel harmonisation extends from the parallel movement of two voice parts, which may result in consecutive 5ths and/or octaves, to parallel movement in all voice parts".

To the foregoing may be added the fact that Tyamzashe not only makes use of diatonic passing-notes, but also experiments with chromatic ones. In these, however, his penchant for "block harmonies" is again revealed and it is also reasonably certain that they derive from the harmonium. Genuine chromatic structures do not occur in his music.

3. COUNTERPOINT

A study of Tyamzashe's scores reveals that, although he has grasped some of the rudiments of counterpoint (he repeatedly employs some contrary movement between the two outer voices), he has in no way accepted the technique of real contrapuntal writing. His only attempt at counterpoint lies in the interpolation of pseudo-polyphonic passages into an otherwise solid harmonic structure; this is little more than the loosening of chordal structures, and thus constitutes no real polyphony. (Xhalanga. Ex. 71 in thesis).

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1. "The Effect of Western Civilisation upon Bantu Music", in Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa, p. 131.

Xhalanga (Ex. 71 in thesis)

Xhalanga ukhoz' ukhoz' sangxa sangxa ukhetsh'

ukhoz' sangxa ukhetsh'

u-khoz' u-khoz - i Sangxa etc.

u-khoz' sangxa u-khetsh'

In Isithandwa sam (his earliest work) Tyamzashe utilises his linear style of writing excessively, something he has not repeated in his subsequent works. In it he achieves a type of counterpoint through a semi-independent voice-leading, viz., a continuous or through-imitation in which one voice repeats a melodic figure previously presented in another part.¹

In one instance - in a song entitled Beka Phantsi - each voice part is melodically independent viz., it has a melodic life of its own. Nevertheless, all the voice parts are interrelated in that all derive from the same theme - Ntsikana's Chant - upon which the entire section is constructed. The result is a type of heterophony.

4. MODULATION

Tyamzashe's modulation is relatively simple; with very few exceptions he always modulates to the Dominant key.

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1. Professor P.R.Kirby's comment on this is "Had Tyamzashe continued to develop this style he might possibly have created something like a characteristic Bantu counterpoint".

Ndosuka (Ex. 73 in thesis)

4/4

Ndo-su-ka ndi- thi ni na Msindi si wa

ndo-su-ka ndi-

Ndo-su-ka ndi-

thi-ni

ko-dwa nga-phandle kwesi-thand-wa Ndi-

nga-phandle kwesi-thand-wa

si-

hlu-thi-we is'thandwa sam s'thandwa

Ndi-hlu-thi-we

hlu- thi- we

Ndo-suka ndi- thi-ni Ndo

Zi Beke Phantsi (Ex. 74 in thesis)

4/4

Zi-beke phantsi, Zi-beke phantsi Hu-lele-le Homua

Zi-beke phantsi, zi-bek' phantsi Hu-le-le-le

Hulele homua, Hulele a-howua A-hom

Hu-le-le-le A hom

5. FORM

Tyamzashe's musical education led him to a knowledge of the basic thematic forms used in Western music - the sentence and the period. The designs of many of his melodies reveal that, in his employment of these forms, he has not learnt to avoid rhythmic squareness. The greater

number of his songs show regular 2, 4 and 8 bar phrasing. In some songs, however, Tyamzashe does achieve some rhythmic flexibility by means of modifying the normal rhythm of the 8 bar phase... He favours closing sections which vary from co-dettas comprising re-iterated cadential progressions to more expanded codas.

Tyamzashe's settings of the Mass, however, demonstrate how, by reason of the nature of the text themselves and the fact that antiphonal singing was an essential feature, he has in his music become much closer to Nguni idiom, and consequently his work in this direction sounds much more African than his secular compositions. Another reason for his "thinking African" in his settings of the Mass was that when invited to undertake the work he was asked to write it without the aid of his harmonium. This suggestion "was made in the belief that the African character of music and African melody could be recaptured more successfully if the harmonium was not used. More than any of the other liturgical works, the antiphons come nearer to traditional Xhosa music in harmony, rhythm and, of course, form, since antiphonal exchange is a feature of much traditional music".

In my thesis, as presented to Rhodes University, I included many musical examples from Tyamzashe's works, the inclusion of which would unduly swell this monograph. I also included a list, as complete as possible, of his compositions, as well as a comprehensive bibliography, and as has been stated in the editorial note, these can be consulted in the library of Rhodes University.

