British Amateur Singers and Black South African Choral Music: The Politics of Access and Encounter

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Abstract

This thesis explores connections between British amateur singers and black South African choral music that, over the past fifty years, have grown in strength and significance. By concentrating on a set of representative case studies, it investigates how and why this music is learned, performed and rehearsed within a variety of choirs and ensembles of different styles and experiences. In addition, the thesis focuses on certain songs that have become popular within specific choral contexts, and discusses the reasoning behind their enthusiastic reception and attractive power. My approach is ethnographical, and the material I present is taken from my own participant-observations of choir rehearsals, workshops and performances, as well as from interviews I conducted with choir members and leaders.

On a theoretical level, this thesis engages critically with ethnomusicological and anthropological debates surrounding cultural appropriation. Particularly pertinent to each chapter are discussions concerning authenticity, cultural authority and power relations, and I explore the politics and logistics that are associated with British singers’ encounters with black South African choral music. By discussing critically these different levels of encounter and engagement, I offer some new and intriguing standpoints from which to consider existing debates surrounding cultural appropriation and, in so doing, suggest approaches for theorising cross-cultural encounters through a more nuanced postcolonial lens.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

On a chilly afternoon in December 2013, I gathered with some close family members in my sitting room to listen to the Boxing Day broadcast of the BBC Radio 4 show *You and Yours.* That day’s offering focused on individuals and communities who were learning new skills and trying new hobbies that took them outside of their comfort zone. As part of this exploration, the show featured a short presentation on the University of Manchester World Music Choir, a small vocal ensemble I had begun conducting some two months earlier at the start of my second PhD research year. Along with observations from choir members about learning to sing and overcome fears of joining an ensemble, the presentation included some material that showed me teaching the group two black South African choral pieces. These were ‘Likhon Ithembalam’, a religious piece that became popular in South Africa during anti-apartheid campaigning, and ‘Nelson Mandela’, a song paying tribute to Mandela, who had passed away earlier that month. My five-year-old niece, who had been sitting in silence throughout most of the interviews, suddenly piped up with a series of inquiries. First she questioned me about the songs she was hearing, asking where they were from and wondering why they were in another language. My explanation that the songs were from South Africa, rather than providing her with a satisfactory answer, simply caused her inquisitiveness to grow. ‘But you are not from South Africa, are you?’, she reminded me sharply. ‘Why are you teaching songs from South Africa? Isn’t that really far away? How do you even get these songs anyway, and how do you even know what you’re doing?’ Little did this enthusiastic five-year-old know that the sorts of questions she was asking were at that time occupying a place of

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1 BBC Radio 4, ‘You & Yours’, 26 December 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03m7z0l](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03m7z0l) (accessed 21 April 2017).
prominence within my own mind, and were in the process of developing into the thesis I am introducing here.

My small world music ensemble was, of course, not the first amateur singing group in Britain to learn multi-part vocal pieces from black communities of South Africa. In fact, December 2013 had seen choirs from all over the world performing this material, following the death of Nelson Mandela. By the time of the You and Yours broadcast, I had been to at least five singing gatherings in the North West of England where anti-apartheid anthems were performed in memory of Mandela. For the majority of singers involved in these events, the performance of these South African pieces was not new. Most participants had sung the songs before in rehearsals or in different performing venues under different circumstances. Some had known the songs for years, and reminisced openly about the workshops they had attended, rallies they had campaigned in, and singing journeys to South Africa they had embarked upon. For these groups and individuals, the songs that were performed during the Mandela tributes had become almost a way of life. The music was a part of them, and a part of their choral, social and political identities. How, though, have these British connections with black South African choral music been developed? How did songs travel to Britain, and who has facilitated their teaching and learning within amateur singing circles? How and why have they become so attractive to singers of differing backgrounds who, for the most part, have no ethnic ties to South Africa? It is on these questions that my thesis is focused. By exploring a variety of contrasting fora and media, I trace some of the many routes by which black South African choral music has travelled to British amateur singing groups and, by drawing on material collected from interviews with their members and leaders, I investigate some of the many causes of its lasting appeal. In addition, I explore some of the many contexts in which it has been transmitted, rehearsed and performed, highlighting challenges connected with cross-cultural teaching and learning and demonstrating its
ability to facilitate the musical, social and political development of a diverse range of amateur singing ensembles.

As the thesis unfolds, we will learn more about some of the many cultures and communities of South Africa, but it is worth pointing out a few statistics and facts here. Located at the continent’s most southern tip, South Africa has a population of around 50.7 million people.² Of this population, 80.2 percent are black African, 8.4 percent are white, 8.8 percent are coloured, and 2.5 percent are Indian/Asian.³ There are eleven official languages and, apart from English and Afrikaans, they are all Bantu languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Northern Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, Swati, and Ndebele. Zulu, Sotho and Ndebele are click languages. Of the songs we will encounter in my thesis, the majority are Zulu and Xhosa, but I will also discuss some pieces that are sung in Sotho and Tswana.

Due to European colonial rule, there has long been a strong Western influence in South Africa, of both a musical and non-musical nature. This dates back to the mid seventeenth century, with the Dutch being the first to colonise in 1652.⁴ The English and French were then to play significant roles in the colonisation of South Africa in subsequent years.⁵ During the colonial period, European settlers brought their own music, some of which came to be mixed with traditional sub-Saharan musical elements to form new genres. A particularly bold example of these cross-fertilisations can be heard in genres such as *makwaya* and *mbube*, genres which in many ways are the product of

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⁵ Ibid.
nineteenth-century missionisation, and which are discussed further later in this introduction and throughout the rest of the thesis.

The musical phenomenon explored in my thesis exemplifies quite a specific process of globalisation and indeed cultural appropriation. Rather than accessing so-called world music purely via the radio, internet, concerts or other forms of passive consumption, the groups and individuals featured here seek out more active forms of participation and more direct modes of cross-cultural encounter. This is achieved in part by learning and performing at workshops, musical festivals or similar singing gatherings. Such events often involve primary culture-bearers who provide very detailed teaching experiences that focus on performance aesthetics and present quite specific information concerning the music’s cultural context. Singers might even travel to a music’s culture of origin to learn songs in their original settings and interact with local musicians and community members. These more active forms of participation have, of course, been influenced to some extent by the development of the worldbeat market and the commercialisation of once-localised musical forms. As we will see, though, the challenges and opportunities that are presented during cross-cultural teaching, learning and performing provide fresh perspectives from which to engage with established debates surrounding globalisation and appropriation that, thus far, have been applied mostly to more passive forms of world music consumption.

With reference to the acceleration of globalisation, Tullia Magrini notes how ‘musics coming from the most different places … find unexpected new listeners, fans, and sometimes performers in the most unlikely places’.6 This observation is pertinent to the songs and performers featured in my study. Singers have not only become attracted

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to songs that have travelled far, but they have also found new and often unlikely homes and venues in which these musics can function. Whilst I have seen these processes of recontextualisation occurring during rehearsals and performances of songs from many different musical cultures, they have been particularly conspicuous as far as the transmission and presentation of black South African choral pieces is concerned. I have heard British amateur singers performing South African songs outside Manchester Town Hall, in shopping centres, supermarkets, museums, bars and pubs. I have even heard the song ‘Shosholoza’ (a popular anti-apartheid anthem with roots in Zulu migrant work culture) performed on the East Lancs Railway, and I have attended countless concerts and fundraising events that have included choirs of mostly British performers singing ‘Nkosi Sikeleli’ iAfrika’ (South Africa’s national anthem). Magrini’s observation about musics attracting fans and listeners in the most unlikely places, then, is especially relevant here, and the travels of specific songs will be discussed further throughout the study.

Caroline Bithell identifies five different orders of attraction that fuel music’s travels to new audiences. These are: aesthetic, affective, pragmatic, ideational and ideological. These different types of attraction have, in some shape or form, been articulated by the majority of my interviewees: all of these types of attraction and more will be explored in greater depth as my study unfolds. We will encounter groups and individuals whose passion for black South African choral styles has been ignited by specific musical elements and thematic content. We will also hear from individuals whose attraction to this music lies in its ability to initiate specific emotional responses and reactions of a multi-sensory nature. A complementary analytical framework is provided by Thomas Turino, with his identification of the three criteria of what (borrowing from Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records) he terms ‘the sociological side of the Bob

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Marley worldbeat legacy'. These criteria are: ‘liberatory politics, especially as pertaining to the African diaspora; “exotic” spiritualism (e.g., Rastafarianism); and a distinctive “roots,” yet familiar, musical style indexing a unique [foreign] locality or community’.

This triad of ingredients is suited to the construction of South African choral music and helps to shed explanatory light on its enthusiastic reception within international amateur singing circles.

Also discussed in this study are the different levels of cross-cultural encounter and connection, both musical and non-musical, that an engagement with South African songs can initiate. As Simone Krüger and Ruxandra Trandafoiu have pointed out, people often use music ‘to migrate symbolically in search of new horizons’. We will discover how the themes and aesthetics of some South African songs, along with the perceived ideologies of the cultures they represent, can, for some British singers, provide opportunities to access identities or ways of life that are different from their own. We will also see how performing these songs can help to mould perceptions of cultures and communities, which can in turn create connections of a more psychological nature. Finally, we will learn how an engagement with these songs has encouraged singers to travel physically to South Africa, and how their temporary involvement in musical and social activities has often led to the establishment of more deep-seated and long-lasting cross-cultural partnerships that extend beyond the music itself. These different types of connection (psychological, physical, temporary and long-term) are explored critically through discussions of the dynamics and ideologies surrounding their creation.

9 Ibid.
Whilst the principal gaze of this investigation is directed towards the activities of choirs in Britain, I provide examples of ensembles and initiatives in other geographic locations – most notably North America and Italy – that have served as conduits for the appropriation and dissemination of black South African choral musics. An exploration of these initiatives and the connections with South African communities that they have facilitated will provide readers with a useful framework for understanding how and where similar British pursuits fit into this international movement. As we will also see, some of these non-British ensembles have contributed significantly to the transmission of this music to Britain, as well as presenting singers with the opportunity to travel to South Africa and learn songs from local culture-bearers and communities. Featuring prominently in this part of the study is the Vermont-based Village Harmony, a non-profit organisation that offers a variety of written and audio teaching resources, as well as a programme of overseas study-performance camps in locations including South Africa.

Introducing the Choirs

Throughout my study I refer to groups and individuals belonging to a diverse range of amateur singing ensembles in Britain. There is, however, a selection of named choirs which occupy a particular place of prominence and whose activities form the basis of a series of case studies. These choirs have been chosen specifically because they offer representative examples of some of the different connections that British singers have developed with black South African choral pieces and communities. They also represent some of the primary contexts in which songs have been rehearsed and performed, and help us to understand some of the challenges and opportunities that these different processes can present. The choirs are: Sheffield Socialist Choir, Free Range, Manchester Community Choir, Open Voice, Rough Diamonds Community Choir, Salisbury Community Choir, and The University of Manchester Cosmo Singers; also featured is the organisation Wren Music. We will discover more about the specific identity of each choir
as it appears later in the study, but some general introductions are necessary here. All of the ensembles, apart from The Cosmo Singers, usually sing a wide variety of songs from different ('other') cultures, and rehearse at least one South African song per term. Some groups, such as Manchester Community Choir, perform South African songs regularly and also include members or leaders with ethnic and/or academic connections with South Africa. Some ensembles sing the songs for pleasure or to emphasise their policies of inclusion and open-access but others, such as Sheffield Socialist Choir, have more direct political connections with this music. Most groups contain members who have attended workshops with visiting South African musicians or other events where South African songs are taught outside their own ensembles. Some ensembles have developed more deep-seated and intimate partnerships with black South African choirs and communities. Rough Diamonds, for example, has developed a relationship with a choir based at a diamond mine near Pretoria and some ensemble members have travelled to South Africa to spend time with this group.

The dynamics of these different levels of engagement and encounter will be explored in chapters three, four and five. Whilst each choir I have selected demonstrates a different level of cross-cultural connection with black South African choral music, however, they can all be related to Mark Slobin’s concept of affinity groups, ‘charmed circles of like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding’.¹¹ Some of these ensembles may never have met, but they all share a passion for singing South African songs that creates personal, social and political bonds between their own members and beyond.

I am aware that these names choirs on which I have chosen to focus in this thesis are just a few of the many singing groups who have engaged with Black South African choral music, both regularly and more sporadically. I have, for instance, concentrated less on choirs based in the South of England, and decided to carry out more in-depth studies of ensembles rehearsing closer to my own base in Manchester. This decision was influenced partly by my visual impairment, which has inevitably affected my ability to travel independently and make regular visits to ensembles based at the opposite end of the country. I feel that I could not spend sufficient time with these groups to carry out substantial case studies. As will be seen, however, many of the members of choirs I have explored have met regularly with ensembles from across the country at workshops, festivals, and other singing gatherings. Indeed, I have also been able to interview such individuals during my own attendance at these events, and any of their responses are discussed throughout the chapters that follow. Finally, as I have become more familiar with the named choirs in my study, and as I have begun to develop an understanding of how they fit into the wider network of groups connected to black South African choral music in the UK, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of these particular ensembles in establishing broader trends and significant cross-cultural relationships that have set the stage for the continued circulation and enthusiastic reception of this music on a national and indeed international scale. It is therefore important that these choirs should take the spotlight in my study. I am equally aware that I have not included any explorations of ensembles with a predominantly black membership and/or a strong gospel connection. I believe that the ways in which these groups have engaged with black South African choral music present opportunities for discussions that are worthy of their own study. As I explain in my final reflection, I would like to conduct a further ethnographic study that concentrates on black gospel choirs’ connections with South African songs,
and compare these findings with the activities of the predominantly white choirs discussed in the current thesis.

The majority of the ensembles I have assembled are representative of a contemporary generation of choirs that has emerged in Britain over the last three decades. On the whole, they operate quite differently from the types of classically-oriented groups that have long been associated with British choral singing. The ethos of the community choir, whose activities feature particularly prominently in my study, has in many ways come to define this contemporary pocket of choral activity. In her 2014 volume *A Different Voice, A Different Song: Reclaiming Community through the Natural Voice and World Song*, Caroline Bithell identifies some of the primary characteristics of community choirs. ‘In contrast to most choral societies or amateur four-part choirs in the classical tradition,’ she writes, these ensembles ‘do not hold auditions or require the ability to sight-read. Songs are taught by ear … and there is far less emphasis on public performance.’

If and when these choirs do perform, Bithell explains, their style of dress and stage presentation is quite different to those amateur ensembles which model themselves on the traditional Western ‘classical’ choir. Singers are often ‘colourfully and informally clad. Rather than standing stiffly in orderly rows, looking down at their music folders, they may be clapping or moving to the beat.’ Some ensembles might not give public performances: members might gather to combat their fear of singing or might just wish to sing for pleasure. As we will see, some South African songs are especially well-suited for initiating feelings of liberation and relaxation and are often structured in ways that encourage quick and easy learning as well as communal participation. This is one reason, then, why they feature so prominently in the repertoire of open-access community choirs and singing groups.

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13 Ibid., 17.
The policy of open access to which this more contemporary generation of choirs subscribes is to a large extent inspired by the Natural Voice Network (formerly Natural Voice Practitioners’ Network). In fact, many of the choirs I discuss have members or leaders who either belong to or are in touch with this organisation. The NVN was founded by a group of voice teachers who had participated in a series of workshops and training courses under the direction of the English folksinger Frankie Armstrong. Armstrong had been leading these events since the late 1970s, and her work was centred on the belief that anybody can sing, regardless of ability or past experience. Armstrong writes: ‘I was determined to provide a place where anybody … could come and simply enjoy voicing and singing … without judgement or criticism’. Armstrong’s philosophy is central to the life of the NVN, as its website indicates: ‘We believe that singing is everybody’s birthright [and] creating an accepting community is an essential element of our approach.’ The NVN will become increasingly familiar to the reader as the study unfolds, and the ways in which South African songs have become popular with various sections of its membership will be discussed. The ways in which this organisation’s approaches to singing and communal participation can influence approaches to the teaching, learning and performing of South African songs are also explored.

Apart from the Cosmo Singers, the named choirs in my study, along with the additional musical directors and singers I introduce, are all to a large extent allied to this open-access ethos. Both Sheffield Socialist Choir and the Leeds-based choir Free Range have been included to represent a branch of choirs that refer to themselves specifically as ‘political choirs’. These groups, although following the general ethos of the community choir, engage in singing predominantly as a form of political activism. Whilst singing for

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pleasure and social bonding are certainly part of their purpose, they usually learn songs that are either explicitly topical or that lend themselves well to mass participation. These songs are then performed during protests, rallies and other similar gatherings, and often audience participation is encouraged. We will learn more about the ancestry of these ensembles in chapters two, three and four, where I explore in more detail their connections with black South African choral music from a collecting, learning and performing perspective.

Classically-oriented ensembles are also represented in this study. Although less frequently, I have encountered groups belonging to this more ‘traditional’ end of the amateur choral spectrum that have rehearsed and performed black South African choral music. In fact, I myself have sung in classical ensembles where this music has been taught. As a member of the Hallé Youth Choir in 2005, for example, I sang a rendition of the South African religious piece ‘Siyahamba’, which we will encounter later in this study. I have also spoken to friends who, during their undergraduate years, have rehearsed and performed a South African song on a one-off basis as part of a classical or church choir. The Cosmo Singers, a four-part auditioned ensemble based at the University of Manchester, presents a case of an ensemble whose members temporarily leave behind their usual musical habits to perform this aurally transmitted material. How they cope with the transition from learning off the page to learning by ear will be explored in chapter three, while the sorts of adaptations that South African songs undergo to fit with their overall performing ethos is discussed in chapter four.

The named choirs that have pride of place in my study, then, allow me to demonstrate some of the different contexts in which black South African choral music is transmitted and performed within British amateur singing circles. Further, they are representative of some of the different approaches to teaching and learning that musical
directors and ensemble members might follow when these songs are embraced by singing communities with differing levels of musical experience and different aims or aspirations.

**Choirs in the Literature and in the Media**

My thesis contributes to the closure of several lacunae in scholarship that, for some time, I have found perplexing. Within the academy, research concerning amateur singing in Britain has tended to take a historical approach, with studies rarely extending beyond the first few decades of the twentieth century. In light of this tendency, only certain types of choir have gained a secure place on the academic map. In *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914*, Dave Russell includes a section entitled ‘Music and the Battle for The Working-class Mind’, in which he discusses the middle-class driven popularisation of choral singing.\(^{16}\) He outlines the role of singing in the workplace, as well as its function as a tool for providing a distraction from vice. The choirs operating within these contexts, however, were usually classically inclined and, as Russell observes, repertoire consisted predominantly of sacred songs or material drawn from what I tentatively refer to as ‘the Western choral canon’ (pieces like Mozart’s Requiem and Handel’s * Messiah*). Ian Watson’s *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements* (1983) offers a more politically oriented investigation into British choral singing.\(^{17}\) In this volume, Watson discusses the role of choirs in the socialist revival that began in the final twenty years of the nineteenth century. Emphasis is placed on the importance of singing in the Clarion movement and, whilst the ensembles he explores differ in some ways from those featured in Russell’s study, they are still aligned with the typical choral tradition. They may be political in outlook and refer to themselves as

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\(^{17}\) Ian Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements* (London and New York: Croom Helm and St Martin’s Press, 1983).
socialist choirs, but their repertoire continues to be based on sacred and ‘classical’ works. Because Watson’s observations do not extend beyond the late 1930s, there is no mention of the later resurgence of socialist choirs which, as we will see, opted for an entirely different musical menu.

A more recent contribution to the study of British amateur musicians is made by Ruth Finnegan, with her 1989 volume *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*. In this ethnographic work, Finnegan focuses on different pockets of amateur musical activity in the town of Milton Keynes in the early 1980s. She investigates the learning and performing activities of brass bands, operatic societies, musical theatre groups, folk musicians, choral ensembles, and a whole host of further amateur music organisations. The choirs on which Finnegan focuses, however, are mostly church groups and more classically-inclined ensembles. There is no material concerning groups belonging to the Natural Voice Practitioners’ Network and political choirs, which were beginning to grow in size and significance throughout the 1980s. There is therefore no mention of South African songs, or indeed of the sorts of cross-cultural teaching and learning undertaken by the choirs I explore in my thesis. In addition, Finnegan’s exploration is limited to Milton Keynes and, whilst she explains how her discoveries and theorisations can be applied to the activities of amateur musicians more generally, there is little mention of ensembles outside of the Milton Keynes area.

There are, though, several aspects of Finnegan’s foundational work that are similar to my own investigation of British amateur singers. Firstly, she explains how some of her ethnographic material is derived from her own participation in amateur music groups.\(^{18}\) She then discusses how long-term participation in different ensembles, as well

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as attending performances as a passive consumer, inspired her to explore further the significance of the different types of relationships that develop between participants and audiences.\textsuperscript{19} For Finnegan, the organisation and musical pursuits of different amateur ensembles involved the consideration of questions relating to ‘the social contexts and processes of artistic activity and human relationships’.\textsuperscript{20} Like Finnegan’s, my own ethnographic investigation consists of material collected from a melange of participant-observations and passive consumptions. I discuss information gathered from my own participation in choir rehearsals and performances, as well as reports of concerts and events at which I have been an audience member. Furthermore, the development of different types of relationships within a variety of learning and performing contexts is also important to my own study. I explore how, within a variety of rehearsal and performance environments, a whole manner of human relationships both short and long-term can be established, and I discuss the dynamics of these various partnerships. Furthermore, I discuss how specific environments can often influence the course of certain human connections.

A wider spectrum of amateur choirs is explored by the contributors to Karen Ahlquist’s 2006 edited volume \textit{Chorus and Community}. Consisting of a compilation of essays by authors from multiple global locations, this publication focuses on ‘choral singing in cultures of markedly different character worldwide’, investigating the chorus as a ‘social, economic, political and/or religious organization’ as well as ‘a musical instrument’ and ‘a vehicle for verbal text’.\textsuperscript{21} In some ways, this investigation is a useful role model for my own study: the characteristics of many of the choirs featured in the assembled essays are similar to those of ensembles I have explored, and the ethnographic

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
approaches taken by some of their authors have inspired my own methodology. Frustratingly, however, the only information included about British choirs is again historical, existing in the form of an essay by Charles Edward McGuire entitled ‘Music and Morality: John Curwen’s Tonic Sol-fa, The Temperance Movement, and the Oratorios of Edward Elgar’.22

The 2017 Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy also provides an illuminating exploration of choirs in a diverse range of settings. This volume features a compilation of case studies that investigate the roles of both singers and conductors in creating different learning and performing environments. Various types of teaching and learning methods are explored, and the challenges of choosing different repertoire to suit specific types of choirs and environments are also investigated. In the introduction to this handbook, Frank Abrahams and Paul D. Head explain that ‘choral pedagogy focuses on singers and conductors who work together in a community of practice called the choir.’23 This idea is particularly pertinent to my own study. I explore thoroughly the contributions of both singers and conductors to the learning and performing of South African songs within different British amateur choral groups, and I maintain that, as well as sometimes working independently, both choir members and leaders often collaborate and assume equal roles in both the rehearsal and performing process. I also investigate the importance of choosing repertoire: we will see how certain South African songs are chosen deliberately to suit a certain type of choir or performance environment. It is also encouraging to note that this handbook contains a full chapter devoted to community choruses. Its focus, however, is on ensembles in the USA, and there is no mention of

British choirs and/or choirs belonging to the NVN. As part of her definition of community choirs, though, Susan Avery explains in this chapter that, for their members, such ensembles provide ‘a source of aesthetic pleasure, physical and mental stimulation, an extended family, and joy’. This is certainly true of the groups discussed in my own study: their members often find physical and mental release through singing, and regularly make new friends and join new networks. Moreover, they are attracted aesthetically to the music they sing: we will discover how certain musical elements of South African songs can initiate specific emotional landscapes.

This handbook also contains a chapter by Mollie Spector Stone. Stone’s contribution to the transmission of South African songs in Britain forms an important part of my own study, and is discussed in depth in chapters two and three. As we will see, her perceptions of authenticity are based on quite a specific set of criteria, which are also explored in my thesis. These criteria are then explored critically in relation to the activities of different choral groups in Britain, and they help to set the stage for a wider investigation of different interpretations and challenges relating to authenticity within contexts of cross-cultural teaching and learning.

The 2010 volume Where Music Helps: Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection brings together a selection of case studies that explore music’s potential for improving ‘health, human development, and equity’. This publication contains investigations of several singing groups, including an East London-based choir called

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Musical Minds. This group is part of an organisation that assists adults with long-term health problems, and singing is for them considered vital for discovering a sense of belonging in a challenging environment. As we explore some of the many ways in which British amateur singers learn and perform black South African songs, many of the therapeutic qualities of singing discussed in Where Music Helps will become particularly relevant. The idea, for instance, that singing can enhance feelings of belonging by building social bridges and friendships will be especially pertinent.

With my thesis, then, I offer a more up-to-date study of amateur choral singing in Britain. By focusing on a specific musical trend, though, I also want to encourage the creation of more full-length studies of various parts of this choral network, and I provide some suggestions as to how their activities might be theorised. Some scholars have begun to set the wheels of this task in motion. Caroline Bithell’s ethnographic investigation A Different Voice, A Different Song: Reclaiming Community through the Natural Voice and World Song (2014) explores (as its title indicates) the connection between choirs associated with the natural voice movement in the UK and world song, the latter being a term she employs to refer to songs from diverse cultures.27 By analysing material collected from interviews with choir members and leaders and building on information drawn from extensive participant-observation, Bithell considers how and why world songs ‘have provided the linchpin for the natural voice movement’.28 Some of the ground covered in this study has provided many useful points of reference for my own, as well as supplying a springboard to launch several of the discussions on which I embark. As part of her investigation, Bithell highlights some musical cultures that have become particularly popular amongst natural-voice-style singing groups, and explores some of the overseas partnerships to which an engagement with these musics has given rise. She

27 Bithell, A Different Voice, 16.
28 Ibid., 1.
observes songs from the African continent playing a particularly important role within the lives of many community choirs:

In my interviews with choir leaders, these songs were often identified as those that called to them most strongly when they first set out on their natural voice path, as well as being amongst the songs that are most effective when working with relatively inexperienced singers.²⁹

Included in Bithell’s discussion of the relationship that has developed with African musics is a consideration of songbooks and other related teaching resources that have contributed to the circulation of black South African vocal styles. My own investigation is in many ways an extension of this exploration and creates additional avenues for discussion by several means. Firstly, as well as highlighting written and electronic resources that have served as important vehicles for transporting South African choral music to British choirs and explaining their contents, I also embark on a more critical examination of their presentation. How might they enhance or complicate approaches to cross-cultural teaching and learning, for instance? Furthermore, my exploration of amateur singers’ connections with South African choral music is viewed not only through the lens of teaching resources but also from the perspectives of the choirs themselves, as I discuss how groups and individuals respond personally and collectively to different rehearsal and performance processes and procedures. Finally, whilst Bithell’s investigation is mostly concerned with choirs belonging to the NVPN (now NVN), my research considers ensembles hailing from musical, social and political networks that are sometimes distanced from natural voice philosophy, as exemplified in my exploration of classically-inclined groups and musical directors.

²⁹ Ibid., 174.
In recent years, aspects of amateur choral singing in Britain have been energetically promoted by the national media, with the BBC making a particularly significant contribution. Whilst in some ways the different types of choir featured on television and radio programmes, such as BBC 2’s *The Choir* (hosted by Gareth Malone), hint at a more diverse and contemporary network of amateur singing in Britain, the main focus is on competition and this theme is promoted vigorously by the media. Much less emphasis has been placed on non-competitive singing, and phenomena such as the National Street Choirs Festival that sees ensembles from across the UK come together to celebrate the joy of singing receive little if any press coverage. Many of the choirs mentioned in my study, then, are operating to a large extent under the radar: whilst they are well known within specific circles, they receive minimal publicity from the media.

Of greater relevance to my own research is *The Choir*, a programme airing on BBC Radio 3 on Sunday evenings. Hosted since 2014 by Sara Mohr-Pietsch, this show includes performances and interviews with many different types of choir, from choral societies to gospel groups. Each week, the programme features a slot called ‘Meet My Choir’, in which an amateur singing group is given an opportunity to showcase its work. In September 2013, one of these sections featured an interview with natural voice practitioner Phoene Cave. In this instance, Cave was talking not about her own choir but about the West Midlands-based Rough Diamonds Community Choir. She was explaining the ideology of the NVPN (as it was then) and part of the conversation included a discussion of the usefulness of South African songs. *The Choir* also presented rare coverage from the 2014 National Street Choirs Festival, an event which, since its inception, has been a channel for the transmission of a wide range of songs from many parts of the world. On this particular occasion, all participating choirs joined in a mass sing in Hebden Bridge, which featured a rendition of the song ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ in
memory of Nelson Mandela. This, then, opened a rare window onto the world that is the focus of this study.

**Introducing the Songs**

Whether or not they have met before, the ensembles featured in my study have often rehearsed and performed the same styles of black South African choral pieces and, as a result, a common repertoire of materials has emerged. Whilst the musical activities of choir members and leaders are constantly facilitating the expansion of this body of songs, there are some pieces that the majority of my interviewees and questionnaire respondents have identified as personal favourites. I have also heard these songs regularly in performances I have attended, and they have proven themselves to be particularly versatile when fitted into a diverse range of musical, social and political occasions. Among the most ubiquitous songs are ‘Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika’, ‘Shosholoza’, ‘Siyahamba’, ‘Senzenina’, ‘Ipharadisi’, ‘Samagwaza’ and ‘Freedom is Coming’. The reasons why these particular songs have become popular within amateur singing circles in Britain are explored throughout the study: we will hear how specific elements of the music and thematic content resonate strongly with certain groups and individuals, and we will investigate why the pieces might be well-suited to particular teaching and learning environments. Contributing greatly to these songs’ popularity and reach, however, are those groups and individuals who have created resources that have facilitated both their transportation and transmission. In chapter two I discuss how the development of a body of resources (written, electronic and human) has enabled these songs and others to be widely circulated among singers of different backgrounds and has presented opportunities for their continued sharing and recontextualisation.

Specific musical and historical details of individual songs are discussed in depth in chapters two, three and four, where I explore how they have been collected, rehearsed
and performed in a variety of musical and social contexts. Whether musically, socially or politically, though, these pieces of music are all associated with makwaya, a genre of black South African choral music that was created initially by black middle-class communities towards the end of the nineteenth century. In his 1996 ethnography Nightsong: Performance, Power and Practice in South Africa, Veit Erlmann defines makwaya as choral music influenced by four-part Western music.\(^{30}\) Elsewhere he describes the genre as being based in part on African traditional material.\(^{31}\) The fusions to which Erlmann points were initiated largely by processes of missionisation facilitated by British and American philanthropists in South Africa during the nineteenth century. Missionaries sought to convert black communities to Evangelical Christianity in order to restore social order and relieve society of the poverty left behind by previous Dutch colonisers. Their strategies to educate and convert resulted in the establishment of mission schools that cultivated elements of European life and culture among black communities. Musically speaking, it was the dissemination of Western hymnody that became a characteristic feature of these mission stations. As David Coplan has noted, this four-part vocal style was markedly different from precolonial indigenous multi-part songs, whose staggered part entries, untempered scales and absence of collective cadences were far removed from a diatonic and strophic approach to melody and harmony.\(^{32}\) Initially, missionaries took indigenous song texts and set them to Western hymn tunes without changing the language or word order. This resulted in both musical and linguistic

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awkwardness, but such pieces were nevertheless acknowledged as a choral genre known as *imusic* which, to a great extent, brought about the development of *makwaya*.\(^{33}\)

*Imusic*’s representation of the dominance of westernisation was, particularly among black traditionalists, regarded as unsettling and even oppressive. For these sectors of society, the genre was nothing more than the product of colonisation. Not only was the Western idea of tonality and regular phrasing unfamiliar, but the concept of performing song texts without traditional dances was equally foreign. A rejection of this genre led to the emergence of groups who began negotiating musically with Western and indigenous styles to create syncretic styles that helped to articulate a distinct black identity whilst acknowledging inevitable processes of modernisation and westernisation. It was these fusions that developed into *makwaya*. Typically, *makwaya* songs adopt a Western approach to harmony, often centred around chords I, IV and V. Elements such as call and response and syncopated rhythmic passages, as well as staggered part entries and contrapuntal textures, are more representative of indigenous styles. The blending of Western and African styles is particularly noticeable in ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’. The first section of the song follows a four-part SATB hymn structure, based around chords I, IV and V. This section is predominantly diatonic. The ‘Woza Moya’ section, by contrast, employs elements of call and response that are more representative of traditional African idioms.

*Makwaya* has continued to play a significant role in the development of black choral culture not only musically but also socially and politically. Its original intentions of articulating a black identity and advocating social change have remained pertinent. During the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, songs belonging to this genre (notably religious pieces) were sung frequently at protests and rallies. The fact that the

\(^{33}\) Ibid.
music was strophic and diatonic made it highly suitable for encouraging mass participation, and meant that it could be easily rearranged to adapt to specific topics or events. Its function within contemporary choral competitions, whose ideologies will be discussed in chapter four, continues to emphasise its theme of articulating collective identity and the idea of a united front. Thomas Mamabolo, a member of Polokwane Choral Society, elaborates on the changing functions of makwaya within the context of his own music-making:

I think there are definitely elements that, you know, we stick to a bit more that are in the African tradition. You hear certain rhythms, for instance, and you think yes that’s Zulu or the music Xhosa. But I think also everything is changing and we have to keep putting new ideas into the music so it’s not, you know, stagnant. Things are moving on and changing, it’s natural and so the music has to do this too.34

With reference to black choral music, David Coplan insists that, as historic conflicts and repressive regimes have challenged the destinies of peoples and cultures, song has been an instrument of ‘determination, self-transformation and competition’.35 As well as the fusion between familiar Western sounds and more foreign African styles, it is the social and political functions of makwaya that, as we will discover, have contributed to its popularity among groups of British amateur singers. The themes of songs, and the contexts and circumstances to which they have been attached, continue to resonate with groups and individuals who make them a part of their own lives.

Makwaya’s fusions of Western and indigenous styles and its on-going articulation of social and political identities over changing periods and regimes are a profound example of what Veit Erlmann has described as 'the interplay of numerous social worlds,

34 Interview with Thomas Mamabolo, 24 July 2014.
35 Coplan, In Township Tonight!, 6.
ideologies and expressive forms setting each other into motion’, and a demonstration of a complex negotiation between the traditional and the modern.\textsuperscript{36} This interplay between continuity and change offers an interesting standpoint from which to examine critically perceptions of tradition as they are presented by singers in my study. In chapters three and four we will encounter ensembles whose members are intent upon performing South African songs in the ‘traditional’ manner. This, for them, might involve following strict rules concerning musical presentation, movement and even dress. Yet, as I have begun to demonstrate, black choral performance in South Africa does not always adhere to such rigid structures: things are changing, moving on and expanding in response to modernisation, urbanisation, politicisation and cross-cultural encounters. Often, then, there is no clear-cut right and wrong and no definitive account of what the tradition actually is.

When asked about their first experiences of listening to black South African choral music, many of the singers in my study – to my surprise – did not refer to \textit{makwaya}. They instead mentioned recordings and concerts by artists such as Miriam Makeba, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Paul Simon. This more commercial exposure to black choral styles allowed listeners to encounter genres such as \textit{isicathamiya}, \textit{marabi} and \textit{mbaqanga}. Unlike \textit{makwaya}, these styles developed out of processes of urbanisation, with their roots lying in the bustling city of Johannesburg. \textit{Isicathamiya}, the Zulu genre that is most often associated with Ladysmith Black Mambazo, developed in the compounds and hostels of black migrant workers. This genre, whilst possessing hard-edged timbres that are communicated in vocal lines, is not so distanced from \textit{makwaya}, despite borrowing elements from township jazz and other urban musics. Its melange of Western and African elements is conspicuous: diatonic melodies and harmonies are set to syncopated rhythms,

\textsuperscript{36} Erlmann, \textit{Nightsong}, 43.
and traditional dance steps are inseparable from the singing. Often *isicathamiya* is less hymn-like, less ‘clean’ and more vocally liberal than *makwaya*, but similarities between the two styles cannot go unnoticed. Some of my interviewees mentioned being drawn to the distinctive sounds of *isicathamiya* and they enjoyed the visual aspects of Ladysmith Black Mambazo’s performances: they referred to costumes and choreography. Often the commercial travels of genres like *isicathamiya* have inspired listeners to seek out ways of participating themselves, and this has led them to community choirs, songbooks, workshops and other events that allow them to learn and perform black choral styles. Many of those who have sought out and indeed facilitated these more active forms of participation, though, have not necessarily wanted to perform music from urban genres.

In fact, although being inspired by this music, they have wanted to find something more rural or even something that is more community-based. ‘What are choirs in South Africa performing?’ is a question I have often heard being asked. Such queries, then, may lead people to *makwaya* and this indeed is a style that is encountered in the majority of teaching and learning resources analysed in chapter two. Yet singers often bring their own listening experiences into their learning and performing: they have the sound of *isicathamiya* in their heads, for instance, and they might transfer some of this to *makwaya* pieces. They might also share songs they have heard during concerts or even in films and arrange them for their own ensembles. A classic example is ‘The Lion Sleeps Tonight’, a song popularised by Disney’s 1994 movie *The Lion King* and based on the church vocal style *mbube*. Readers will learn more about the origins and different versions of this song in chapter two.

Commercial artists have not just influenced singers in my study in musical terms, however. Their activities have often promoted or disseminated information about South Africa that has inspired these singers to become actively involved in South African affairs. Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album, for instance, highlighted political conflicts
surrounding the apartheid regime while introducing an inspiring line-up of South African musicians to Western audiences. Miriam Makeba was likewise a protagonist in South Africa’s quest for social and political change. Hearing these artists and learning the stories that were attached to their careers has certainly inspired singers to perform black choral styles as an act of solidarity. They have also, as we shall see in chapter four, used the songs to voice their own contemporary issues and concerns.

Methodology

Throughout this thesis, I combine detailed descriptions of events and activities, information derived from semi-structured interviews, and analyses of recordings and written teaching resources with passages of more theoretically based discussion. At times these descriptions might appear to take on a quasi-journalistic quality, signalled by my change of tone with regard to language and presentation. This is intended to bring the reader closer to the activities I have experienced and to ensure that my study does not lose the personal dimension that I think it deserves. Throughout my investigation I have encountered many interesting people and have been involved in several experiences that have changed my own life as well as my perspective on singing. I have therefore wanted to include these experiences and their effects, and to pay appropriate tribute to the people who have provided them. My approach to these passages is informed by Clifford Geertz’s concept of thick description.\(^37\) My own participant-observation of rehearsals, performances, workshops and other singing gatherings has also allowed me to, as James Clifford puts it, ‘experience, at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation’.\(^38\) This has been particularly useful for the discussions I pursue in chapters three and four, which deal exclusively with the dynamics of cross-cultural teaching and

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learning and the adaptations and recontextualisations that take place during cross-cultural performance.

By adopting these ethnographic approaches, my study differs quite significantly from some of those undertaken by music psychologists who have investigated the social and psychological powers of singing through a more scientific lens. As Caroline Bithell has pointed out, these studies tend to take a more empirical approach, with emphasis being placed on the collection and analysis of quantitative data. Bithell also notes that, whilst information extracted from interviews may be included, it is often presented in the form of graphs or tables and is again subjected to statistical analysis. In the introduction to the *Routledge Reader on the sociology of Music*, John Shepherd and Kyle Devine note how, in many cases, scholarship related to the social aspects of musical culture has in fact focused more on the music itself, and on the analysis of sounds in a scientific context. For Shepherd and Devine, however, music is understood as ‘a social phenomenon that is always the product of specific and concrete instances of human interaction’. ‘More precisely,’ they continue, ‘we understand music not simply to be the sounds of music (which is how “music” as a social phenomenon itself comes to be reified) but to be the interaction between individual subjects as constituted through human interaction and the sounds that they recognize as music’. Here, then, music is viewed as an experience rather than a thing. In light of this, Shepherd and Devine call for scholars to discuss music within the context of human interaction and, as such, explore the people and societies who create the musical sounds. What do these sounds mean to their creators? How are

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40 Ibid.


42 Ibid.
they used in everyday life? The concept of ethnography has of course been central to ethnomusicological enquiry since the demise of the more laboratory-based comparative musicology, but I remain mindful of Shepherd and Devine’s assertions that music is about the people who make it, and my frequent references to interviews and participant-observations will demonstrate as such.

Whilst drawing from the ethnographic toolkit has enhanced my research process, it has also presented a series of challenges. For Bruno Nettl, the primary objective for any musical ethnographer is to ‘get a picture, as much of a panoramic picture as you can, of the culture of the society in which you’re a guest, and about the way music interacts with the rest of that culture’.43 Yet this task involves grappling with issues related to representation and interpretation, as we attempt to piece together a narrative that constitutes a balanced account of the activities of the culture in question. Whilst my inclusion of case studies has allowed me to focus intensely on specific aspects of British amateur choral culture, I have also wanted to demonstrate broader trends or indeed acknowledge dramatic differences. For this reason, I sometimes refer to other ensembles or individuals in addition to the named choirs featured as my main case studies. If, for instance, my focus is directed towards the activities of one particular political choir, I identify and briefly investigate other groups that follow similar patterns or have embarked on related projects. In each example, I also contextualise the choir in question with reference to its line of ancestry and the circumstances in which this particular type of ensemble originated and evolved, as well as giving an overview of the kind of network within which it might now operate. This is to provide the bigger picture to which Nettl refers.

A further objective of this investigation is to ensure that perspectives from both the appropriators and the appropriated – or givers and receivers – have been represented. To this end, I sought out the opinions of South African musicians and community members themselves. How might they respond to groups of white British singers performing their music? How do they react to these foreign singers entering their communities or homes? My strong relationship with the organisation Village Harmony has presented me with opportunities to conduct fieldwork for this study in Cape Town and Johannesburg. My participation in a singing camp in Cape Town in August 2013 not only presented opportunities for in-depth participant-observation, but also introduced me to a large number of black South African musicians belonging to a diverse range of choirs. By pursuing some of these contacts, I was able to conduct useful interviews both in the field and at home, and I have maintained regular contact with at least four of the participants throughout my study. These individuals are Matlakala Bopape, Bongani Magatayana, Thomas Mamabolo and Rose (surname withheld). Whilst I acknowledge that the responses provided by these South African musicians may have been influenced by a series of personal and professional factors, they have none-the-less supplied this thesis with some useful contextual information.

As Timothy Cooley has noted, ‘cross-cultural fieldwork is now and has always been about the politics of power and access – access to experience and to information.’ During my own fieldwork I had to grapple with these access-related issues, and so collecting data and organising interviews was not always straightforward. Being a white British citizen with a camera, notebook and voice recorder, I (together with my fellow campers) was not always received enthusiastically by community members. Attending choir rehearsals and gatherings held in townships was therefore sometimes difficult.

Some participants suspected that we might be observing and recording their musical activities for commercial purposes that might ultimately exploit them. Others thought we were acting as spies for rival groups and were listening to rehearsals in order to steal information and ideas. There were, of course, many occasions on which we were warmly received and I was invited to ask for as many details as I required. When considering all of the data I obtained from informants, though, I have remained mindful of the concept of partial truths, particularly where the feedback of South Africans on performances given by Westerners is concerned. As will become increasingly apparent, receptions of performances have, on the whole, been positive and culture-bearers have commented on the benefits of British singers engaging with their music. These assessments can, of course, be treated as celebratory interpretations of cultural appropriation and global interconnectedness, but some critical discussion must still take place. Firstly, many of the informants referred in their interviews to performances in which I had been involved. This fact might have influenced how these individuals spoke about such events: a degree of politeness might have been present, and therefore assessments must be contextualised according to this relationship. Moreover, the politics of space (which I discuss in more detail in chapters four and five) must be taken into account when analysing these interviews. How do informants really feel about white British or American singers entering their communities and singing their songs? This question is borne in mind when considering the responses of my informants.

On a more personal note, my overall research process has been affected to some extent by my visual impairment. For much of my fieldwork, I was accompanied by an assistant who acted as a note-taker and, on occasion, a describer. Some of the findings I discuss and analyse have therefore been filtered through the descriptions and interpretations of this extra visual aid. My assistants all share aspects of my own cultural sphere: they are all Caucasian middle-class adults with some connection to university
education. Their musical backgrounds and experiences, however, have been varied. Whereas some assistants are acquainted academically with ethnomusicology, others have emerged from a more conventional musicological background. Some have received no formal musical education but have been involved in amateur singing groups and/or natural-voice-style events. The ways in which situations were described, therefore, differed depending on the assistant present. On other occasions, I observed events and watched videos from an entirely audio perspective, which inevitably affected the nature of the information gathered. The dominance of vision within knowledge production has been identified and discussed by Michael Bull and Les Back in the introduction to The Auditory Culture Reader: ‘In the hierarchy of the senses, the epistemological status of hearing has come a poor second to that of vision.’45 The authors argue that experiencing aspects of the world through vision is ‘fundamentally different’ from exploring them through sound.46 Given that my ethnography draws on experiences of both an audio and visual nature, it will be useful to bear Bull and Back’s observations in mind. Finally, then, whilst its data is not derived wholly from sound, I hope that my study goes some way towards countering the visually-dominated nature of knowledge production that is critiqued in Bull and Back’s volume.

Issues and Concepts

As Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley observe in the introduction to their volume Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology, ‘Ethnomusicology enjoys the advantages of being an inherently interdisciplinary discipline, seemingly in a perpetual state of experimentation that gains strength from a

46 Ibid.
diversity and plurality of approaches’. Throughout my study, I revel in the advantages of knocking on this interdisciplinary door by engaging with numerous theoretical frameworks and discussions straddling different, though related fields in order to lend both explanatory and analytical power to my observations. As I explore in greater depth the different levels of attraction that come into play when discussing the travels and appropriations of black South African choral music, a number of issues emerge. Caroline Bithell has noted that, whilst ‘music might seem to travel of its own accord … it does not follow a straight, obvious, and uneventful path’. As with most journeys, things occur along the way and there are often diversions and obstacles to overcome. I investigate the nature of these diversions and obstacles within the contexts of collecting, transmitting and performing black South African choral music. This involves exploring issues that gather under the umbrella of the politics of access and encounter. These politics present themselves in the form of debates surrounding such areas as cultural and musical representation, authority, authenticity, ownership and power relations. I also address problems of translation, which are inevitably present in any form of cross-cultural teaching and learning. More real-time concerns will emerge when we follow the journeys of those who have travelled to South Africa to work with local culture bearers. Here we will engage with critical discussions surrounding the tourist experience as we explore Ulf Hannerz’s concept of tourists as cosmopolitans who ‘tend to want to immerse themselves in other cultures … [where] they want to be participants’. In these contexts, we will encounter ethical dilemmas, as well as some of the more hidden underlying tensions that might limit guests’ access to certain communities or social spaces. By drawing on specific

48 Bithell, A Different Voice, 165.
examples, I consider some of the ways in which these many related issues have been approached and interpreted by British teachers and performers, and explore how different levels of engagement and encounter have affected their relevance and importance for these individuals. In so doing, I offer new perspectives on existing critical discussions surrounding cultural appropriation by identifying alternative avenues for examining and theorising intercultural encounters through the postcolonial lens. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, in the introduction to their edited volume *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in World Music*, present a critical examination of some of the current debates surrounding the connected processes of globalisation and cultural appropriation. Here I highlight some key areas of these debates that will emerge as points of critical concern within my own study.

Ethnomusicology has been the subject of much critical reassessment over the past forty years. As Mark Slobin has pointed out, the 1960s saw ethnomusicologists begin to question the notion that the study of world musics involved the consideration of only three types of music outside the Western classical tradition: oriental, folk and primitive. This change in direction was prompted by several key developments, two of which I want to pinpoint here. Firstly, what Stephen Feld terms the ‘total portability, transportability, and transmutability of any and all sonic environments’ started forcing scholars to become more attuned to the idea that global cultural flow was not a mere trickle but a near torrent. In light of this, it was becoming ever more necessary to view ‘local scenes as

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inseparable from a media-driven internal fantasy life that takes people’s minds far from native grounds’.  

A further contributor to this critical turn within the discipline came in the 1970s with the emergence of post-colonial theory and the 1978 publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. As Stuart Hall observes, this area of study casts doubt over the once seemingly clear-cut distinction between the ‘west and the rest’. For Said, Orientalism is a term used to define the academic study of the East but, as he explains, colonialism acquires a broad spectrum of imaginaries. The Orient was essentially a European invention and, since Antiquity, had been a place of ‘romance, exotic beings, and haunting landscapes’. Orientalism was, therefore, ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient”, and (most of the time) “Occident”’. Within this mode of separation, Said observes ‘deep and recurring images of the other’ which he believes have led to the construction of a barrier between the West, ‘us’, and the Orient, ‘them’.

It is both the acceleration of globalisation and Said’s call for a critical examination of the ‘us and them’ dichotomy that have contributed to changes in approach for Euro-American ethnomusicologists. These changes have resulted in a process of division, which in turn has led to the emergence of two contrasting schools of thought. On the one hand, there are scholars who have identified the negative effects of the legacy of

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56 Ibid., 2.
57 Ibid., 1.
58 Ibid.
colonialism and have observed how these effects continue to impact heavily on the discipline and society in general. They have not only begun to challenge the representational practices of past ethnographers, but they have also associated contemporary manifestations of global cultural flows with ‘asymmetrical power relations and concomitant processes of marginalisation and denigration’. As such, Western consumers are often portrayed as the pantomime villains, thieving magpies, and other greedy and manipulative characters. In the introduction to her article ‘Appropriating the Didjeridu and the Sweat Lodge: New Age Baddies and Indigenous Victims’ – whose title alone is highly suggestive of these negative analogies – Christina Welch writes:

Cultural appropriation can be said to occur when members of one culture take the cultural practices of another as if their own, or as if the right of possession should not be questioned or contested.60

Tullia Magrini comments on the ways in which commodifications of non-western musics have led to a ‘loss in referentiality’.61 She argues that, as musical sounds become detached from their original sources, ‘many musics that were basically colloquial and connected with specific forms of social interaction are now used to fuel the production of musical commodities conceived for one-way communication’.62 In the same discussion, Magrini refers to ‘the western cannibalism of musical otherness’.63 These observations contribute to her primary concern: ‘The possibility of making music as a basic form of being human and experiencing the world, of thinking in sound and giving form to thought

59 Born and Hesmondhalgh, Western Music and Its Others, 5.
61 Magrini, ‘From Music-Makers to Virtual Singers’, 322.
62 Ibid., 323.
63 Ibid.
through the body, of working out and sharing experience within a social group’ becomes lost.64

The negative consequences of ‘schizophonia’, the concept employed by Feld to refer to the decontextualisation of musical sounds, have been thoroughly explored in relation to the popular music industry. Commercial artists and record companies who have appropriated the sounds of non-western cultures and employed the services of musicians from beyond their own national borders have often been accused of exploitation and involvement in projects of a neo-colonial nature. Furthermore, their uses of these alternative sonic landscapes have been regarded as strategies to revitalise and/or exoticize their own careers. It is of note, particularly due to the nature of my own study, that the majority of criticism has been aimed at those artists who have appropriated so-called black musics or who have collaborated in some way with non-western black musicians. Issues of power and representation take on a new urgency as projects often become entangled with racial politics, both past and present. David Locke discusses the tensions associated with white musicians performing black musical traditions, with a particular focus on the African-inspired ensemble in the United States. He maintains that whilst the study and performance of this music might appear to be ‘an apolitical activity that is focused on making good music, learning about unfamiliar music-cultures, and fostering international good will ... global relations of power and issues of social justice simmer beneath the optimistic humanistic surface’.65 This additional political baggage is recognised and approached in many of the examples of transmission and performance contained in my own study. Here, too, South Africa’s turbulent social and political history

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64 Ibid.

can affect the ways in which issues concerning authenticity and performance practice are negotiated.

Alternative interpretations of Said’s study have led to more celebratory accounts of globalisation and appropriation. Scholars belonging to this school of thought have perceived the us/them barrier as something to be transcended and have concentrated on the ways in which global cultural flows can aid this process. Writing in the mid-1960s, Marshall McLuhan introduced the concept of a ‘global village’, an image denoting connectedness and communality. In a similar vein, sociologist Brian Fay describes human history as a ‘bazaar, a crossroads in which … skills and resources are traded, stolen, improved upon [and] passed along to others.’ Other scholars, such as Dean MacCannell, have emphasised the benefits of cultural appropriation for both hosts and guests. Cases in which borrowers become preservers or revivalists of dying traditions have also been highlighted. Moreover, the ways in which movement across borders and boundaries can enhance intercultural understanding, bridge social and racial divides, and dismantle established hierarchies have been increasingly recognised. In the chapters that follow we will discover how, in some contexts, aspects of learning and performing black South African choral music can help to raise awareness of social and political situations in South Africa itself, as well as stimulate processes of musical revival and/or preservation.

The idea that processes of globalisation can create a sense of disillusionment and lead to a loss of cultural identity has also been challenged by some scholars. Referring to

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69 See, for example, Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
his fieldwork in Nigeria, anthropologist Ulf Hannerz explains how ‘the people in my favorite Nigerian town drink coca cola, but they drink burukutu too; and they can watch Charlie’s Angels as well as Hausa drummers on the television sets which spread rapidly as soon as electricity arrived’. Through these observations, Hannerz is highlighting the many opportunities for interaction that globalisation can present, whilst simultaneously demonstrating that cultural heritage and individuality can still be maintained. He continues: ‘My sense is that the world system, rather than creating massive cultural homogeneity on a global scale, is replacing one diversity with another and the new diversity is based relatively more on interrelations and less on autonomy’. Such perceptions relate strongly to critical discussions surrounding identity, a concept which, over the past thirty years, has attracted considerable academic attention. Writing in the early 1990s, Stuart Hall called for a re-examination of discourses and definitions concerning identity constructions. For Hall, the idea of inheriting a fixed and monolithic identity has been superseded by the possibility of forming many different identities that draw inspiration from an unlimited catalogue of histories, languages and cultures. He therefore views identity as ‘a process of becoming rather than being’. It is not so much about ‘who we are or where we came from, [but rather] what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves’. These celebratory responses to global mobility are influenced greatly by that area of postmodernist thought that advocates pastiche and bricolage and rejects the concept of the master narrative. This willingness to embrace diversity is pertinent to many of the

71 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
discussions that follow. We will see how some choir members and leaders reject ideas that authenticity can be achieved by following strict sets of rules. For them, there is no clear-cut right and wrong and they accept that even in more bounded, local contexts songs may have developed multiple functions and meanings. They are concerned more with the opportunities offered by recontextualisation and with finding ways of connecting songs to their own concerns, ideologies, emotions and beliefs. These interpretations are explored in depth in chapters three and four.

To which school of thought, then, does my study belong? The answer is neither. It intentionally roams between the two, in an attempt to aid the construction of a third school that encourages a more nuanced approach. In his 1996 volume *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, Ulf Hannerz argues that debates surrounding globalisation should not be split so neatly into two contrasting groups: ‘It would seem to me that contemporary interconnectedness in the world is really too complicated and diverse to be either condemned or applauded as a whole. Different aspects of it may quite justifiably draw different responses’.  

74 Timothy Taylor, speaking to the same theme, reflects: ‘What is usually needed in such arguments is more ethnographic data to explain what happens in specific places and historical moments. Gathering more information with respect to globalization demonstrates both sides are right, sometimes.’  

75 Within the context of cultural appropriation, Steven Feld identifies what we might view as two ends of a continuum (rather than two sides of a coin), thus offering a broad middle ground. For Feld:

> Musical appropriation sings a double line with one voice. It is a melody of admiration, even homage and respect, a fundamental source of connectedness, creativity, and innovation. This

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we locate in a discourse of ‘roots,’ of reproducing and expanding ‘the tradition.’ Yet this voice is harmonized by a countermelody of power, even control and domination, a fundamental source of asymmetry in ownership and commodification of musical works. This we locate in a discourse of ‘rip-offs,’ of reproducing ‘the hegemonic’. 76

Within this triad of scholarly observations is the recurring insistence that cases of globalisation should be treated individually and discussed in relation to their specific contexts. My study, then, responds to this plea. By investigating a field of cultural appropriation that encourages active participation through teaching, learning and performing, I demonstrate that a wholly one-sided stance cannot be taken. On some occasions, teachers and learners might forget or discard the need to carry out appropriate research concerning the cultural context of a song. This, as we shall see in chapters three and four, can result in music being introduced and performed in ways that are simply too far removed from their original settings and purposes. At other times, though, performances of black South African songs within British amateur singing circles present more celebratory examples of racial equality, global interconnectedness and a transcendence of the us/them barrier. Such performances (like Frances Bernstein’s Sing Freedom) often contribute to music revival initiatives in South Africa in unexpected ways, which in turn can create profound cross-cultural connections with South African people and communities. 77

There are few full-length ethnographic studies that explore the appropriations of a specific culture from multiple standpoints, particularly within the context of active participation. In fact, full-length studies that opt for this more nuanced approach to appropriation are not common within the academy in general. There are, though, some

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77 Bernstein’s project is discussed in chapter 4.
notable exceptions. A fitting role model for my own study is Mirjana Lausevic’s 2007 ethnography *Balkan Fascination: Creating an Alternative Music Culture in America*. This study was born from Lausevic’s realisation that the majority of those who participated in Balkan folk singing and dancing in North America had no ethnic ties to Balkan countries and were actually WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants).78 My study shares a similar objective: it focuses on a specific appropriated musical tradition and explores some of the functions this tradition has acquired in its new homes. In the introduction to her volume, Lausevic explains that it is not her intention to ‘evaluate or judge performance practices of Balkan musical material within its transnational settings’, and her stance could be perceived as primarily celebratory.79 Whilst the musical activities of the groups and individuals featured in my study are by no means judged, there is some degree of evaluation. I want to explore moments of both celebration and complication as I investigate processes of cross-cultural teaching, learning and performing within different choral contexts. Ted Solís’s *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles* (2004) comes closer to this more nuanced school of thought. The contributors to this volume consider both the pleasures and problems of maintaining and participating in a world music ensemble. Discussions surrounding authenticity and cultural authority, which are embarked upon by all contributors to this volume in some shape or form, have presented some useful guidelines and provided scope for extending and reassessing debates that have come to light in my own study. Michelle Kisliuk and Kelly Gross, in their chapter concerning the cross-cultural teaching and learning of BaAka music and dance, highlight some particularly relevant issues associated with recontextualisation, a process which is examined critically in the third chapter of my own thesis. Yet whilst Solis’s volume contributes significantly


79 Ibid, 7.
to the theorisation and conceptualisation of cross-cultural transmission from both a
teaching and learning perspective, it is focused mainly on instrumental musics and
ensembles in American universities. By turning my attention to more community-based
musical activities, predominantly from the perspective of the British Isles, I demonstrate
how its featured discussions can be applied and extended to other cases in which cultural
appropriation through active participation occurs.

A more recent contribution to the study of appropriation through active
participation has been made by Jochen Eisentraut, with his 2013 volume *The Accessibility
of Music: Participation, Reception, and Contact*. Drawing on a diverse range of case
studies, Eisentraut explores how and why certain groups of people become attracted to
certain musical styles, and discovers the different ways in which such attractions might
be pursued. Particularly useful is his investigation of Samba groups in Wales. Here he
discusses how groups and individuals, many of whom have no ethnic connections with
Samba, have encountered this musical culture. He also discusses different repertoires and
how they are disseminated, and he explores issues surrounding representation. His study,
then, is in some respects quite similar to my own, but I have focused more on different
modes of teaching and learning and have sought to investigate the different kinds of
challenges and opportunities that such processes have presented.

When we come to examine the attractive powers of black South African choral
music from teaching, learning and performing perspectives, an additional set of themes
and ideas will be unearthed. We will hear how, for many singers, performing South
African material helps to conjure certain images and induce certain states of mind. I
discuss such responses in relation to analytical frameworks presented in discourses
surrounding music and emotion. Of particular relevance is Thomas Turino’s exploration
of musical icons. Turino writes: ‘The most basic type of iconic process is the grouping of
phenomena because of some type of resemblance’. Throughout the interviews I conducted with choir members, there were often discussions about certain aspects of South African vocal music that triggered memories or points of nostalgia. Such memories and landscapes were sometimes constructed from real experiences, but on other occasions they were fictional and idealised. I identify these icons and explore why they have stimulated moments of resemblance and nostalgia. As Turino points out, certain iconic signs within a piece of music may not have been created intentionally and are instead born from the imagination of the consumer. He elaborates: ‘Kettle drums will probably not suggest the rumble of a subway to a listener who has no experience with subways, but this connection may be the first thing that comes to mind for a daily subway commuter.’ This prompts discussions concerning schizophonia and identity as we discover how musics can acquire new functions and meanings as they travel through the minds and experiences of singers of differing social backgrounds.

A related set of ideas is articulated by Tia DeNora in her ethnography *Music in Everyday Life*. This study seeks to identify music’s function beyond the realm of ‘decorative art’, and posits ideas concerning its role as a ‘device of collective ordering’. For DeNora, music is a device of ‘emotional, biographical, and corporeal regulation’ and has therefore acquired agency in the production and scheduling of our daily lives on account of its connotations to which we have become entrained. Included in the study are cases that exemplify music’s function as a strong mediator of ‘social ordering on a collective and collaborative level’. This type of entrainment provides a useful starting

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 7.
84 Ibid., 110.
85 Ibid.
point for analysing the political significance of South African songs within certain pockets of the British amateur choral sphere. These emotional and political connections will again prompt us to revisit central themes of re-contextualisation, identity and postmodernism.

**Planning the Journey**

Chapters two and three of this thesis examine processes of collection, transportation and transmission, with particular attention paid to the role of intermediaries in the dissemination of black South African choral music. Chapter two focuses primarily on those groups and individuals who have collected songs and created resources that facilitate the teaching and learning of this music. What has been assembled and by whom? By drawing on a set of case studies, I explore the ideologies and motivations underpinning different song-coll. ecting projects, and discuss how these factors can affect and influence the types of material that is gathered. Projects are discussed in relation to issues surrounding representation and interpretation as we discover how resources are presented for teaching and learning purposes and explore how songs are classified and contextualised. Some of the more specific challenges that are presented when collecting songs in South Africa are also discussed, and we will see how these complexities can affect how resources are presented. By the end of this chapter, the reader will begin to understand how and why certain groups of black South African songs have travelled to British amateur singers, and will have become familiar with the growing catalogue of resources that is available for teachers and learners.

Chapter three explores British singers’ rehearsals of black South African choral music within different teaching and learning environments. I turn to a more in-depth discussion of a selection of the written and electronic songbooks encountered in chapter two, and I investigate how the advice they offer with regard to teaching the songs is
interpreted by different musical directors. In addition, I follow the journeys of those individuals who have chosen to teach South African songs directly to their choirs and ensembles, exploring why they have chosen to teach these materials and identifying some of the challenges they have encountered during this face-to-face rehearsal process. Issues surrounding authenticity, cultural authority, translation and recontextualisation are addressed as we explore various approaches to pronunciation, sound production, physical movement and more. The differing levels of teaching experience and cross-cultural encounter that these transmitters can provide are also examined critically. How, for instance, might a workshop led by a black South African musician differ from that conducted by a British choir leader with no African connection? Finally in this chapter we hear from the choir members themselves, as we explore how songs are absorbed and interpreted from the perspectives of learners. What sorts of challenges and responsibilities are faced by learners? To what extent does the learning of South African songs differ from that of other world songs?

Chapter four focuses on performance and reception. Having familiarised the reader with the core repertoire and how it may be taught, I explore where and when it is heard, and by whom. By considering the activities and responses of both participants and audiences, I explore some of the many contexts in which South African songs are performed within British amateur singing circles and discuss the different kinds of emotional landscapes these songs might conjure. In addition to examining the moment of performance and discussing relationships between songs, participants and audiences, I also investigate some of the different types of cross-cultural encounter and connections such performances can initiate. Issues related to the politics of access and encounter are again pertinent to this chapter. As we consider some of the different contexts in which songs are performed, we will begin to develop an understanding of the sorts of adaptations
and decisions, both musical and non-musical, that must be made as songs are moulded to fit their new environments.

In chapter five I focus on tangible and more in-depth cross-cultural encounters by exploring the activities of those British singers who have travelled to South Africa to learn from local culture bearers. We follow their stories as they plan their journeys, enter into new communities, meet new people, and learn and perform in new places. What additional experiences do these travellers acquire, and what challenges do they encounter? How does this influence the ways in which they approach South African singing back home? Finally, how can these journeys help to create long-lasting, cross-cultural partnerships, and what are the issues surrounding their maintenance? In this chapter material is discussed particularly in relation to theoretical debates surrounding the tourist industry as we examine the dynamics of the interactions that occur between host and guest communities.

My Conclusion takes the form of a reflective evaluation. It brings together the various strands of my research, summarising some of the main issues that are associated with the transmission and performance of black South African choral music in the British amateur singing sphere. I also propose ideas for further study and show how my methodology provides fresh perspectives on ethnomusicological and anthropological debates about cultural appropriation.
Chapter 2

South African Choral Music in Transit: Collection and Presentation

This chapter explores the development of a key body of resources that has facilitated the teaching of black South African choral music within British amateur singing circles. By drawing on a set of representative examples, it examines critically not only the content and presentation of specific teaching aids, but also the advice and information these resources disseminate to their users. I have chosen these examples because of their relationships with the choirs featured in my study. These resources have been mentioned regularly in interviews I have conducted and have served as the primary teaching and learning aids for the singers encountered in later chapters. Whilst the musical travels and activities of teachers and performers are constantly contributing to the expansion and musical diversity of this pool of teaching materials, there are sets of more rooted themes, styles and ideologies that continue to guide its development. As such, there are a number of songs that, through this body of resources, have become particularly popular among amateur singers of differing social and musical backgrounds, and these will also be identified as the chapter unfolds.

The songs themselves, though, are not the protagonists in this discussion. Whilst some consideration is given to their structures and themes, their more specific connections with choirs and performance will be explored in greater depth in future chapters. It is the routes by which songs have travelled to British singing groups that are particularly important to this chapter. Simone Krüger and Ruxandra Trandafoiu have explained how, in the case of many journeys, ‘the road is often more important than the
destination’, an idea that informs my own analysis here.\textsuperscript{86} Examining the inventories of song collectors and their published collections is a starting point for observing how repertoires of favourites have emerged, but tracing the developmental histories of these inventories is even more informative. This can reveal how and why songs were collected, and how they have been transported to British amateur singing groups. It is the collectors, then, who are the principal focus of this chapter, along with the primary motivations and ideologies underpinning the creation of their teaching resources. In addition, their roles as cultural go-betweens, ambassadors and advice bureaux are investigated and discussed in relation to debates surrounding cultural authority, authenticity, and the politics of access and encounter more broadly.

In chapter one we encountered Caroline Bithell’s observation that music does not travel via a ‘straight, obvious and uneventful path’, and does not arrive quietly at its destination.\textsuperscript{87} This applies strongly to the songs whose journeys I discuss here. Whilst travelling from South Africa to Britain, they have inevitably faced a series of obstacles and diversions, and often arrive in their new homes with different meanings, styles and functions as they are prepared for transmission in different teaching and learning environments. Again, it is their collectors who have usually facilitated these adaptations and, when dilemmas have arisen, have acted as the principal decision-makers.

In \textit{The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts}, Bruno Nettl identifies some of the primary challenges attached to ethnographic study (as alluded to briefly in chapter one). For Nettl, it is the ‘interpretative character’ of ethnography that presents the most difficulty. After conducting fieldwork in a culture of which he/she is usually a guest, the ethnographer must ‘interpret all this material … in ways that on the


\textsuperscript{87} Bithell, \textit{A Different Voice}, 165.
one hand do not violate the culture’s own perspective and on the other still communicate something meaningful to the society that is your audience.\textsuperscript{88} Although not trained ethnomusicologists, the collectors I discuss share with ethnographers the fact that their projects have involved some degree of fieldwork, and this has resulted in materials whose meaning must be translated for a new audience. On some occasions collectors have travelled to South Africa where, as cultural outsiders, they have gathered material by interacting directly with local communities. Others have compiled collections closer to home, in this case interacting with South African culture-bearers who have made the journey out of South Africa to a new home. Yet despite these different approaches, the challenges faced during the presentation of materials are much the same. All of the collectors have undertaken the task of interpretation. When songs are gathered, how are they grouped together and how are they described? Do these groupings with their accompanying information constitute a well-balanced representation of the culture of origin, or have certain aspects been emphasised or ignored? How can the songs be presented in ways that will speak to their new target audiences, and to what extent do these styles of presentation contradict the usual habits of the songs’ home cultures?

Numerous factors affect how presentational decisions are made. Both the personal and professional backgrounds of collectors can influence the rationale and methodology behind the gathering of the material, the types of songs acquired, and approaches to visual and audio presentation. The dynamics of decision-making can also be considered in relation to Thomas Turino’s model for explaining the success of worldbeat artists.\textsuperscript{89} Locating material with a melange of foreign and familiar sounds and assembling songs with strong messages of liberatory politics can sometimes be a concern for collectors.

\textsuperscript{88} Nettl, \textit{The Study of Ethnomusicology}, 233.

\textsuperscript{89} Turino, \textit{Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music}, 338.
Equally relevant is Immanuel Kant’s notion of the aesthetic community, described by Erlmann as a community ‘that forms and undoes itself on the basis of taste’. In South Africa, certain social and political climates can often influence the types of songs that are performed and, on some occasions, one song might be particularly popular or anthemic. In collectors’ home cultures, specific communities or indeed pockets of choral activity might enjoy certain types of songs at certain times, and this clearly influences the collection and presentation of material.

Processes of decision-making must also be considered in relation to the more general circumstances that have surrounded the projects of collectors featured in this chapter. Just as the groups and individuals I discuss are not trained ethnomusicologists, the majority are also not qualified specifically as song collectors. For figures such as Cecil Sharp, collecting and analysing vocal material was a planned long-term project. Sharp set out with a specific agenda of what he wanted to achieve, and had strong ideas concerning how he would go about this. Moreover, he produced numerous publications that were devoted entirely to the songs he had collected. For some of the protagonists in this chapter, however, the process of collecting has been much less thought out. Quite often, individuals have found themselves gathering material unexpectedly and sometimes accidentally during an excursion or project with no explicit connection to song collecting. People have simply been inspired to record and transcribe material and have produced only one or two resources devoted to this music. Perhaps, then, we might view these cultural go-betweens as pseudo-collectors: they are not collectors by trade but they are participating in a task of collecting. This in itself can affect the ways in which decisions are made.

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The types of resource I discuss fall into three categories: paper, electronic and human. ‘Paper’ describes teaching aids whose instructions are communicated predominantly on the page. SATB parts are usually presented in Western musical notation and written guides concerning cultural context, pronunciation and performance practice are provided. Whilst in some cases sound recordings are available to enhance the teaching and learning experience, it is possible to use these resources without such additions. ‘Electronic’ refers to material whose information is presented primarily through audio-visual technology. Instructions are presented in the form of teaching CDs and DVDs, which contain detailed part-by-part recordings, audio pronunciation guides and videos of complete performances. Whilst these items are sometimes supplemented by paper booklets that may contain some notations or written information, they are usually designed to be used as independent paperless resources. ‘Human transmission’ denotes the kind of face-to-face learning that takes place in singing residential, festivals, protests and other related gatherings. Here groups and individuals provide information concerning how the music should or might sound, but they also share memories and experiences of how a specific performance played out. My exploration of the different teaching and learning opportunities presented by this trio of presentational styles will undergo further critical and theoretical elaboration in the next chapter, where I discuss the ways in which teaching resources have influenced the pedagogical approaches of individual choir leaders.

The examples I present here are discussed chronologically. Not only does this offer structural coherence, but it also allows us to identify how certain trends developed, and how specific groups and individuals built on previous ideas to form new approaches and presentational styles.
Pete Seeger and Choral Folksongs from South Africa

The songbook *Choral Folksongs from South Africa* constitutes the earliest example of teaching resources used by the British choirs I have encountered. First published by G. Schirmer in 1960, the volume was compiled by the American folksinger Pete Seeger, with later editions edited by the New York-based choral director Robert De Cormier. It may initially seem curious that British amateur singers have become acquainted with this US teaching resource but, as we will discover in chapter three, the volume is in fact one of several overseas publications that have been consulted extensively during the cross-cultural teaching and learning of black South African choral pieces in Britain. Chapell and Co. had, in fact, produced a British edition of the volume in 1960. This is now out of print but De Cormier’s 2009 edition is now often used by British choirs. Not only have certain songs become favourites among choir and workshop leaders, but Seeger’s presentational and representational methods have also influenced the construction of subsequent teaching materials.

As its title suggests, Seeger’s songbook has a strong folky flavour, which is emphasised primarily by its bias towards songs that are used to accompany aspects of daily life and that are supposedly performed by rural communities. There are examples of lullabies, work songs, songs to accompany certain ceremonies, and wedding songs (see Figure 2.1). Interestingly, the wedding song section contains the most pieces. It is unclear whether or not this was specifically intended: Seeger may have wished to indicate a preference for these songs, but it is more likely that his choice was dictated by the source on which he drew. The songs were not initially collected by Seeger himself. They were taken from a songbook he had encountered during his research into South African vocal

music more generally, which itself was inspired by his own burgeoning career as a folk singer.

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**Figure 2.1. Contents page from De Cormier’s 2009 edition of *Choral Songs from South Africa***
Son of the influential musicologist Charles Seeger, Pete Seeger had a productive international career as both a folksong leader and a social activist. In the late 1930s he encountered Woody Guthrie, Aunt Mollie Jackson and Lead Belly, musicians with whom he helped to sow the seeds of a folk music revival that would spread throughout 1950s and 1960s America. Not only was Seeger attracted to the musicianship of this group of folk giants, but he was also captivated by the political nature of their songs. He soon became a figurehead of the topical folksong, writing lyrics containing satire and social commentary. He also spread political messages by encouraging audience participation in his concerts. Often Seeger would either teach his audiences a simple song or encourage them to sing along with a song that was already well-known. The idea of collective music-making was undoubtedly a contributing factor to Seeger’s passion for South African vocal music.

It was the American song collector and folklorist Alan Lomax who, in the late 1940s, first acquainted Seeger with South African vocal music. Lomax presented him with numerous commercial recordings from South Africa, including ‘Mbube’, a song recorded by the young Zulu singer and herdsman Solomon Linda and his group The Evening Birds in 1939. Mishearing the repeated chant of ‘mbube’ as ‘wimoweh’, Seeger transcribed this song and recorded it in 1952 with his folk group The Weavers. ‘Wimoweh’ then topped the charts and soon became an international hit, subsequently

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid,
96 Choral Folk Songs, Seeger, ii.
giving rise to many cover versions. The most famous of these was ‘The Lion Sleeps Tonight’, recorded by The Tokens in 1961.\textsuperscript{99} This is the version that appeared in the 1994 movie \textit{The Lion King}, and it is most probably on account of the \textit{Lion King} that many young people today are familiar with the song, whereas older generations (including many of the choir members encountered in this study) are more likely to be familiar with the versions by Seeger and/or The Tokens. Seeger would often perform ‘Wimoweh’ in concerts to encourage audience participation: he would teach each part in turn and conduct with hand signals to help people sing along. Numerous audio and visual examples of Seeger teaching the parts to audiences are available, and the infectious joy he brings to the piece is strongly evident.\textsuperscript{100}

Stimulated by the success of ‘Wimoweh’, Seeger began searching for more South African vocal music to transcribe and record. In 1950s New York, this music, as in the rest of Europe and America, was particularly difficult to locate. According to Seeger, ‘there seemed to be only two South Africans in all of New York City in 1952’.\textsuperscript{101} These were Professor Z. K. Mathews and his wife, both of whom were based at the Union Theological Seminary. The fact that Seeger faced problems with researching South African vocal music is unsurprising. Censorship laws enforced by the apartheid government meant that black South African artists were prevented from gaining any international exposure and, although some jazz-infused styles such as \textit{marabi} had filtered through to the United States, choral genres and rural folk music were virtually unknown. Mrs Mathews encouraged Seeger to listen to village songs and presented him with a songbook from St Matthews College in Cape Town Province, South Africa. It was this songbook that formed the basis of \textit{Choral Folksongs from South Africa}.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} See, for example, Pete Seeger, ‘Wimoweh’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7XjzqPZJDc (accessed 1 July 2015).
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Choral Folk Songs}, Seeger, ii.
Seeger reproduced this songbook’s material, choosing to transcribe it in standard Western staff notation (the original songbook was in Tonic Sol-fa). He scores each piece for multipart ensemble (see example in Figure 2.2) and chord symbols are sometimes included to provide the option for instrumental accompaniment. Further musical indicators such as dynamic markings are also frequently provided. Some tempo descriptors are included in the De Cormier edition but these are not found in earlier editions. All songs feature introductory notes that provide some cultural context and, where it is deemed necessary, information concerning performance practice (see Figure 2.3 for an example). The introduction to the De Cormier edition contains a written pronunciation guide which, by employing examples of Anglophone words, attempts to inform the reader how certain vowels and consonants should be pronounced in Zulu and Xhosa: ‘ph as in peanut, not phone’, for example. Instructions for producing click sounds are given in a similar vein: ‘X = Sideways click (as in spurring a horse)’.\textsuperscript{102} The songbook does not include any audio material to help with part learning and the visual presentation requires users to be familiar with Western notation. In 1955, however, Seeger recorded ten of the songs for Folkways Records with a group of American teenagers known as the Song Swappers and this can be purchased separately.\textsuperscript{103} The recording could, in fact, serve as a teaching resource in its own right. Although vocal parts are not isolated on the audio, the liner notes contain some handwritten transcriptions that could aid teaching and learning (see Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5). Furthermore, listening to the recording could influence approaches to pronunciation and vocal production.

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\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., iv.
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Figure 2.2. Example of transcription from Seeger’s *Choral Songs from South Africa* (2009).
12. BABEVUYA

Wedding Song

It is customary for the bride to only show sadness during the wedding ceremony. When her party is ready to depart for the wedding, this song is sung to express this ceremonial sadness. It asserts that they were glad and rejoiced when the bridegroom brought the dowry, but today they are full of sadness... sadness like the bitterness of aloes.

A literal translation of the words would be: They were jolly, they were singing and making music, but today the fist is sounding (as in fighting). Sons of my father, sons of my father, today the fist is sounding.

How can this possibly be translated so that all the original meaning is clear to non-Africans? Obviously the solution is to sing the original words, which are quite simple, and enjoy the song for its fine melody, rich harmony, and interesting counter-rhythms. The basses sing in 3/4 time while the others sing in 6/8 time. You may want to try an accompaniment in 12/8 time, which will rhythmically result in a “two-against-three-against-four” feel.

The key of the original African transcription has been changed from A-flat to E-flat, necessitating slight changes in the bass part, and the switching of the alto and tenor parts.

Babevuya betshayalela kodwana mhlanje yincind'ye khala
Babevuya betshayalela kodwana mhlanje yincind'ye khala
'Ntoz'ka bawo, 'n'toz'ko bawo, 'n'toz'ka bawo yincind'ye khala
'N'toz'ka bawo, 'n'toz'ko bawo, 'n'toz'ka bawo yincind'ye khala

PRONUNCIATION:
- a as in father
- e as in egg
- o as in obey

Figure 2.3. Example of instruction text from Choral Songs from South Africa (2009).
Figure 2.4. Excerpts (notes and Tonic Sol-fa transcription) from *Bantu Choral Folk Songs* LP Liner notes (1955).
The presentational decisions made by Seeger during the compilation of these resources are intriguing to observe. The most conspicuous of these is his choice to include staff notation and chord symbols. Being originally orally transmitted, the songs were not intended to be transcribed, and doing so might cause certain elements, both musical and
non-musical, to be lost or distorted. Rhythmic patterns may be simplified, for instance, and some vocal nuances and timbres will not be communicated. In this case, however, Seeger was only translating notation. The original songbook was itself a written transcription by members of St Matthews College in Cape Town Province, who presented the songs in Tonic Sol-fa, a method of notation transmitted to South Africans via European and American missionaries in the nineteenth century to aid musical literacy. Seeger, therefore, is merely converting the music from one paper source (Tonic Sol-fa) to another (Western notation). Furthermore, the original Sol-fa book included bar lines and note values. That said, the idea of using tempo markings might appear puzzling to a black South African user, given that songs could be performed differently every time and would not necessarily have any rigid pace. Seeger’s notational presentation might therefore have been less familiar to many black South African choral communities, where Tonic Sol-fa is considered the norm. By using traditional staff notation, however, Seeger was making the songs accessible to a wider community of international users: Seeger’s publication made songs available to those musicians who use Western notation (this is in addition to the fact that the original Cape Town booklet – entirely in Sol-fa – was not available outside of South Africa). Moreover, it is probable that he was responding to the expectations of the publishers: Schirmer would require material to be presented in a certain format and would consider Western notation to be standard practice for choral music. In the original introduction to the 1947 St Matthews songbook (as reproduced in the introduction to Seeger’s book), however, the limitations of transcription are recognised: ‘No formal notation can convey the intricacies of rhythm and suspended syncopation’. It is therefore suggested that transcriptions are used only for preliminary guidance and rehearsal purposes. I will return to the dilemmas of transcription both

104 Choral Folk Songs, Seeger, vi.
105 Ibid.
later in this chapter and throughout the next, when the responses of other authors and transmitters are explored.

The idea of the need for musical flexibility is further acknowledged by Seeger when he states that ‘whilst we would want to be faithful to the original spirit of the songs [i.e. as an oral tradition], we should frankly admit that we cannot duplicate exactly the way they are sung in Africa’.  

Similar advice was given in the 1947 preface by H.C.N. Williams and J.N. Maselwa of St Matthews College: ‘The present arrangement of these songs does not pretend to be final, and indeed it is to be very much hoped that those using this book will use their imagination and make their own arrangements of these songs’. Furthermore, Seeger acknowledges the many different musical styles and performance practices that exist in South Africa alone and, although not stating his opinion explicitly, suggests that creating any sort of truly authentic experience is impossible. Similar sentiments are expressed throughout the liner notes of the Folkways recording. Here it is predicted that ‘the reaction of a South African native musician to these records would be mixed’.  

The view is lodged that, whilst certain elements of the performances might be recognisable as South African, the influences and interpretations of Western musicians tend to dominate. In addition, the recording as a whole is presented as an experiment, made not for ‘laboratory research’ but for entertaining purposes. Its appeal is intended to lie in its reinterpretation of musical styles, which, according to the accompanying notes, provides a more exciting and stimulating listening experience than authentic recordings. For Seeger, then, authenticity represents innovation and improvisation, and there is no clear-cut right or wrong.

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106 Ibid., vi.
107 Ibid., v.
108 Bantu Choral Folk Songs. Liner Notes, 1.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
With this songbook, users are introduced to a number of musical styles. Songs such as ‘Babevuya’ and ‘Here’s to the Couple’ introduce elements of makwaya, emphasised by syncopated rhythms and call-and-response figures over basic I–IV–V chord progressions, as well as by tonal melodies and conventional four-bar phrases. Songs like ‘Somagwaza’ and ‘Hey, Tswana’ have a pre-colonial flavour, manifested in their overall rhythmic organisations, which in both cases demonstrate the use of repetitive cyclical patterns. ‘Somagwaza’, for instance, is based around a steady 12-beat cycle. These types of structures are found regularly in traditional sub-Saharan musical traditions. Interestingly, though, these repeated cycles are somewhat obscured in Seeger’s written songbook: ‘Somagwaza’ is notated in 2/4, and so a more conventional western metrical structure is represented here. Seeger’s introductory notes contain no discussion of the more technical aspects of this music or information concerning its developmental history. Both in these notes and in the preface to the original 1947 songbook, music tends to be discussed in relation to Africa as a whole. The idea of pinning down the songs and attaching them to a rigid tradition and origin, however, does not appear to be Seeger’s intention. He wants to present an opportunity for the international exposure of this music and raise awareness of the cultures it represents. Robert De Cormier elaborates: ‘When [these songs] first appeared there was very little available of this wonderful African choral music. The book made it possible for choral directors and song leaders to acquaint their singers with music of a culture we knew little or nothing about’.111

The 2009 edition contains a number of extra songs. The most striking of these additions is ‘Senzenina’, a strophic song with a tonal hymn-like melody whose title translates as ‘What have we done?’ In the documentary Amandla: A Revolution in Four-

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111 Choral Folk Songs, Seeger, iii.
part Harmony, Sifiso Mtuli reflects on this song’s significance in the South African anti-apartheid movement:

Somewhere along the line, a thousand years from now, we will be forced to sit down and review our history. ‘Senzenina’, like ‘We Shall Overcome’, will take her rightful place in society because at one time a mass of people related to the song. We touched each other’s hearts using that song.\(^\text{112}\)

The song became an anthem of the anti-apartheid struggle not only in South Africa but also in Britain and the US. As we will see later, political choirs in Britain have continued to perform this song and for many it has become a lasting favourite. It has also appeared regularly in workshops, and it features in other written and electronic teaching materials. Seeger himself had recorded the song in 1956 on a record called With Voices Together We Sing, and in 1960 he released a further compilation of anti-apartheid material.\(^\text{113}\) On the surface, it seems curious that these references to the anti-apartheid movement were not included in the songbook until 2009, especially since the original edition was published during the regime. It must be remembered, though, that the original collection was essentially a re-edition of the St Matthews songbook, which itself did not contain any overtly political material. Whilst in some circles Choral Folksongs from South Africa is seen as Seeger’s own collection, this is in fact not the case, and the absence of political songs in earlier editions serves as a reminder. Under different circumstances, perhaps Seeger would have included protest songs.

A further point of interest is Seeger’s emphasis on the concept of revival. As he explains in the songbook’s introduction, he was told by Mrs. Mathews that village songs

\(^{112}\) Lee Hirsch (dir.), Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony (Santa Monica: Artisan Home Entertainment 14498, 2003).

were ‘dying out as people had to go to the big cities to get jobs’. The 1947 songbook had been constructed following a successful concert of entirely village songs that had been performed by a small choir of St Matthews College students. This concert was organised primarily to raise awareness of these songs, and to encourage their revival and preservation. By making this collection more readily available, therefore, Seeger was participating in this revival project, as well as presenting opportunities for involvement on an international scale. The nature of this revival mission raises a point for discussion. Tamara Livingston defines music revivals as ‘any social movement with the goal of restoring and preserving a musical tradition which is believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past’. By producing resources that allow for continued active participation, however, both Seeger and the College were extending the boundaries of preservation and restoration. In both cases, these songs were not revived and protected in the museum sense: they were not curated by an archive where they might one day be admired or analysed. They were also not being shared among a small or private social group. They were instead presented in a manner that would allow for their continuous transmission and performance on a potentially international scale. Noel Lobley discusses the need to extend the definition of preservation in his article ‘Taking Xhosa Music out of the Fridge and into the Townships’. He points to Janet Topp Fargion who, within the context of ethnomusicological research, argues that preservation should not simply refer to the task of keeping music ‘safe from extinction’, preferring to define this process

114 Choral Folk Songs, Seeger, ii.
as ‘the facilitation of the continuation of tradition’. This approach to preservation, then, is taken by Seeger and indeed by the majority of transmitters encountered in this chapter.

Anders Nyberg and *Freedom is Coming*

A somewhat different group of songs travelled to British amateur choirs via the collection *Freedom is Coming: Songs of Protest and Praise in South Africa*, compiled by Swedish choral director Anders Nyberg and first published in Sweden in 1984; the UK edition was first published in 1990 by Wild Goose Publications, the publishing division of the Iona Community in Scotland. A recording featuring the songs in this collection is available but must be purchased separately. Whilst Nyberg’s approaches to musical presentation are similar to Seeger’s, the context in which songs were collected is rather different, as is the manner in which peoples and cultures are represented. As its title suggests, this collection carries an overtly political message and its ideology lies far apart from the more relaxed apolitical folklore underpinning Seeger’s material. This political stance is articulated throughout the songbook’s introduction, which highlights the theme of liberation and emphasises connections between singing and protest in South Africa: ‘But out of the suffering of the Black People a song is born. The singer can be silenced but never the song: the hope of a free country, the dream of freedom, this song can never be taken from the people.’

Situations in which songs might be performed are then described through the use of vivid imagery: the reader is taken to sites of protest, to prisons and to other locations where song has helped to communicate or alleviate oppression. Frequent references are also made to the atrocities of the apartheid regime. The songs themselves have been selected to emphasise further the intersection between

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120 Nyberg, *Freedom is Coming*, 4.
music and liberatory politics and the majority are linked to the South African anti-apartheid movement. (The contents page from the 1990 UK edition is reproduced in Figure 2.6.) Songs such as ‘Asikhatali’ and ‘Freedom is Coming’ communicate feelings of hope and endurance, and promise that the time of victory will come. The hymn-like ‘Banthatha’ is a tribute to the then-imprisoned Nelson Mandela, and is also a plea to his wife Winnie to remain strong and ‘speak out’.\footnote{Ibid. 23.}
The songs gathered by Nyberg are all clear representations of the musical styles that were born from nineteenth-century fusions of Western and indigenous styles. Material is centred predominantly on chords I, IV and V and melodic lines are defiantly tonal. Most songs are strophic and some contain only one or two phrases. In the case of this volume, the way songs are structured is significant. Since many of these songs were performed at protests and demonstrations in South Africa, they would have been
composed or adapted to suit such environments. Strophic forms, for instance, meant that new lyrics could be added spontaneously, whilst short chant-like pieces allowed for easy audience participation. The fact that this collection is defined by these structures is a further reminder of its strong political orientation.

Another distinctive feature of this songbook is its religious ideology. Firstly, the book is published by Wild Goose, the publishing house of the Christian Iona Community. Secondly, Nyberg, also a Christian, refers regularly to ‘our church’, ‘we’, and ‘us’ in the songbook’s introduction, indicating that this volume is intended for fellow Christians. The theme of religion and more particularly Christianity remains strong throughout the songbook. Nyberg begins his introduction by explaining that Christianity is the primary religion in South Africa. Many of the songs refer to the power of God and carry utopian images of the promised land. Of particular interest, though, is Nyberg’s decision to illustrate how politics and religion can be intertwined. In the previous chapter I explained how, during the late 1970s and 1980s, church music was often politicised and appropriated into the struggle. Hymns were sung regularly during protests, both to call on God’s help and to evade the government who at the time were censoring political song. In Nyberg’s collection, songs such as ‘Ipharadisi’ and ‘Siyahamba’ demonstrate this trend. Religious sentiments are also used in this volume to encourage readers to become involved themselves, not just by empathising with the situation in South Africa but also by reflecting on the ways in which aspects of apartheid are inherent in their own culture. Nyberg writes:

If we can enter into these fantastic songs genuinely and fully, we will automatically be faced with many difficult and painful questions: Where do we stand in this struggle? Where does our society stand, our Church? Do we find ourselves among these crazy, singing women round the cross who lost everything but just because of this are open to receive God's
Kingdom? Or do we find ourselves among the well-to-do who refuse to part with their privileges and positions, and just because of this will lose all?122

Here Nyberg emphasises how songs might be used to develop intercultural understanding and bridge social and political divides. Also interesting is his idea of relating songs to our own struggles or our own reflective thoughts. This encouragement for recontextualisation is similar to approaches taken by choir leaders and members encountered in the next chapter. Might Nyberg’s musings here have inspired the thoughts of these later cultural transmitters?

Nyberg’s call for reflection and critique can also be discussed in relation to revivalist ideology. Although he is not concerned specifically with rescuing or preserving a dying musical tradition, he is seeking to restore or re-imagine aspects of his own culture that he believes are threatened, and this in itself is a revival mission. Tamara Livingston has recognised the significance of music revivals as ‘agents of cultural renewal and social healing’ and their ‘efficacy in making the past come alive in the present’.123 In their introduction to The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival, Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell insist that ‘revivalists are almost always motivated by a dissatisfaction with some aspect of the present and a desire to effect some sort of cultural change’.124 These ideas seem to chime with Nyberg’s motivations for song-collecting.

Like Seeger, Nyberg opts for the paper mode of presentation, with songs transcribed in Western notation arranged for SATB ensembles (see Figure 2.7). Unlike Seeger, however, he has chosen to omit tempo and dynamic indications, and there are

122 Ibid., 4.
also no chord symbols provided. Perhaps the decision to present this more basic scoring is deliberate: Nyberg advises performers to approach the material with a ‘true liberating joy’, and to ‘make the songs our own’. Moreover, he explains that songs were originally transmitted orally, meaning that they should not be learned primarily via the musical notation. The lack of details in the scores, then, seems to emphasise these guidelines. Although Seeger offered similar advice in his introductory notes, it is not always reflected in his presentational method. The organised scoring of his collection appears rather curiously to encourage a more formulaic performance. A further difference in approach is located in terms of recordings. Like those in Seeger’s collection, the songs featured in *Freedom is Coming* have been recorded and, although they are not included with the booklet, can be purchased separately. In this case, performances are by an SATB ensemble – Fjedur – based in Sweden.

125 Nyberg, *Freedom is Coming*, 4.
126 Ibid., 5.
Figure 2.7. Example of transcription from *Freedom is Coming* (1990).

In his musical instructions, Nyberg refers regularly to the recording and highlights its importance as a teaching aid. As in Seeger’s offering, vocal parts are not isolated but here users are encouraged to refer to the audio for guidance with performance practice.
and pronunciation. In the case of Seeger’s collection, the availability of a recording is indicated but not emphasised: there is no suggestion that the audio should be used alongside the booklet. Furthermore, Seeger’s recording contains only ten of his booklet’s songs and so represents only a partial record of the published collection. The difference in approach to vocal timbre in these recordings is also pronounced. Both collections are described as folksongs. Nyberg’s offering, however, is characteristic of a ‘classical’ choral sound. Parts are precise and the vocal production is pure and clean. In Seeger’s recording, on the other hand, voices are more hard-edged and are not blended. Moreover, whereas Fjedur sing predominantly in the head voice, Seeger’s group rely on the chest voice. These timbral differences are caused to some extent by the nature of the ensembles and what we might assume to be their more habitual repertoire and performing styles, but, as will be discussed in the next chapter, they can present numerous dilemmas during rehearsal processes.

The ways in which Nyberg collected the songs in his volume are also very different to those of Seeger. Nyberg describes himself as Swedish and South African, despite having no ethnic ties to South Africa. He was born in Sweden and received a predominantly classical music education, studying choral conducting at the Royal Music Academy in Stockholm with Eric Ericson and composition with Bengt Hallberg.127 Outside this more conventional training, he developed a keen interest in traditional Swedish folk music and helped to establish a small singing group, Fjedur, in order to perform and experiment with folksongs. It was this passion for folk singing that would later strengthen his connections with South African choral music. In 1978, Fjedur received an invitation from the Swedish church to travel to South Africa for a month and

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share some of their music to provide some relief ‘amidst the horrors of apartheid’.\textsuperscript{128} This excursion ‘shaped a lot of Nyberg’s consecutive work’.\textsuperscript{129} Although the group’s primary aim had not been specifically to collect songs, they had brought tape recorders and cameras with the intention of documenting some of their experiences. Alongside sharing their own material, Fjedur visited local communities, observing not only some of their music practices but also the ways in which apartheid was affecting their daily lives. Nyberg recalls there being ‘singing everywhere: in the churches, schools, hospitals, everywhere we went. Communal singing was happening all the time’.\textsuperscript{130} It was the connection between communal music-making and the struggle for liberation that Nyberg found particularly poignant. Although he encountered some ‘horrible scenarios’, he was also made aware of ‘this fantastic sense of hope and joy’ that singing was able to communicate.\textsuperscript{131} When he returned to Sweden, Nyberg felt a responsibility to share his experiences and help people to understand how apartheid was affecting the fabric of black communities. In addition, he saw this venture as a way of repaying his informants:

\begin{quote}
People had been so generous in sharing not only their music but also their lives, and they had taken great risks in doing so. I really felt like I should share this generosity and let others know just how inspirational these people were. I thought I owed this to them.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

He therefore assembled his collection of songs, photographs and anecdotes to produce the \textit{Freedom is Coming} songbook. This style of fieldwork clearly differs from the armchair approach conducted by Seeger. By travelling to South Africa and interacting with informants face-to-face, Nyberg was able to provide his resource with an additional

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{128}{Interview with Anders Nyberg, 24 September 2015.}
\footnotetext{129}{CVs of Jennifer Ferguson and Anders Nyberg.}
\footnotetext{130}{Interview with Anders Nyberg, 24 September 2015.}
\footnotetext{131}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{132}{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
layer of information. The inclusion of pictures, for instance, evidences his more direct cross-cultural encounters.

Yet just how these interactions were able to play out during Fjedur’s South African tour may be hard for the reader to imagine. The turbulent political climate of 1970s South Africa meant that violent protests were frequent, and personal safety was therefore a risk. Nyberg recalls several situations in which Fjedur had visited places where white people were not welcomed or permitted to enter. When the group explained their intentions, however, and asked permission to participate in and observe musical activities, they were usually received enthusiastically. On other occasions, their white skin had protected them from violence: ‘Sometimes, we were not harassed by the police in the same way as others were. I think this was in some way prevented because of our skin’.133

For Nyberg, though, it was the ways in which the group’s visit had impacted upon host communities that presented the greatest challenge. To illustrate his point, he recounts a situation in which a group of young children were singing a political song with their fists in the air. Part way through the song, one child turned his back so that he could look out of the window for any on-coming police. Nyberg elaborates:

These kids were singing illegal songs that could have thrown them right into jail. This guy kept watching to make sure it was ok to continue and to protect his fellow singers. We all got excited about this… We were seeing how things were not only dangerous for us, but also for them. We were all in danger really.134

The issues Nyberg faced during his song-collating process are evidently quite different to those encountered by Seeger. Although he had to grapple with dilemmas surrounding presentation and representation, he also had to contend with problems of a more hands-on and real-time nature. For him, the obstacles did not lie solely at home, and decisions

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
affected head-on the safety and well-being of both visitors and informants. As we will see in the next chapter, it is the political ideology of Nyberg’s collection that has led to its popularity within amateur singing circles in Britain.

**Maggie Hamilton and Sing Freedom**

Collecting songs in a similar context was Maggie Hamilton who, in 1986, travelled to South Africa with funding from the Christian Fellowship Trust to study the ways in which apartheid was affecting musical activity. This expedition involved attending rallies and visiting churches and townships, where she collected songs from black and coloured community members. The trip functioned as a ‘sort of exchange’, during which Hamilton was able to connect with members of the Council of South African Churches and establish contacts in several working black communities.\(^\text{135}\) She stresses the importance of these contacts, explaining that, during subsequent visits to South Africa, they helped her to access certain events and diluted some potentially hostile situations. Yet despite this assistance, she still recalls facing challenges linked directly to apartheid during the process of collecting and recording. By the mid-1980s, the repressive regime had reached its peak: state security forces were omnipresent in black townships and white urban areas, and thousands of black South Africans were detained without access to any form of legal representation.\(^\text{136}\) Moreover, the government was expelling foreign journalists and declaring states of emergency because political resistance to apartheid had reached boiling point on both a national and international scale.\(^\text{137}\) These circumstances clearly affected Hamilton’s own fieldwork and her personal safety was often compromised.\(^\text{138}\) She also recalls experiencing head-on the repercussions of censorship and her tape

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\(^{135}\) Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 3 March 2015.

\(^{136}\) Muller, *South African Music*, 38.

\(^{137}\) Ibid.

\(^{138}\) Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 3 March 2015.
recordings were regularly confiscated. In light of these problems, she took extra precautions:

I got used to stuffing [the tapes] down my front if the police came in sight, and one Methodist church was very helpful with getting them out of the country to Hinde Street Methodist church in London, who forwarded them to me.\textsuperscript{139}

Again we are reminded of the logistical challenges faced by collectors operating in South Africa during apartheid.

Like Nyberg, Hamilton wanted to share the material she had collected during her fieldwork in South Africa. In many respects, she too saw herself as a cultural ambassador, a role that, according to her, involved the task of informing others about the state of apartheid:

For me, it was really important that people understood what was going on. It was so obvious to me when I was there, and I just thought people had to know and understand. I believe one of the best ways of learning about another culture is through singing, through participating actively in some way.\textsuperscript{140}

Hamilton’s primary purpose, then, was to enhance intercultural understanding. Her sharing venture began with a series of workshops given to choirs throughout Britain. These consisted of both community groups and school ensembles. During these events, singers were given the opportunity to record material, which could then be taken back to their own choirs. Here we encounter a different type of transmission: rather than interpreting material on the page, participants are able to receive information at a face-to-face level. The directness of this experience can then be captured on a recording and circulated easily to others. Given that Hamilton taught songs part-by-part, it would be

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
possible for choir leaders to easily access the musical material without the need for a score. Such recordings are obviously different to those provided by Seeger and Nyberg, which present finished products rather than learning processes.

Inspired by the enthusiastic reception of her workshops, Hamilton applied for and received a two-year Music and Peace fellowship from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.\textsuperscript{141} This involved a return trip to South Africa, where she was briefed specifically to record and transcribe songs for subsequent workshops. During this visit Hamilton encountered the Director of Christian Aid and he expressed an interest in supporting the publication of her material on her return home. Although initially surprised by this request, Hamilton decided to pursue it and she began approaching various music publishers. \textit{Sing Freedom: Songs of South African Life} was eventually produced by Novello, who agreed to publish Hamilton’s material in association with Christian Aid (see Figure 2.8 for the list of contents).\textsuperscript{142} Again, standard notation is the main method of transmission here, with most songs arranged for two, three or four-part ensembles (see Figure 2.9). Chord symbols are also included and performance details such as tempo markings and dynamics are provided. This style of presentation is essentially similar to that used for other Novello vocal scores, and so Hamilton was probably obliged to follow these procedures. She certainly subscribes to the now-familiar stance that, within the context of the transmission of aural traditions, recognises the limitations of written transcriptions. She advises users to treat the notation as a skeleton only, encouraging them to flesh out performances by experimenting with rhythm and harmony.\textsuperscript{143} She is also keen to defend the inclusion of chord symbols. She explains:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Margaret Hamilton (ed.), \textit{Sing Freedom: Songs of South African Life} (London: Novello and Christian Aid, 1993).
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 3.
\end{itemize}
Some ethnomusicologists would probably criticise me for using chord symbols. I did this, though, because I wanted to make the songbook as accessible as possible. If a group of young school children wanted to sing these songs, they might not be able to include all the harmony, and so a guitar or piano could easily fill in.\footnote{144 Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 17 September 2015.}

The idea of employing certain presentational methods to aid accessibility, then, is clearly central to Hamilton’s musical interpretations.
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<td>Umzabalazo (We are the women)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Manyanani Basebenzi (Workers unite)</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Klim op die Waa (Get onto the wagon)</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Daai Stones (Those stones)</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Organize and Mobilize</td>
<td>29</td>
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## SONGS OF LIBERATION AND PROTEST

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<td>Siyaya ePitori (We are going to Pretoria)</td>
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<td>Senzizina(Wheel have we done?)</td>
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<td>Hayo o Tshwanang le Yena (There’s no-one like him)</td>
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<td>Mandela Wetu (Our Mandela)</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Hamba Kahle (Go well)</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Parma Junda (The flag)</td>
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Figure 2.8. Contents page from Sing Freedom (1993).
Figure 2.9. Example of transcription from *Sing Freedom* (1993).

The equally familiar themes of open-access and innovation are also emphasised in *Sing Freedom*. In her introductory notes, Hamilton refers regularly to both the musical and cultural diversity of South Africa and explains that ‘there are regional differences in the performance of a song’.  

For each song, I wanted to make clear who it was performed by, and where it was performed.

I think this information is really important because it shows that the transcriptions in the book

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are only representing the way certain people are singing in certain places. It is one way, but it isn’t the way.146

Hamilton’s assertions resonate with Clifford’s concept of partial truths, calling to mind his notion of culture as ‘composed of seriously contested codes and representations’.147 Hamilton recognises there this is often more than one way of learning and/or performing something. Different people and cultures will inevitably have their own styles and approaches.

Like Seeger and Nyberg, Hamilton made certain decisions throughout her collecting process that require some critical assessment. The most conspicuous of these concerns her choice of title. The description ‘songs of South African life’ could potentially raise some eyebrows within ethnomusicological circles. This description might suggest the songs featured are representative of South African life as a whole, rather than just some aspects of it. Given that most of the material was collected during apartheid, however, the employment of such a title appears curious. It is true that, compared to Seeger and Nyberg, Hamilton explores a wider selection of South African languages: the collection includes material in Sotho, Shangaan and even Afrikaans, as well as pieces in Zulu, Xhosa and English. A number of different communities are also represented. The volume is divided into religious songs, children’s songs, work songs and liberation songs. Most of the material, though, is linked in some way to aspects of the apartheid regime. Many of the children’s songs carry overtly political messages and the religious pieces, like many of those collected by Nyberg, exemplify how some church choruses were recast as protest songs. Moreover, Hamilton explains that her primary

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146 Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 17 September 2015.

mission had been to ‘collect songs that showed many different aspects of life under apartheid’. Perhaps a more fitting title, then, would be *Songs of South African Life under Apartheid*. Further issues of representation are raised when considering Hamilton’s collecting procedure:

> I tended to record songs that I thought would be good to teach. I collected songs with simple harmonies, memorable tunes, repeated patterns and relevant themes. Most of my material, therefore, was urban music… I didn’t really concentrate on rural songs, simply because I thought they would be less appealing and more complicated to teach.  

Hamilton is clearly guided by specific criteria which give preference to certain musical styles and communities. The holistic connotations of her collection’s title, then, appear equally problematic here.

Yet these accusations concerning representation may not be so straightforward. As I explained above, the activities of the majority of groups and individuals discussed in this chapter differ from those of established folksong collectors. They are not necessarily seeking to document as fully as possible the music of a certain tradition. In Hamilton’s case, visits to South Africa were relatively short and much of what she gathered was determined by circumstance. She did not know how much she would be able to collect at any given moment. Her intentions, then, were to present a collage or snapshot of the music she had encountered. She was therefore not claiming to be comprehensive or representative. Perhaps she did not consider fully the implications of the descriptor ‘Songs of South African Life’ when she chose it. For the purposes of the collection, such a title would probably be adequate.

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148 Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 3 March 2015.
149 Ibid.
Political Singing in Britain and the Role of South African Exiles

For some British amateur singers, the injections of political song offered by Nyberg and Hamilton were not so new. Songs from both of these collections would have arrived on the scene in the mid to late 1980s, a period that witnessed an explosion of political choral activity throughout the UK. This upsurge of collective singing was caused in part by the political conflicts that surrounded Margaret Thatcher’s government. Socialist choirs, which had on the whole been dormant since the First World War, began to re-form with renewed vigour and purpose.¹⁵⁰ Not only did this generation of choirs participate musically and non-musically in protests against taxes, cuts and the miners’ strikes, but they also became involved in more international affairs, including anti-apartheid campaigning. The British anti-apartheid movement, which had been growing in size and significance since the 1950s, had arguably reached its peak by the mid 1980s. We have heard already that in South Africa a state of emergency had been declared during this period, and riots and street violence had become more frequent. Many of these outbursts were reported by the media and campaigns in Britain were also televised. Concerts paying tribute to Nelson Mandela were also frequent in Britain at that time.

Campaigning against apartheid occurred throughout Britain, and political choirs would often gather to provide musical accompaniment and to participate actively themselves in protest marches and rallies. Many of the songs rehearsed and performed during these demonstrations have become lasting favourites for many groups and are now established as part of core repertoires.

There were several towns and cities where the early transmission of anti-apartheid songs was prominent. A prime example is Sheffield, an industrial city located in the North

of England. Since the early 1980s, Sheffield had played a significant role in the cultivation of community-based political singing. In 1983, it hosted the first National Street Bands Festival, which later became known as the National Street Choirs Festival. This event was ‘created initially to promote the development – through song – of a society free from all forms of oppression, exploitation, exclusion and violence’. A series of evening classes dedicated to the learning and performing of political songs was organised by the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA). These meetings gave birth to the Sheffield Socialist Choir, an open-access singing group that continues to campaign for ‘freedom, justice, and peace around the world’. During the late 1980s, the ensemble became involved in anti-apartheid activities and worked extensively with exiled South African activists.

Among these activists was white South African Rod Douglas. Douglas had previously been involved with the United Democratic Front and had participated in anti-apartheid demonstrations when living in his native South Africa. It was this association with the UDF that contributed to his emigration to Sheffield in the 1980s: ‘I didn’t leave South Africa specifically as a refugee,’ he recalls, ‘but I knew things might start to get difficult for me so it seemed like the best thing to do.’ His initial encounter with SSC came via his attendance at an anti-poll tax demonstration where the group were performing. It was through this meeting that Douglas ‘became exposed to the UK’s version of political singing and encountered a lot of like-minded people’, and he was encouraged to attend the WEA classes. He soon became aware of SSC’s association with the anti-apartheid movement, realising that he could contribute not just as a performer but also as a teacher:

154 Ibid.
When I attended political meetings in South Africa, they would always start and finish with several songs, so I knew quite a lot of material. It just felt right that I should share this knowledge with the group. … We would perform at quite a few rallies, and so we needed to make sure we had enough songs.155

Yet although Douglas was keen to transmit as much as possible, he was aware of the need to be selective and tended to choose material that possessed quite a specific set of characteristics. He elaborates:

I taught songs that I thought would really get people going, I suppose. Songs with only a few words were useful, because this meant people could pick them up really quickly and could easily join in if they wanted. Call and response singing also worked well, I think, because again it was quite easy to learn and it also stirred up the crowd.156

A particular favourite was ‘Shosholoza’, an Ndebele folksong that originated in Zimbabwe.157 It was popularised in South Africa by male migrants, many of whom had travelled from Zimbabwe by steam train to work in the diamond mines. As well as providing a source of motivation for the miners, the messages of encouragement and solidarity that permeate this song were also pertinent to the anti-apartheid struggle and ‘Shosholoza’ soon became a powerful voice of protest. It is now often classified as South Africa’s second national anthem and continues to symbolise solidarity, not only at political events but also during sporting occasions such as football and rugby matches. As we will see in later chapters, this song is cherished by many British amateur choirs of both a political and a non-political nature.

155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
Douglas remembers in particular his teaching of ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’, a hymn composed in the *makwaya* style by mission school teacher Enoch Sontonga in 1897. From as early as 1919 this piece was sung during street protests in Johannesburg and in 1925 it became the official anthem of the ANC. It was later banned by the apartheid government but its status as an anthem was far from lost. As well as being performed at secret meetings in South Africa, it was able to cross borders via exiled musicians who were intent upon raising the international awareness of the song and of the political situation in South Africa. The anthem became popular with many British political choirs who performed it during the apartheid era as an expression of solidarity and a means of campaigning for the release of Mandela. More than twenty years after the regime’s demise, it continues to feature regularly in choirs’ performances and singing events and has become particularly poignant following Mandela’s death.

Kate Howard, a former member of SCC, comments on the significance of the input of South African exiles to the choir’s development. During the late 1980s, she had been instrumental in establishing the ensemble and had collected many songs from Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) workers. She muses:

> We were able to learn so much from them. They had lots of material they wanted to share, and we really wanted to sing it. Without them, I just don’t think we would have been able to become so involved with what was going on. It wasn’t just the music they brought, but it was also an understanding of the contexts in which it would be performed.

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159 Ibid.

160 Interview with Kate Howard, 16 October 2013.
Similar assertions have been made by Gavin Brown, who participated in singing activities during his involvement with the non-stop picket outside the South African Embassy in London in the late 1980s. He comments on the picket’s ‘distinctive soundscape’, emphasising in particular the significance of the protest song.¹⁶¹ For Brown, the input of white South African exiles was essential to the development of a repertory of material that could be taught to groups of picketers, no matter their size: ‘These people were just so instrumental in sharing and teaching songs. We wouldn’t have been able to do it without them’.¹⁶² This network of cultural go betweens helped to establish The London City Singers, an ensemble who performed not only on the picket line but also at events related to the anti-apartheid project. Jonathan Eato has discussed the role of exiled South African musicians in relation to the development of the UK jazz scene. Eato argues that ‘the impact of South African exiled musicians in the UK was so great’ and, drawing on his interviews and his study of commercially-available recordings, identifies how these musicians influenced heavily the outputs of many British jazz ensembles.¹⁶³ These observations can easily be applied to parts of the British amateur choral scene.

As well as Rod Douglas’s desire to broaden SCC’s repertoire of political songs, there was something more personal connected with his decision to assume the role of cultural go-between:

I really wanted to retain my interest in South African politics. I had been so involved at home and I suppose I just wanted to keep the connection going, and it was through sharing the songs and teaching and performing them at rallies that I was able to do this, I think.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Interview with Gavin Brown, 3 February 2015.
¹⁶² Ibid.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid.
This form of preservation has been explored by Carol Muller in relation to exiled South African jazz musicians. Muller explains how, for many South African jazz artists and ensembles who escaped to Europe and the UK from the early 1960s through to the late 1980s, the concept of integrating or bringing to life ‘the sounds of home they remembered’ in their music was central to their creative journeys. This idea was generated by a desire to combat feelings of displacement and maintain connections with familiar cultural environments. Douglas’s motivations can therefore be viewed in a similar light. By sharing his material with SCC, he was able to recall and keep alive the sounds and cultures he had left behind.

Douglas explains that he rarely transcribed songs and preferred to teach them face-to-face in a workshop-like setting. Like Maggie Hamilton’s events, these gatherings allowed participants to record material and bring it to their own rehearsals or meetings. Furthermore, as Douglas also points out, much of the transmission occurred during the demonstrations themselves. Such demonstrations would often bring together choirs from a variety of locations, and songs would be shared in a spontaneous yet effective manner. Again, people would record or transcribe material to use at future gatherings. These recordings present rather different learning experiences to those offered by Seeger and Nyberg. Nyberg’s recordings in particular seem to emphasise a more presentational approach to performance that does not necessarily reflect the participatory nature of the political songs in his collection. The recordings made during protests, demonstrations and workshops, however, emphasise a more participatory performance aesthetic that is connected with the songs’ functions as political expressions.

166 Ibid.
Events such as the Street Choirs Festival also provided opportunities for song-swapping. In 1998, SCC released a songbook to mark their 10th anniversary, and this features a selection of South African songs, including ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’. More recently, Raise Your Banners festival has provided a forum for the sharing of political songs, and some of those from South Africa have been recycled and introduced to new generations of singers. This biennial event is again designed to bring choirs from across Britain together, but its emphasis is based on the sharing of topical material. Both this event and the Street Choirs Festival have influenced the creation of an additional network to encourage song-sharing: since 2013, several choirs have been constructing a website to present songs both from past festivals and from their own repertoires. This forum, known as the Campaign Choirs Network, categorises material according to event and purpose. Sections include: Fracking, Peace, Climate, and Syria. Songs are usually written in standard notation, but midi files containing individual parts are also provided. The anti-apartheid material, then, has continued to be circulated.

Songs have also been transmitted via cassettes, CDs and LPs compiled by specific choirs and organisations. AA Enterprises, for instance, historically offered a range of recordings in their catalogues of merchandise. An intriguing contribution was a series of cassettes containing programmes from Radio Freedom, the ANC’s underground radio station. As well as presenting speeches and poetry from ANC members and leaders, the recordings also include numerous songs that have obviously been captured live during demonstrations. The station was seemingly dedicated to Umkhonto We Sizwe, the ANC’s

168 See, for example, AA Enterprises, ‘Winter 1988–89 Mail Order Catalogue: Anti-Apartheid Goods and Gifts’, http://www.aamarchives.org/file-view/category/10-all-files.html?s_f_id=12943 (accessed 3 February 2016). The catalogue gives details of the organisation: AA Enterprises (which was founded in 1986 and ceased trading in 1991) was the trading name of Futures Co-operative Ltd, under the direction of Margaret Ling and Roger Harris.
militant wing, and so featured material that is defined by themes of violence. In the recording I obtained, most of the songs are accompanied by gunfire and other related sounds, and the liner notes include translations that are all concerned with rising up and attacking by force.\textsuperscript{169} Kate Howard recalls the significance of such militant songs to demonstrations in Sheffield during the late 1980s. She explains how anthems from Umkhonto We Sizwe were performed regularly and how they became a ‘really important part of our South African campaign’.\textsuperscript{170} Such pieces are now absent from the repertoires of the majority of political choirs I have encountered, but they were undoubtedly widely circulated throughout the apartheid years. Also featured on my recording is a track entitled ‘The ANC’s Signature Tune’, which turns out to be a version of ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’. The fact that the name of this song is not included serves as a strong reminder of the climate in which Radio Freedom was operating: on the face of it the song appears to be religious rather than political (the title translates as ‘God bless Africa’) but it was officially banned and the government would have been suspicious of any use of this title. It also reiterates the importance of recordings in the transmission of black South African material that was being hidden deliberately from international ears by actions of the apartheid regime.

AA Enterprises also sold a recording of South African songs made by Bremer Chor Die Zeitgenossen, a choir based in Bremen (Germany), with James Madhlope Phillips, a South African artist who had fled to England in the 1950s and later taught South African liberation songs to choirs in Europe and the United States.\textsuperscript{171} This offering features many of the lasting favourites, including ‘Senzenina’, ‘Tschotscholoza S’timela’

\textsuperscript{169} Radio Freedom: Voice of the African National Congress and the People’s Army Unkhonto We Sizwe (Rounder CD 4019, 1996; reissue of Rounder LP 1010, 1995).

\textsuperscript{170} Interview with Kate Howard, 16 October 2013.

\textsuperscript{171} Malibonwe: singen Freiheitslieder aus Südafrika, Bremer Chor, Die Zeitgenossen and James M. Phillips (ANC, LC 0972, 1984).
(‘Shosholoza’) and ‘Kea Rona’. Like Nyberg’s collection, the cover image shows a photograph of South Africans who appear to be protesting (see Figure 2.10). The inclusion of the ANC logo on both the front and back of the sleeve suggests a direct political connection. This recording is just one product of a larger international network of choirs and singing collectives who relate to the anti-apartheid movement primarily through song. This network has received growing archival attention through websites such as Forward to Freedom and the African Activist Archive, which include audio and visual examples of political singing of South African songs.172 Closer to home, Tyneside Anti-Apartheid Choir released Freedom Now! Songs from Southern Africa. Formed in 1987, this ensemble sought to ‘raise awareness of local activities through authentic songs of the freedom struggle in South Africa’.173 Some of the songs featured on the cassette were collected from South African recordings, but others came directly from South African musicians and anti-apartheid activists who visited the North East of England.174 Predictably, the track list explores familiar musical territory, and includes songs such as ‘Nkosi Sikelel’i’, ‘Shosholoza’ and ‘Senzenina’. Compared with the notes of other recordings I have mentioned, the information supplied in this example is rather brief. There are no song lyrics or translations, meaning that material could not be learnt directly from the audio.

174 Ibid.
Colin Harrison and *Songs from South Africa*

A somewhat different ideology underpins *Songs from South Africa*, an audio and written teaching resource compiled by Colin Harrison in the early 1990s (see Figure 2.11 for contents of the songbook). Over the past twenty years, this collection has become particularly popular with singing groups associated with the Natural Voice Network and its material has often been taught at residential gatherings that have links with the NVN, such as the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp, as well as the organisation’s own annual gathering. Harrison himself was a key figure in the establishment of the (then) VPN, attending a party at Kinnersley Castle where the network’s aims and objectives were first

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175 Colin Harrison, *Songs from South Africa* (no publication details given).
conceived. He taught South African material at a series of voice and dance camps in the late 1980s, before it had been transcribed into his songbook. More recently, Harrison’s collection has gained popularity through Nickomo Clarke, who acted as transcriber in the original project. He had been introduced to the natural voice world via Harrison, who had brought him along to the Kinnersley gathering. Nickomo (as he prefers to be known) is now an organiser of the Unicorn camp and is a regular vocal workshop facilitator, and these roles have enabled him to continue the circulation of Harrison’s songbook.
Figure 2.11. Contents page for Colin Harrison’s *Songs from South Africa*.

Harrison’s collection was not initially intended for singers alone. In the late 1970s, he became involved with the British Circle Dance Movement. Active since the 1960s, this movement aims to ‘create a sense of well-being and community’ through the experience of dancing in a group.\(^{176}\) The performance of circle dances usually includes...

both music and movement: most often, participants dance to recorded music or to music
provided by a live band, but on occasion they may also learn songs to sing while dancing.
Inspiration for these dances is drawn from a diverse range of cultures and traditions, as is
the music that usually accompanies them. As well as facilitating networks in Britain,
Harrison also helped to establish circle dance groups in several other countries, including
South Africa.\footnote{Harrison, \textit{Songs from South Africa}, 2.} He was, in fact, born in Zimbabwe and lived in Southern Africa for
twenty years before moving to England to be with his family. In 1988, Harrison and his
then partner, Anne Monger, were invited to lead a series of workshops in St Peter’s
Catholic Seminary at Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. On the second day of his visit,
Harrison encountered two trainee priests singing and dancing to a hymn called ‘Thanda’
and was captivated by the combination of music and movement. Not only this, but he also
saw the ‘simple dance moves’ as being ‘ideal for groups to do in a circle’.\footnote{Ibid.}
Harrison and Monger taught both the song and dance to groups back in Britain and, inspired by its
enthusiastic uptake, made two subsequent visits to South Africa in search of additional
material. They travelled first back to St Peter’s, where they found ‘an enthusiastic group
with many new songs and dances to show us’.\footnote{Ibid.} By the next visit, however, interest in
this music and dance had declined, and so Harrison contacted the Lumko Institute. This
Catholic organisation is made up of Southern African bishops and runs various
Harrison had been informed about Lumko’s musical collection, which was published on
both manuscript and tape. Like the St Peter’s material, he saw these pieces as ideal
repertoire for circle dance groups and returned to England with ‘just about everything [Lumko] had’. 181

It was after their second visit to South Africa that Harrison and Monger contacted Nickomo and Rasullah Clarke to share and discuss the material they had gathered. Harrison recalls how, when presented with the St Peter’s recordings, Nickomo was ‘able to decipher harmonies that I had never been aware of’, and the quartet began teaching the material at a series of dance camps. Nickomo reflects on how the songs fitted in with the ideology of these gatherings:

Although these camps were called dance camps, we did a lot of voice work there too. We would learn the parts to a song, and then we would dance it. These South African songs, then, were perfect for the occasion because they came from a dance setting, and they just worked. 182

The initial intentions of Harrison’s collection, then, had been to provide a resource for teaching songs with both their music and movement. Harrison’s intentions are quite different from those of the majority of collectors we have encountered thus far, who have not provided any guidance for teaching movement. Moreover, the dance camps with their somewhat New-Age vibe also constituted a very different environment from the more militant environments associated with the anti-apartheid movement. In Harrison’s collection, songs are presented in standard notation, but written instructions for dances are also given (see Figure 2.12).

181 Harrison, Songs from South Africa, 2.
182 Interview with Nickomo Clarke, 16 October 2013.
The song is by N.Kpoyiya, from Lumko. No translation is available.

Dancers form pairs, one facing into the circle, the other facing out. Allow a wide gap between partners.

Partners face each other and dance on the spot:
1) Step R → and clap to the R, 2) Step L ← and clap to the L, 3) Step R → and clap to the R, 4) Stamp L next to R.
Partners move towards each other and pass right shoulders:
5) Step R ↑, 6) Step L ↑, 7) Step R ↑, 8) Step L and clap both hand with partner as you pass

Ewe, Ewe, Ewe, In-thando Kathi-xo - o - o
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Do this sequence four times with one partner, then move on to next partner facing you on your right, for a new sequence of four.

Through the same period missionaries had brought western four-part hymn singing to congregations throughout the country, and soon this influence was being thrown into the melting pot, along with traditional wedding songs, local dance styles and the influence of vaudeville.

Figure 2.12. Example of notation and instructions for dance steps from Songs from South Africa.

These instructions are given using symbols: arrows indicate the direction of foot movements or steps, and numerals representing beats are sometimes placed below a line
of song text to show how each movement might fit with the melody line. Additional details are presented in the form of written descriptions. These include phrases such as ‘Face clockwise, processing in a circle’ or ‘walking step on the spot’. This resource constitutes a prime example of how dances, as well as songs, can travel into new homes, where they are often assigned new functions and meanings. Although the dance steps have their roots in South Africa, they have been appropriated by a different dance tradition and may have been adapted in certain ways to fit certain performing situations.

Another key element of Harrison’s collection is its inclusion of ‘workdiscs’. All of the songs featured in the booklet are recorded in a three-CD set (previously cassette tapes) and, although this must be purchased separately, Harrison believes it is crucial for enhancing the teaching and learning experience provided in his written booklet. In fact, these recordings could easily serve as a stand-alone resource. Not only do they contain full performances of songs, but they also feature each vocal part in isolation. These separate parts are recorded on individual tracks to aid teaching and navigation. Crucially, such audio representations of Harrison’s booklet allow non-music readers to teach and perform its content. Of course, Seeger and Nyberg recognised the importance of recordings and their audio material is certainly useful for the teaching process, but the recordings illustrate finished products rather than works in progress. By presenting an audio breakdown of parts, then, Harrison is making the songs even more accessible for those users who cannot easily pick out vocal lines in a multi-part ensemble. On the recordings, the material is performed by Harrison, Monger, and Nickomo and Rasullah Clarke. Unlike Nyberg’s choir, this quartet does not cultivate a clean vocal timbre. Songs sound much more folky, with tuning and vocal precision being less of a concern. This

183 Harrison, Songs from South Africa, 5–7.
184 Songs from South Africa, Nickomo Clarke, Rasullah Clarke, Anne Monger, and Colin Harrison (no publication details).
type of recording again emphasises a more participatory approach to performing, which is associated both with the songs collected and with the circle dance communities for which the resource is intended. What the recordings cannot convey are the dances, and so anybody wishing to teach these would still have to rely on the booklet or, preferably, attend a workshop.

Harrison’s performance advice is once more representative of the open-access approach, and this is emphasised in both the volume’s introductory notes and the presentation of the songs. Harrison insists that:

When [African singing] is happening, live, in Africa, everyone sings what they feel like! The only mistake one can make is not to participate, rather than not to get it right. 185

He then reiterates this point by relating it to one of his own experiences of performing in South Africa: ‘Everybody was grinning from ear to ear, it was impossible to keep still, and not joining in would have been absurd’. 186 Harrison’s perception of authenticity as denoting inclusivity and creativity is clearly articulated here. This notion is highlighted further by the limited use of performance indicators in the songs themselves. Unlike Seeger’s volume, this collection does not include tempo or dynamic markings. Songs’ cultural contexts are provided and guidance for pronunciation is given, but the overall performance is left open to interpretation. Originally, this songbook was aimed primarily at those people who had already attended one of Harrison’s workshops or camps. They would have already learned many of the songs and would therefore not require extensive written performance advice. This, then, might explain Harrison’s seemingly relaxed approach to interpretation in the resource.

185 Harrison, Songs from South Africa, 2.
186 Ibid.
The songs in this collection have been selected primarily on the strength of their ability to encourage participatory performance. Many contain only a few short phrases, which allows for quick and easy learning. This structure also means that songs can be repeated over and over again whilst people are dancing. Unlike Seeger, Nyberg and Hamilton, Harrison is not necessarily providing advice for creating presentational performances. The songs function more as accompaniment to a shared dancing experience. The collection does include some familiar favourites, notably versions of ‘Nkosi Sikelel’i’ and ‘Asikhatali’. Harrison includes both Nyberg and Seeger’s volumes in his list of references, and also mentions the political singing that occurred in England as part of the anti-apartheid project.\(^{187}\) It is unclear as to whether these familiar songs have come from these resources, however. Overall, the emphasis on this songbook is not political, which aligns it more with Seeger’s collection rather than those of Nyberg and Hamilton. This is highlighted further by differences in the use of illustrations: whereas Nyberg’s book includes full-page black-and-white photographs of scenes from South African life, some of which signal struggle, Harrison’s volume features a handful of artistic pen-and-ink drawings by Anne Monger that are used more as page-fillers: the contents page as reproduced in Figure 2.11, for example, features two turkey-like birds. However, Harrison’s collection does bear some resemblances to Nyberg and Hamilton’s projects, primarily through its strong religious content. Yet while Hamilton includes songs that have passed from the church to the protest movement, the religious songs and dances in Harrison’s collection are essentially rooted in contemporary acts of worship.

\(^{187}\) Harrison, *Songs from South Africa*, 4.
In his introduction, Harrison explains that his collection contains transcriptions of the St Peter’s recordings, many of the songs collected from Lumko, and songs from ‘various other sources’.\textsuperscript{188} We might assume that these ‘other sources’ are those mentioned in his list of references but this is not explicitly stated. These references may be present to direct users to further sources of repertoire, and this could help explain why Seeger and Nyberg’s publications have continued to be popular in natural voice circles.

A final point to discuss in relation to Harrison’s songbook concerns availability. The collections by Seeger, Nyberg and Hamilton have been published commercially, meaning they are relatively easy to obtain. One could search for these titles on sites such as Amazon and be presented with lists of sellers. Harrison’s resource was produced on a more independent level, however, and is consequently more difficult to obtain. Originally, the books and cassettes could be purchased only at workshops. Now they are available via Nickomo Clarke’s website, but this is still a very private market. This therefore limits the types of people who might encounter the collection.

**Mollie Stone and Vela Vela**

A new standard of songbook came with the release of *Vela Vela: Striving for Authentic Performance in Black South African Choral Music*, created by US-based choral conductor Mollie Stone in 2004.\textsuperscript{189} The ideology underpinning this resource is quite different from those discussed thus far. The inspiration for its creation came from Stone’s own experiences of a tour to South Africa in which she participated as a member of

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 2.

Chicago Children’s Choir (CCC) in the early 1990s. Chicago Children’s Choir was founded in 1956 during the height of the civil rights movement and, as such, it followed closely the development of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. To show its support and solidarity with this movement, CCC began gathering a repertoire of anti-apartheid songs, the majority of which were drawn from Nyberg’s *Freedom is Coming*.

Following the historic democratic elections that took place in South Africa in 1994, however, it was decided that the group would travel to South Africa – a project that came to fruition in 1996. The ensemble visited townships across the country, performing for and with local choirs and staying with families of different races and backgrounds.

Stone recalls how her participation in this tour completely changed her own perceptions and performance of black South African vocal music:

I had been taught South African songs in choir by people who had never travelled to South Africa. We were learning material mostly from handwritten transcriptions you find in those songbooks lots of people seem to be using now. At the time, this was okay for me… Obviously I didn’t really know anything myself about the music at that point and I was keen to learn from anybody who could teach me. I was told about how songs were used as weapons during apartheid and how they helped people to protest etc., but I guess I had no real idea of what that meant until my first visit. I don’t think anybody can really know what it is like until they have actually been there.

For Stone the highlight of the tour had been performing alongside local black choirs. She described how these groups performed ‘in a way I had never heard before – they were dancing and ululating, and they had this amazing vocal tone’.

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190 Interview with Mollie Stone, 6 August 2013.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid. ‘Handwritten transcriptions’ here seemingly refers to notated transcriptions.
194 Ibid.
It was this experience that shaped much of Stone’s subsequent work in South Africa, including her research for *Vela Vela*. She returned from the tour feeling not only enlightened but also deeply perturbed:

I left feeling so angry because I couldn’t understand why I had not been taught like this before. For me, those songbooks with their written transcriptions immediately became inadequate... They cannot convey all the information that is so necessary for performing this music. 195

It was in this state of mind that Stone returned to Cape Town some years later. She stayed again with host families and performed with local black choirs, but she formed a particularly deep-seated connection with The University of Cape Town Choir for Africa. She worked extensively with this ensemble, recording songs and observing teaching methodologies. *Vela Vela* showcases the results of this collaboration and features material both collected from and performed by the choir (see Figure 2.13 for a list of contents).

The layout of this resource is markedly different from those analysed thus far. Whilst a paper booklet is provided, it does not contain any musical notation. It is instead devoted to introductory notes, song texts and translations, and transcripts of interviews with choir members (Figure 2.14 gives an example of a typical page for a song). Teaching instructions are communicated via an interactive DVD, which features individual parts for each song as well as full visual performances.

195 Ibid.
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For each song, the following information is provided:

- Text, IPA, translation
- Background information
- Song form and dance form
- Suggested high-voice arrangements

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Figure 2.13. Contents page from *Vela Vela.*
**Ntakana** *(Xhosa popular song)*

**Text:**

Ntakana,  
*ntakana*  
ayiló, ayiló,  
*nti*  
whoosh!

**IPA:**  
*ntakana*  
*nti*  
*whoosh*

**Translation:**  
a bird  
tweet, tweet  
whoosh!

**Pronunciation tip:**  
Do not add a schwa between “n” and a following consonant (e.g., “rub-takanen”). As for the word “ayiló,” merely pronounce the “i” as in the phrase “don’t yield.”

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**About Ntakana**

This song is based on the Xhosa ballad “Ntakana,” written for Miriam Makeba in the 1950s by Alun Silling. *Ntakana* tells the story of a person who is wandering and hears the voice of a bird coming from the bush. And although this voice sings, “The world is dead,” the listener is so delighted by the beauty of the voice that his spirits are uplifted.

**Song and Dance forms**

A section: *ntakana* (1x)

B section: *ntakana* (1x)

* A section surrounded by asterisks denotes a section sung without movement.

Note: A and B have the same text, but notes and rhythms change for some parts.

On the DVD, they perform the following:

AA BB AA BB AA BB "A" (pause) BB "A"

* "After the first "A", pause as though the song is finished, then start up again full-force. You may lengthen or shorten *Ntakana* and omit one of the tenor parts if necessary.

**Possible high-voice arrangements**

For an SA choir:  
S: soprano  
A: alto, tenor, bass

For an SSA choir:  
S: soprano  
S: alto  
A: tenor

For an SSAA choir:  
S: soprano  
S: alto  
A: bass up the octave  
A: tenor

Feel free to move up as many keys as necessary for your choir to sing comfortably.

Figure 2.14. Example of instructional information for a song from *Vela Vela.*

For each song, there is also an option to hear a choir member speak through the text line-by-line, which can provide quite a different learning experience from the written pronunciation guides presented by Seeger and Nyberg, for example. Cultural context is provided in part by interviews with choir members and associates, which can also be
accessed via the DVD. Participants discuss how they encountered certain songs and reflect upon the role of music more generally within their own communities. For example:

Vuyani: When it comes to folk songs, those are the songs that were – it’s like this thing’s being carried from one generation to another. You see, what used to happen a long time ago, we used to have our mothers – we would sit around the fires at night, and then they would make some folk tales, and then in between these folk tales you’d notice that there would be a song that was sung.196

By adopting this audio-visual approach, Stone is seeking to imagine a more face-to-face learning experience that relies predominantly on technology and descriptive transcription. She elaborates:

I think it’s really important to keep with the times and use all the resources that are available to us. Today, technology can help us so much and I think there is really no excuse for providing some sort of pale and oversimplified learning resource… With my DVD, you can watch and listen to a South African choir performing. You can watch them move and learn from them… You can practically bring them into your home.197

Yet this collection does not only feature the inputs of Stone and the South African singers. Users can also witness the songs being performed by members of CCC. Stone does not explain her decision to include these American singers, but perhaps it was made to show how choirs outside South Africa might approach the music. These singers might also act as cultural translators: as well as giving full performances, they are also employed to explain in words some of the dance movements. Perhaps Stone thought users would understand better if they saw and heard Western singers experimenting with the material.

Equally striking is Stone’s approach to performance practice. We have seen how other collections have tended to emphasise ideas of experimentation and interpretation.

196 Stone, Vela, Vela, 22.
197 Interview with Mollie Stone, 6 August 2013.
For their creators, the notion of authenticity has been virtually discarded on account of the diversity of music-making that can be witnessed in black South African communities. In Stone’s introductory notes, however, a much stricter tone is set. She insists on using what she terms the ‘correct rhythms, movements, vocal tone, and pronunciation’ when teaching the songs.\textsuperscript{198} If such goals are not achieved, she explains, performances become ‘artificial’, and the user (in her estimation) runs the risk of representing the music as ‘primitive and simplistic’.\textsuperscript{199} As well as communicating more rigid musical guidelines, Stone emphasises the importance of movement. Apart from Colin Harrison, the collectors featured in this chapter have barely mentioned movement and there have been no attempts to represent it in resources. Even in Harrison’s case, choreographies do not necessarily belong to established black South African traditions and are typically adapted for circle dancing purposes. For Stone, however, music and movement are inseparable and she stresses the need for songs to be performed with ‘the authentic dance movements’.\textsuperscript{200}

She further emphasises this connection by comparing the performance of songs without dances to a performance of ‘Bach’s B Minor Mass without instruments’.\textsuperscript{201} There is some room for flexibility: Stone recognises the need to arrange and adapt songs for different types of ensemble, and she suggests some alternative parts for high-voice groups. She also invites users to experiment with different keys to cater for the voices in their ensembles. On the whole, though, performance advice is extremely detailed and seems to adhere to specific standards and criteria.

The modest number of songs contained in this collection perhaps underscores Stone’s wish that choirs should concentrate on presenting a more detailed and polished

\textsuperscript{198} Stone, \textit{Vela Vela}, 2.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
performance, with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity. *Vela Vela* contains only seven songs. Nonetheless, the similar range of musical and social representations explored here is similar to that found in the other collections: ‘Shumajela’ is overtly political and comes from the anti-apartheid struggle, for example, whilst ‘Vela Vela’ belongs to a more relaxed folky tradition and ‘Lizela’ is a traditional Xhosa song containing strong religious imagery. The majority of songs in this collection have been taught to British amateur singers via the association Village Harmony, with whom Stone continues to work. She herself has visited Britain several times to lead workshops with community choirs and other similar singing collectives.

Despite its attempt to provide a more detailed and face-to-face learning experience, *Vela Vela* cannot escape issues concerning representation. Firstly, the fact that this project involves only one choir creates problems with Stone’s observations overall. The ensemble is attached to a university, meaning that it might contain a specific type of person with an equally specific connection to the songs included in the collection. A glance at the participants in the interviews and performances can give some idea of their background: most are well-dressed, which might suggest that they hail from more advantaged communities. The vocal timbre of the choir is also rather distinctive. The sound is almost operatic, with singers employing quite a heavy vibrato. The voices sound rehearsed and trained, even in those songs that grew out of political demonstrations. Here, then, we are witnessing a certain type of choir that follows a certain type of performance practice – one that elsewhere might be referred to as ‘academic’. According to Stone, however, users should study the teaching DVD to discover ‘how South African choirs sound, move, and perform’. ²⁰² Again, she is presenting a holistic representation of black choral culture which in itself is problematic. The descriptive transcriptions of

²⁰² Ibid.
performances she offers are, moreover, records of how songs sounded at one given moment and cannot claim to show a definitive approach. Although the music is described as diverse and complex, this is certainly not conveyed.

Unlike the other resources discussed earlier, though, this collection does offer some information concerning singing in post-apartheid South Africa. This is still discussed in a political context, but it provides a different perspective from those collectors operating in the 1980s. Stone focuses in particular on the position of singing in the struggle against HIV, presenting ‘As’ kwaz’ Ukuhamba’ as a prime example. Yet she does not include any material that explores the role of singing post-apartheid outside the political arena. It is also interesting, given her efforts to emphasise the importance of audio-visual technology in the task of cross-cultural transmission, that there are no images of South African landscapes included in her collection. The user is instead limited to shots of the room in which the choir is performing. Choir members themselves are obviously visible, but we see nothing of Cape Town or indeed any of their local communities. We must therefore only imagine the locations described in the interviews and song descriptions. Overall, though, the resource is clearly intended to provide a more enhanced and interactive teaching and learning experience than the paper resources encountered earlier.

**Village Harmony and The African Folk Rhythm**

A similar mode of electronic transmission has been employed by the US-based organisation Village Harmony, whose repertoire of South African songs came initially from Kate Howard, whom we encountered earlier in this chapter. Howard’s association with Village Harmony began in the early 1990s, following her participation in a fortnight-long singing residential and tour led by Larry Gordon. She recalls how ‘one thing led to another’: members of the Village Harmony team had become interested in the extensive
repertoire of political songs she had to offer and she was asked to join the organisation as a teacher.\textsuperscript{203} For several years Howard led summer camps in a variety of global locations and shared predominantly black South African material with participants.

Yet the teaching experience offered by Howard was soon to be scrutinised by Patty Cuyler, who joined the team in 1995. For Cuyler, the role of primary culture-bearers during processes of teaching and learning is particularly important:

You need to know about the nuances of the language, the vocal production, the pronunciation and the movement. You need to know about the history of the culture’s music you are learning and you can’t make all these real connections unless you’re being taught by somebody directly from that culture.\textsuperscript{204}

It was these criteria that fuelled Cuyler’s dissatisfaction with Village Harmony’s early learning of South African material: ‘There was something about the vocal tone that was not convincing, and we often found ourselves moving awkwardly’.\textsuperscript{205} This is not to say that she found no value in these initial stages of transmission: she explains that they were the only means by which Village Harmony could learn South African songs at the time, and Howard provided the organisation with ‘a taste of their harmonies and structures’.

By the late 1990s, however, Cuyler thought the group needed more: not only did they need to extend their repertoire of South African material, but they also required a more in-depth understanding of performance aesthetics and cultural contexts. Kate Howard had also decided to relocate, meaning that there was no South African specialist in the organisation. Then in 1999, Cuyler took a mixed ensemble of adults and teenagers to

\textsuperscript{203} Interview with Kate Howard, 16 October 2013.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205} Interview with Patty Cuyler, 15 August 2013.
Newfoundland to participate in the second edition of Festival 500 and it was this event that provided the turning point she had been seeking.206

Cuyler’s group knew in advance of the festival that the Polokwane Choral Society, directed by Matlakala Bopape, would also be performing:

We turned up in our brightly painted school buses and basically stalked them. We knew the hotel where they were staying and we went directly there. We were so excited to see this forty-strong black South African choir performing, and we thought we could potentially experience some first-generation delivery of songs.207

The Village Harmony participants were captivated by the performance and fought their way to the front of the crowd and attempted to join in with some of the songs. When the performance was over, Cuyler took the group backstage to meet with Bopape and her choir, and soon both ensembles were singing together. Cuyler recalls singing a song (about a cow) that her group had learned some time before the festival, and explains that the Polokwane ensemble helped to refine parts and polish dance routines and vocal tone.

By the following year, Bopape was a part of the Village Harmony team, giving several workshops in the United States and adding significantly to the organisation’s repertory of South African material. She has subsequently co-directed camps for amateur teenage and adult singers in New England, Italy, the UK and South Africa, and has collaborated with Cuyler, Stone and other members of the Village Harmony team to produce a series of teaching resources, all of which have travelled to British singing groups associated with the Natural Voice Network. The first of these materials was The

206 This biennial international choral event was created in response to the cultural threat posed by the forced closure of the cod fishery in Newfoundland in 1992: the festival contributed to the economy whilst ‘nurturing cultural identify’. See Festival 500, http://www.festival500.com/about-festival-500/history.aspx (accessed 16 December 2015).
207 Interview with Patty Cuyler, 15 August 2013.
African Folk Rhythm: South African Folk, Church and Protest Songs, a paper and electronic songbook compiled by Cuyler and Bopape in 2004. Consisting of two volumes, the resource includes Bopape’s four-part arrangements of a selection of church choruses, wedding songs, folksongs and struggle anthems in Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa. The material is transcribed in both standard western notation and Tonic Sol-fa. This is the first example in which we have seen the two forms of notation represented together: whilst other collectors have acknowledged the importance of Tonic Sol-fa, they have not incorporated it into their work. Here, then, we are presented with a choice of teaching methodologies. The paper booklet also comes with an audio CD that features Polokwane Chorale’s recordings of the songs. Like the ensemble associated with Stone’s resource, this choir employs an operatic timbre, as do most of the choruses that have worked with Village Harmony. The CD does not contain part-by-part recordings but a teaching DVD can also be purchased. As with Stone’s DVD, this item contains sound files of individual voice parts, as well as visual instructions for dances. Bopape’s pronunciations of the song texts are also featured. The resource itself does not explicitly claim to provide a definitive guide to performing black South African choral music: there are no bold statements that suggest Bopape’s choir is typical of all South African choruses. In interviews, however, both Bopape and Cuyler have stressed the importance of performing materially ‘in the authentic way’, and have insisted that their resource can guarantee this achievement. The responses of British choir members to this claim will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the introductory notes to the first volume of The African Folk Rhythm, Bopape explains her primary motive for assembling its material:

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Most of our music continues to be orally transmitted, and therefore runs the risk of ultimately disappearing as the younger generations become more interested in other genres. My documentation of this is therefore specifically to preserve this rich culture, and to share this with other nations of the world.209

These motivations are clearly similar to those of Seeger: the concept of revival is central in both cases. Like Seeger, Bopape believes this revival can function through active participation. Rather than focusing on preserving traditional folksongs solely in her home country, Bopape chooses to extend the mission to involve participants on an international scale. Perhaps this involvement helps to set up a fair cultural exchange: Bopape provides Western users with material but they give something back by helping to preserve it.

**Reflection**

The resources I have discussed here are just some of the many channels through which black South African choral music has been transported to British amateur choirs. It is clear that, with the growing influence of the Internet, there are countless opportunities for song-sharing which choirs have embraced with enthusiasm. Moreover, via platforms such as YouTube, it is possible to observe black South African vocal groups performing in a variety of contexts without the need for travel.210 Also there are more general collections and world music song books that feature several of the South African pieces. The examples I have assembled in this chapter, however, constitute a key body of resources from which many of the British amateur choirs I have encountered have constructed their own repertoires of South African songs. We have seen how some songs, such as

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209 Ibid.

210 See for example, Soweto Gospel Choir, ‘Nkosi Sikelel (South African National Anthem)’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdNHRja4k or The Drakensberg Boys Choir, ‘Shosholoza’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suJmOw0GGvI (both accessed 28 January 2016). The latter contains performances of individual voice parts.
'Senzenina’ and ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’, have appeared in several resources and this has helped them to become particularly popular among choirs.

Examining the activities of authors, cultural go-betweens and project facilitators has revealed some of the many different circumstances and ideologies underpinning the creation of resources for teaching and learning, and we have developed an understanding of some of the many challenges that are faced during different collecting journeys. Some projects have been centred on concepts of revival or preservation, whilst others have included initiatives to enhance intercultural understanding and awareness and have highlighted the strong relationship between singing and political activism. We have encountered issues relating to representation and authenticity, but we have also witnessed some of the more direct politics of access as we followed the journeys of those who travelled to South Africa as part of their projects. In these instances, we saw how apartheid affected their creative journeys and we became aware of some of the more domestic problems collectors had to negotiate. These challenges, obstacles and negotiations will return again later when we discuss the travels not of the collectors themselves but of the choirs they have fed.

Finally, by considering both the personal and professional backgrounds of collectors, we have discovered how decisions concerning interpretation and representation can be analysed and understood in numerous different ways. For some, collecting was not initially a primary objective: they entered into this task unexpectedly, without any prior training or knowledge of appropriate presentational styles. Decisions were made quickly and sometimes there were few opportunities for choice. For others, the process of collecting was pre-planned which therefore meant that specific songs and/or presentational styles were sought out. We have also been introduced to some of the different types of performance aesthetic that collectors have sought to emphasise, ranging from encouraging users to experiment and make the songs their own, to an
insistence on studying ‘authentic’ practice. These and other aspects of performance practice will be discussed in greater depth in chapters three and four.

Whilst we have explored the procedures of collectors and been introduced to some of the songs they have discovered and shared, we have, as yet, only scratched the surface with respect to the transplantation of these songs and the ways in which they have flourished in their new environment. What happens to these songs next? Who takes over their transmission, and what challenges do these new protagonists face? Which materials have been the most effective and why? Have certain modes of transmission made certain songs more popular than others? It is these questions that will guide us through the next chapter.
Chapter 3
Black South African Choral Music in Rehearsal: The Dynamics of Cross-cultural Teaching and Learning

This chapter explores some of the principal methods by which black South African choral music is transmitted and rehearsed by British amateur singers in a variety of teaching and learning environments, both within and beyond the UK. By concentrating on a set of representative examples, it discusses the extent to which the work of those people and resources encountered in the previous chapter have influenced these different pedagogical approaches, whilst also identifying some additional tasks and decisions that teachers must face for themselves. The questions I now address include: On what basis do teachers select songs? What sorts of roles and responsibilities do teachers acquire? What sorts of challenges are faced when preparing to teach, and how are these challenges negotiated? Also important are the responses of learners. It is they who are on the receiving end: they must absorb the knowledge that is disseminated by their teachers. What challenges do learners face and how do their teachers take these on board? These questions are explored in relation to theoretical discussions surrounding the dynamics of teaching and learning within specific cross-cultural contexts as well as more broadly.

At the beginning of this study I introduced the different types of choir I encountered during the course of my research. I explained that, whilst many of these choirs shared policies of open-access and followed similar approaches to the democratisation of the singing voice, they each carried their own specific identities. I also outlined some of the different connections with South African musicians and communities that have developed within certain singing circles. It is to a more in-depth exploration of these various pockets of choral activity that this chapter, and indeed the
remainder of the study, now turns. In the discussion at hand, it is ensembles’ musical directors who take the spotlight. It is they who must find ways of transmitting black South African songs with methods that will cater for both their own needs and the needs of their groups. Achieving this balance is not always straightforward and there are often adjustments to be made by both parties. By exploring the teaching and learning procedures of specific choir leaders and members, we will gain an understanding of what these transformations might involve.

The information that provides the foundation for this chapter is derived from a representative set of interviews I conducted with choir leaders and members over a four-year period between September 2012 and August 2016. I also discuss material recorded at rehearsals and workshops in Britain and South Africa that I attended during this period as a participant-observer. In addition I reflect on my own experiences of teaching black South African choral music in a variety of contexts. These include my small world music ensemble at the University of Manchester (my home institution), my twelve-month position as musical director of a University of the Third Age (U3A) singing group in my home town (Urmston in Trafford), and my role as teaching assistant to the Open Voice Community Choir (also based in Manchester). Audio extracts from my fieldwork are included to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of some of the various pedagogical methods I describe.

**Teaching Black South African Choral Music to British Amateur Singers: Towards a General Approach**

In a questionnaire distributed at the 2014 Natural Voice Practitioners’ Network Annual Gathering, I asked: ‘How do you go about teaching the [South African] songs to your groups?’ The twenty-six respondents, all of whom were choir leaders based in Britain, referred to the same set of rehearsal procedures. Similar procedures were described by
interviewees to whom I posed the same question. I also encountered these teaching stages directly during rehearsals and workshops I attended throughout my research period. I have therefore identified a general methodology for transmitting black South African choral music to British amateur singers, and indeed to amateur singers in the West more broadly. Here I provide a brief overview of the different components that constitute this teaching system, before dissecting each one in turn. The stages are as follows: contextualisation, pronunciation, music-learning, musical layering, and movement. I am not suggesting that these steps must be carried out in the order presented here: teachers might vary the placement of instructions or might omit a stage altogether. Yet this set of procedures provides a grounding in the form of a set of guidelines that can be followed.

The ways in which teachers choose to interpret the system I have described are influenced by a series of factors. These variables can be discussed in relation to what Mark Smith describes as ‘learning terrains’.211 For Smith, ‘different settings will offer a novel mix of resources and opportunities for learning and will have contrasting expectations associated with them’.212 He also asserts that particular knowledge may be shared when stimulates by particular settings.213 Smith’s assessments have certainly resonated throughout my observations of teaching during choir rehearsals, workshops, rallies, and study-performance camps in South Africa. I have witnessed how these different environments have influenced both the types of resources used and the ways in which the information contained in them is communicated to learners. If, for example, an individual teaches songs on a picket line or during a march, he/she might select material

213 Ibid.
with particularly repetitive music that involves only a few words. These words might even be in English to bypass the need for tackling pronunciation. Songs featuring call-and-response figures might also be favoured in these situations. Here the main objective is to quickly learn material that is to be performed in the moment for attracting attention and emphasising political messages. The teaching process is quite different during an intensive residential singing workshop in South Africa, however. We will learn more about the specific itineraries of such events in chapter four, but their usual intentions are to provide participants with detailed teaching concerning cultural context and performance aesthetics. Although presenting opportunities for learning songs from a variety of traditions, the primary focus of Village Harmony’s South African camps is on South African songs, which are always taught by a South African musician. In light of these circumstances, the teaching process lasts much longer: cultural context, pronunciation, part-learning and movement are all covered in great detail. The emphasis in these situations is placed on preparing a polished performance that has been developed over a longer period of time. By contrast, the teaching that takes place during rallies is intended to produce rapid results that allow for almost instant participation. Physical surroundings and intended uses, then, must be considered when discussing different pedagogical approaches.

The learning terrains I explore are not just constructed around social and geographical spaces, however. The pursuits of teachers themselves can arguably have an even greater effect on how knowledge is disseminated. In their 1991 volume Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger argue for teaching and learning to be viewed as independent analytic concepts.214 In a similar vein,

Patricia Shehan Campbell suggests that ‘the contrast in the role of the teacher and learner is considerable’. These distinctions are acknowledged to some extent in my own discussion. Teaching describes the process by which knowledge is transmitted, whereas learning refers to how such knowledge is received by specific participants. Yet in many of the examples I present, the separation is not always so pronounced. Before transmitting black South African choral music to their groups, musical directors must inevitably take a series of preparatory steps, all of which involve aspects of research, revelation and familiarisation. How and where songs are gathered and learnt can affect greatly the ways in which teachers deliver information to their groups. Moreover, the experiences gained during these preparatory processes might shape the ways in which teaching and learning environments are constructed. Considering the learning backgrounds of teachers is therefore important when exploring the different learning terrains in which the transmission of black South African choral music occurs.

**Searching for Needles in Haystacks: The Quest for Cultural Context**

The exploration of different learning terrains becomes particularly significant when discussing how musical directors attempt to situate songs within their original cultural contexts. This task usually constitutes the beginning of the learning experience. Teachers feel unprepared and uncomfortable about transmitting material unless they have researched the meaning of its text and its performance context. Becca Flintham, musical director of the West Berkshire-based community choir Sing the World, reflects on this part of the teaching and learning procedure in more detail:

I share the song’s meaning (which I always try to research beforehand) and history/context.
I try to explain in what setting a song would be sung, and by whom, and why. Translation
might be word for word, or paraphrasing.\textsuperscript{216}

For musical directors like Flintham, though, establishing songs’ cultural contexts has a
deeper significance than simply learning about their meaning. It is a task motivated as
much by responsibility as by curiosity. Liz Powers, who has directed Manchester
Community Choir since 2008, elaborates:

When we’re teaching and performing these songs, it’s important that we do them justice.
Some people won’t have heard this music before, and it’s our duty to try and give them a
well-researched representation of its cultures.\textsuperscript{217}

For other musical directors, researching cultural contexts forms a large part of the process
of repayment (‘giving something back’ to the cultures of origin) that underscores their
cross-cultural teaching and learning activities. Natural voice practitioner Beth De Lange
is particularly articulate in relation to this view:

I feel we owe these people a huge debt. We can do lots to pay it back, but I think that
providing accurate translations and presenting songs with the correct meanings goes a very
long way. We’re speaking on behalf of these cultures in a way, aren’t we, so we need to do
what we can for them.\textsuperscript{218}

Such approaches and concerns relate to issues of responsibility surrounding processes of
cross-cultural teaching and learning on a more general level. They are rooted in what Ted

\textsuperscript{216} Questionnaire response, Becca Flintham, January 2014.
\textsuperscript{217} Interview with Liz Powers, 5 June 2015.
\textsuperscript{218} Interview with Beth De Lange, 8 May 2016.
Solís describes as the ‘angst born from serving as ambassadors (or at least local consuls) for cultures to which [one] only equivocally belong[s]’. 219

Debates concerning authenticity, authority and power relations occur frequently within such learning environments. The transmission of African music has often created further complications, however, and has caused discussions surrounding the politics of access and encounter to become more urgent. With reference to world music ensembles in the United States, David Locke comments on the political baggage that has become associated with the learning and performing of African music. He explains that, whilst on the surface such activities might seem to be ‘focused on making good music, learning about unfamiliar music-cultures, and fostering international good will’, they are in fact haunted by problems concerning ‘global relations of power and issues of social justice’. 220

In the case of the majority of the musical directors I have encountered, these tensions have been recognised and, as we are beginning to understand, have resulted in particularly strenuous research concerning songs’ meanings.

Exploring how this research process is carried out unearths some intriguing points for discussion. Many teachers have their own opinions concerning where the most valuable and reliable information is located, and are equally certain about who to consult. For some musical directors, getting as close to a source as possible provides the most reliable information. Achieving this closeness might mean attending workshops given by native South African musicians and community members. The nature of the contextual knowledge disseminated within these learning environments is often quite specific. Culture bearers might share detailed and personal accounts concerning songs’ meanings.


In November 2013 I attended a workshop in London directed by black South African singer Joyce Moholoagae. Now based in the UK, Moholoagae leads singing workshops in schools and art centres. Her repertoire usually focuses on jazz and popular music and she teaches both a cappella and with instruments. On this particular occasion she was teaching songs from the anti-apartheid movement. The event was directed predominantly at primary school teachers, but anybody was invited to join. The idea was to encourage teachers to share these songs with their pupils to increase awareness about South African history and about multiculturalism as a whole. The first song Moholoagae taught was ‘Shosholoza’. For me this song was not new: I had encountered it on television and was also taught the parts during a rehearsal of Manchester Community Choir. At this rehearsal Liz Powers had connected the song with miners and had also explained its significance during sporting events. When Moholoagae introduced ‘Shosholoza’, however, she shared some rather different information. She explained that the song was performed as an anthem of encouragement during protests and rallies, but she also shared some more personal details:

> When Nelson Mandela was released from prison there was such a big celebration. I remember joining crowds of people in South Africa and we went to see him appear publicly. We were so excited and we sang lots of songs on this day. Shosholoza was one of those songs and it always reminds me of this day.²²¹

Here Moholoagae allowed participants to access her personal memories and supplied the song with a context and meaning that was highly specific. Her memories reminded participants that some of these South African songs are actually part of people’s real life experiences.

²²¹ Transcript of field recording, Workshop directed by Joyce Moholoagae, 9 November 2013.
I witnessed a similar phenomenon whilst participating in a study-performance camp in Cape Town organised by Village Harmony. This was directed by Matlakala Bopape, the conductor of Polokwane choral society, whom we encountered in chapter two. Bopape taught a variety of folk, religious and struggle songs. Her primary intention was to ensure that these songs were contextualised:

I think it’s really important that people know what these songs are about. They can’t learn this properly until they come to South Africa and listen to a South African telling them. They need to experience the song in its home culture and they need to listen about the roles these songs have had in people’s lives.222

When introducing each song, then, Bopape always provided a lengthy description of the tribe or cultural group with whom it is usually associated and of the sorts of contexts in which it would be performed. This dissemination of local knowledge was not confined solely to the rehearsal room, however. Throughout the camp, Bopape allocated time, usually in the evenings, to share her own memoirs of growing up under the apartheid regime, as well as stories of other significant moments she had witnessed or experienced while being raised in South Africa. On another occasion during the same camp, we were taught a song that praised the work of the headmistress of a primary school in Langa township. Not only did we learn this song at the school, but we were also introduced to its subject and were able to perform for her. This, of course, provided us with a very specific kind of cultural context. Again, the significance of songs in people’s daily lives was emphasised.

It is interesting to explore how participants of these events responded to the contextual knowledge that was provided. Many attendees of the Moholoagae workshop referred to the ‘authenticity’ of the information and explained that it provided them with

222 Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 16 August 2013.
a realistic portrayal of the meanings of the songs they were learning. This helped them to connect with the music. For participants of the Village Harmony camp, the information communicated by Bopape was treated with similar respect. As one participant put it: ‘We are receiving a historical account that is so raw… I don’t think I could find this sort of thing anywhere back home.’

It is surprising that participants accept without question the authority of the story-teller as a cultural insider and seem to assume that their personal experience is representative of an entire population.

From a more critical perspective, however, things are not so straightforward. Both Bopape and Moholoagae were sharing information that was derived partly from personal memories. These were their own perceptions and experiences and their own ways of recounting stories and events. As Veit Erlmann reminds us, ‘Human existence requires more than one person, one viewpoint … the view of totality can only be a fragmentary, partial one.’

In the case of Bopape, personal and social background is particularly important to consider. She was a political activist during apartheid, which could impact heavily on how she tells certain stories or recalls specific events. Also, on this occasion Bopape was teaching in Cape Town, which is not where she is usually based. There were some occasions, then, on which she was operating at least in part as a cultural outsider. It is therefore possible to see how personal and social backgrounds can sometimes affect the type of information that is provided even if the person giving such information is believed to be a cultural insider.

Having a choir member or teacher who has either travelled to South Africa or been taught by a South African can contribute greatly to the learning experience of others. I witnessed this during a rehearsal of the West Midlands-based community choir Rough

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223 Informal conversation during Cape Town camp, 9 August 2013.
224 Nettl, The Study of Ethnomusicology, 150.
225 Erlmann, Nightsong, 12.
Diamonds. This ensemble has developed a relationship with the Diamond Choir, which is based at a diamond mine near Pretoria. Along with their musical director Hilary Davies, some members of Rough Diamonds have travelled to South Africa to learn from and perform with the Diamonds. At a rehearsal I attended, they were singing a party song they had learnt at a social event during their time in South Africa. For those who had not participated in this expedition the song was new and they were learning parts for the first time. As part of the introduction, Davies and her team of travellers shared memories of the social event they had attended and explained the environment in which they had learnt the song. The conversation included such elements as: ‘Do you remember when we drank all that beer and then somebody started teaching us the song? We were all dancing and everybody was joining in.’

Those learning the song for the first time responded positively to these stories. One choir member said the information was ‘extremely useful and refreshing’, explaining:

> It just gives things a bit more meaning doesn’t it? It’s more personal and I think this makes you feel a bit more connected with the music. I know I wasn’t there, but it’s nice that I’m singing with people who were.

This again challenges the notion that teachers and learners assume separate roles. Here it was choir members as well as their director who were sharing information. These members are usually the principal learners.

Opportunities to work directly with South African culture-bearers have, of course, not been available to all of the musical directors featured in my study. Other methods of contextual research have therefore been pursued. For some teachers, the background information and translations provided in songbooks constitute the most efficient and

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226 Transcript of field recording, Rehearsal of Rough Diamonds, 14 November 2013.
227 Personal communication (informal post-rehearsal conversation).
trustworthy sources to share with their groups. This research method is employed by Frances Bernstein, who conducts the Leeds-based choir Free Range. This choir has a particularly intimate connection with South African songs, a relationship that has been forged through Bernstein herself. Bernstein was born in South Africa during apartheid, and her parents were white activists who worked closely with the ANC. Her own father was arrested and tried alongside Nelson Mandela. As a young child Bernstein was forced to flee South Africa and take refuge in Britain, where she has since been based. In order to pay tribute to her father and keep alive her political and emotional connections with South Africa, she has created a presentation titled Sing Freedom, which her choir has performed in a variety of schools, theatres and other arts venues. This presentation combines spoken text and black South African choral music. This music is predominantly, although not exclusively, based on material from the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Interestingly, Bernstein has not collected any songs in South Africa itself: she has instead relied on workshops as well as written and electronic resources. She finds the latter particularly useful for learning about cultural context. She discusses this in relation to the collections compiled by Pete Seeger and Anders Nyberg, resources she uses frequently:

I think the information and translations in these books are really useful. To me, they are accurate enough. The information has been collected from South Africa and I’m sure the sources Seeger and Nyberg used would have been reliable.228

Other directors approach such channels of information more cautiously. Bolton-based Moira Hill leads Cadenza Women’s Choir and Bolton Clarion Choir, as well as other singing groups and workshops in the Greater Manchester area. She uses songs from Nyberg and Seeger’s collections regularly with her choirs. To some extent she finds these

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228 Interview with Frances Bernstein, 18 June 2014.
resources useful: she enjoys teaching the songs and she finds the guidelines concerning rhythm and pronunciation ‘quite informative’. Yet she is more tentative when studying the translations provided for the songs:

I’m quite careful about how I present these translations. They certainly show us roughly what a song means so I think they’re okay in that respect, but I don’t think they are always completely accurate. Nyberg’s book does not contain word-for-word translations and they are much more poetic. It makes me wonder if anything has been exaggerated or changed or lost. Also, if you look at the same song in a different songbook, the translations and information about cultural context etc. is not always the same.

Hill’s musings raise two points ripe for critical discussion. Firstly, she alludes to the complexities surrounding processes of translation. For Hill, a translated piece of text does not necessarily convey a song’s literal meaning in a pure and unadulterated fashion. There are often choices and inevitable adaptations that must be made. In the case of Nyberg’s collection, several of the English language texts provided for the songs, including ‘Singabahambayo’, are not literal translations. Rather, the text has been moulded specifically to fit the melodies (often with the English words appearing directly beneath the notated melody and the text in the original language) so as to make the songs more singable and easier to learn. This also makes it possible for singers to alternate verses in e.g. Zulu and English, thereby ensuring that the message is understood by listeners. Sometimes when songs are translated literally, words can no longer fit with the melody, meaning that the option to perform them in English is not available. In these circumstances, then, the general meaning of text is maintained but some words or expressions are changed. Caroline Bithell discusses further the nature of the adaptations associated with processes of translation within anthropological and ethnomusicological

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229 Interview with Moira Hill, 16 May 2015.
230 Ibid.
contexts: ‘As ethnographers, we set out to translate cultural practices in a way that allows others – far away in space, history and psychology – to understand meanings and mind-sets.’\(^{231}\) This raises questions about what exactly might be changed, and what might be added or lost during such processes, while also drawing attention to the role of specific ‘others’ to whom a translation might be addressed. To some extent, Hill seems to view Seeger and Nyberg’s translations in a similar light, preferring to present them as possibilities rather than definitive accounts. By this token, it becomes difficult to contextualise songs in a straightforward manner.

Further problems may occur if two different songs have the same title. A case in point is ‘Schumayela’, a title featuring in Nyberg’s songbook and in Mollie Stone’s *Vela Vela*. The text of the former reads: ‘Shumayela ivangeli!’ and then as a second verse ‘Mali hambe ivangeli!’\(^{232}\) This is translated as: ‘Come let us preach the Gospel.’\(^{233}\) Stone’s version, as well as using a different melody, contains only the words ‘Shumayela ivangeli’.\(^{234}\) The translation is near identical to Nyberg’s, ‘Preach the Gospel’, but the cultural context is presented quite differently. Whereas there is nothing in Nyberg’s presentation of the song to suggest that it is anything other than a purely religious piece (one of the ‘songs of praise’ indicated by the book’s subtitle), Stone’s version is framed much more politically. She emphasises the importance of the song in the South African anti-apartheid movement, explaining that it is one of many church songs that were appropriated during the struggle. This is reinforced by instructions for dance movements that include stomping and pretending to hold AK47s. The sentiments in this version, then, are quite obviously revolutionary.


\(^{232}\) Nyberg, *Freedom is Coming*, 27.

\(^{233}\) Ibid.

\(^{234}\) Stone, *Vela Vela*, 10.
The sorts of complications that multiple versions of a song can cause are exemplified in a thread in the Natural Voice Dialogue Group (hosted by Yahoo) from October 2013 concerning ‘Schumayela’. This online forum is designed to present NVN members and interested others with opportunities to share songs, experiences, advice and problems. On this occasion, Ana Hayrabedian, natural voice practitioner and musical director of Bradford Voices, recounted a situation in which she had been shown the song ‘Schumayela’ on YouTube by a choir member. The member had voiced an interest in learning this song but Hayrabedian was reluctant to teach it because she knew nothing about its background. She therefore posted a request to the Natural Voice Dialogue Group, writing:

I wondered if anyone out there has already taught it & if they had any dots. I don’t know anything about the song, what it’s about, why it’s sung etc. The dance did look fun though.

If anyone could enlighten me I’d be most grateful.235

Hayrabedian’s reference to a dance might suggest she was presented with Mollie Stone’s version of Schumayela. This is difficult to verify, however, as a simple YouTube search ‘Schumayela’ brings up several different versions of the song, and more than one of these includes dance. Each version I watched was performed by a different ensemble. Initially, some NVN members actually pointed Hayrabedian to the Nyberg version. Choir leader Ros Walker had then stirred up the mixture by introducing a version she had learnt during a workshop given by Northern Harmony, the semi-professional touring group that is part of the Village Harmony enterprise. Walker does not mention Stone by name but, since Stone has travelled to Britain with Northern Harmony on several occasions, it is likely that she is referring to her version. After much speculation and further research, fellow

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NVN members decided that Hayrabedian had indeed been presented with Mollie Stone’s take on ‘Schumayela’, and she was directed to Vela Vela. Hayrabedian reflected on this ‘Schumayela’ uncertainty during an interview I conducted with her a year later. For her, the research process and the help of other list members had been extremely valuable:

I really don’t like teaching a song if I don’t know anything about it. I like to know what it means and who sings it. I’m usually quite good at finding this out…. If I’m watching and listening to things on the internet, though, it’s complicated because they don’t always give a source. Also, like with ‘Schumayela’, if different versions exist it’s really hard. It was useful to talk to others about it because now I’ve found the right version and I’ve got all the information I need. It turns out it was really important information too.236

Similar complications arise if a musical director has encountered the same song in different settings. In October 2013, during a rehearsal of Manchester-based community choir Open Voice, musical director Carol Donaldson began teaching ‘Thula’, a traditional black South African folksong. Whilst most members were familiar with this piece, there were a few who were hearing it for the first time and so Donaldson firstly provided some information concerning its context:

I think this song is a lullaby… This is what I was told but then I think I was told something differently at another point. I don’t really know… I’ve learnt this song in so many different places that I can’t quite remember what I was originally told. Also, it probably means something completely different in South Africa depending on who you ask so I don’t think we should worry too much.237

Donaldson’s musings about ‘Thula’ address further the complexities of recontextualisation. Firstly, she highlights the fact that the same song can travel to groups and individuals via different routes. This often creates a ‘Chinese whispers’ effect,

236 Interview with Ana Hayrabedian, 8 October 2014.
237 Transcript of field recording, Open Voice Community Choir Rehearsal, 5 October 2013.
whereby information concerning a song’s cultural context changes gradually as it is shared throughout time. Donaldson, like the majority of other choir leaders in this study, has encountered South African songs through what Anne Rasmussen describes as ‘a patchwork of experience’.238 Learning songs in multiple locations and from different perspectives is common for those in world music circles, as Solís has noted.239 It is equally common, then, for teachers to lose track of songs’ meanings. These many-layered journeys offer a new vantage point from which to consider issues relating to schizophrenia, the concept employed by Feld (following R. Murray Schafer) to describe what happens to sounds when they become separated from their original sources or contexts.240 This process of decontextualisation is usually discussed in relation to the popular music industry and scholars tend to explore the impact of technology in transforming and/or enhancing sonic environments. Here, however, the focus is not on technology but on people. As a song is shared and passed on it gradually transforms, as people bring their own experiences and ideologies into the equation. In these cases, songs are not mixed in a studio: they are affected predominantly by word of mouth.

Such transformations also initiate debates surrounding authenticity. Whilst some teachers view acts of decontextualisation as dangerous obstacles that complicate the learning process and threaten the integrity of people and cultures, others, like Carol Donaldson, are more accepting. In fact, they find that learning the same song from multiple perspectives is more representative of cultural diversity and reminds them that performances can and should be open to interpretation. Here notions of tradition and


240 Feld, ‘From Schizophrenia to Schismogenesis’.
authenticity are represented in terms of change and continuity, rather than as stagnant and monolithic.

There have, of course, been some situations that have caused justifiable concern. Maggie Hamilton, the author of Sing Freedom, recalls a problem that occurred during a concert in which one of the songs in her collection was being performed. The item was introduced by the choir conductor as a wedding song and was performed with happy faces and energetic dance moves. Hamilton remembers ‘feeling absolutely horrified, because this song is usually sung at funerals in South Africa. I did have to stand up at the end of the performance and explain to people that this was the case… I just couldn’t let that one go.’ Hamilton acknowledges that a song’s meaning is often hard to pin down but this does not, in her view, absolve its users of all responsibility: of course it’s difficult to find out exactly what something means. People might get it slightly wrong or they might forget or they might be told lots of different things, but I think these sorts of mistakes really should be avoided. People should do enough research to get a general idea and I don’t understand how things should change completely like that.

Donaldson’s second observation is that songs’ meanings can be just as varied in South Africa as they are when presented in workshops and rehearsals in the UK. Noel Lobley explores similar territory in his 2008 article ‘Taking Xhosa Music Out of the Fridge and into the Townships’. Here he presents discoveries from a project that involved ‘taking ethnomusicological sound recordings out of archives and connecting them with the people whose music they capture’. In this particular example, the

241 Interview with Maggie Hamilton, 3 March 2015.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Lobley, ‘Taking Xhosa Music out of the Fridge’.
245 Ibid., 181.
material had been selected from archival recordings of Xhosa music from the Eastern Cape, collected by Hugh Tracey in 1957 and stored at the International Library of African Music (ILAM) located in Grahamstown, South Africa. These recordings were, according to Lobley, ‘almost entirely unknown to the Xhosa musicians living on ILAM’s doorstep’. The intentions of the project were to examine what happened when these recordings were presented and reintroduced to musicians from townships in the local area. Participants were asked what the songs meant to them and to their communities. Lobley identifies a recording of the song ‘Somagwaza’ as that which generated the most animated discussions. ‘Somagwaza’ is a favourite of workshop leaders within NVN circles. It was encountered in the previous chapter as part of Pete Seeger’s *Choral Folksongs from South Africa* collection and has also appeared in slightly different versions in a variety of other sources, including Ysaye Barnwell’s *Singing in The African American Tradition*. The information featured in Seeger’s book informs us that the song is performed by boys at the end of ceremonies that celebrate their initiation into manhood. Whilst singing, the boys run down to the river where they wash away the ceremonial clay that covers their bodies. A quotation from the translator is used to explain that, like many American nursery rhymes, the song ‘cannot be translated’ because its specific meaning has long been lost. Similar information has featured in different sources. Moira Hill encountered ‘Somagwaza’ in the second *Voiceworks* collection, which also links the song’s origins to boys’ initiation ceremonies. This source, though – like Barnwell’s – belongs to a

246 Ibid., 182.
249 *Choral Folk Songs*, Seeger, 26.
250 Ibid.
second set of sources that give variants of the translation ‘A boy who holds [or carries] his own stick [or spear] no longer needs his mother’ (identified in some cases as an African proverb). Rather like ‘Schumayela’, the existence of multiple versions of ‘Somagwaza’ and the stories that accompany it has sometimes caused confusion within NVN circles. This confusion was increased in May 2014 when NVN member Janet Stansfeld attended a conference at which the song was taught by Susie Digby. On this occasion, Digby had presented the piece as ‘Mamagwaza’, describing it as a party song for all the family. Stansfeld, however, had originally encountered ‘Somagwaza’ some years earlier and at that time it had been presented as a South African initiation song that accompanies male circumcision ceremonies. Since she now wanted to teach the song, she was seeking advice from fellow practitioners concerning its actual meaning.

In this case, the lack of clarity was by no means confined to singing communities in the UK. When Lobley and his colleagues presented Tracey’s recording of ‘Somagwaza’ to musicians from townships in the Eastern Cape, there were also several discrepancies surrounding the meaning of the song. Tracey’s field notes claimed that the piece was a praise song sung by Mpondo men and women in thanks to their chief when he had killed a beast for them. Yet the majority of Lobley’s participants connected the song with male initiation ceremonies. One Xhosa elder explained that the song was performed by men only, to accompany circumcised boys returning from their initiation ceremonies in the bush. Whilst some agreed with this explanation, others insisted that it was no longer valid and stated that the song’s meaning had changed over time. Another elder, this time a woman, explained that whilst originally the song had been intended for

252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 Lobley, ‘Taking Xhosa Music out of the Fridge’, 188.
255 Ibid.
married men only, it was now also performed by married women.\textsuperscript{256} One group of Xhosa musicians informed the project team that they used the first line of the song during live performances that incorporated electronic instruments such as guitars and keyboards.\textsuperscript{257} Here, then, locating any final or definitive meaning of ‘Somagwaza’ was virtually impossible.

Lobley’s project allows us to view the debates about ‘Somagwaza’ within natural voice circles in a new light. It is clear that Lobley’s participants could not agree on the song’s meaning. To some this was unimportant and they were more interested in the song’s recontextualisation. Should people become overly concerned, then, about locating a song’s definitive meaning? Would this be a never-ending search? Should musical directors focus more on recontextualisation, and would this be in fact more ‘authentic’?

For East-Midlands-based director Sally Brown, processes of recontextualisation are significant when transmitting and rehearsing many black South African songs. She explains how this is pertinent to the teaching of her ensemble Choir Invisible:

\begin{quote}
Of course it’s important to know what a song means or originally meant, but I think it’s much more important for a group to make it their own. If we’re singing an anti-apartheid song, we can’t really put ourselves realistically in that situation and I think it would be wrong to do so. We can’t imagine how traumatic things were and we don’t want to be acting that out. We need to change the meaning of a song so it relates to us and there’s enough going on in the current world for us to be able to do that.\textsuperscript{258}
\end{quote}

Here Brown is accepting and indeed, recommending recontextualisation in a way that repositions it as an opportunity rather than a threat: she is not afraid to clothe songs with new meanings that may sometimes take them far away from their original performance

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid, 189.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{258} Interview with Sally Brown, 10 October 2013.
contexts but make them more meaningful to her own singers. An example of this is the song ‘We will walk with him’, which originally referred to supporting Nelson Mandela, but is used by Brown’s choir in both a religious setting and as a more general expression of solidarity.

Brown’s attitude towards recontextualisation is rather similar to ideas advanced by Michelle Kisliuk and Kelly Gross. Reflecting on their own experiences of teaching BaAka music and dance to university students in North America, they highlight the importance of recontextualisation: ‘we must actually become hyper-aware of the radical recontextualisations involved in the presentation of any “world music” and perform with our particular awareness in mind.’

For these authors, the main objective is not to recreate the atmosphere of a specific ritual or performing context. Rather, their concern is to produce learning and performing experiences that are relevant to the students themselves. Again, then, acts of interpretation and transformation are applauded. These processes of recontextualisation can also be understood in relation to Christopher Small’s assertion that:

… the meaning of a song, or indeed of any piece of music, is not just that of the text on the page. That’s just the beginning of it. Only when a song is performed will its multiple layers of meaning reveal themselves.

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260 Ibid.

Taking the American protest anthem ‘If I had a Hammer’ as a case in point, Small
discusses how certain images or styles of songs are particularly suitable for
appropriation. He lists several situations in which the hammer, as in the original version
of ‘If I had a Hammer’, could symbolise an instrument for creating social change. For
Small, ‘musical meanings are not permanent and stable … but are labile and changeable,
with each new context in which performance takes place’. This idea is therefore highly
similar to those articulated by choir directors like Sally Brown.

From the various situations I have described, a pattern has begun to emerge. Although people have sought different methods for contextualising songs, the challenges faced have been quite similar. The idea (or feasibility) of conducting accurate and reliable research concerning cultural context and translation, although deemed possible by some, has been questioned. Will people ever reach a unanimous agreement about a song’s meaning? Will any method of research be truly reliable? We have seen how some teachers have been more interested in the creative potential of recontextualisation and in adapting or relating songs to the ideologies of their own ensembles. Is this approach the best option? Is it indeed the most authentic or informed option? All of these questions will continue to define this initial phase of the teaching process.

**Learning the Text**

After attempting to contextualise or recontextualise a song, teachers will usually turn to its text. This text must be transmitted in ways that allow it to enter choir members’ short and/or long-term memories. Some musical directors teach words by ear, taking each line and asking their ensembles to repeat it until they have mastered it to a satisfactory degree.

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262 Ibid., vii–x.
263 Ibid., ix.
Other directors supply word sheets: these might be A4-sized (to be given to each choir member) or in a larger format (to be pinned on walls during rehearsals or workshops).

Aspects of Thomas Turino’s worldbeat model (as outlined in chapter one) are pertinent during text learning. For many, a song’s language constitutes its exotic or ‘foreign’ flavour that unleashes its attractive power.264 In the case of black South African songs, it is often the sounds of the words and the excitement people experience when learning to produce these sounds that is especially appealing. As we discovered in the previous chapter, the South African material accessed by British amateur singers is predominantly in Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho, all of which are click languages. In Xhosa there are three types of click, and it is the idea of learning to make these click sounds that is often seen as particularly novel and exciting. Open Voice member Alan Mazonowicz elaborates:

I just love listening to and trying to make those click noises. This is really one of the things that attracted me to this music. To be honest, though, I do like the sounds of the South African languages I’ve sung in more generally. It’s just something different, isn’t it? Learning to make these sounds requires me to access a different part of my brain that I probably wouldn’t use much otherwise so it just gives me something different to think about. It’s almost a relief really to get away from my normal English conversations.265

As well as referring to the attractiveness of sounds, Mazonowicz highlights the theme of escape, of accessing a part of himself that he would not ordinarily experience. He is not alone in this feeling: many musical directors and choir members have explained how learning to sing in a different language allows them to explore and try on a different identity. On some occasions this new persona constitutes a form of release. For Liz Powers,

264 Turino, Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music, 338.
265 Interview with Alan Mazonowicz, 5 July 2013.
learning to sing in a different language is just so refreshing. It puts me into a whole different world and I can often just forget about what I’m doing later or tomorrow and just really focus on this less stressful environment.\textsuperscript{266}

Ana Hayrabedian shares similar views. She explains how her choir members often respond more quickly to songs in a foreign language:

When I teach English songs people get too bogged down with the words somehow. I’m not sure what it is … they just don’t always get into it as much. When I teach songs in different languages, like Xhosa or Zulu or something, they really get into it. They just love it.\textsuperscript{267}

Since the early 1990s, concepts of self-experimentation and transformation have been particularly pertinent to critical discussions concerning the notion of identity. Stuart Hall has notably described identity as ‘a process of becoming rather than being’.\textsuperscript{268} Identity, Hall argues, is not so much about ‘who we are or where we came from, [but rather] what we might become’.\textsuperscript{269} Similar interpretations of identity are found in the literature surrounding cultural tourism. For Jeremy Boissevain, the tourist experience often encourages guests to don a ‘new, temporary identity that necessarily incorporates some elements that are the opposite of the habitual personality and behaviour.’\textsuperscript{270} Whilst Mazonowicz, Powers and Hayrabedian do not resemble tourists in the conventional sense, the ideas of escapism they articulate relate strongly to those addressed by Boissevain. For these choir members and leaders, learning a new language presents opportunities for stepping away from their usual habits and escaping into an alternative mindset.

\textsuperscript{266} Interview with Liz Powers, 2 February 2016.
\textsuperscript{267} Interview with Ana Hayrabedian, 8 October 2014.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.
Whereas some teachers and learners welcome opportunities to master unfamiliar sounds, others are rather more self-conscious. For them, this process initiates further debates surrounding cultural authority. In the case of the South African songs, it is the click sounds that are often seen as problematic. Some directors avoid teaching any songs containing clicks because they feel unsure about how to produce them correctly. Others will substitute clicks with a similarly sounding consonant. The latter approach was taken during a rehearsal for Sing for Water North that I attended in May 2013. On this occasion the leader was teaching the song ‘Hamba Ka Ncane’, a Zulu folksong meaning ‘walk gracefully, you people of modern days’.271 The C in the word ‘Ncane’ requires the click sound that is produced by the front of the tongue, which Pete Seeger associates in his pronunciation guide with a tutting sound.272 During the rehearsal, however, it was decided that this click would not be attempted. Instead participants were to use a hard C consonant. The musical director in question explained the reasoning behind her decision:

I know some people can do this click and they’ve spent ages learning how to do it properly but I’ve decided we won’t do that here. It’s hard to get everyone doing the same thing and we don’t want it going horribly wrong.273

She then recounted a situation in which her own choir had attempted a song with its relevant clicks and had been approached by a South African who had explained that they were in fact turning the word into something rude. They had been using the wrong click. This experience made the musical director feel reluctant about teaching clicks.

It is also worth noting that the Sing for Water rehearsals usually include members of several choirs from across the region. These gatherings are therefore usually extremely crowded: it can sometimes be challenging to hear and it is easy to misinterpret

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272 Choral Folk Songs, Seeger, iv.
273 Transcript of field recording, Sing for Water North Rehearsal, May 2013.
instructions. Communicating information such as click sounds, then, can be particularly complicated in these situations, as the musical director of my rehearsal hinted. This reminds us of the significance of learning terrains. Certain environments can complicate attempts to communicate particular aspects and/or sounds of languages. Clicks would be especially difficult to negotiate in a large room of over fifty amateur singers, some of whom might never have sung a South African song before.

In other learning settings, problems concerning pronunciation are more general, but they can still be associated with anxiety surrounding authority and unfamiliarity. I experienced the nature of some of these fears during the course of my own teaching of South African songs. When I presented my U3A choir with the song ‘Ipharadisi’, most of the singers became perceptibly tense. One member asked if I would be providing word sheets and when I answered ‘no’, chaos descended. People were talking loudly, insisting that they would never be able to remember or pronounce the text. Some were more jocular, explaining that their memories ‘aren’t what they used to be’.274 After further thought I decided to distribute the written words, but this did little to improve matters. People became so involved with how things were written that they found it difficult to follow my tips about pronunciation. They preferred to speak what was on the page rather than learn aurally. The sounds they made were extremely quiet and under-confident as heads were buried in sheets of paper. Further obstacles were caused by the fact that the choir only rehearsed once a month and so, even though I managed to familiarise members with some sounds by the end of the practice, by the time of their next meeting we were back to square one: almost everybody had forgotten the progress we had made during the previous rehearsal and so I was greeted once again by the same tense and self-conscious atmosphere.

On reflection, I identified three issues raised in these practices. Firstly, some of the members were not regular performers: some had not sung for many years, whilst others had barely sung at all. A few members were more familiar with being in a choir but they had never sung South African songs or indeed any songs in a different language. The prospect of accessing and exercising a part of the brain that was not used regularly became a daunting challenge. Another problem was that ‘Ipharadisi’ has a clear religious meaning conveyed in its text (that we may one day join the dead in Paradise). People were concerned about affecting this meaning by pronouncing words incorrectly. This in turn caused members to question their right to perform this piece. Was I to be trusted with this task of transmission? Would they be able to get it right without offending or violating a culture which they knew nothing about?

Carol Donaldson has discussed some of the techniques teachers have employed to overcome these problems. She explains that, although I was having a difficult time with ‘Ipharadisi’, the South African songs were often particularly well suited to those new to singing in different languages: ‘Quite a few of them only have a few words and they repeat over and over again. Once you say the phrases a few times people tend to latch on to them quite quickly.’ Donaldson also describes how she sometimes teaches the text in rhythm. In her experience, people tend to tackle pronunciation more easily when they know how the words fit with the song itself. Movement might be encouraged at this point, as Donaldson explains:

> Getting the body involved can really help, I think. It makes people loosen up and it gives them something else to do while they’re speaking the text. It’s a sort of distraction, I suppose, but it kind of makes people more relaxed.

275 Interview with Carol Donaldson, 22 September 2015.
276 Ibid.
Teachers might suggest clapping, slapping thighs, or using some other type of body percussion to help increase familiarisation with rhythmic patterns. Liz Powers reflects: ‘This way you’re sort of killing two birds with one stone. They’re getting into the text but they’re also coming to terms with the rhythm.’ The importance of the body in processes of rhythmic entrainment is highlighted by Steven Black in his 2011 article ‘The Body in Sung Performance’. Black argues that ‘Making music together involves coproducing sound in time (often in rhythmic time). The body is usually a primary resource for synchronizing with other performers.’ This idea is discussed in relation to his own observations of a rehearsal of a Durban-based Zulu gospel choir. He explains how, when practising some songs, the ensemble would perform a simple four-step movement that corresponded with the basic beat. This movement caused the group to sway backwards and forwards. According to Black, ‘the embodied feeling of producing the foot and body movement provided an experiential grounding for rhythmic entrainment along with visual perception of others’.

Other musical directors approach language-learning initially by presenting their choir with nonsense words. This might proceed in a call-and-response fashion, with words being spoken or sung. Once choir members become comfortable with these sounds and treat them as fun and meaningless, words with actual meanings might be casually thrown in. Before a group knows it, they have learnt a song in a different language and fears about pronunciation have not even been considered.

Further solutions to linguistic challenges may be found by seeking advice from culture bearers. Choirs might contain members of South African origin who are able to

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277 Interview with Liz Powers, 2 February 2016.
279 Ibid.
provide some assistance with pronunciation. Alternatively, friends or relations might be called upon for help. For Paul Wilson, co-director of Wren Music, involving culture-bearers is essential for learning language ‘in the most respectful and authentic manner’.  

He insists that, with the growing developments in technology, there is no excuse for doing it badly. You don’t need to rely on your own interpretations of written resources or even recordings. You can easily call somebody up on Skype and get them to give your choir a lesson there and then. You can FaceTime on your phone… You can do so many things that don’t even mean you need to travel to South Africa.

These perceptions bring to mind Marshall McLuhan’s concept of ‘the global village’. Directors are encouraging global interconnectedness and enhanced intercultural understanding by making use of technology and celebrating cultural diversity. As a primary culture bearer, Matlakala Bopape feels particularly inclined to provide intense language coaching in her workshops:

Part of my job is to prepare people as if they belong to my culture. They need to know the language. They need to know how the pronunciation works. Otherwise they’ll just be laughed at or misunderstood when they perform in South Africa. What’s the point in that?

A similar standpoint is taken by Hardja Susilo, this time in relation to teaching Javanese Gamelan in North America. Much of his teaching methodology, he explains, is ‘geared towards students getting ready to go to Java’. Like Bopape, Susilo wants his students to feel more like cultural insiders when performing in Java. He wants them to

280 Interview with Paul Wilson, 25 February 2014.
281 Ibid.
282 See McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.
283 Interview with Matlakala Bopape 15 August 2013.
feel at ease and to be understood rather than alienated. Learning language and conquering difficult pronunciation is part of this preparation process. Taking time over the language, then, is important for these teachers, and indeed for most of the teachers encountered in this chapter.

**Learning the Music**

In most of the ensembles I have studied, the vocal parts for black South African choral music are, like those of other ‘world songs’, taught by ear. This learning method serves two purposes. Firstly, as I have explained elsewhere, the majority of members do not read music notation, a form of learning that is usually avoided in singing circles connected with the natural voice ethos. Secondly, even when teaching more classically-oriented ensembles, there is a tendency to transmit South African songs aurally. Musical directors tend to believe that this is the most ‘authentic’ and respectful way of disseminating the material, given that it belongs to cultures in which aural transmission is considered the norm. The order in which parts are taught depends on the structure of the piece. With songs such as ‘Freedom is Coming’, it is usual to start with the bottom three parts. These serve collectively as a sort of response figure to each phrase of the main melody. In this example, musical layering, which I explore in the next section, actually occurs here: teachers will often ask the bottom three parts to keep singing and will teach the melody line on top. Liz powers explains: ‘It tends to give people a bit more context. I think it’s easier to learn the melody if you’ve got the other parts going … it just sort of fits better.’

For songs such as ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ or ‘Thina Siswe’, however, it is more usual to start with the melody and teach each part separately. The song is often only put together when all parts have been taught.

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285 Interview with Liz Powers, 2 February 2015.
In some cases, the rehearsing of vocal parts is enhanced by processes of informal learning. Patricia Shehan Campbell discusses the distinction between formal and informal learning in terms of individual responsibility: ‘In formal settings it is the teacher who is responsible for imparting knowledge, whilst informal learning holds the learner responsible for obtaining the information.’

As we already know, choir members often seek additional opportunities to learn South African songs that take them beyond the confines of their usual rehearsal settings. They might attend workshops, camps and rallies, where they might learn the same song more than once. If they bring these songs back to their rehearsals or if directors happen to have encountered the same songs and decide to teach them, those who are already familiar with vocal parts can assist other members. This happens regularly in natural voice circles. In these situations, the distinction between the teacher and their learners is less pronounced: those who are usually learners might take on a teaching role. At other times, the teacher may need to be reminded of a particular part and some choir members may step in. In this case the teacher becomes the learner, again demonstrating that the boundaries are not always set in stone.

There are further ways in which the distinction between teaching and learning becomes blurred during this musical part of the transmission process. For some musical directors, the idea of teaching parts by ear is new and requires them to embark on their own learning journeys. A case in point is Carol Bowns. Bowns is a classically trained musician who, as well as directing a number of community-based groups, has organised a series of world music projects and workshops in primary and secondary schools. She has also conducted a series of classically-oriented choirs. She reflects on some of the benefits of written resources in her own learning of South African songs:

286 Shehan Campbell, Lessons from the World, 81.
Reading the music just means I can learn a song quickly and easily. I guess it’s just the method I’m the most comfortable with. I might listen to recordings on YouTube to get an idea of how the song might be performed by a South African group… I listen to different vocal techniques etc. but learning the parts from the recordings would take me ages and I find it quite hard. I just pick things up quicker when I’ve got the dots.\footnote{287 Interview with Carol Bowns, 5 February 2016.}

When rehearsing any world songs with her choirs, however, Bowns prefers to teach the parts aurally. For this to happen, though, she has had to adapt her own learning style, a process that she initially found challenging:

I found it really difficult to remember all the parts properly. I would have to refer to the music quite a lot and this wasn’t encouraging some choir members. Some of my groups can read music and if they saw me doing it they wondered why they just couldn’t have the dots in front of them too.\footnote{288 Ibid.}

Here we see another instance of how accessing a different part of one’s brain can at first be difficult: coming to terms with something new and experimenting with alternative identities and habits does not always produce successful results overnight. For Bowns, however, the South African material was particularly useful for learning this new mode of transmission:

The parts are really easy to pick up, aren’t they? Lots of the songs have quite straightforward tunes and predictable harmonies. Sometimes if I temporarily forget, say, the alto part, I can sort of work it out.\footnote{289 Ibid.}

Finally, she reflects on the advantages of teaching and learning these songs by ear:

I did give one group the music once when we were learning a South African song but they were just so stiff. It actually took us longer to learn the parts somehow. When I teach without

\footnote{287 Interview with Carol Bowns, 5 February 2016.}
\footnote{288 Ibid.}
\footnote{289 Ibid.}
the music it’s so different… People really listen to each other and we get a song together really quickly and are able to turn it into a great performance.290

Additional advantages to transmitting South African songs aurally are discussed by Sara Brown, musical director of Coastal Voices and Bangor Community Choir in North Wales. Brown is unable to read musical notation and so relies exclusively on her own memories and recordings of workshops and singing events she has attended, alongside audio material from the internet. Brown believes that her inability to work with written music has actually enhanced her own teaching of South African songs. Firstly, both of her ensembles prefer to learn by ear as the majority of members are not music readers. Also an aural learner, then, Brown sees herself in ‘the best position for communicating things in ways they will understand. We’re on the same wavelength and I think this really helps. I think it makes my planning easier.’291 Secondly, by attending workshops and absorbing all their information aurally, Brown feels inspired to create similar learning experiences for her choirs that are based on her own memories and interpretations of these events.292 She elaborates:

I can really latch on to different sounds because I’m not always thinking about how I might transcribe them or how they might appear in a score. I can concentrate on the moment. I might forget the parts when I go home but I can easily pick them up again when listening to the recordings, and when I do that I remember the energy of the day and the people who were there. I can bring this all back to my choir.293

This multi sensory approach to teaching, for Brown, helps to stimulate and animate choir rehearsals.

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
In other situations, musical directors feel less inclined to leave their comfort zones and choose to teach and learn songs with musical notation. An example is Aimee Presswood who, between 2013 and 2014, conducted The Cosmo Singers. Based at the University of Manchester and consisting predominantly of music students, this auditioned SATB choir operates quite differently from the majority of ensembles we have encountered thus far. Rather than focusing on the performance of world songs and more folk-inspired musical material, the ensemble usually presents concerts of Western choral pieces and musical notation constitutes their primary learning tool. In March 2014, however, this group temporarily changed its course by performing a concert titled Songs from Around the World, which, alongside traditional pieces from countries such as Hungary and Macedonia, featured the songs ‘Shosholoza’ and ‘Thula Baba’. Presswood was brought up in South Africa, which might be assumed to provide a sense of connection with, or affection for, these South African songs but she does not operate as a cultural insider, in part because she is white and in part because of her training as a professional musician in the Western mode. Presswood explains that she transmitted these songs to the choir with the help of musical notation for a variety of reasons:

I needed to teach the parts quickly because we didn’t have a lot of time… I’m not used to learning by ear and neither are most of the group so it was just better to do it this way. In the end we performed ‘Shosholoza’ without music because people could remember the parts… It’s easier to remember and some people had already heard it before, but we did use music to learn.294

The potential complications of using written transcriptions to learn songs similar to ‘Shosholoza’ and ‘Thula Baba’ were discussed in the chapter two in relation to paper resources such as those created by Pete Seeger and Anders Nyberg. Presswood also

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294 Interview with Aimee Presswood, 23 June 2014.
acknowledges some of these difficulties, but she remains confident about her own teaching methodology:

At first I thought I was going about it in the wrong way. Of course in South Africa these songs are probably usually transmitted aurally and I felt like we weren’t being authentic and things might get uncomfortable. Then at some point I just decided I really shouldn’t get too caught up in this because we would probably have ended up not doing them and that’s not good either. Why shouldn’t we put our own stamp on them? We usually learn with music, so why not stick to this? We’re not trying to be South Africans, are we really?\textsuperscript{295}

It is interesting that Presswood emphasises the idea of making the songs her own, and is seemingly unapologetic about this decision. Similar sentiments are expressed by Ted Solís:

Try as we may, we will never really make our gamelan performances Yogyanese, or our marimba events Chiadanecan. Apology is futile; should one apologize for not being what one can never be?\textsuperscript{296}

Like Presswood, Solís questions the need to become distracted by attempts to recreate traditional learning and performing styles. He believes that such attempts would produce ineffective results. For Presswood, the potential danger of becoming overly preoccupied by thoughts of learning vocal parts authentically was musical isolation. Patrick E. Johnson has examined authenticity as a cause of cultural isolation in his 2003 volume \textit{Appropriating Blackness: Performance and The Politics of Authenticity}.\textsuperscript{297} Whilst he explains that expressions of authenticity can enable ‘marginalized people to counter

\textsuperscript{295} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{296} Solís, ‘Introduction, Teaching What Cannot Be Taught’, 12.
oppressive representations of themselves’, he also argues that they can carry ‘the dangers of foreclosing the possibilities of cultural exchange’.298

Yet it is curious that some ensembles perceive aural learning as unfamiliar and at odds with their usual habits. As Patricia Shehan Campbell points out:

The aural acquisition of musical phrases is considered by at least some Western educators to be a necessary phase in the development of the musician and to facilitate music literacy and understanding.299

There are certainly circumstances when, usually during childhood, people partake in aural transmission. Learning nursery rhymes, for instance, is normally an aural process. In addition, as Shehan Campbell notes, ear training is offered as part of many university music courses.300 As people become more familiar with music notation, however, aural learning occurs less often and may soon be relegated to a different time or place in the mind. It therefore seems difficult or obscure to resurrect old habits. Moreover, learning nursery rhymes usually occurs gradually and is not associated with a formal lesson situation. It is not a process that is slaved over and people will probably forget how and where they did it.

A further dilemma that often arises during the part-learning process concerns vocal technique. Particularly within natural voice circles, debates surrounding how black South African choral music should be sung have often hung over the rehearsal setting. These debates have in part been catalysed by the release of resources compiled by Mollie Stone and Village Harmony. As we discovered in the previous chapter, these electronic songbooks advocate the use of quite a specific vocal timbre that is produced by the head

298 Ibid.
299 Shehan Campbell, Lessons from the World, 104.
300 Ibid.
voice and demands a heavy vibrato. This technique is advertised as being ‘authentic’ and, according to the resources that promote it, it is how South African choirs perform. For some musical directors, encouraging this operatic sound has been successful and their ensembles have responded positively. Christine Nelson, for example, insists that it ‘really gets people singing loudly and freely and they have great fun’.

Nelson directs the N-choir, an open-access all-female singing group based in Bramhall. In October 2014 I attended a rehearsal in which this group were learning the Tswana song ‘E Marabini’. Nelson began by teaching the melody part, instructing the group to ‘sing it as though you were a huge operatic diva. You really have to go for it. I’m told this is very South African.’ The choir immediately responded and the sound was loud and confident. One participant said:

This really gave me a buzz. I was using a part of my voice that I haven’t often used and it was really pushing me but it also allowed me to just go for it. I sort of forgot all my aches and pains, all my worries of the day [laughs]. It was brill! That’s why I love the South African songs.

In other cases, however, adopting this vocal technique is viewed as unnecessary. In reference to the Village Harmony resources, Sally Brown insists:

Just because it comes from South Africa it doesn’t mean it’s right. I don’t understand Village Harmony when they tell us we have to learn songs in this operatic style. We don’t have to… I’ve heard some South African choirs singing in a more gospel style and using more guttural sounds. They use their chest voices but not this more classical or operatic sound. That’s just one way. It’s awkward to make people sing like that if it doesn’t feel right. It’s not me and it’s not my choir… It just sounds fake and unrealistic if we try to do it.

301 Interview with Christine Nelson, 5 September 2014.
302 Transcript of field recording, rehearsal of N-choir, 5 October 2014.
303 Personal communication (informal conversation during rehearsal), 5 October 2014.
304 Interview with Sally Brown, 10 October 2013.
It is for these reasons that Brown and her choir, and indeed the majority of other choirs whose rehearsals I have observed, have opted to sing South African songs with a hearty chest voice. In many ways this approach ties in with the NVN’s ethos of finding the voice and allowing it to be released. For many practitioners, using the chest voice presents opportunities for vocal and physical release, and this is yet another reason behind the attractiveness of the South African material.

It is worth considering Brown’s observations further. Here we encounter a similar problem to that experienced by Presswood. An expression of authenticity is being suggested, but Brown has decided to build on other knowledge and make compromises and adaptations to avoid discomfort and awkwardness. These tensions can be viewed in light of Gage Averill’s concepts of ‘musical transvestism’ and ‘ethno-drag’. Whilst attempts are made to don a different musical skin, the appearance is still only a costume: the overall characteristics of a group or person remain visible, and the fact that the music has been appropriated cannot simply disappear. For Averill, then, the idea of reproducing the performance aesthetics of other cultures does not create pure and unadulterated representations. There is still an element of theatricality. From a postmodern perspective, this idea of musical transvestism might hold more positive connotations. The concept of experimenting with different identities could be viewed in terms of transformation rather than awkward imitation. Its place in Averill’s argument, however, is to emphasise the idea that authenticity cannot be reached. For Sarah Westcott, leader of the political choir Sea Green Singers (based in Oxford), the situation is quite similar. She argues that, try as they might, community choirs like hers will never

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... sound like a black South African choir. To me they always just sound really English… Sometimes it’s a bit uncomfortable actually, but are we really expecting people to just turn into someone else?  

These queries again relate to dilemmas faced by Kelly Gross during her teaching of BaAka music in North America. She ponders over types of sound that are expected of her ensemble:

Is it the sensation by which, if you closed your eyes, you could imagine yourself back in the forest with your BaAka friends? Or is it a positive feeling that comes from our particular group doing the best with the materials we have learned and incorporated?

For Michelle Kisliuk, the answer lies somewhere in between: she argues that the objective is to create a ‘melding of sounds (and experiences) of both here and there’. Yet despite these possible solutions, there is still room for much debating. Questions relating to sonic production will continue to linger during choirs’ rehearsals of South African songs.

It is often during the part-learning process that challenges concerning rhythmic interpretation are particularly pertinent. All of the choir leaders I interviewed, as well as those who responded to my questionnaire, explained how they found rhythmic patterns especially difficult to transmit. For Liz Powers, communicating rhythm is

... really one of the most tricky parts of teaching the South African songs. People can’t get their heads around the syncopations and they tend to try and sing things straight or too Westernised.

Powers normally tackles rhythm during the part-learning process as she thinks that people respond better when they have a melody with which to connect. Sometimes she will

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306 Interview with Sarah Westcott, 24 February 2016.
308 Ibid.
309 Interview with Liz Powers, 2 February 2016.
encourage movement to help with tackling syncopation: she asks participants to step from left to right in order to establish a primary beat and then sings the passage over this pulse. As Michelle Kisliuk and Kelly Gross point out, it is unsurprising that Western performers are sometimes slow to adjust to rhythms outside of their usual musical habits. With reference to their own cross-cultural teaching, they refer to rhythm as one of several sociomusical adaptations that Western learners are required to make. Rhythmic challenges, then, are not unique to the teaching and learning of South African songs, but they undoubtedly assume a particularly strong presence during this process.

As in the other teaching and learning stages I have discussed, the involvement of primary culture bearers can impact greatly on approaches to learning music. They often reveal extra details concerning performance techniques and aesthetics that can enhance the overall learning experience. The Village Harmony camps in South Africa constitute a particularly intriguing example. As I explained earlier, Matlakala Bopape is the principal teacher of the South African material, but she also employs several members of Polokwane Chorale as teaching assistants. Throughout rehearsals, these extra bodies (usually one per part) stand among the participants to reinforce melody lines, demonstrate vocal timbres and assist with dance moves. Many Village Harmony campers have responded positively to these additional teaching aids and have been inspired by the specialist advice they have offered. As well as participating in rehearsals, the Polokwane singers will also present full performances of songs before they are taught. This is something that participant Amanda Thomas found particularly beneficial:

It really helped me understand how the parts would fit together when we were learning them.
Sometimes it can get a bit tedious and you don’t always know how it will come together.

Kisliuk and Gross, ‘What’s the “It”’, 254.
When I heard our South African friends, though, it made me more excited about learning my part because I knew what the finished product might sound like. \(^{311}\)

In these situations, then, the input of primary culture-bearers contributes greatly to the music-learning process.

There are some instances, however, in which primary culture-bearers can unintentionally complicate this part of the learning process. The main issue is that, in most circumstances, these culture-bearers must adapt their teaching methodologies to suit Western singers. They might have to become familiar with certain vocabulary or emphasise specific elements of the music they are teaching, processes that may not be necessary in their usual rehearsal settings. Further adjustments may be made if these teachers are operating outside their home country of South Africa. They may be required to become used to different climates, different teaching spaces and even different rehearsal etiquettes. All of these factors can affect the structuring of their learning terrains. In April 2015 I attended a seven-day singing workshop at Laurieston Hall, a residential community located in South West Scotland. This Victorian mansion has long-standing connections with groups and individuals belonging to and associated with the NVN. The venue has played host to numerous natural-voice-style events, including women’s singing weeks and other world-song-related gatherings. Harmony Week, the event I attended, is an annual project that invites choir leaders from different locations to share musical material from around the world. Its principal organiser is Kate Howard. Sometimes Harmony Week is focused on the music of a specific culture, and a practitioner from that culture is invited to provide a series of intensive workshops. In April 2015 the theme was South Africa, and it was advertised that the Cape Town-based composer and choral conductor Bongani Magatyana would travel to Laurieston to teach

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\(^{311}\) Ibid.
traditional South African folksongs as well as some of his own compositions. Magatyana was not the first South African to lead workshops at Laurieston: Matlakala Bopape had, in fact, taught songs at a women’s singing week several years earlier. For Harmony Week, however, the involvement of a South African teacher was something new.

Magatyana has taught Western singers in South Africa with Village Harmony since 2013. Harmony week, though, constituted his first visit to the UK. During the course of this event, there were several noticeable self-adjustments that Magatyana had to make. Firstly, he had to adapt to Howard’s strict timekeeping. At the start of the week his sessions always began at least twenty minutes late, but for him this was not an issue: ‘Everything starts late in South Africa’, he insisted. In fact, Magatyana found it rather difficult to negotiate the more western social expectations around which rehearsals should be focused. He explains:

In South Africa rehearsals are so relaxed. We can be coming and going, we can be getting out our mobile phones, we are sometimes getting a beer … it’s fine.312

This relaxed approach manifested itself in several ways. The week was particularly wintery and snow regularly fell around Laurieston. Magatyana had never experienced snow and he would rush outside in his T-shirt during rehearsals and skip around energetically whilst the flakes covered his body and face. At first participants responded happily to these distractions and encouraged Magatyana to enjoy his experience, but this changed as time progressed. One participant explained how these unexpected disappearances were affecting the learning experience:

312 Interview with Bongani Magatyana, 13 April 2015.
It’s hard enough to remember your part when it’s taught to you but if he keeps coming and going in the middle I’ll never remember it. The whole thing becomes quite disjointed and he comes back forgetting where he was up to.\(^{315}\)

Another participant commented on Magatyana’s tendency to rush through a song so he could go outside and enjoy the snow:

He would sometimes get half way through teaching a part and then say he would leave it there and come back to it tomorrow. He really wanted to be outside in the fresh air and with the snow. I can appreciate this but it did get a little challenging sometimes.\(^{314}\)

I also noticed how Magatyana referred regularly to tea breaks, parties that might happen later, and the possibility of food during the rehearsals. One wonders if Magatyana actually found it difficult to adapt to a different type of rehearsal setting. Was he aware of how a choir rehearsal in Britain would usually work? Was he simply trying to encourage singers to adopt the more South African approach to rehearsing? We he pretending that he had no idea of the rehearsal structure to which Lauriston participants were used to?

Communication problems can therefore occur as culture bearers adapt to their new teaching environments.

The challenges of learning directly from culture bearers are discussed further by Larry Gordon, co-director of Village Harmony:

Our foreign teachers do an incredible job of communicating their music to us. Sometimes, though, there are things they just can’t convey… Perhaps this is to do with a language barrier, or perhaps it’s just a cultural thing. This is where we come in because we can translate what they want into a language that participants might understand better.\(^{315}\)

\(^{313}\) Personal communication (informal conversation after rehearsal), 12/04/2015.

\(^{314}\) Personal communication (informal conversation after rehearsal), 14/04/2015.

\(^{315}\) Interview with Larry Gordon, 27 September 2014.
Here Gordon emphasises the importance of the cultural translator or go-between in bridging gaps and resolving pedagogical discords. It is they who must try to interpret fully the instructions of culture-bearers, and who must often present these in ways that will be more familiar to Western singers. This task becomes easier with time: Village Harmony teachers, for instance, have worked extensively with foreign transmitters and have become used to problems of translation. Even in these situations, however, there is no guaranteed solution: these teachers will probably not have mastered the music fully and so misinterpretations cannot be completely ruled out. The contributions of go-betweens, though, are clearly important. Relating to his own experiences of working with native practitioners during processes of musical teaching and learning, Gage Averill has spoken of ‘the complex human dimensions [and] cross-cultural pitfalls’ of relations that develop between master artists and their students.\(^{316}\) The examples I have just described highlight the types of complexities that Averill is referring to here, and we can see how the input of go-betweens can often help to create moments of resolution.

**Musical Layering**

After part-learning comes musical layering. In rehearsals of Western classical music it is normal to begin by running through a piece as it appears on the page or as it is designed to be performed. Parts will enter at specific points as indicated in the score. These parts might be isolated and/or dissected both prior to and after this run-through but, when attempting to fit parts together, there is usually minimal venturing from the original ordering. When assembling a South African song, however, the process is often quite different. Teachers might introduce each part separately, often starting with the basses. These voices will sing their whole part before the tenors enter and do the same. The altos then join and the melody line, normally allocated to the soprano part, will enter last. This

\(^{316}\) Averill, “‘Where’s ‘One’?’”, 100.
type of musical layering is particularly suited to many South African songs: they are quite often strophic or cyclic, meaning that each successive part can easily enter after each verse or full song. ‘Ipharadisi’ is a classic example of the sort of cyclic structures I am describing (see Figure 3.1). This song can be taught fairly quickly by layering voice parts in the BTAS formation mentioned above.
Figure 3.15. ‘Iphradisi’ in *Freedom is Coming* (1990 UK edition).

For other songs that have become favourites with choirs in my study (‘Freedom is Coming’, ‘Thula’ and ‘Siyahamba’, for example), musical layering is a rehearsal technique that produces successful results.

Whilst musical layering is by no means limited exclusively to South African songs, it often contributes to their lasting appeal for choirs of different sizes and experience. It was particularly attractive to members of my small world music choir at
the University of Manchester. The majority of members had never sung South African songs before attending, and some were not used to learning by ear. For Antonia Marsden, it helped significantly with the learning process:

When we first went through my part I thought I remembered it, but then by the time all the other parts had been taught I had completely forgotten what I was doing. If we had to then just perform it there and then I would have fallen apart, but when you suggested that we start with the basses and build up it all sort of clicked. I could remember from hearing the basses how my part would come in and I was just able to sing it.317

Susie Miles, also a member of this ensemble, had a similar experience. Before joining the choir, Miles had been deeply concerned about singing in public. At school she was told she could not sing and had apparently ‘hidden my voice away ever since’.318 She reflects on rehearsing the South African songs with my ensemble:

Well, I just thought I would completely go to pieces. You were teaching the parts really fast and I was so worried I hadn’t got mine down. I tried my best but when it came to putting everything together I was petrified. Then you brought the tune in first, and then the altos came in, and then I just sort of knew what to do. It was so satisfying… I just sort of fitted my part in with the rest, which is something I don’t think I’ve ever been able to do.319

It is notable that both singers mention their abilities to fit their parts in or predict how their part might sound. As we have discovered elsewhere, the melodies and harmonies of some of the songs are diatonic and based around I–IV–V chord progressions. These musical features are well-suited to encouraging quick and easy participation and, particularly when parts enter successively, singers can sometimes easily detect how their line fits or functions, even if they have forgotten or not yet learnt it properly.

317 Interview with Antonia Marsden, 24 October 2014.
318 Interview with Susie Miles, 3 November 2014.
319 Ibid.
Another observation made by both Miles and Marsden concerns gratification. They explained how, with the process of musical layering, a song is turned into a full performance quite quickly. Marsden elaborates:

It just sounds instantly satisfying. When each part comes in you get something slightly new and exciting. The song might have only taken a few minutes to learn but it sort of sounds like you’ve been working on it for ages.\(^{320}\)

Here songs are helping to speed up processes of self-confidence and self-gratification. This again constitutes another distinctive feature of the teaching and learning of South African songs. Compared to less familiar-sounding musical idioms – such as Corsica’s untempered, unmetered and highly melismatic polyphonic songs or Bulgarian folksongs with their sharp dissonances – the parts of songs such as ‘Shosholoza’ and ‘Ipharadisi’ are quick and easy to assemble.

Musical layering can also help to resolve logistical issues concerning size and attendance that choirs often face. Some of the ensembles I have encountered do not have a fixed membership, and directors are often quite relaxed about people coming and going as they wish from one week to the next. Some South African songs allow teachers to experiment with different combinations of musical layering if rehearsal numbers are low. Certain songs will still be teachable, even if only two of the four vocal parts are available. In some cases, such as in the song ‘Thula’, the bass part is extremely similar to that of the alto line. If, then, an ensemble was short of altos for several rehearsals, the song could still be taught. I faced this issue during several rehearsals of my University of Manchester world music ensemble. On some occasions our number was five or six only, and within that group we did not have an equal distribution of voice parts. Some singers felt uncomfortable with holding a part on their own, so I had to choose material that would

\(^{320}\) Interview with Antonia Marsden, 24 October 2014.
cater to this situation. My first thought was three-part Corsican polyphony, but often I had nobody who wanted to sing the middle voice part. Since this is the leading part, such a choice in music would not have worked. When I tried with some South African pieces, however, things were quite different. I was able to teach a song that, even when missing its alto part, could function fully as a piece in its own right. Manchester-based community choir leader Jules Gibb is similarly drawn to South African songs because of the flexibility many of them offer:

They just work. It doesn’t really matter how many people you’ve got. You can always fit them together in a way that is just right and that gives people so much joy and confidence.321

Musical layering, then, constitutes yet another of black South African choral music’s attractive powers, particularly during the rehearsal process.

Movement

I have already touched upon the role of movement in the transmission of black South African choral music, discussing the ways in which the body can serve as a device for rhythmic entrainment during the teaching process. We have witnessed how simple steps and sways from left to right and/or the use of body percussion can help to establish a foundational beat against which more complex rhythms can be introduced. For the majority of South African songs taught within British amateur singing circles, however, movement is considered far more than a device to enhance learning. It is, in fact, an integral part of their performances and, as Mollie Stone has emphasised, is arguably just as important as the singing.322 Within the ensembles I have encountered, the extent to which connections between singing and dancing are emphasised during the rehearsal process tends to differ depending on the needs and/or abilities of teachers and learners.

321 Interview with Jules Gibb, 9 July 2012.
322 Stone, Vela, Vela, 22.
In some cases, there is a strong emphasis on choreography and directors will gather information from visual resources or indeed their own fieldwork to deliver specific instructions concerning movement. In these instances, dance is treated as a specific stage of the teaching and learning process. In other situations, directors choose to avoid rigid choreography and might suggest some basic steps from left to right. They may also encourage participants to improvise their own movements. Finally, some teachers omit movement altogether, a decision that is often based on both logistical and moral reasons.

For Hilary Davies and her group Rough Diamonds, dance constitutes an important part of the rehearsal process. When teaching or revisiting a South African song, Davies leaves the movement until last, but she allocates a large portion to the rehearsal to ensure that each step is performed in a way that is deemed correct. She prefers the choir to all perform the same movements, and insists on running through the dance without the music several times before the two are joined together. Choir members take up a specific formation and time is spent to ensure that each person is in the correct position. This attention to detail is, for Davies, related in part to the group’s connections with the South African Diamond singers:

We have been taught a lot of the songs from them and of course then we did the dances as well. I suppose there’s no excuse really for me not to teach the dances but I enjoy it anyway. I think it’s a sign of respect and I’ll always try to watch choirs perform so I can teach dances for new songs.323

Sally Brown also sees movement as a part of the teaching and learning process that contributes to the development of intercultural respect and understanding. She has not worked extensively with South African singers, but she relies on visual resources such as those compiled by Village Harmony to fill this gap in knowledge:

323 Interview with Hilary Davies, 9 November 2013.
I always try to watch performers so I get an idea of how the movement might work. The Village Harmony books are great for that but I also watch YouTube videos etc. I’m not saying I always reproduce these movements perfectly but I have a go. I think it’s important that we try because it’s such an important aspect of the music.\textsuperscript{324}

Whilst Brown is not claiming to be an expert in the field of South African dance, she is emphasising the need to acknowledge it as part of the teaching and learning process. It is more about respect and responsibility than about accuracy.

In other learning terrains, however, coming to terms with movement is more complicated. In June 2015 I led a short workshop in London’s Wigmore hall, in which I taught a South African song to a group of visually impaired singers from around the UK. ‘Thela Moya’, a religious song celebrating the presence of the Holy Spirit, has an ABA structure. The A and B sections each contain a set of dance movements that involve both the feet and arms. After teaching the music I began to demonstrate these movements, a task that was a little more complicated given the participants’ lack of vision. I verbalised instructions, however, and those with some sight were able to assist those who were totally blind. Yet there was still a general reluctance within the group to try this dance. I suspected this was caused by shyness and by the fact that people could not see me. Obviously, I was also not able to see them and this only complicated things further. Taking these difficulties into account, I suggested we simplified the movements and asked participants to step from left to right. Having still detected reluctance, I decided to question the group directly: ‘Is there something in particular about the dance that you find difficult or uncomfortable’?\textsuperscript{325} One participant explained that she felt awkward, not just physically but also mentally. Rather than enhancing intercultural respect and

\textsuperscript{324} Interview with Sally Brown, 10 October 2013.

\textsuperscript{325} Transcript of field recording, workshop at the Wigmore Hall led by Kerry Firth, 24 June 2015.
understanding, she felt that partaking in this dance might have more dangerous consequences:

I don’t feel right. I feel like we’re intruding on something that we shouldn’t be. I think we’re all doing different things and to me that’s messy but it’s also making a bit of a mockery of things, I think. 326

Other members of the group murmured their agreement. It is curious that the same discomfort was not expressed during the music-learning process: people were willing to sing in another language and expressed no concerns about interpreting the click sound featured in the song. With the dance, however, came questions of authority. Because this was something completely new and out of their comfort zones, the singers felt ill at ease and intrusive. They believed they were trespassers capable of causing violation. In some ways these concerns revisit Gage Averill’s concept of musical transvestism: participants are being asked to don a different skin and experiment with unfamiliar dance moves, but they feel that this skin is merely a costume. They are neither themselves nor the other. The idea of lingering between the two, however, was viewed negatively by my participants. To them, this state of uncertainty was capable of creating colonialist caricatures and misrepresentations that could invade the integrity of people and cultures.

More than a year earlier I had witnessed the complete opposite during a rehearsal of the Cosmo Singers. They were learning ‘Shosholoza’ and struggling to memorise their parts. Some singers were not confident and the result was a timid sound. The notes were correct but the energy was minimal. When Aimee Presswood introduced physical movement, there was even more uncertainty. Members seemed unsure about singing and dancing simultaneously but were willing to try. After Presswood had suggested some simple steps, she encouraged the group to ‘do your own thing. Just move however you

326 Ibid.
want to and let’s see what happens.’ Immediately there was a change in atmosphere. Some members started leaping around the room and performing exaggerated hand gestures. Others then followed these more confident movers. The singing became suddenly robust. Some people dropped their music and decided to rely on their memory of the parts, which proved successful. There was a significant increase in energy. For Lizzy Humphreys, movement provided the missing link:

I just went for it and ended up dancing around the room. It might have been a bit much but it really gave me lots more energy to bring to the song. I sort of appreciated how much movement could contribute to the sound and it made me understand why it was so important to have a go. We toned it down in the actual performance, of course, but still I think it was an eye-opening experience really.

Here, then, the overall attitude was quite different to those participants of the Wigmore Hall workshop. Rather than feeling invasive, Cosmo Singers’ members felt enlightened and energised. Experimenting with movement contributed greatly to the sound they were making and increased their confidence as cross-cultural learners.

For others, movement creates difficulties of a more comic nature. I have spoken to countless choir members who have made comments such as ‘the men are just too stiff’ or ‘I just can’t sing and dance at the same time without breaking into hysterical laughter’. The idea of using parts of the body in new or unfamiliar ways is often difficult for people to negotiate. Some pieces require singers to dance in a different metre to the music, which can also be problematic. If opportunities are presented, though, people will generally try to join in with movement and do the best they can.

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327 Transcript of field recording, rehearsal of the Cosmo Singers, February 2014.
328 Interview with Lizzy Humphreys, 12 June 2014.
Reflection

In his volume *Facing the Music*, Huib Schippers argues that the primary challenge for those presenting world musics in educational settings is to ‘develop an understanding that is sensitive to culturally diverse realities but workable within specific educational environments’.

This, he explains, involves an examination of different interpretations and applications of ‘tradition, authenticity, and context’. This assessment has been pertinent throughout this chapter. By exploring a series of different teaching methodologies, I have demonstrated that the main difficulty for choir leaders during their transmission of black South African choral music concerns the achievement of balance. On one level they wish to deliver material in ways that respect its original culture: they attempt contextualisation, study vocal techniques and watch performances by black South African groups. They might also seek the advice of culture-bearers and obtain information from written and electronic resources. Yet various aspects of this music have made the quest for authenticity particularly problematic. Directors have become aware of the radical transformations that songs have undergone in their home culture and in so doing have struggled with processes of contextualisation. They have become equally aware of the difficulties and discomforts surrounding imitation and have opted instead for a more innovative approach. For some, this decision has been carried out with confidence: they have accepted that authenticity is a loaded term that does not have to involve a slavish adherence to a rigid set of rules. For them, the diversity of black South African choral music has been acknowledged and ideas of innovation appear to equate to a more faithful representation of the music they are transmitting. For others, however, it has been more of a challenge to part with imitative approaches and they feel guiltier about

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330 Ibid.
recontextualisation and reinterpretation. Yet no matter their take on authenticity, the ensembles I have encountered have, like those described by Kisliuk and Gross, created socioaesthetic contexts in which participants ‘can be neither fully themselves nor the other’. Attempts are always made to acknowledge certain aspects of the music but the teachers’ and learners’ own identities inevitably remain.

Throughout the chapter we have also become aware of how those collectors and project facilitators encountered earlier have shaped certain pedagogical approaches. Specific resources have supplied valuable advice for musical directors and have contributed to their own learning of South African songs. Yet there are still many decisions that teachers must face for themselves. They become intermediaries and, although collectors can supply some advice, they cannot give answers to everything. Teachers have still had to embark on their own journeys and transformations in order to cater for the needs of learners. As in the previous chapter, to say that a definitive catalogue of favourite songs has developed is problematic: teachers will always find new songs as they attend more workshops and gatherings. Moreover, new generations of choir members and leaders will bring fresh experiences and material to the table. There are, however, a number of songs that have become especially familiar in this chapter. These are: ‘Senzenina’, ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’, ‘Freedom is Coming’, ‘Shosholoza’, ‘Siyahamba’ and ‘Ipharadisi’. This body of repertoire certainly constitutes a representative example of the sorts of songs that are described as especially teachable and loveable.

Finally, we have seen how South African songs have often helped to ease some of the challenges surrounding cross-cultural teaching and learning as a whole. Their often repetitive structures, short phrases and few words have encouraged learners to try out new

331 Kisliuk and Gross, ‘What’s the “It”’, 252.
identities and new ways of rehearsing. These learners have enjoyed singing in different languages and have not always felt overwhelmed when experimenting with new vocal techniques and bodily movement. In fact, these aspects of the music have been a major source of its attractive powers and have caused both teachers and learners to welcome it regularly into their rehearsals.
Chapter 4

Black South African Choral Music in Performance:
Contexts and Connections

This chapter explores connections between black South African choral music and British amateur singing groups in relation to performance. By examining a representative selection of case studies, it investigates some of the many different contexts in which these singing collectives have performed South African songs, discussing the diverse cross-cultural encounters and life experiences (musical, non-musical, physical and psychological) that these presentations have created for both participants and audiences. Some of the themes and ideas explored in the previous chapter remain relevant in this discussion: we have seen how, during rehearsal processes, certain songs have initiated certain physical and emotional responses that often present opportunities for self-evaluation, self-discovery, and physical and mental release. For many of the singers featured in this chapter, these transformative powers of music are often even stronger during moments of performance, and opportunities for initiating cross-cultural connections of both a tangible and imaginary nature can also be enhanced. Solís writes that ‘the emotions engendered and engaged through the act of ensemble creation and participation are profound and volatile’, an observation that applies strongly to the singers encountered in this chapter.332 As we will see, though, many of these experiences are not just enjoyed by performers: South African songs are particularly well-suited to encouraging audience participation in different shapes and forms, and this participation can often initiate transformations of a musical, social and political nature among audience members. These sorts of responses are explored later in the chapter.

The information for this chapter is derived partly from interviews I conducted with British choir members and leaders where I inquired about experiences or anecdotes relating to specific performances. Material is also drawn from my own observations of concerts and singing events I attended across Britain during the course of my research, as well as from singing residencies in Corsica and Italy in which I participated during the summers of 2012 and 2014. Organised by Village Harmony, these overseas events involved several British singers alongside other participants from locations such as North America, Italy and France, and the programmes presented as part of the tour contained a number of South African choral pieces. My analysis of recordings and videos of choir performances found on YouTube have also provided scope for critical discussion. Finally, I present insights from my fieldwork in Cape Town and Johannesburg in August 2013 which, as well as involving visits to a number of black, white and multi-racial choirs, also provided opportunities for interviewing musicians and community members. This aspect of my research has revealed information and material concerning some of the many performance practices of choral groups in South Africa, which allows us to address some intriguing questions: To what extent do British performances differ from those in South Africa? Are there any unexpected similarities and connections between the ways in which the musical material is presented?

All of the examples I present will allow us not only to explore where and how South African songs are performed within British amateur singing circles but also to ask why. What are their functions within different presentations and what are the reasons for their inclusion in programmes and set lists? What is unique about the experiences and responses they generate? As we explore further the reasons behind performances, the functions of the songs, and the responses of participants and audiences, Caroline Bithell’s identification of the five orders of attraction that inspire music’s travels to global
audiences will become especially relevant.\footnote{Bithell, \textit{A Different Voice}, 167.} We will encounter groups and individuals who experience attractions of an aesthetic, affective, pragmatic, ideational and ideological nature that fuel their connections with South African songs and create positive performing experiences that inspire further presentations and enhance cross-cultural understanding.\footnote{Ibid.}

\section*{Considering Context}

In this chapter, the exploration of performance context covers several key areas. Within the framework of its discussion, performance settings are not only defined by physical space, but are also shaped by the behaviours and habits of both participants and audiences. The ways in which groups introduce songs, the manner in which they dress on stage, their formation, and the gestures and movements they employ during presentations are just some of the many factors that constitute performance context and can affect strongly the experiences of both participants and audiences. Nicol Claire Hammond, for instance, argues that ‘choral performance is at least partly about visual effect, and analysis that focuses entirely on sound is impoverished’.\footnote{Nicol Claire Hammond, ‘Singing the Nation: Negotiating South African Identity Through Choral Music’, in Eric Akrofi, Maria Smith and Stig-Magnus Thorsén, \textit{Music and Identity: Transformation and Negotiation} (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, African Sun Media, 2007), 21–35; here, 30.} Visual appearance is certainly relevant to the examples I describe: often the way in which a choir looks on stage can influence the type of sound they make and can communicate the aims and expectations of the specific performance. Moreover, groups’ formations and uniforms can present performers with opportunities to articulate both social and political identities. The examination of these different contextual elements creates numerous analytical possibilities. We can identify the principal ways in which British amateur singing groups employ South African songs
as part of their own performance agendas, and can discover intriguing differences and similarities between the musical and social approaches of different groups. We can also explore the extent to which performances initiate processes of recontextualisation of a musical, social and political nature. The ramifications of these different shifts can then be assessed critically.

We have already encountered some of the ways in which songs are altered and/or adapted as they are transmitted within a variety of rehearsal settings and are interpreted by teachers and learners from different social and musical backgrounds. These changes, whether deliberate or inadvertent, often cause material to acquire new meanings and functions that are quite distanced from those of their original settings. Processes of recontextualisation during performance work in similar ways. As songs are presented in different venues and are adapted to suit certain types of event, participant and audience, they can again be assigned new purposes or acquire new elements that are sometimes radically different to those given by their cultures of origin. Previous debates relating to the politics of access and encounter are ignited as we explore these transformations in greater depth. The now familiar issues of authenticity, authority and power relations are inevitably raised anew as groups incorporate songs into their repertoire in a way that resonates with their own performing ideologies. The musical and social decisions these groups and their leaders must confront can, to borrow Feld’s description of acts of musical globalisation, be ‘experienced and narrated as equally celebratory and contentious’.336 On the one hand, people accept that changes to songs often occur naturally and are confident in their celebration of such development. Yet others are more anxious and question their right to perform the music of a culture with which they are unfamiliar: they may feel self-conscious and uncomfortable about participating actively in the appropriation of this

music for fear of it becoming too exoticised or romanticised. Others again believe they are participating in some sort of awkward re-enactment of colonialism. Further problems may be caused by lack of research or adequate cultural knowledge, which might result in incorrect uses of a song and inappropriate performance practices. They might also be unaware of some of the complexities and incongruities that different modes of transmission and approaches to translation or interpretation can present.

The extent to which songs become recontextualised and detached from their cultures of origin during performance is not always so clear-cut. As Feld points out, musical styles and identities are becoming ‘more visibly transient, [and are] more audibly in states of constant fission and fusion than ever before’.337 These developments are usually associated with processes of globalisation, and as such it is often the Western musician or consumer who is seen as the main protagonist in acts of stylistic marrying and experimentation. Yet recontextualisations of a similar nature are also implemented by culture-bearers themselves, whether this be in response to globalisation or as a result of social and political changes in their own communities. In light of these musical advancements, notions of tradition as a static entity are questioned, and culture-bearers are often seeking to break boundaries and change or develop existing musical forms to move with the times. Such shifts might trigger musical revivals and transformations that see genres being updated and performed in new spaces and environments. The extent to which musics have been resurrected, re-examined, reshuffled and recycled within their own cultures has often meant that, when they are appropriated by communities from other places and cultures, their meanings and functions are often not so different from those found in their original settings. In this sense, it becomes more relevant to identify interconnectedness rather than to emphasise dislocation.

337 Ibid.
In the introduction to her 1990 volume Where is the Way: Song and Struggle in South Africa, Helen Kivnick refers to this flexibility within genres when she writes: ‘in South Africa the themes I think of as “church,” “kraal” (a circle of grass-and-mud huts), and “fist” run through all of black life, and music somehow weaves them together’. 338

**From the Participatory to the Presentational**

Within the British performances of South African songs I have encountered, the most conspicuous form of recontextualisation concerns, to borrow Thomas Turino’s terminology, the shift from a participatory to a presentational performing aesthetic. Broadly defined, participatory music-making is ‘a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role’. 339 Turino associates this performance category with activities such as singing in church, playing music informally with friends, community singing that takes place in bars and coffee houses, as well as with other similarly interactive events. 340 These types of performance are, for Turino, ‘more about the doing and social interaction than about creating an artistic product or commodity’. 341 Presentational performance, by contrast, refers to ‘situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing’. 342 As Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell note, such events usually require some degree of prior organisation: tickets are usually sold in

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340 Ibid., 25.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid., 27.
exchange for money, a transaction that sets up a series of expectations.\textsuperscript{343} Such expectations might cause participants to make musical decisions, whether consciously or subconsciously, in order to provide audiences with the types of experiences they are anticipating. Performers themselves also have their own expectations: they will probably want to be in their comfort zone on stage and will make various decisions or adjustments that allow them to feel secure with the music they are presenting. In these instances, then, the performance is a sort of showcase, an opportunity for participants to present a finished product that exhibits the fruits of their rehearsals.

The majority of multi-part black South African vocal music that is sung by British amateur singers is heavily associated with participatory music-making. These sorts of songs usually originate in churches, protests and rallies, moments of daily life such as work or celebration, and other events where a strong participatory aesthetic is encouraged. Rose, a member of Polokwane Choral Society, refers more directly to participatory music-making in relation to the types of multi-part South African songs that are often performed by British amateur singers:

These more folky and traditional things … everybody knows them. At a wedding somebody will start singing one and then everybody joins in. They can go on for hours… there’s no special start or finish and nobody is usually telling us how many times to sing this, how loudly to sing that. We just sort of move together. If we’re onstage and we are singing a traditional song, literally everybody joins in and they are dancing, singing, ululating, you know … it’s about everybody really.\textsuperscript{344}

The shift from participatory to presentational has been particularly prominent within the classically oriented groups I have encountered and have been a part of. An example of this transformation was witnessed in a performance of ‘Shosholoza’, given

\textsuperscript{343} Hill and Bithell, ‘An Introduction to Music Revival as Concept’, 11.

\textsuperscript{344} Interview with Rose (surname withheld), 18 July 2014.
by the Cosmo Singers during their ‘Songs from around the World’ concert in March 2014. As we discovered in the previous chapter, the event in question saw this choir, a classically-oriented group based at the University of Manchester, rehearsing and performing music that was quite different from their usual repertoire of Western ‘classical’ pieces. For musical director Aimee Presswood, the concert was:

... a great project that allowed us to venture musically into new waters. The choir were able to sing pieces from all sorts of places and it was just eye-opening for them, I think. The South African material was all part of this great experience.345

Yet whilst the repertoire itself might have been different to the typical choices, the overall dynamic of the concert was more suggestive of the ensemble’s usual presentational approach to performance. Like the majority of classical performances at the University of Manchester, this event was held in the Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall and there was a clear distinction between audience and participants: the former were seated in rows facing the designated staged area and the latter were positioned in standard SATB formation, dressed in black and carrying folders that contained the required musical scores.346 All items were led by a conductor. The performance was ticketed and had a set starting time.

‘Shosholoza’, which began the concert’s second half, was in several ways shaped to fit this presentational environment. In her role as conductor, Aimee Presswood provided each vocal part with its starting note, which was played on the piano. She then remained in front of the ensemble for the duration of the song, beating time and indicating repeats and specific musical dynamics. She also mouthed the words as a reminder. It was clear that the choir had thoroughly rehearsed the piece: transitions between dynamics

345 Interview with Aimee Presswood, 30 June 2014.
346 The Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall is part of the Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama. For the Music subject area, this also serves the function of a departmental hall.
seemed smooth and prepared. Moreover, there was a planned start and finish to the song. Finally, whilst a few listeners tapped their feet, nodded their heads or made some other small movements, the majority of the audience remained still and seated throughout, and thus conformed to the standard etiquette of Western classical concert life. Yet there were also aspects of this performance that demonstrated some understanding of the song’s musical and cultural origins. Until this point in the concert the choir had been standing still and, although the majority of the songs they were performing are rooted strongly in aural traditions, musical scores were used. For ‘Shosholoza’, however, the ensemble abandoned their music folders and performed off copy. In addition, the inclusion of some simple dance steps from right to left appeared to energise the group somewhat and seemed to create a rather more liberal atmosphere than that of the first half of the concert. On the whole, though, a presentational performance ethic was followed predominantly throughout.

In chapter two I explained how ‘Shosholoza’ was connected initially with South African migrants who travelled from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg by steam train to work in the diamond mines. Within this context the song would probably have been performed spontaneously by workers as a means for motivation, thus encouraging a strong participatory ethic. When the song was adopted by the anti-apartheid movement and performed during protests and demonstrations, its role was again surely predominantly participatory. The Cosmo Singers’ performance, then, set quite a different tone. This difference was, for me, even more pronounced by the fact that, six months earlier, I had attended a choir concert in the township of Khayelitsha where a fully participatory rendition of ‘Shosholoza’ had spontaneously broken out. The event, which started late and lasted around five hours, involved black ensembles from several townships in the Cape Town area and was organised to raise money for residents of Khayelitsha. The concert was not ticketed and both audience and singers could come and go as they
pleased. There was no rigid programme or schedule: audience members were allowed to choose who they wanted to perform and for how long via a process of bidding. The group who received the highest financial offer after each auction were to take the stage. ‘Shosholoza’ featured towards the end of the event and was presented by a group whose leader urged everybody ‘to stay together and to be united by the power of song’. After making this announcement, this leader moved into the main body of the ensemble and took a place in the soprano section. A tenor then delivered a vocal call that prompted everybody else to start the song. There were no specific notes given and no mandatory tempo was set. Within seconds the majority of the audience was on its feet, dancing, singing and ululating. The distinction between participants and audience was completely blurred: some of the spectators even pushed their way onto the stage, keen to become part of the choir. It was not obvious when the song would end and most singers wanted to make the performance last as long as possible. After around ten minutes, however, some singers began to slow down and the song was brought to a close. There were still some performers humming and singing the words after this point but these stragglers gradually faded. In this scenario, then, the atmosphere was clearly participatory: there was no rigid structure to the performance and no distinction between artists and audience. Moreover, the majority of people in the church knew the song well and there was obviously no prior rehearsal. The piece had no clear start or finish and the length of the performance had not been organised beforehand. Finally, this performance was more of a chance for social interaction than for musical exhibitionism: the primary objective was to involve as many people as possible to create the idea of a united front, and the emphasis was not placed on presenting an artistic product or commodity.

347 Notes from field recording, choir concert, Khayelitsha, 11 August 2013.
This is not to say that formal presentations of these types of multipart songs are absent in South Africa: they often appear on the concert stage and are performed in front of a distinct group of observers (‘the audience’). Choral competitions provide notable examples of more formal and rigid vocal presentations in which the distinction between artist and audience is particularly defined. As Markus Detterbeck has pointed out, the national finals of many of these events are held in large sports halls or arenas to cater for the extensive audiences that they attract. The significance of competitions within black choral culture has been reinforced by many of the South African musicians and community members with whom I have spoken and interacted. Many choirs are created simply for competitions, and if they go through extensive periods of not winning they are likely to disband. Repertoire for these events is usually prescribed. Pieces from the Western choral canon and contemporary compositions by mission-trained South African musicians have become staples of this repertoire, but a tendency to include folk and neo-traditional songs has started to become increasingly popular in recent years. Although performed under the same circumstances in front of judges and spectators, this additional musical material can often induce a more participatory atmosphere. Thomas Mamabolo has participated in the Old Mutual National Choirs festival, an annual event that is known ‘as the country’s oldest, biggest and most prestigious choral music competition’. Participants constitute a diverse range of ensembles including church, university and community choirs. Mamabolo shares his experience of the competition’s performance ethos:

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The through-composed pieces or the new compositions usually don’t involve audience joining in. You know, they are show pieces really and quite controlled… we have like dynamics and everything, and the audience will probably sit in silence. In the folk category, though, sometimes it can be different. We might sing something that everybody knows and they will want to dance along with us and sing and everything, so then it’s more interactive.\(^{350}\)

There is therefore some elasticity within performances: they are neither fully participatory nor presentational, but the traditional material tends to initiate the most audience interaction. The environment created by the Cosmo Singers, then, was quite different from these various South African performance settings.

The Cosmo Singers’ recontextualisation of ‘Shosholoza’ initiated some debate among ensemble members. Lizzy Humphreys, a soprano of the choir, responded positively to the ensemble’s take on the song:

> At the end of the day, I think we all had a good time and I don’t think we were doing anything wrong. We loved it, the audience loved it and that’s all that matters really. We were giving a concert that was really quite different to our usual thing and we jumped on that and embraced the challenge. Aimee gave us some information about the music and about how to perform it so we did respect that, but we are who we are and that’s always going to show, isn’t it? I don’t think there’s a problem with that because we had a go and did our best.\(^{351}\)

For Humphreys, the main purpose of the performance was to entertain. Richard Dyer defines entertainment as ‘a type of performance produced for profit, performed before a generalized audience (the public), by a trained, paid group who do nothing else but produce performances which have the sole (conscious) aim of providing pleasure’.\(^{352}\)

Humphrey’s musings chime with some aspects of this definition: in her view, the ensemble had presented a concert for a public audience who had attended to simply enjoy

\(^{350}\) Interview with Thomas Mamabolo, 19 July 2014.

\(^{351}\) Interview with Lizzy Humphreys, 27 June 2014.

the music. The choir, too, were, according to Humphreys, supposed to be performing predominantly for pleasure. Whilst the musical content was different to the usual repertoire, the overall setup of the concert adhered to the group’s normal procedures. Whilst they are not paid, all members join the choir with the intention of performing concerts whose primary goals are to create pleasure, and so the presentation of ‘Shosholoza’ was, for Humphreys, part of that more general approach.

For soprano Freya Turton, however, the performance was not so straightforward and initiated some discomfort. She was concerned about:

... the very middle-class feel of the performance. I don’t know… For me it was all a bit uncomfortable. Of course I enjoyed it and I think the audience did too, but was it okay? Was it a bit colonial? Obviously we did what we could and we really got into it but it still felt a bit wrong and I wonder what some South African musicians would say if they saw us singing it. I suppose it depends on how you look at it and what you want to get out of it.353

Here Turton refers to the sort of political baggage we encountered in the previous chapter. The primary problem concerns cultural authority: Turton questions the ensemble’s right to perform ‘Shosholoza’, on account of its social position. She also refers to colonialism, hinting at the more specific complications surrounding British performances of black South African pieces and touching on the more general negativity that surrounds Western acts of appropriation. Yet Turton’s conclusion of ‘I suppose it depends on how you look at it and what you want to get out of it’ suggests ambiguity and acknowledges the absence of right and wrong.354 It suggests the need to treat performances as individual cases and make assessments based on the aims and objectives of performers themselves as well as on the overall intentions of the specific event. What

353 Interview with Freya Turton, 4 July 2014.
354 Ibid.
exactly are we performing here? Similar questions are raised by Kelly Gross during her musings over the presentation of BaAka music and dance that we encountered earlier:

Is ‘good’ even the word to describe the sensation we are trying to capture? And what is that sensation – a sound or feeling or both? Is it the sensation by which, if you closed your eyes, you could imagine yourself back in the forest with your BaAka friends? Or is it a positive feeling that comes from our particular group doing the best with the materials we have learned and incorporated?\(^{355}\)

In Gross’s case, the challenges faced are similar to those identified by Turton. Both acknowledge the on-going tension between imitation and innovation that lingers over cross-cultural performance and forms the basis for debates surrounding recontextualisation.

**A Bumpy Ride**

Whilst the recontextualisation of ‘Shosholoza’ caused some concern within the Cosmo Singers, the performance itself appeared to run relatively smoothly. The song was adapted, both musically and socially, to fit the presentational environment in which it was being showcased. Both audience and participants seemed, on the whole, to enjoy the performance and the piece contributed appropriately to the concert’s theme of entertainment. There are some situations, however, in which the shift from participatory to presentational is more problematic. Difficulties are not only caused by the physical aspects of performance environments but are also brought about by the musical components of certain songs and by the feelings and intentions of musical directors, singers and audience members. NVN practitioner Beth De Lange explains some of the challenges she faces when selecting songs for her community choral concerts:

\(^{355}\) Kisliuk and Gross, ‘What’s the “It”’, 253.
I think you have to be a bit careful about what you give to audiences. A lot of these songs are great, but they are so repetitive and are not really suitable show pieces. The majority of our audiences won’t join in as they might in South Africa so you don’t get the same atmosphere. You’ve got to keep them interested and I think it’s difficult to do that with something that is so repetitive.356

For De Lange, difficulties are caused by the participatory ingredients of the black South African choral music she performs with her choirs. Repetitive structures, simple phrases, and few words are certainly appropriate for inducing mass participation; they are less useful for creating a varied listening experience for silent spectators. Liz Powers, who has encountered similar complications, suggests some possible solutions, but these too can bring fresh challenges:

I vary dynamics and I might tell the choir to clap during one verse or move from side to side, or do something that will provide some variety to the strophic songs or the songs with only one or two lines. You have to make a performance of it. The problem is that sometimes concert environments can be funny… You’re all dancing about energetically in the choir, but the audience is just sitting there and, even if they are enjoying it, you can feel a bit strange. It’s sort of bland.357

Analysing a Manchester Community Choir performance of ‘Shona Malanga’, a South African struggle song that featured in the anti-apartheid movement, demonstrates some of the difficulties to which Powers refers. The performance took place in a church in Chorlton, with the audience sitting in rows and the choir standing in SATB formation at the front. Powers, the conductor, gives the starting notes and then delivers a vocal call to which the choir responds. The two sections of the song are repeated several times, animated by Powers’ energetic gestures, the ensemble’s full-bodied chest singing, and the occasional movements and ululating of individual members. At the end of the piece,

356 Interview with Beth De Lange, 8 May 2016.
357 Interview with Liz Powers, 5 June 2015.
all members raise their fists as a sign of solidarity as they sing: ‘A luta continua’ (the struggle continues). The audience remains still and silent throughout the performance, which creates a rather peculiar atmosphere and a sharp contrast to the energy and political dynamism of the song. The piece seems to belong more to a participatory environment, rather than to the presentational setting in which it has been placed. Even when some adaptations are made, then, and performers employ elements of participatory music-making in order to captivate audiences, the rigidness of the presentational environment prevents songs from settling in. They might seem out of place and inappropriate.

A related set of issues is identified by Michelle Kisliuk, in her description of her ensemble’s performance of BaAka music and dance during an Amnesty International rally celebrating the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This performance was to feature ‘very serious speakers’, and took place on the steps of Thomas Jefferson’s Rotunda in the grounds of the University of Virginia. Rather than sitting and facing each other as they usually would, the ensemble were standing and facing their audience. Not only did this formation affect the overall sound and communication of the group, but it also stifled the possibility of creating the types of participant/audience interactions on which their performances would ordinarily be based. These difficulties were caused by physical space and by the presentational atmosphere of the event as a whole. Kisliuk’s ensemble had been given only a small role in the proceedings, but the audience were not prepared for, or not used to, the participatory nature of BaAka music-making. Within this context, then, the performance seemed out of place and the music did not adapt well to its new environment. Perhaps the scenario described here is a little more problematic than those suggested by De Lange or Powers, but there are still some

358 For the performance I have described, see Manchester Community Choir, ‘Shona Malanga’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URnsPn6Aj8E (accessed 17 May 2017).
359 Kisliuk and Gross, ‘What’s the “It”’, 251.
360 Ibid.
similarities between the sorts of problems that are faced as inherently participatory pieces are transplanted into presentational settings. It is not always possible to reshape the new environment fully, so performances might become awkward and tense for choir members and leaders.

This type of recontextualisation might also become problematic if groups are working with primary culture-bearers who may not always be familiar with the settings in which they are required to operate. In July 2014 I participated in a two-week Village Harmony study-performance camp in Northern Italy that was co-led by musicians from Italy, North America and South Africa. Carlo Pozzoli, from Italy, taught a series of sacred pieces and Italian folksongs. American teacher John Harrison taught a variety of gospel songs as well as a number of his own shape-note compositions. Finally, Matlakala Bopape, from South Africa, taught participants a melange of folk, religious and struggle songs. During the second week of the camp, we were required to give concerts in a variety of venues, the majority of which were churches and monasteries. Whilst the performances of the American gospel pieces and sacred Italian songs ran relatively smoothly, the presentation of some of the South African material caused a degree of tension within the group and caused some discomfort for some members of the audience. A primary problem concerned song duration: because most of the songs Bopape taught were strophic and highly repetitive, participants were worried that performances were too long. We were all dancing and creating some variety within each verse, but at one point Bopape allowed a song to last for ten minutes, which some participants thought was simply too long. Christine, based in Norfolk and an alto of the group, elaborates:

I think it was a bit difficult for Matlakala… Obviously in South Africa these songs go on and on and everybody is used to it. We were just getting a bit tired, though, and I think some of the audience were too. It wasn’t really the forum for making people join in… You weren’t
going to get many monks coming on stage and dancing with us. It was sometimes a bit awkward, I’m afraid.\textsuperscript{361}

On one occasion, John Harrison, the American conductor, had to approach Bopape and insist that all songs were shortened so that the ensemble could have time to sleep. Bopape herself acknowledged the difficulties both she and the group were facing:

Yeah, I suppose sometimes it was hard for us. I’m just used to everyone joining in, you know, and so it’s not usually a problem for songs to be too long. We did get a really touching reception, but I guess people weren’t as used to getting up and joining us as they would be back home. Also, I got carried away because I was having a great time and I might have [laughs] forgotten myself and my audience and my singers.\textsuperscript{362}

In this case, the music had not been adapted sufficiently to fit a presentational environment. Whilst the performance spaces inhabited by our ensemble were not new to Bopape (since she has directed and performed in most of these venues before), the atmospheres they created were still somewhat unfamiliar. Although she has taught outside South Africa on several occasions, her usual performance habits are obviously based there, and so sometimes it becomes difficult for her to acclimatise to these different settings. Again this highlights the sorts of challenges that might be present in ensembles where the culture-bearer is the primary teacher.

This example also emphasises a problem that is relevant to all of the examples discussed in this section. This difficulty concerns the consideration of space. When performing, it is natural for participants to take control of their space. There have been countless occasions on which, before I have participated in a performance, I have been told to ‘own the space’ or ‘make the surroundings feel like home’. In Italy, we were guests performing in other people’s communities. We did not necessarily know about the

\textsuperscript{361} Interview with Christine (surname withheld), 30 July 2014.

\textsuperscript{362} Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 30 June 2014.
dynamics of these communities and had perhaps not considered how our South African performances might have affected our audiences. Because of the inherently participatory nature of these songs, it is important to assess performance surroundings and decide how best to present the material. If sufficient adaptions are not made, then all sorts of complications can occur.

**In Memoriam**

In some cases, choirs have established ways of sustaining or even rekindling songs’ connections with their cultures of origin, despite the different surroundings in which they are performed. In these situations, it is the intentions and/or inspiration behind the performance that are the primary focus. Particularly profound examples are those events that are organised to commemorate or highlight specific occasions, political or otherwise, with which ensembles or their leaders have had some direct contact and/or concern for black South African cultures. Such performances might involve fundraising for specific communities, paying musical tributes to certain people or places, and educating audiences, again through music, about aspects of black South African life. Quite often, the ways in which these presentations can affect participants, audiences and even primary culture-bearers are extremely positive, and performers can exert a much wider influence and leave much stronger social and political marks than they had originally anticipated without even being aware of it. A particularly inspiring case is *Sing Freedom*, a musical and visual presentation created by Frances Bernstein, the conductor of Freerange Choir in Leeds. As we learned in chapter three, Bernstein’s connection to South Africa is both personal and political: not only was she born there, but her parents were also ANC activists during the apartheid years and her father was arrested and tried alongside Nelson Mandela. After moving to Britain and participating in numerous political choral activities, Bernstein was inspired to create a performance that, through music and personal memoirs, told the story of her father’s traumatic experiences and relentless courage, and
communicated the ways in which these events affected Bernstein’s own childhood and family life. The performance began initially as a series of talks that Bernstein delivered to primary schools around Britain, with the intention of educating children about apartheid politics. In 2012, however, Bernstein explains how

... things took an unexpected turn. I hadn’t realised just how popular Sing Freedom had become, but we were asked to perform at a literary festival in Paris, which I was delighted about. The piece had gone international.

Since this engagement, Sing Freedom has been performed in Leeds, Sheffield, London and various other locations across Britain. There is both an adult and a children’s version of the performance but, having seen both, I have witnessed the differences between them to be minimal. Occasional changes in language are made in the children’s rendition, but all of the music is the same.

Sing Freedom combines words, music and photographs to tell Bernstein’s own story, as well as to explain the consequences of apartheid more broadly. All songs are performed by members of Free Range. The piece begins with a performance of the opening section of ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ and is followed by Bernstein’s account of her childhood in Johannesburg. During this narrative she shows photographs both of her home surroundings and of some of the early effects of apartheid. She explains the apartheid system and informs the audience of the types of restrictions imposed by the government to enforce racial segregation. Towards the start she identifies the importance of music within the struggle, explaining that song was one of the only means of expression available to the black community. As well as ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’, the presentation includes such pieces as ‘Senzenina’ and ‘Forward We Shall March’. Songs are performed in

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364 Interview with Frances Bernstein, 13 June 2014.
365 Ibid.
between personal memories shared by Bernstein and passages of written text read by choir members. Sometimes songs are introduced by name but on other occasions they appear unannounced, performed at the end of particularly poignant and emphatic memories and texts. They are also occasionally accompanied by photographs that are projected onto a screen.\textsuperscript{366}

Like ‘Shosholoza’, the songs included in this performance are inherently participatory: the call and response sections and marching movements in pieces such as ‘Forward We Shall March’ remind us of their importance at open-air demonstrations and emphasise their suitability for communal music-making. Sing Freedom, though, is wholly presentational, with the choir standing in SATB formation at the front of the room and the audience sitting silently in rows. Yet unlike the scenarios I have described above, the physical and social aspects of a more participatory environment are less important within the context of Sing Freedom. It is more fitting to analyse this performance in terms of its cross-cultural connections, rather than its adaptations and recontextualisations. Although some audiences may find the performance entertaining, its main focus is clearly educational: singers have contributed to the presentation so as to raise an awareness of the social and political upheavals of apartheid and are thus facilitators for developing cross-cultural understanding. Like many of those groups and individuals we have encountered throughout this study, these participants serve as bridges or go-betweens, having the responsibility of communicating information from other places and other cultures. The fact that Bernstein is South African by birth and based the presentation around her family’s own political struggles further intensifies the idea of interconnectedness that is articulated throughout. The music, then, becomes a part of this

\textsuperscript{366} For an example of the format of Sing Freedom, see Free Range Choir, ‘Sing Freedom at Ilkley Literature Festival’, October 2014, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIry8PBqOE&feature=youtu.be} (accessed 17 May 2017) which shows a performance given in 2014.
process: the songs, although performed in a different environment and at a different time, are presented within a political context with which they have long been associated. Ros, a member of Free Range and participant of Sing Freedom, elaborates:

For me, being a part of this presentation feels really quite special. Singing the songs and knowing Frances’s own connection to the struggle and knowing that we are educating people really gives the whole thing a powerful meaning. We’re not really singing them out of context, are we? I mean, I know the anti-apartheid movement isn’t officially active now, but I think raising awareness of it is important and the songs belong to that time. We’re singing them as if from that time.\(^\text{367}\)

Here Ros is clearly emphasising the notion of interconnectedness, and the idea of situating the songs within their original contexts to inform listeners about South African history is an important aspect of Ros’s performing experience. Also, the fact that these songs are still a part of Bernstein’s own life contributes an additional layer of significance to the performance. They are associated with her own personal memories and bring to mind real people and real situations.

From my own fieldwork in South Africa and from conducting interviews with South African informants online, I have identified a mixed attitude towards the resurrection of anti-apartheid songs. In some cases, the idea of performing such material, certainly as a form of entertainment or nostalgia, initiates a negative response. One black South African informant (who wishes to remain anonymous) explains:

I moved to London some years ago and I joined a community choir. People were singing what they called South African freedom songs ... songs from during apartheid. For them this seemed good and, you know, they were getting really into it. For me it was quite traumatic.

\(^{367}\) Interview with Ros (surname withheld), 23 March 2016.
I see these songs as struggle songs and they bring back such awful memories of what life was like for me and my family back then.\textsuperscript{368}

Other informants expressed their desire to move forwards and concentrate on building a life after apartheid. In these situations, thinking about and performing some of the songs from the apartheid period prevented them from making this transition: they felt that they were digging up negativity and dwelling too heavily on the past. Again this reminds us of the extent to which songs create memories and resurrect experiences of a non-musical nature. They can affect the body in negative ways, which can sometimes be overlooked by guest performers. Some people will sing these songs to initiate particularly positive responses, but in fact they can also trigger involuntary responses for individuals who carry more negative or traumatic memories.

For Matlakala Bopape, however, the situation is quite different. In her view, the preservation of anti-apartheid songs is:

Really important. I think there is a tendency, particularly where the younger generations are concerned, for people to forget or ignore our history. We can’t ignore apartheid and we can’t ignore that it was a really awful time and that it did happen. We need to use these songs to show people the courage of South Africa. We need to tell people about how we got through it … about how we, through our music, really found our voices and showed them we were strong and we didn’t give up. The young ones just don’t always understand how it was and they don’t show as much respect as I think they should.\textsuperscript{369}

Bongani Magatyana, as we are already aware, also sees the significance of reviving this music. Whilst he often uses old political songs to voice contemporary issues, he has also created presentations about apartheid specifically, one of which I attended in Cape Town in August 2013. Made up of local amateur musicians, this performance was

\textsuperscript{368} Interview, (anonymous), 21 September 2015.

\textsuperscript{369} Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 15 August 2013.
not too dissimilar from Bernstein’s project: participants presented the audiences with readings and short pieces of drama that highlighted chronologically the key events of the apartheid years, and songs were positioned in between these spoken texts and dialogues. The environment was wholly presentational, and the musical content included ‘Thina Siswe’, ‘Senzenina’ and ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’.

Having access to the above information, then, provides us with an interesting perspective from which to discuss Sing Freedom. Without knowing it, Bernstein is, in fact, making some contribution indirectly to initiatives launched by such musicians as Bopape and Magatyana. She is helping to raise awareness of the cultural history of apartheid outside of South Africa, and at the same time enabling the revival to become international. Here, although not formally consummated, a cross-cultural connection has been created. Bernstein, who is aware of Bopape and attended Magatyana’s workshops at Laurieston Hall in April 2015, responded positively to my reading of this potential connection.

Well, that really is good to know. I knew that these songs still had a lot of meaning to people in South Africa, and it feels good to know that I’m helping to fly the flag. For me all this is really special, and it’s great how we can make these connections through our performances.\(^{370}\)

The type of connection I have identified here has been explored partly by Caroline Bithell in her study of the internationalisation of polyphonic song from the republic of Georgia. Bithell argues that the increasing number of Western amateur choirs who are choosing to include such material in their eclectic repertoires could be perceived as ‘a third existence of folklore’ and a natural ‘extension of internal revival processes’.\(^{371}\) To

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370 Interview with Frances Bernstein, 13 June 2014.
illustrate this view, she explains how a demand for teaching materials has led to the resurrection and accumulation of archival recordings, many of which have been digitised to enable wider accessibility. This in turn has introduced younger generations of Georgians to traditional songs they may not have grown up with. Whilst in Bernstein’s case we are not dealing specifically with teaching materials and recordings, there is nevertheless some common ground here: the idea of extending a revival process, although perhaps unknown to the performers, is clearly at work in Sing Freedom. Through the internationalisation of anti-apartheid songs, Free Range community choir is contributing to initiatives in South Africa that, through music, are seeking to introduce younger generations to history concerning local heritage.

The theme of interconnectedness is also pertinent to the life of Rough Diamonds Community choir, whom we encountered earlier. They have established several ways of keeping alive the memories and relationships they created during their visit to the Diamond Choir near Pretoria. Many of the concerts organised by Rough Diamonds follow a presentational format yet, despite this performing environment, the ways in which the South African material is sung to create moments of interconnectedness are profound. During their field trip, members of Rough Diamonds were affected by the poverty they experienced, particularly within communities where HIV/AIDS was prevalent. Conductor Hilary Davies was shocked by the lack of equipment that was provided to treat sufferers, and by the poor sanitation that existed in homes and residential care centres. Rough Diamonds therefore decided that, on their return to the UK, they would perform concerts to raise money not only for these deprived communities but also for the maintenance of the Diamond Choir, whose lack of funds was becoming a growing concern. These fundraising concerts, which consist predominantly of songs learned and

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372 Interview with Hilary Davies, 16 April 2013.
collected during their time in South Africa, have continued to feature strongly in Rough Diamonds’ performance schedule and are received enthusiastically by sell-out audiences. Whilst the majority of the events take place in churches, community centres and school halls where the distinction between participants and audiences is clearly defined, the concept of recontextualisation is, in my reading, superseded by the act of cultural exchange. Davies elaborates:

> When we’re singing the songs in a concert and we know that the money we make is going directly to the friends and communities we became so close to in South Africa, it really adds a lot of meaning to the performance. I certainly feel like I am giving something back and paying for the wonderful opportunity to perform the songs and I know the rest of my choir feel the same. We feel connected, you know.\(^{373}\)

Once again, then, we encounter the idea of the cultural bazaar, where practices and traditions are shared, exchanged, traded and/or paid for. This time, we see British performers contributing to the lives of host cultures through financial donations. In addition to performing concerts, Rough Diamonds have also made and released a CD that, along with spirituals and American gospel material, contains songs collected from the Diamond Choir. This album, *Lilizela*, was created initially to raise money for the Diamonds and surrounding communities.

Rough Diamonds is just one of many ensembles who have performed presentational concerts of South African song to raise money for black communities. In October 2013 NVN practitioner Denise Dobson initiated a profound cross-cultural connection with the community-based NGO Woza Moya, a Buddhist organisation based in Kwa-Zulu Natal that seeks, among other things, to raise awareness and educate Zulu

\(^{373}\) Ibid.
workers about the AIDS and HIV pandemic. Dobson had taught her London-based community choir the piece ‘Kusinwa Kudedelwana’, a Zulu folksong associated with Woza Moya and which Dobson herself encountered during the Unicorn Natural Voice Camp. The ensemble responded positively to the song, and they decided to send the organisation a donation to express their gratitude for this music. Woza Moya had sent an enthusiastic reply and were excited to learn that a choir in London was performing their material. Here the idea of cultural exchange is prominent: the ensemble sent a donation to Woza Moya as payment for the performance of their song. In return, Woza Moya sent positive feedback and were encouraging about the transnational connection that was created between the two groups. Following this encouraging communication, Dobson shared the story with the natural voice community via their online discussion forum and soon several ensembles were keen to become involved. Ideas were expressed about recording the song together via Skype and sending it to Woza Moya. Other suggestions entailed organising fundraising gigs or asking for donations after upcoming concerts.

Further ways in which participants and audiences might remember, or pay tribute to, those communities whose music they are experiencing are may be triggered more specifically by the songs themselves. Certain pieces can induce feelings of nostalgia or interconnectedness of both a psychological and tangible nature. For some members of Rough Diamonds, performing songs collected during their field trip to South Africa helps to resurrect and keep alive powerful memories of the people they encountered and the

376 Ibid.
377 Ibid.
places they visited. For example, the song ‘Shay Ngoma’ is a piece composed by the Diamond Choir and pays tribute to Rough Diamonds. It was presented to the ensemble during their time in South Africa and is now regularly performed to open their concert programmes. Barbara Curry, a member of Rough Diamonds who participated in their visit to South Africa, explains the significance of performing this song back home in the UK:

It feels really special when we sing this one because we know it was made especially for us. We know the people who composed it and I suppose it’s a sort of souvenir. I can certainly sing this song and remember quite vividly these people and it’s just great. That goes for a lot of the South African songs we sing actually… Yes, we can laugh and remember things about the friends we made and the parties we went to and things, just by singing.378

Here the songs present singers with souvenirs, both musical and non-musical, of their visit to South Africa.

At a theoretical level, these types of nostalgia bring to mind Thomas Turino’s concept of musical icons. For Turino, certain sounds or patterns in music can ‘create a special space for making imaginative connections’.379 These icons or signposts might exist in the form of melodic structure, tempi or rhythmic patterns. In the case of Rough Diamonds, it is whole songs that conjure specific memories and emotions and these are not imaginary. Yet the principle is still relatively similar: specific pieces of music are inducing certain feelings and mindsets – which, in this case, are positive.

There are, though, instances in which participants and audiences, by singing or listening to specific elements of songs, have constructed more imaginary perceptions of South African cultures and communities. After an Open Voice Community Choir concert in May 2014, one audience member told me how the choir’s performance of ‘Shosholoza’

378 Interview with Barbara Curry, 5 October 2014.
379 Turino, Music as Social Life, 6.
made her think about Cape Town, where her son was living at the time. She had never visited Cape Town, but she explained how the song’s upbeat tempo, rich harmonies and lively and strong vocals prompted her to imagine ‘solid and united communities full of joy, love and determination’. In these cases, then, musical icons are providing opportunities for audience members and participants to construct purely imaginary ideas about the cultures whose music they are borrowing. These ideas are based largely on musical entrainment: listeners and performers associate upbeat tempi and full-bodied harmonies with energy, strength and unity. Yet sometimes these musical icons might resurrect more negative memories, particularly for those who had direct experience of oppression under apartheid.

Whilst some perceptions might not be accurate and might assume an idealised or romanticised community life, they are nevertheless a clear indication of people’s efforts to respect and connect with the songs they are singing. Because these responses and emotional landscapes are not always physically visible, there is a tendency to overlook and even miss their presence and significance. People might attend a performance of a South African song and see only the presentational environment and the musical and social adaptations that such an environment has initiated. In so doing, they might think predominantly about recontextualisation and its more problematic implications, and might question the right or authority for this transformation to occur. Yet, as we have seen in this section of the chapter, there are many other ways in which cross-cultural connections are made and in which people and communities are respected and empowered.

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380 Personal communication (informal conversation), 12 May 2014.
Towards Participatory Performance

Thus far I have focused on performances that follow a wholly presentational format and have outlined the different types of recontextualisation and interconnectedness they have initiated. I have, however, encountered a wealth of ensembles who have presented South African material in a more participatory environment. In these situations, there is no defined audience and the goal has often been to involve as many participants as possible, even if this means simply moving to the beat, clapping along or singing a short refrain or repetitive vocal line. This practice is especially common within more politically oriented choirs whose performing locations consist largely of open-air rallies, marches and protests. In some cases, the singing of South African songs within these performing environments has been organised deliberately to make transnational connections and to show support specifically for social and political movements within South Africa itself. As I explained in the previous two chapters, as South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement gained international support and recognition, political choirs in Britain began singing struggle and liberation songs as part of their contributions to the campaign for racial equality. Singers would gather outside venues such as South Africa House in London and station themselves on picket lines to perform material such as ‘Nkosi Sikelel’i’, ‘Senzenina’ or other songs paying tribute to Nelson Mandela and his fellow freedom-fighters and ANC activists. The Cardiff-based Cor Cochion, for example, sang regularly in supermarkets, outside banks and in shopping centres to urge people to boycott goods from South Africa. Singers were often removed from these venues and were even arrested for causing obstructions. Figure 4.1 shows the choir singing outside the Magistrates Court because some members had been arrested for obstruction (they had sung outside a supermarket whilst asking people to boycott South African goods). In these situations, then, choirs were not safely contained within the confines of a theatre, community centre
or similar closed performing space. They were out in the open and at the heart of the action.

Figure 4.16. Photograph of Cor Cochion (Red Choir) in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.\textsuperscript{381}

For many choir members, these participatory environments contributed directly to the feelings and ideas of interconnectedness they were attempting to spread. Celia Mather, a member of Sheffield Socialist Choir, explains:

\begin{quote}
The fact that we were all standing there together and singing really was a powerful way of showing solidarity, but there was something else going on. … I think the fact that we were often in the streets and singing and people would come up to us and sometimes join in or even just talk to us and ask us about what we were doing was really special. We were connecting with them, and we were affecting them… We weren’t just standing on a stage singing to an audience… I don’t know, it was really powerful though.\textsuperscript{382}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{381} Thanks to Christabel Gurney, AAM Archives Committee, for providing this image.
\textsuperscript{382} Interview with Celia Mather, 10 March 2015.
For Mather, then, the primary intention of these performances was to induce social and political bonds between participants to heighten the sense of solidarity and support. Thomas Turino refers to these sorts of connections as ‘kinesic attractions’. The emphasis was on the participants themselves, rather than on musical detail. Mather elaborates further:

We would go through the songs beforehand but we weren’t really aiming for a concert performance … so it was sometimes a bit rough and ready, you know. The main objective was to get our point across and to try and attract as much attention as possible. We wanted people to come and join us and get involved.

In these cases, the idea is not necessarily to create a polished performance. There are no tickets sold and performances are much more spontaneous and open-ended, almost like the rendition of ‘Shosholoza’ I encountered in Khayelitsha. There is sometimes a conductor or director present, but their task is quite different when operating in these participatory settings. They do not concentrate on indicating dynamics and song length. Instead they might attempt to recruit participants, deliver calls to the choir or generally stir up and excite the crowd. Ultimately, there is no showcase and no pressure to produce a finished and rehearsed performance, and the overall intention is to induce mass participation.

The participatory elements of political singing during apartheid were not just employed to initiate interconnectedness among performers and passers-by, however. Some choir members also felt that they were helping to connect with victims and protestors in South Africa itself. Morag, a member of the London-based political choir Raised Voices, elaborates:

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384 Interview with Celia Mather, 10 March 2015.
When we were singing these songs we felt like we were connecting with the struggle and with the people who were being oppressed. We felt like we were helping them, because we were often singing the same songs and we were working with South African exiles too. We really felt like we were making a difference and were helping to raise the cry for freedom.385

These feelings were often strengthened by positive feedback groups received from South African community members. In Celia Mather’s case, it was a specific performance of ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’ that prompted such positivity:

I can’t quite remember where it was … it was outside a town hall somewhere I think, but we were singing ‘Nkosi’ and we were approached by two black South Africans after the performance. I was a bit self-conscious because I wondered what they thought of a bunch of white people singing this, but they were so enthusiastic. They said it reminded them of home and said that it was great that we were singing it here and spreading awareness of it and of its importance. I just felt so emotional… I felt like we really were making a difference.386

Thomas Mamabolo has also responded enthusiastically to the input of political choirs during anti-apartheid campaigning:

I wasn’t really campaigning in South Africa at the time because I was very young and had just been born really, but I’ve heard about how there was lots of singing from choirs in UK. I think this was amazing and I am so grateful to like all of you British people for doing it. I think it shows our connections and our friendships and for me is very moving.387

These responses are profound examples of the celebratory aspects of globalisation: here there are no accusations of theft or greed. Instead, members of both host and guest cultures are presenting an act of appropriation in a positive light.

385 Interview with Morag (surname withheld), 18 September 2014.
386 Interview with Celia Mather, 10 March 2015.
387 Interview with Thomas Mamabolo, 19 July 2014.
There have, however, been some instances in which these types of performance have initiated more critical responses. One black South African whom we encountered earlier and who again wishes to remain anonymous felt particularly tense. She had moved to London and had joined a community choir there some years ago. She explains:

I heard people talking about how they used to sing this and that song during apartheid as part of their campaigns and they said about how this made them feel connected with our people. They also said how the songs made them feel uplifted and together and happy and united. Yes, okay, but can they really have had any idea of the traumas we experienced? Yes, they were singing our songs, and yes, it was for a good cause, but they weren’t really connecting with our struggle, in my opinion. They weren’t singing in the same environments… They weren’t being shot, they weren’t being teargassed or anything like that.388

Sharp though it is, this criticism is worth discussing further. I have encountered many choir members who have referred to the rousing nature of anti-apartheid songs and who have said they felt connected with the people and the struggle. Whilst this might be viewed positively, there is also scope to be critical: can we, as British performers of this music, ever really relate to events in South Africa? Is it justified to experience positive energy vibes and idealised notions of interconnectedness from singing these songs? We have, of course, heard how song certainly did create the idea of a united front and helped to relieve pain and suffering, but we must also acknowledge the brutality of apartheid – which was ultimately directed towards black South Africans actually living there. For some South African community members, as we have just seen, the singing of these songs was traumatic and had harsh consequences.

The singing of South African songs in a participatory setting has continued to exist within British amateur choirs, even though the anti-apartheid movement has long been disbanded. These sorts of presentations have not only been created to emphasise

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388 Interview (anonymous), 21 September 2015.
cultural context. There are some occasions on which South African material has been employed simply because of its participatory nature and its ability to attract the public. A case in point is a performance during a demonstration against fracking that I attended in Manchester with members of Open Voice Community Choir in January 2014. Margaret Westbrook, a member of the choir, had approached the musical director, Carol Donaldson, to suggest that a small group of singers could participate in this rally by providing some musical accompaniment for a march through the streets that was to open proceedings. There was no rehearsal before this event and Donaldson had informally recommended some appropriate repertoire, encouraging participants to add their own and even suggest items spontaneously during the march itself. These suggestions included such anthems as ‘We Shall Overcome’, ‘Power in the Union’ and, of most interest to us here, the black South African hymn ‘Siyahamba’. This last item was performed towards the end of the march, by which point a large crowd of followers had joined the procession. The choir sang the Zulu text in four-part harmony several times, before replacing it with the words ‘We are marching in the name of peace’ and finally with ‘We are marching to maintain our lands’. Interestingly, the song translates literally as ‘We are marching in the light of God’, and so on the occasion of this performance the English text had been slightly altered. Margaret Westbrook, who had suggested this song, explains the inspiration and reasoning behind this choice:

Well, I wanted something that we all knew as a choir and that would hopefully get other people going as well. I’ve seen lots of choirs whip out ‘Siyahamba’ at these sorts of events because it works well. It’s repetitive, it’s easy to change the words on a whim, it’s a good one to march to, and it’s teachable and really singable. People can learn it and join in really quickly, which is also good because we don’t get a chance to always rehearse and go through everything before these gigs so even if people have forgotten it they soon remember.389

389 Interview with Margaret Westbrook, 4 February 2015.
In this scenario, it was primarily the nature of the music itself that inspired Westbrook to include ‘Siyahamba’ in Open Voice’s performance. The fact that the piece was South African was, in this case, not the main concern. It was the song’s participatory flavour that was the most important for the occasion. Yet there were still elements of this performance that felt surprisingly South African, even though there may have been no direct intention to achieve this. Particularly prominent was the idea of changing the words of the song to suit the occasion, which, as we have already discovered, remains a popular trend within South African protest music. This trend also relates strongly to the practice of employing what Lee Hays – in the context of the American folk revival – termed ‘zipper’ songs.\footnote{Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, \textit{Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 66.} In a zipper song, each verse usually remains the same musically, but words are changed and/or substituted. This makes the songs easy to learn and recycle within different contexts. These songs, like the South African material, were well suited to mass participation and were frequently heard during civil rights marches. In addition, the process of combining religion and politics through music, which Open Voice were carrying out in this specific performance of ‘Siyahamba’, was an important feature of the South African anti-apartheid movement and is still conspicuous in black communities today. Again, then, whilst it might at first seem strange to hear a South African hymn being sung during a demonstration about fracking, it is not necessarily inappropriate: indeed, protesting about fracking is something that South African activists are also addressing, thus again linking the local and the global.

As Margaret Westbrook observed, ‘Siyahamba’ has become a popular choice for choirs embarking on more participatory and political performances. I have encountered several groups who, like Open Voice, have performed the song during open-air rallies and demonstrations and have adapted the English translation to relate to specific causes.
Moreover, they have chosen the song on account of its ability to encourage mass involvement. Part of the 2013 National Street Choirs Festival in Aberystwyth involved a large-scale peace march during which ‘Siyahamba’ was sung to the words ‘We are marching in the name of peace’. Representing five different community choirs from across the UK, the fifteen participants to whom I spoke during the march itself all explained that they had performed the song with these same words in their own choirs. On a different occasion Morag, a member of Raised Voices, explained how this group have incorporated ‘Siyahamba’ into their performance agenda:

A lot of the events we sing at are protests and things where we want to raise awareness of something and we want to get people involved. We do sing ‘Siyahamba’ regularly at these.

… We sing words like ‘we are marching in the name of love, peace, hope and freedom’, anything that we think is relevant to the cause really.391

In these cases, then, it is the participatory elements of ‘Siyahamba’ that again constitute its attractive powers. Moreover, it is arguably easier for the majority of people to identify with peace rather than God or a specific religion.

I have focused here on ‘Siyahamba’, but there are several other South African songs that make regular appearances in the types of participatory performance I have described here. ‘Shosholoza’, ‘Senzenina’, ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’ and ‘Shona Malanga’ have all become favourite choices for ensembles to sing. The regularity with which they are used compared to songs from other music cultures is worth exploring. Carol Donaldson elaborates:

Whenever I know the choir is going to perform at a political event, I think immediately of the South African stuff. I think it’s the same with lots of groups. … You always find that

391 Interview with Morag, 18 September 2014.
these protests and things cause us all to get our South African songs out. Yeah, they are the first ones I go to really.  

Natural voice practitioner Jules Gibb shares similar thoughts:

You do see the South African songs at the political events a lot because they just work, don’t they? They do the job in a really great and special way. They spread the word, touch the heart and get everybody going. They’re perfect.

These observations remind us of the unique properties of South African songs and of the more specific circumstances in which they are used. They are set apart from other types of world song which, although attracting British singers and facilitating all kinds of active participation, do not create these opportunities for instant involvement. A Corsican trio song, for example, can be taught and rehearsed over time but audiences would almost certainly not be able to pick it up there and then.

In the participatory events I have encountered, the roles of the performers are not always primarily or exclusively musical. There are other ways in which participants can contribute to the types of atmospheres that such events can initiate. In November 2013, Open Voice Community Choir organised a Christmas card-signing afternoon in connection with Amnesty International. The event, which took place in a church hall in Manchester, presented people with the opportunity to send Christmas cards with messages of goodwill, hope and endurance to victims of human rights abuses. The choir, along with helping to ensure that all activities ran smoothly, were asked to perform a number of songs throughout the afternoon. These included ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’, ‘Freedom Is Coming’ and ‘Siyahamba’. There was no specific structure to the performance programme, however: choir members suggested which songs to perform there and then,

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392 Interview with Carol Donaldson, 1 December 2013.
393 Interview with Jules Gibb, 13 July 2012.
and there was no organised running order or time allocation. This approach illustrates the extent to which black South African songs have become completely embodied and absorbed into everyday life. Somebody would suggest a song and the rest of the group would join in. For the most part, there was no distinct audience. While the choir sang, people were writing cards, buying cakes and talking amongst themselves. The songs, then, acted as a sort of accompaniment to these tasks. For Carol Donaldson, this choral contribution was much more than background music for attendees to enjoy, however:

I think the choir had a really important role here. We were singing but we were helping to create this feeling of hope and solidarity by doing that and we wanted people to catch on to that and get involved. Songs like ‘Freedom is Coming’ are really powerful, I think, and they draw people in and make them want to be involved. They might inspire the sorts of messages people write. They might even encourage people to write a card if they feel unsure about it.  

Several members of the public who had attended the event to send cards and donate money reinforced Donaldson’s insistences. One person explained how hearing the music had inspired the words they wrote. Another told me that the sound of the harmonies had helped them think about the need to create a united front and to give others hope. Here, then, the music was again encouraging people to be involved, but this time the intentions were somewhat different. People were not necessarily required to sing, but it was hoped that they would draw inspiration from the singing. The performance was participatory: everybody had a role to play, and the goal was social cohesion and mass involvement. This type of performance also relates to Christopher Small’s concept of musicking. For Small, ‘To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance’. In the Christmas card-singing event, everybody in the room was contributing in some way to the performance. The singers were providing the music, but

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394 Interview with Carol Donaldson, 1 December 2013.

this music would not have been performed if those signing the cards had not been present. These people, then, were just as important in the musical proceedings as the singers themselves.

**The Best of Both**

As Turino explains, the fields of presentational and participatory performance cannot be attached definitively to specific genres or situations. Throughout their careers, bands and artists might shift their focus from one to the other as their work and fan base changes and develops. Moreover, some groups might place an equal emphasis on both, offering concerts that are sometimes formally presented and other times wholly participatory. These fluctuations can also be encouraged by the music itself: certain genres contain stylistic elements that, as well as working well in presentational environments, might present opportunities for audiences to become easily involved. Simple rhythms might encourage clapping or other types of body percussion. Choruses of songs might encourage audience interaction. Such musical elasticity is conspicuous in many of the South African songs that are performed within the British amateur choral sphere, and has often allowed groups to roam freely between the presentational and the participatory in intriguing ways. Some ensembles, rather than shifting from concert to concert, have sought to incorporate both presentational and participatory elements into one single performance. They might start a concert by singing directly to a separate audience, but by the end of the event everybody might be joining in with the singing and dancing.

In March 2014 I attended a charity concert given by Manchester Community Choir at St. Werburgh’s church in Chorlton. As usual, the ensemble presented its audience with an eclectic menu of songs from various parts of the world, including Britain, North America, Spain, Norway and South Africa. The South African songs, ‘Ipharadisi’ and

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‘Oh Yay Narimbo’, were performed in the first half of the concert. Like the rest of the pieces, they were delivered in a wholly presentational style: the choir stood in SATB formation and performed in front of a seated and silent audience. After the final song was sung, however, quite a different atmosphere was initiated. Rather than presenting an encore, some members of the choir left their performing positions and began to spread themselves among the spectators. Liz Powers then announced that it was the audience’s turn to sing and explained she was going to teach part of ‘Oh Yay Narimbo’, a black South African choral piece that is based wholly on call and response figures. Usually, the choir sings through the song twice. In the first version, Powers sings a line and all parts repeat in unison. The second rendition sees Powers still singing each call but the ensemble responds in four-part harmony. When teaching the audience, Powers explained that the piece would also be sung twice, but the choir would provide the harmony. Powers sang through each call several times and asked the audience to repeat. At first some people were unsure about joining in but after some coaxing and encouragement they seemed to ease into the participatory atmosphere. Within about five minutes, everybody seemed to know roughly how the song went and so a full sing-through, complete with the choir’s harmonic contributions, took place.

Some time later as people were leaving the event, I heard the excitement in their conversations. Not only had they enjoyed the concert, but they also expressed great enthusiasm about their own contributions. Some audience members had been surprised about how they were able to actually join in and learn a song. Others had approached Powers to enquire about becoming part of the choir. The overall attitude to this participatory element, then, was positive. Powers explains her motivations for inducing this participatory atmosphere:

I just think it’s something different really. I think it’s great to see the audience joining in and they seem to love it. They can really feel like they are a part of the performance if they want
to, and I like encouraging that. The South African songs are just great for it because there’s something for everybody to do and it doesn’t have to be difficult. People can just clap or stamp, or they can quickly learn a simple melody and they can feel so involved. You don’t get that opportunity with a lot of music so I think you have to seize it.397

Powers’ observations remind us again of some of the more specific properties of South African songs and their ability to create certain types of performance environment. In the case of Manchester Community Choir, the musical elasticity of these songs allows for performances that are neither presentational nor participatory. Instead, a melange of environments and atmospheres are constructed. Carol Donaldson has also commented on these specific properties:

The South African songs are great for making people feel involved in a performance, yes. I’ll often teach one in a concert. The audience can sit and listen to us singing a song and think wow, that sounds great, but they can actually be a part of it too. They can make the sound and this can have a really positive effect. People come up to me and ask can they join the choir because they loved singing along so much. So yes, I think with these songs people can have the best of both worlds.398

Fluctuations between the presentational and participatory are also common in concerts and events that involve numerous choirs. The annual Street Choirs Festivals, for instance, attract community choirs from all over Britain. As well as a mass sing and an afternoon of busking, these occasions involve a large-scale concert in which all participating choirs are allocated a slot to showcase two or three songs. Although tickets are sold to the public, the audience for these events tends to consist mostly of the choirs themselves. In this respect, they are performing for each other. Despite the social and cultural diversity of these ensembles, their repertoire is, as we have begun to understand, often quite similar. The same song might be performed by several choirs because it has

397 Interview with Liz Powers, 2 February 2016.
398 Interview with Carol Donaldson, 1 December 2013.
been taught at a workshop or has simply been circulated again and again amongst ensembles. These commonalities often mean that, during a performance at a street choirs concert, audience members might be tempted and encouraged to join in. Of course this does not happen only for South African songs: there are other styles such as spirituals and gospel pieces that have become particularly popular among these singing circles. Yet the South African songs have often initiated a particularly lively culture of audience participation. Perhaps this type of elasticity within performance is more closely associated with choral festivals in South Africa. Although their competitive atmosphere differs from the ‘everybody can sing’ attitude of the Street Choirs events, their performance etiquettes are sometimes similar. The events might pertain mostly to a presentational performance practice but, if members of the audience hear a song they know and join in, a participatory element is initiated. Again, then, we witness some cross-cultural connections.

For Mandela

I wish to finish this chapter by discussing a series of performances in which some particularly intimate cross-cultural connections were created. In December 2013, the death of Nelson Mandela brought international mourning. The British media, who had been reporting the deterioration of Mandela’s health for several months, provided comprehensive coverage of the tributes that came from both inside and outside of South Africa. Newspapers were full of articles that discussed and celebrated Mandela’s many political and social achievements, as well as obituaries and memoirs from celebrities and members of the public who had met him in person. Television and radio documentaries about apartheid and the life of Mandela were frequently broadcasted, and footage of people gathering to sing and pray outside his house and on the streets of South Africa appeared regularly on news programmes. In addition, the internet provided countless opportunities for people to pay their own tributes, with messages that were able to gain
recognition on an international scale. A particularly inspiring example came from members of the Soweto Gospel Choir, who performed a flash mob of the song ‘Asimbonanga’ inside a Woolworths store in Pretoria on Saturday 7 December 2013. Written in 1987 by the internationally renowned white South African artist Johnny Clegg, ‘Asimbonanga’ is a struggle song about Mandela himself. This piece, whose title translates from Zulu as ‘We have not seen him’, was composed initially to protest against the censorship of publications of any images and depictions of Mandela that was enforced in South Africa during his imprisonment.399 The Soweto Gospel Choir’s performance was shared on YouTube via the Woolworths channel, and was soon being posted on social media sites by countless groups and individuals who were inspired by its poignancy.400

For Patty Cuyler, co-director of Village Harmony, this video was especially influential:

I was just so moved by the performance and the song is so powerful. I wanted to teach it to as many people as I could at that time, so we included it in workshops and we also shared it with other groups. It’s still really popular over here, actually. We were doing this for Mandela, and I guess that’s why it became popular really quickly.401

In Britain, many community and political choirs were keen to pay their own musical tributes to Mandela. Not only had groups felt deeply connected to him through the South African songs they had learned and performed over the years, but they had also deeply valued his courage, determination and approach to inclusion, which had inspired their own performing ideologies. In the days and weeks following Mandela’s passing, social media was full of invitations and advertisements for ‘big sings’, fundraising concerts, flash mobs and other similar events at which South African songs, particularly

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401 Personal communication (email), 17 February 2014.
those with a connection to the anti-apartheid movement, would be performed. On December 13th 2013, I attended a singing gathering that took place in Manchester, on the grass outside Cheetham’s School of Music. This event saw members of several community choirs in the Manchester area come together for around forty minutes of fairly spontaneous singing. Some members of ensembles from other parts of the North West of England were also present. There was no obvious structure to the event: some people arrived late and others came and went throughout the performance. Word sheets featuring a selection of the songs were handed out, and choir leaders took turns to stand at the front with a microphone to teach and direct material. Certain songs – such as ‘Asikhatali’ and ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’ – were extremely familiar to some performers, and their appearance during this event resurrected memories of the times in which they had been sung in the past. People talked amongst themselves about the political campaigns with which they had been involved, and about how much they enjoyed learning and performing these songs on account of their thematic and musical elements. For some younger singers like myself, ‘Asikhatali’ was at that time less well known and we could not always grasp the words and melody. By the end of the event, however, the song had become a little more memorable, thanks to the teaching provided by NVN practitioner David Burbidge. Some weeks after the performance, I decided to teach ‘Asikhatali’ to my own world music choir at the University of Manchester, having been inspired by its reception on that cold December Sunday afternoon. This is now part of my own repertoire, and is attached to my own personal memories that I can share with my own ensembles. Perhaps this is a reminder of how these events are constantly presenting opportunities for songs to be shared, resurrected and passed on to other choirs where they enjoy new leases of life.

The main purpose of this event, though, was to pay tribute to Mandela, and this was reinforced throughout. When songs were introduced, choir directors explained why they had been chosen and outlined their connections to Mandela. Some of these
associations concerned apartheid but, interestingly, others were more abstract. Not all of the songs performed that day were South African: some had their roots in the Middle East. When these other items were presented, it was the idea of inclusion that was emphasised. Choir leaders spoke about conflicts in the Middle East and explained how, in an ideal world, everybody would be united despite their colours, cultures or religious beliefs. They associated this desire for universal interconnectedness with Mandela’s own mission to create social inclusion and his creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

There are a series of unexpected connections that were established through the sorts of events I have described here. As mentioned above, many of the tributes paid to Mandela in South Africa involved group singing, and songs like ‘Senzenina’ and ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ i’ were heard frequently. In addition, South African choirs and vocal groups organised events to commemorate Mandela in which songs connected with anti-apartheid were performed. In Polokwane in December 2013, Matlakala Bopape organised a weekend of choral singing that involved local ensembles paying tribute to Mandela. Here, choirs performed songs about Mandela specifically, together with other political and religious pieces in honour of Mandela’s life.\(^{402}\) It is notable, then, that similar events were taking place within Britain’s community choral network. During this period of mourning, choirs in both Britain and South Africa were often performing the same songs for the same reasons, thus creating a profound musical and ideological connection. This process of interconnectedness might not have been evident to all choirs, but for those who were aware of its existence some powerful emotions were initiated. For Carol Donaldson:

Knowing that we were doing similar things to choirs in South Africa to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela was really quite special. We felt extremely touched, I think, that we were a part of

\(^{402}\) Thomas Mamabolo, personal communication (Facebook conversation), 4 January 2014.
it all. I think we also felt particularly connected with the choirs in South Africa and we felt like we weren’t just a bunch of random people singing songs that might not have had any significance in South Africa. They obviously did, and it was great to hear them being performed there too.403

During that time of mourning, both British and South African groups were also seen on television performing similar songs in similar contexts, a phenomenon that, although not completely out of the ordinary, is certainly not a regular occurrence but perhaps shows the level of media coverage in such a situation.

A final type of interconnectedness I wish to identify concerns relationships between the British choirs themselves. With the help of YouTube and other social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, many of the musical tributes to Mandela paid by different choirs in their own localities were brought into the public sphere. This meant that groups could draw inspiration from each other, and could verify that what they were doing was in tune with others. Sometimes choirs received Facebook invitations from neighbouring groups who passed on information to other singers they knew, and so gatherings were made up of performers from many different ensembles from a variety of places and backgrounds. We have, of course, encountered similar situations in previous chapters where choirs have shared events, songs and ideas over social media. In this particular situation, however, the connections created were particularly profound. Choirs felt in tune with one another and this contributed to the feeling of support and solidarity that was being expressed and articulated throughout communities in South Africa. This also shows how advancements in technology can enhance interconnectedness on both a local and global level.

403 Interview with Carol Donaldson, 21 January 2014.
Reflection

The case studies I have presented demonstrate some of the many contexts in which black South African choral pieces have been performed by different types of amateur singing ensembles in Britain. Within these performances spaces, all sorts of emotions, relationships, responses and transformations are initiated, and it is primarily the songs themselves that stimulate such processes. Returning to Caroline Bithell’s five orders of attraction, we have encountered participants who have been drawn to specific songs because of their abilities to spread political messages and solidarity through their themes and cultural contexts, induce feelings of extreme happiness and mental and physical release through their sounds and styles, generate physical or visceral responses through driving rhythms and powerful harmonies, and much more. Furthermore, we have seen how, particularly during performance, certain songs can inspire participants and audiences to construct mental images and perceptions of aspects of black South African cultures and communities. As well as making imaginary cross-cultural connections through music, though, some participants have, through fundraising concerts and other similar types of performance, created or helped to maintain more tangible cross-cultural partnerships of both a long and short-term nature. Yet whilst we have discovered some of the positive vibes and responses that the performance of South African songs can create within British amateur singing circles, we have also been reminded of the more negative and involuntary reactions that certain songs can cause for certain people. Because many of these songs have been a part of people’s real lives and experiences, they have sometimes resurrected traumatic memories that provoke critical feedback. Whilst these kinds of responses might prompt some to question their right to perform the songs in certain contexts and respond to music and texts in certain ways, they might for others simply serve as a reminder to acknowledge and respect the effects these songs may have in their original cultures.
The politics of access and encounter have once again been pertinent to this chapter. The challenges and debates that arise as songs are inevitably adapted to fit different performing environments have been explored and, as in previous chapters, tensions have emerged concerning what is right and wrong. The most prominent form of recontextualisation has concerned the transformation from a participatory to a presentational performance environment, and the ramifications of this adjustment have been identified. Whilst for some this transformation has been perceived negatively and has led to questions about their legitimacy as performers, it has for others been a manifestation of positive change, natural evolution and innovation that is inevitable and indeed healthy in the ‘global village’. We have also seen the sorts of complications that can arise if sufficient adaptations are not made, and if performers do not consider the spaces in which presentations take place. In some respects, trying to be authentic and performing songs as they might be presented in communities in South Africa can be more harmful and awkward than change and recontextualisation.

Finally, we have become even more aware of some of the specific properties of South African songs that make them favourites for performance. Particularly exciting is their ability to change established relationships between participants and audiences within a single concert. The musical elasticity of songs often makes them suitable for creating both a presentational and a participatory performance environment within one event: choirs can roam freely between the two and this can impact positively on both participants and audiences.

But what happens next? Can choirs find ways of coming even closer to the songs they are performing? These questions will be explored in the next chapter, in which we follow the stories of groups and individuals who have embarked on some unforgettable singing journeys.
Chapter 5

British Amateur Singers in South Africa: The Dynamics of Hosts and Guests

Over the past ten years, an increasing number of British amateur singers have journeyed to South Africa to learn songs from local musicians in their original settings and to gain a deeper understanding of the cultures and communities to which these songs belong. Either through participating in camps and expeditions facilitated by overseas organisations or by pursuing contacts and connections from within their own choirs, these singers have, for a short time at least, been granted access to what Ulf Hannerz terms ‘a slice of local life’. They have performed for and with local musicians, often becoming involved in community traditions and protocols. Although the impulse to join such tours is primarily musical, participants have often become involved in affairs of a non-musical nature by taking part in fundraising projects or by contributing in some other way to the communities they have visited. This chapter focuses on four representative examples of singing expeditions to South Africa that have involved British singers. It follows the journeys of participants, exploring the dynamics of the communities they have entered, investigating the tangible cross-cultural relationships they have forged, and discussing the challenges they have faced. It also examines critically the host/guest relationships that singing tours have ignited from both a positive and negative perspective, primarily in relation to theoretical discussions surrounding the tourist experience. The politics of access and encounter are particularly pertinent to this discussion. Not only do we revisit debates surrounding authenticity, cultural authority and power relations, but we also see

404 Ulf Hannerz, Transnational Connections, 4.
how physical factors, such as space and social situations, can control and influence the levels of participation when such an interaction occurs.

Throughout my study I have discussed activities undertaken by the non-profit association Village Harmony. I have explained how its long-term partnership with the black South African choral director Matlakala Bopape facilitated the creation of a series of study-performance camps in South Africa that continue to attract British participants. The kinds of itineraries around which these camps are constructed are discussed and analysed as part of this chapter, along with the experiences and activities of some of their participants. Other cases considered here are the West Midlands-based Rough Diamonds Community Choir and its association with the Diamond choir in the Cullinan mines near Pretoria, Wren Music and its collaboration with the Cape Town based ComArt, and Salisbury Community Choir and its project with the Fezeka High School Choir in Gugulethu. Although in many respects sharing a set of striking similarities, each example offers a different insight into some of the motivations, activities and challenges associated with the organisation and undertaking of singing tours to South Africa. Moreover, each case demonstrates some of the different ways in which relationships between hosts and guests are forged, and allows us to explore how these relationships play out in a diverse range of social settings. Information for this chapter is derived mostly from face-to-face conversations and participant-observations. My own experiences of learning and performing South African songs with Village Harmony during my participation in a study-performance camp in Cape Town in August 2013 are included in the discussion, as is the information I obtained via interviews with participants of all the singing journeys featured in this chapter.

Examples of British choirs travelling to South Africa date back to the early twentieth century. A September 1910 edition of *The Manchester Guardian* reports on the
work of London-based Dr Charles Harris. He had visited such locations as Kimberly, Johannesburg and Pretoria to organise the reception of a 200-strong choir from Sheffield, which he was planning to take to South Africa the following year. Whilst the reader is told that this tour was ‘exceptionally successful’, the details concerning its itinerary are limited.

There is no mention of the repertoire this ensemble performed, and we are equally unaware of any input from South African musicians. Did the Sheffield choir simply perform concerts alone for South African audiences? Did they observe any performances themselves? Were there any cross-cultural collaborations? The reader is simply informed that concerts were well-attended and the performers were ‘lavishly fêted at each place’.

The Royal Welsh Choir embarked upon a six-month tour to South Africa in February 1927. Details of this tour’s itinerary are again frustratingly brief, and we are told only that the choir performed for over a quarter of a million South Africans in 153 locations.

These scattered references with their all too brief details offer a tantalising glimpse of earlier encounters but leave many unanswered questions. The examples explored in this chapter offer a more detailed exploration of cross-cultural encounters, and primary source material enables us to investigate the ways in which British singing tours to South Africa have affected the day-to-day lives of host communities.

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405 Anon., ‘Sheffield Choir’s Visit to South Africa: Dr. Charles Harris’s Arrangements’, *The Manchester Guardian* (20 September 1910), 10.


407 Ibid.

Planning the Journey

In chapter two we encountered Anders Nyberg and Maggie Hamilton, both of whom travelled to South Africa in the 1980s and embarked upon musical projects with local black communities. Not only did we discover how these projects culminated unexpectedly in more long-term song-collecting missions, but we also gained an understanding of some of the preliminary planning that was necessary for their creation and success. The political climate of 1980s South Africa had presented Hamilton and Nyberg with a series of logistical problems that related primarily to their own safety and the safety of their informants. For Hamilton, the idea of establishing trustworthy and influential contacts was an important aspect of preparing, and she had made this her priority during her first visit to South Africa. This had then allowed her to make subsequent journeys, which, although involving a few complicated situations, ran relatively smoothly. In the quartet of examples of singing tours to South Africa explored in the current chapter, processes of preparation have been particularly vigorous. For Wren Music, the idea of establishing contacts and itineraries prior to official tours has been especially important. Wren’s connections with black South African choral music and politics have been active since its inception in the early 1980s. The organisation’s co-founder, a black South African exile, had a powerful ideological influence on the activities of both participants and employees, and campaigning against apartheid was a major concern. As Wren grew in size and status, co-director Paul Wilson expressed a strong desire to strengthen its partnership with black South African musicians and communities, and began assessing the possibility of embarking on singing tours to South Africa that might culminate in exchange visits.409 Yet Wilson was highly aware of the challenges that were attached to this mission: the apartheid regime meant that travelling

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409 Interview with Paul Wilson, 25 February 2014.
to South Africa could be dangerous for both his own colleagues and for black South African communities themselves. Moreover, it was impossible for the organisation to establish any contacts in South Africa via its exiled associates, because they were unable to communicate safely with people back home.

If Wilson had organised a singing journey to South Africa during apartheid, he might have encountered similar problems to those experienced by a Welsh male voice choir who had planned a tour to Roodepoort in 1981. The group were supposedly participating in an international Eisteddfod competition which, given its timing, was generating some controversy. The primary problem was that, in travelling to South Africa, this choir were violating a cultural boycott imposed by the United Nations which prevented international artists from performing in South Africa. Writing in an October 1981 edition of *The Guardian*, David Pallister explains that the main sponsor of this event had approached two other choirs at an earlier stage, but they had been forced to withdraw in response to ‘local political pressure’.\footnote{410} The sponsor had therefore advertised for singers to form an ad-hoc ensemble that could participate instead. These singers had been promised anonymity to avoid reprisals from anti-apartheid organisations, but Pallister states that such organisations would track down names and ensure they were blacklisted.\footnote{411} It is perhaps unsurprising to learn that, in a follow-up report, Paul Hoyland informed readers that the visit had been called off on account of its giving ‘token support to a racist regime’.\footnote{412}

Yet even after the dismantling of apartheid in the early 1990s, the task of developing Wren’s relations with South Africa by means of musical exchange tours was


\footnote{411}Ibid.

far from straightforward. This organisation has a strong youth following, with choirs and instrumental groups being set up to cater for children and teenagers.\footnote{Wren Music, \url{http://www.wrenmusic.co.uk} (accessed 5 January 2015).} It was with teenaged participants that Paul Wilson wished to develop the South African connections, and this decision presented numerous additional complications. The task of locating a set of solid and trustworthy contacts who could ensure personal safety as well as insightful and educational experiences became crucial for Wren. Amy Wilson, who participated in Wren’s first singing tour to Cape Town in 2005, elaborates:

> When you’re an organisation who is responsible for young people, you can’t just throw them into a really dangerous situation. However much you believe in the new South Africa, you have to acknowledge that there are still difficult situations and parents certainly won’t thank you if things are unsafe.\footnote{Interview with Amy Wilson, 29 October 2014.}

With this awareness in mind, Paul Wilson and his colleague Marilyn Tucker embarked on a fact-finding trip to Cape Town in 2003. According to Tucker, this visit would ‘test the waters and see if there was a possibility of finding some youth organisations and communities who could work with our young participants’.\footnote{Interview with Marilyn Tucker, 17 September 2014.} The success of this mission resulted in a tour of young singers to Cape Town in 2005, during which a relationship with ComArt, a non-profit community arts organisation based in Elsies River on the Cape Flats, was initiated. Consisting of a variety of initiatives that includes a network of vocal and instrumental programmes, ComArt is dedicated to ‘making a unique contribution to shaping and influencing people’s lives’.\footnote{District Six Museum, \url{http://www.districtsix.co.za/Content/Affiliations/index7.php} (accessed 5 January 2015).} According to its website, the projects undertaken by the organisation are designed to ‘reflect how people perceive and represent themselves as well as the way they are viewed by others’.\footnote{Ibid.}
It was with ComArt that Wren soon forged a successful cross-cultural partnership, which, at the time of this writing, continues to flourish. Two musical trips to South Africa have occurred, and members of ComArt have also visited Devon, where Wren is based. For Paul Wilson, the success of this cross-cultural partnership owed much to Wren’s careful planning:

We couldn’t have developed this relationship without that initial visit we made to Cape Town. We didn’t really have too much to do with ComArt during that time, but we were still able to get some sense of what was going on in South Africa, both musically and otherwise, and I think this really helped when we then brought the teenagers along.418

Establishing reliable contacts has also been essential for Village Harmony in its organisation of study-performance camps in South Africa. Mollie Stone, who has co-directed several of these singing journeys, explains:

You can’t just go to South Africa and hope to find a bunch of people to sing with. You’ve really got to plan. Not only is it dangerous not to know where you’re going, but it’s just a waste of time because choirs won’t let you in if they don’t know what you’re doing.419

We have seen already how Polokwane-based Matlakala Bopape’s long-term association with Village Harmony has clearly contributed to the organisation and success of the company’s visits to South Africa. Aided by her own choir and musical and geographical knowledge of her local area, participants have been given access to the lives and activities of numerous black communities. The more recent contributions of composer and conductor Bongani Magatyana have perhaps provided campers with a more up-to-date experience of choral activity in South Africa, and have also presented opportunities for attending choir festivals and competitions. Finally, Mollie Stone’s own personal and academic connections with South Africa have undoubtedly been useful in Village

418 Interview with Paul Wilson, 25 February 2014.
419 Interview with Mollie Stone, 7 August 2013.
Harmony’s planning process. Not only did she live in Cape Town for several years in the 1990s, but she also worked closely with a number of university choirs. She has also been studying for a PhD, whose focus is directed towards the functions of black choral music in the struggle against AIDS/HIV. Throughout the Cape Town camp I attended in August 2013, Stone’s contacts provided guidance both musical and otherwise. They fed us, granted us access to schools and concerts, and introduced us to their own communities with warmth and kindness.

Yet even with culture-bearers and cultural brokers on the team, Village Harmony has occasionally faced some difficulties when planning their tours. Although some aspects of the 2013 Cape Town camp were organised by Stone’s contacts, there were other parts of the visit that were more problematic. As Patty Cuyler explains:

Matlakala doesn’t really have many contacts in Cape Town and so it was sometimes really difficult to plan things properly. Mollie knows lots of people, but we were still going to be taking some risks. We thought we’d planned things, but we couldn’t guarantee their success because we didn’t always know the people so well.420

An example of such problems came during our visit to Cape Town’s Chris Hani High School. Before the tour, both Stone and Cuyler had spoken to a member of the school’s staff to request a visit and to ask for permission to perform with some of its students. Our arrival at the school caused some surprise, however, and it turned out that our visit had not been expected. The person with whom Stone and Cuyler had conversed was no longer an employee and had not informed the staff of our intentions. We were therefore asked to leave after only a short observation of the school choir. Some time later, Mollie Stone reflected on the cause of this misunderstanding:

420 Interview with Patty Cuyler, 15 August 2013.
I really don’t know what happened there. We didn’t really know them too well, and it could have been a trust thing … I don’t know. I don’t think somebody set us up, but clearly there was some sort of misunderstanding that I’m not going to explore further, to be honest.\textsuperscript{421}

This shows that, even when a choir or organisation develop a strong cross-cultural relationship with South African community members to help plan specific tours, things are still not straightforward. There are still gaps to fill and risks to take.

For Rough Diamonds Community Choir, the process of developing a partnership with black South African musicians was complicated by a rather different set of issues. This choir, which had been formed specifically to travel to South Africa, was made up of members from three other community singing groups in the Worcester area that its director Hilary Davies had then conducted. It was through a member of one of these groups that the idea of connecting with a black South African vocal ensemble had developed. This member, Jan, had approached Davies and expressed an interest in travelling to South Africa in order to find a choir with whom singers from within the Worcester groups could potentially work. Jan was a white South African and visited the country regularly to see friends and family. Despite her heritage, she had only participated in the singing of black South African choral music in Britain, and had no knowledge of the locations of any choirs in South Africa that performed this music. Whilst visiting family in 2005, Jan had enquired of the whereabouts of such ensembles, but nobody within her circle of friends and relatives was able to help. On receiving this information, Hilary Davies recalls feeling rather perplexed:

Well, I was just so surprised that it was so hard to find a black choir. I thought they were such a huge part of community life, and I’d imagined they would be everywhere and easy to discover.\textsuperscript{422}

\textsuperscript{421} Interview with Mollie Stone, 12 August 2013.

\textsuperscript{422} Interview with Hilary Davies, 16 April 2013.
In addition to her own observations, Davies had spoken to fellow NVN practitioners who had participated in camps organised by Village Harmony, and they had explained how their visits to South Africa involved spending significant amounts of time with black choirs. Eventually, Jan was directed to a group of miners who gathered regularly to sing before and after work, and a relationship with this group was forged. The ensemble, which later became known as the Diamond Choir, visited Davies’ choirs in Worcester, and in 2008 an exchange visit to South Africa was organised.

Davies’ comments about her expectation that there would be choirs ‘everywhere’ in South Africa, along with the insights of those Village Harmony participants with whom she conversed, raise some issues concerning representation. We have already discovered how, primarily through the themes and aesthetics of songs, choir members and leaders have been able to conjure up images of the cultures and communities to which these songs belong. We have also seen how these images can sometimes represent people and cultures in idealised or over-romanticised ways that are far removed from their actual ways of life. Hilary Davies had not travelled to South Africa before Jan’s visit, and her ideas concerning black choral culture had been formed largely from singing South African songs, reading information found in written and electronic teaching resources such as *Sing Freedom*, and watching videos on YouTube. She had therefore been accessing information that was compiled either by black choirs directly, or by groups and individuals with a strong connection to black choral culture. Via these channels of information, then, Davies was seeing circumstances and situations in quite a controlled and specific way. The Village Harmony participants would likewise have been treated to an experience that was tailored to their own purposes for travelling. They wanted to sing black South African songs with black South African musicians, and so it was arranged

423 Ibid.
that the people with whom they spent time were well-informed about such groups in the local area. Had participants spent time with non-musical community members or people from different social and musical backgrounds, they might have experienced quite a different trip. Dean MacCannell has explained how processes of intervention administered by host cultures and social groups can inevitably affect the overall tourist experience. He argues that ‘the machinery of the social engineering’ that often goes into the presentation of attractions is sometimes hidden from view, but it is usually something present and constantly at work. It is the hosts, then, who are the gatekeepers: they control what guests do and do not see, and they might obscure certain aspects of society in order for experiences to run smoothly and live up to expectations.

Salisbury Community Choir’s connections with black South African communities developed under more spontaneous circumstances. Unlike many of the ensembles we have encountered in this study thus far, SCC, although learning some music from the aural traditions of a variety of cultures, tend to perform more large-scale pieces drawn from the Western choral canon. Choir member John Elliott explains that, although songs from South Africa were certainly a part of this ensemble’s repertoire, they were only performed occasionally and had not acquired a place of particular prominence within its musical life. It was in 2004, during rehearsals for Karl Jenkins’ The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace, that SCC’s connection with South Africa was initiated. The mass was to be performed in Salisbury cathedral and the choir had hoped to find a statutory figure to open the proceedings. After approaching what John Elliott describes as ‘most of the British great and good’ without success, the choir’s director emailed Desmond Tutu to see if he was available. This may have seemed an ambitious move, but perhaps it was thought that the mass’s strong theme of peace would appeal to the Archbishop. Although

he declined the invitation, he promised to send Colin Jones, who was then the Dean of Cape Town cathedral. This promise was indeed fulfilled, and Jones delivered a presentation before the concert in which he expressed the need for the establishment of peace academies in South Africa. He explained that Tutu was searching for funds to create such institutions. Jones was so captivated by SCC’s performance that he invited the ensemble to travel to Cape Town and premiere the piece in the City Hall as part of Freedom Day. This would, in fact, be the mass’s African premiere.

Having had no prior intentions of visiting South Africa, the choir were at first unsure of how to proceed. John Elliott, who was due to holiday in Cape Town shortly after Jones’s visit, suggested that he ‘went and did a bit of digging. We just wanted to know really if the offer was genuine because the visit was obviously going to take a lot of organising’. Elliott returned from his excursion with promising results and soon the choir were organising their tour to Cape Town. It was only during this visit, after their performance of *The Armed Man*, that the ensemble met Phume Tsewu, conductor of the Fezeka High School Choir in Gugulethu. This encounter marked the start of a long-term partnership between the two groups, which has in turn resulted in a further tour to Cape Town and an exchange visit to Salisbury. As Elliott explains:

> It all just sort of happened. We hadn’t gone out there with the intention of developing any kind of long-term relationships with an organisation but this thing with Fezeka just seemed right. It happened naturally and now we just cherish it really.

The genesis of SCC’s relationship with South Africa, then, is quite different to the examples discussed above. In chapter two we saw how, on some occasions, groups and individuals embarked on song-collecting projects in South Africa almost by accident.

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425 Interview with John Elliott, 31 December 2013.
426 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
Often they were simply in the right place at the right time, or were guided by their own experiences and revelations in the moment. There was no deliberate objective to collect songs, it just happened spontaneously. SCC’s case is quite similar to these projects. It happened almost by accident and, as we shall see shortly, the cross-cultural relationship to which it gave rise has grown naturally with minimal administrative planning.

**Aims and Expectations**

The singing tours I am describing here are, in general, set apart from many of the overseas residential offered to British amateur singers by members of such organisations as the NVN. This difference can be observed in the description of a singing journey to the Greek island of Kos, led by natural voice practitioner Dave Stewart in September 2014:

We will sing in the shady garden in the mornings (coffee break in the pool) with afternoons and evenings free to visit, look around, or just lie on the beach, with a concert with the local choir, and singing/dancing in the sunset.428

A similar experience was promised in April of the same year, when singers were offered a ‘wonderful opportunity to sing for a whole week in a mountain village on Crete, with guided trips into the landscape’, this time under the direction of Pauline Down.429 Whilst singing is certainly a focal point of both of these tours, the prospect of an idyllic holiday and antidote to the hustle and bustle of daily life is undoubtedly at their core and is most probably a major source of attraction for would-be participants. This type of course tends to take place over a seven-day period, costing around £1000. Accommodation is usually specially designed for the tourist market and often verges on the luxurious, with all meals being included and prepared by hotel staff. The descriptions of the holidays in Kos and

Crete do indicate that some meetings with local musicians will take place but the main encounter is with other participants and the majority of time appears to be spent learning songs taught by their British leaders, sight-seeing and basking in the sun. The fact that both events are advertised on the NVN website as ‘singing courses/holidays’ further underscores their main focus. Here, then, Jeremy Boissevain’s definition of tourists as ‘persons engaged in a sacred journey to a world free from the constraints of work, time, and conformity’ is particularly pertinent.430

Earlier in the discussion I referred to the singing tours under exploration in this chapter as expeditions, a label that I think reflects the intensity of their itineraries. These trips are far removed from the prepared tranquillity of the package holiday, and there is often little time for resting and recuperating.

Singing tours under the auspices of Village Harmony exemplify strongly the sorts of experiences that this more intense approach can entail. Often designated study-performance camps, these overseas residentialusually cost around £1300 and tend to last between two and three weeks. All food and accommodation is included in this cost, although sometimes participants prepare meals together, which immediately encourages group interaction. Given that the group will usually consist of people from a variety of geographic locations, backgrounds and age-groups, this also provides a chance for people to learn about and experience different tastes and traditions. The first seven or eight days of the camp are devoted to intense rehearsals. Teaching is led predominantly by performers and practitioners from the camp’s host country, and so participants are exposed to in-depth knowledge concerning specific styles and aesthetics, as well as first-hand contextual information surrounding the songs they are learning. One or two additional teachers, most commonly Patty Cuyler, Larry Gordon, Mollie Stone or another

member of the Village Harmony team, will also be present to share musical materials from a variety of other cultures. These songs are intended to add diversity to the concert programme for the performances that are held in the second part of the camp.

After a busy week of rehearsals, many of which may continue late into the night, participants begin touring other areas of the country, meeting with indigenous musicians and ensembles, and interacting with other members of local communities. In addition to giving their own concerts, the Village Harmony group will often join forces with those musicians they have encountered to perform simply for pleasure or as part of community-based events and gatherings.

Education is not just acquired through the practising and performing of music, however. The organisers of these camps are keen to demonstrate to participants how people from the cultures they are visiting live their daily lives. Accommodation, therefore, is rarely luxurious; hostels, retreat centres or other locally-run residential sites usually serve as camp bases. Moreover, the inclusion of homestay visits within the itinerary offers guests the opportunity to spend time with local families and learn about their traditions and cultural practices.

Whilst some time is allocated to visiting famous or historic sites, the principal objective of these camps is to provide participants with what we might term an emic cultural perspective by presenting opportunities that would not necessarily be offered to, or indeed sought out by, the average tourist. Unlike the singing courses offered by some NVN members, then, there is a greater interaction between guests and hosts at work in these singing residential. Schedules are busy and there is little time for relaxation. Participants are encouraged to become involved in community events and to experience, for the duration of their stay, a life which is more representative of those cultures they are visiting.
In relation to the camps she has co-directed in South Africa, Matlakala Bopape discusses the types of experiences she wishes to offer participants:

A lot of people teach and learn from my songbooks and they think that tells them lots about South Africa, but there is only so much I can show on a page or on a CD or something. People really have to come here and to sing the songs here to know what our cultures and our way of life is really like. With these camps, I want to show them some things about our lives that they certainly wouldn’t find if they went to the travel agent and booked a holiday to here.431

Bopape’s comments, along with the ideologies that surround Village Harmony camps in general, resonate strongly with some of the more critical discussions concerning tourist experiences which, following Dean MacCannell’s landmark publication The Tourist: A New Theory of The Leisure Class (1976), have come to attract an increasing amount of academic attention. For MacCannell, the tourist is ‘one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general’, intent upon seeking an authentic experience that is thought to exist ‘elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles’.432 It is MacCannell’s idea of the tourist as a seeker of authenticity that is particularly pertinent here. Not only is this notion conveyed in camp’s itineraries, but it also constitutes a primary motivation for participation. Whilst reflecting on her own reasons for traveling, Emily Mines, a fellow participant of the 2013 Cape Town camp hailing from New York, muses:

I was hoping to become familiar with more of the South African music I’d been exposed to, and to have the experience of connecting with the people we’d be performing with or for. I knew I would come away with a stronger sense of the people than if I’d gone as an average tourist, and I also thought I’d learn more about the culture than I likely would have as a tourist too.433

431 Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 15 August 2013.
432 MacCannell, The Tourist, 1.
433 Interview with Emily Mines, 14 September 2013.
Here, then, the idea of obtaining emic cultural knowledge and accessing aspects of community life that go beyond the average tourist experience is strongly articulated. These participants are searching for something raw, something that offers a reliable representation of people and cultures.

This type of off-the-beaten track tourism has also been sought and experienced by participants of the singing expeditions organised by Rough Diamonds, Wren Music and Salisbury Community Choir. In an article she produced for the August 2008 edition of the NVPN newsletter, Hilary Davies describes Rough Diamond’s visit to South Africa as ‘not so much a holiday, more an experience of a lifetime’. She elaborates further:

When we were organising the visit, we didn’t want it to be the same as going on holiday to South Africa. We wanted to experience more than that. We did a bit of sightseeing, but it was more about interacting with communities and venturing off the beaten track really.434

According to John Elliott, SCC’s tour to Cape Town was similarly hands-on: ‘It was completely different from the average tourist trip’.435 The structure of this tour’s itinerary had been organised deliberately: Elliot had previously visited Cape Town with a commercial travel company, and he explains how on that occasion there were few opportunities to interact with township communities.436 When organising SCC’s trip, then, Elliott wanted to ensure that participants experienced ‘something that was much more hands-on and much less like the isolated feeling that I had during my package holiday’.437 For Paul Wilson of Wren, the idea of being involved directly in local community activities was

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434 Interview with Hilary Davies, 16 April 2013.
435 Interview with John Elliott, 31 December 2013.
436 Ibid.
437 Ibid.
... such an important part of our visits to South Africa. We wanted our teenagers to learn about black South African cultures through being there and interacting with people. We wanted them to understand how things worked and how lucky and privileged they are to have access to a good education, food on the table every night, etc.438

The ethos of the study-performance camp, then, is just as central to this trio of examples.

Discussing critically the extent to which participants of these singing expeditions receive untainted and comprehensive information about, and experiences of, host cultures is a pursuit that initiates several intriguing debates that will engage us throughout the remainder of the chapter. As part of his investigations into cultural tourism, Dean MacCannell, (borrowing from Erving Goffman) discusses what he terms as ‘the back regions’ of a place or culture.439 These areas, according to MacCannell, are associated with the pure and uncontaminated, and are thought to be devoid of the sorts of performed perfection found in ‘front regions’.440 Rather than visiting a location that may have been deliberately modified to fulfil the role of the idyllic holiday destination, tourists might choose instead to stay in small family-owned establishments, eat at local restaurants or venture into more remote areas which have not been advertised as designated tourist spots. These back-region experiences apply strongly to the itineraries of the singing expeditions I am describing, all of which are clearly designed to take participants away from the primary tourist spots. Yet as MacCannell has also pointed out, it is problematic to guarantee the authenticity of any designated back region. There are often situations in which tourists, although being assured that they are ‘penetrating the true inner workings of other individuals or societies’, are actually experiencing an artificial performance that

438 Interview with Paul Wilson, 25 February 2014.
440 Ibid., 590.
has been made to resemble the real thing.\textsuperscript{441} In these situations, then, what is perceived as entry into a back region could in fact be entry into a front region ‘that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation’.\textsuperscript{442} Again, it is the host cultures who have the most control here: they determine fully the types of information that guests can and cannot access. This is not to say that the experiences of participants of the singing tours in the chapter at hand should all be assessed in terms of this ‘staged authenticity’.\textsuperscript{443} Many of these ventures are clearly representative of a stronger relationship between hosts and guests that would not occur in commercial holiday situations. Moreover, the level at which guests contribute to local community life throughout their visits would suggest that hosts are keen to grant access to the more private aspects of their day-to-day routines. Yet it would nevertheless be wrong to assume that all experiences provide a true and uncontaminated representation of host communities.

Particularly problematic is the publicity that surrounded the Village Harmony 2013 Cape Town camp. The website stated: ‘You will definitely come away from your eighteen-day stay in South Africa with an insider’s understanding of the incredible musical and cultural diversity of the country.’\textsuperscript{444} With a small number of minor adjustments to phrasing, this promise has appeared in the five previous camp descriptions and, up to the time of this writing, has featured in the information associated with subsequent Village Harmony residential's in South Africa. During my time in Cape Town, I certainly became involved in activities that would probably not have been available to me via a package holiday. I visited people’s homes, attended choir rehearsals and concerts as both performer and audience member, participated in school fetes and festivals, and

\textsuperscript{441} MacCannell, ‘Staged Authenticity’, 593.
\textsuperscript{442} MacCannell, \textit{The Tourist}, 101.
\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{444} Village Harmony, ‘Village Harmony Summer Camps 2013’,
much more besides. In these circumstances, there can be no doubt that, to some extent at least, I was offered numerous back-region experiences. There were other situations, however, in which Village Harmony’s idea of presenting participants with an emic and reliable understanding of the cultural diversity of South Africa seemed less realistic. Our eighteen-day stay was based entirely in the Cape Town area, and none of the various visits and trips we made from our base there extended beyond that region. There were times when I was very much aware that the choirs with whom we worked had been hand-picked by Bopape and the Village Harmony team. These were contacts that, as we already know, the organisation had been developing for several years. As I explained in chapter three, the teaching delivered by Bopape and her assistants pertained to quite a specific choral style, and Bopape’s contextual knowledge of songs was based mostly on her own experiences and upbringing. In addition, she was teaching away from her home ground, which affected the type of learning experience she herself was able to provide. Finally, we were transported from place to place in private minibuses that had been hired especially for the tour. We were rarely allowed to venture out alone and we did not use public transport. We were, then, experiencing just some aspects of South African culture. These experiences had, to a large extent, been prepared especially for us and we could not identify with confidence the degree to which places and situations had or had not been modified. We saw many positive sides of community life and there were few occasions on which we encountered any day-to-day problems. Indeed, we were protected from the darker side of present-day realities: according to information supplied by the Foreign Office, South Africa continues to endure a high level of crime, including rape and murder\textsuperscript{445} – even if the risk of crime to visitors traveling to tourist destinations is generally low, as South African authorities give high priority to the protection of tourists. Incidents

of carjacking and robbery occur regularly, particularly in isolated areas or after dark.\footnote{Ibid.} Violent industrial action is not uncommon, and unemployment is widespread; in 2013, twenty-five per cent of the population were reported to be without work.\footnote{Statistics South Africa, \url{http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2014.pdf} (accessed 25 November 2014).} The singing tours I am discussing, then, do not necessarily offer a full representation of life in the rainbow nation.

It is interesting at this point to explore the type of township tourism that has been laid on by commercial travel companies. It is only since the early 1990s and the dismantling of apartheid that excursions to townships have featured in the itineraries of package holidays in South Africa. Before the democratic elections of 1994, tourism in South Africa was limited strictly to designated ‘white areas’. This owed predominantly to laws enforced by the apartheid government, which prevented white citizens from visiting proscribed black townships. Such locations were also considered no-go zones on account of their supposedly high rates of crime and violence.\footnote{Jennifer Briedenhann and Pranill Ramchander, ‘Township Tourism: Blessing or Blight? The Case of Soweto in South Africa’, in Melanie K. Smith and Mike Robinson (eds.), \textit{Cultural Tourism in a Changing World: Politics, Participation and (Re)presentation} (Clevedon, New York, Ontario: Channel View Publications, 2006), 124–142; here, 124.} Now many travellers believe that, by pursuing opportunities to visit townships, they experience real history, real people and the real South Africa.\footnote{Ibid., 125.} In their short 2006 study ‘Township Tourism: Blessing or Blight’, Jennifer Briedenhann and Pranill Ramchander discuss critically the extent to which these excursions can provide such untainted insights. Briedenhann and Ramchander identify Soweto as becoming especially popular amongst tourists on account of its rich political history, international recognition and diverse cultural heritage.\footnote{Ibid.} The
study explores the itineraries of some of those tours that have been offered. Many of these excursions adopt a safari-like approach, 'where tourists take photographs and peer at the surrounding poverty through the windows of air conditioned busses'. There is little time for conversing with residents and, if tourists do leave their vehicles, they are escorted through the streets by a guide. These sheltered trips therefore only offer a mere taste of township life and do not allow visitors to penetrate far into societal activities. Visiting famous sites such as the Apartheid Museum or Nelson Mandela’s house can certainly reveal some information concerning local social and political history, but the lack of interaction between hosts and guests means that tourists have few chances to experience more contemporary ways of living.

Not only do these excursions challenge strongly the idea that tourists are presented with a realistic picture of township life, but they also demonstrate just how much further participants of the singing expeditions in this chapter are allowed to venture. I have spent time assessing critically their aims and objectives and to some extent these criticisms are valid, but the fact that they offer significantly more scope for deeper host/guest interactions must be emphasised.

**Cultural Exchange: Opportunities and Challenges**

Enhancing greatly the opportunities for host/guest interaction and central to the itineraries of singing expeditions is the process of cultural exchange. This type of cross-cultural interaction appears in several guises. All of the singing tours discussed here have involved joint concerts with host and guest ensembles. Quite often, a host choir will begin a concert with a showcase of their own music, and then the second half will feature guest performances. Usually, there is then a collaborative performance to finish the proceedings. In these cases, the hosts are giving something to the guests, and the guests

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451 Ibid., 136.
are returning this favour or privilege by presenting their own music. The teaching that occurs during tours is also a form of cultural exchange: musicians will allow participants to learn their songs, but these participants will also usually teach some material to host choirs and culture-bearers.

Wren musician Amy Wilson explains how processes of cultural exchange defined this organisation’s teaching and learning experiences in South Africa:

Yes, we were taught so many songs by all sorts of people and communities, but we also wanted them to learn from us. When we went in schools we would usually learn a song, but then we would teach an English folksong and let the children play on some of our instruments. It was a way of us giving something back to them.\textsuperscript{452}

For Amy Wilson, then, the right to learn and collect songs from these local communities was paid for by Wren’s own teaching contributions. One primary school was particularly favourable towards the presence of the Wren musicians. In a letter to the organisation, the school principal comments on the positive influence these musicians were able to exert on many of the school’s pupils: ‘Your work has served to re-affirm our belief as educators that every child is born with an abundance of talent and potential awaiting to be ignited and nurtured optimally’.\textsuperscript{453} The letter also refers to the transformative powers of music, insisting that learning and performance sessions have presented children with a therapeutic opportunity to escape the stressful domestic realities they carry within themselves on a daily basis.

This sort of positive feedback emphasises the ways in which host/guest relationships do not always have to be imbalanced within a tourism context. Just as hosts can provide guests with educational and enjoyable experiences, guests are able to repay

\textsuperscript{452} Interview with Amy Wilson, 29 October 2014.

\textsuperscript{453} Letter from Chris Mathys (Principal, Norwood Central Primary School) to Becki Driscoll and Members (Wren Music), 16 August 2011.
the favour and even contribute significantly to community development. Such processes of exchange, then, challenge the notion that tourism is ‘tainted with the imagery of a totalising modernity that tarnishes all it touches, destroying authentic cultures and polluting earthly paradises’. In the case of Rough Diamonds, payment or exchange did not just exist in musical terms. Hilary Davies explains:

Song-sharing was such a big part of the tour and I think we taught the Diamonds nearly as much as they taught us, but we also wanted to give something back in other ways. We wanted to volunteer within the community and quite a few of us offered to help by visiting sick people in their homes. We would just talk to them and sometimes might help with bringing equipment etc. We just felt like we were giving something back to these communities.

I experienced a particularly strong manifestation of cultural exchange during a Sunday church service in Khayelitsha I attended with Village Harmony. We had been invited to join in with this event and were encouraged to listen and sing along with the hymns, and we were also invited to perform at the end. Many of us felt apprehensive about taking up this invitation and feared making mistakes, but we knew it was something we had to do. We were aware that our right to access and join in with the service was, in a sense, paid for by our performance at its closure: they had given something to us and so we had to give something back to them. This then seemed to dilute any potential feelings of hostility or mistrust amongst our hosts and created a degree of credibility that seemingly paved the way for enhancing subsequent intercultural encounters. It was a statement made by the priest at the start of the service, though, that really emphasised the concept of exchange:

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455 Interview with Hilary Davies, 16 April 2013.
Whatever happens in this service, there is one important thing I must say. I would like us to learn from our Village Harmony visitors and I would like them to hopefully learn something from us. We are many different cultures but we can all learn from each other, and for me that is so, so special and important.\[456\]

Here the idea of the cultural bazaar is strongly evoked in the form of direct exchange. The priest highlights processes of borrowing, trading and influencing in a positive context. Concepts of interconnectedness could not be more powerful here.

Larry Gordon also recalls how participating in acts of cultural exchange enhanced his own learning experiences during a Village Harmony camp in Cape Town in January 2014:

We had the opportunity to do a workshop with a series of high school kids from the local townships. We taught them some American shape note music and a Georgian song and they just loved it. They were so keen to learn from us. We then sang a couple of South African songs that Matlakala had taught us during the camp and they were so excited. They were so excited that foreign people were singing their music, and I think the fact that they could also learn from us really contributed to these feelings. It certainly contributed to my own feeling of excitement. … I just felt so much more comfortable singing with and learning from them knowing that I could give them something back too.\[457\]

There is something more than payment at work here. The idea of musical sharing creates a sense of belonging and bridges gaps between ‘us and ‘them’.

In many cases this kind of exchange seems to ease guests’ concerns about authority and helps to legitimise their presence within host communities. Marshall McLuhan’s concept of the global village has been accentuated throughout much of my study thus far. In chapter one the ways in which black South African musicians absorbed

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\[456\] Transcript of field recording, Sunday church service, Khayelitsha, 8 August 2013.

\[457\] Interview with Larry Gordon, 27 September 2014.
a panoply of influences from Western hymnody and African-American traditions to create new vocal styles were pointed out. In chapters three and four we encountered more recent examples of British amateur singers sending donations and, in some cases, recordings of their own performances of songs to the South African groups and communities from which they originated, in an offering of thanks. The anecdotes explored in the chapter at hand, however, exemplify moments of what could be described as real-time cultural exchange. Rather than occurring at a distance or over a prolonged period of time, processes of exchange take place in the moment, face-to-face. These direct transactions also help to even out the power disparities which, as we have seen, are a central concern of debates surrounding cultural appropriation. Both parties have a fundamental role to play during the moment of intercultural encounter, which weakens the more habitual emphasis on the representatives of the West as the dominant actors. On many occasions, in fact, it is as if the tables have been turned and the South African hosts hold the most power during the act of intercultural interaction.

The Politics of Participation

Yet whilst the situations presented here demonstrate how direct intercultural encounters can be conceived as mutually beneficial for hosts and guests, and crucial to the transcending of various barriers, some of the obstacles encountered in earlier chapters are still present. We have already begun to understand the significance of David Locke’s insistence that studying and performing African music is by no means an apolitical activity. By engaging with debates surrounding authenticity, intellectual property and authority, we have discovered how global relations of power within the context of South Africa’s turbulent socio-political history have bubbled beneath the surface of both choir rehearsals and performances of black South African songs in Britain. Yet some participants of singing expeditions recalled instances in which the scar of apartheid and its effects on the relationship between South Africa and the West became even more of a
stark reality – something I had also experienced myself. I came across a number of problematic situations whose roots seemed to lie in past and on-going racial tensions and historic colonial encounters. There were times when my group was denied access to certain performance spaces and communities because of the perceived threat we posed to their integrity. We were asked frequently why we wished to enter such locations, and were sometimes construed as people who wanted to observe black cultural life to fulfil some sort of touristic fantasy. There were times when we were asked to turn off our phones and recording equipment and were prevented from taking photographs. On other occasions, group members felt they were obliged to hand over money; hosts would share a particular piece of information or permit entry into a certain area but would immediately and quite openly ask guests for financial payment. It was as if hosts had certain expectations of guests, which were guided by the sorts of associations living in the West has come to acquire.

Another complicated situation is described by Irene Hermann, who participated in a study-performance camp in and around Polokwane in 2006:

> We were visiting a prison … I can’t remember exactly where it was. We were going to sing for the resident choir and I think they were going to teach us a song. I’m not sure of the exact details, but something went wrong with the communication and we had to pretend we were from somewhere else. It was all very strange and I felt quite uncomfortable.⁴⁵⁸

In this instance, then, we see how the politics of access can create moments of anxiety.

A related set of problems was explored in a 2003 issue of *The British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, which was devoted to the discussion of the impact of fieldwork on people and cultural practices. As Timothy Cooley points out in the opening article of this

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with Irene Hermann, 24 July 2014.
collection, ‘cross-cultural fieldwork is now and has always been about the politics of power and access – access to experience and to information.’ He then goes on to discuss this assessment within the context of his own fieldwork in southern Poland, explaining how his informants reminded him regularly of his position as Western-privilege-incarnate. He highlights one particularly conspicuous example in which he was charged an uncharacteristically high fee for a ticket to a musical event which he wanted to film as part of his research. He was then obliged to make a further payment to secure the right to use his videoing equipment, and was later informed that this charge applied only to him; others had filmed and recorded the proceedings but were exempt from parting with money. ‘It was not the money that mattered then or now,’ Cooley explains, ‘but the principle’, and he ponders over the cause of the special treatment to which he was undoubtedly subjected. This situation, then, bears similarities to the experiences of the participants of singing tours I am describing here. Often it is unclear as to why guests are denied access to certain places and are treated with suspicion. Like Cooley, though, participants have associated this ambiguity with issues of power, and have connected such problems with colonialism and racial tensions.

Yet it is not just through the activities and behaviour of hosts that access-related issues can arise. On some occasions, when venturing into more private domains, participants of singing tours have felt intrusive or unintentionally disruptive. For Alyse Pellow, who participated in Wren’s second visit to Cape Town in 2011:

> Being in some places made me feel a bit uncomfortable sometimes. Sometimes we were visiting people’s homes and community centres and things and, although we were mostly

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460 Ibid., 2.
461 Ibid., 3.
treated so well, I couldn’t help feeling like I was invading their personal space or something. I don’t know … all these people just turning up in your home, it’s a bit weird isn’t it? 462

A similar situation is described by Rough Diamonds member Barbara Curry. She explains:

I was so used to interacting with people from a variety of backgrounds because I had worked in education for a long time. … I think for some, though, this was more of a challenge. People sometimes found it hard to cope with living differently. … They were unsure how to deal with certain situations and they were quite shy in social situations.463

In these cases, then, the politics of access are not ignited solely by hosts. Hosts might be accepting and welcome guests whole-heartedly into their communities, but guests might find interactions difficult. Within the literature surrounding cultural tourism, tourists are often defined as groups and individuals who are intent upon seeking a break from their everyday lives. Their primary aim is to return from their holidays feeling refreshed and revitalised. From the situations I have just described, however, we can see how some experiences might not always provide the sorts of relaxing and care-free environments of the standard package holiday. Living differently and participating temporarily in an alternative way of life can sometimes be demanding for guests, and can cause moments of anxiety and awkwardness.

**Beyond the Music**

As we are beginning to understand, the insider’s cultural knowledge and experiences that singing expeditions strive to provide are not confined to the learning and performing of music. Participants are able to access some aspects of community life at a non-musical level and, in so doing, are presented with opportunities to experience the day-to-day

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462 Interview with Alyse Pellow, 14 October 2014.
463 Interview with Barbara Curry, 5 October 2014.
activities and routines of local inhabitants. Whilst some of these opportunities can surface somewhat spontaneously, others are facilitated more consciously by organisers and directors. Throughout Village Harmony camps, Patty Cuyler is always keen to seek out ways in which participants can work and interact non-musically with community members. She and her team assume the role of facilitators or go-betweens, initiating and encouraging these intercultural encounters. In the case of the South Africa camps, it is through the inclusion of home stays in the itinerary that some participants strongly feel they have been able to experience what Dean MacCannell describes as the ‘true inner workings of other individuals or societies.’

This has certainly been the case for Ruth Walmsley, who has participated in camps in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Polokwane: ‘In the first two South African camps I was a part of,’ she explains, ‘staying with host families really created some defining moments, and I was learning about things that went way beyond the music I was trying to memorise.’

She firstly recalls one particular home stay during a camp in Polokwane in 2005:

I arrived at the family’s house late at night and so I said a quick hello but went straight to bed. The next morning I went downstairs, and there was this huge breakfast on the table. There was all sorts of food. … Some of it I think was traditional as I didn’t really know what it was. After breakfast my host took me outside, and there was this huge procession going on. There was dancing, singing, people selling things, just so much going on. It turned out that this was a celebration of National Women’s Day. I had no idea initially what this day was about, but my host explained everything to me. I felt privileged to be a part of this event, and I also felt touched that my host, who was a male, had gone to all this trouble of preparing a special meal for me and inviting me along to all the festivities.

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464 MacCannell, ‘Staged Authenticity’, 593.
465 Interview with Ruth Walmsley, 6 August 2013.
466 Ibid.
Through these home stays, then, participants have been able to become temporary members of people’s communities and day-to-day lives. An active engagement with these protocols has supplied a layer of education that goes far beyond the musical.

In their study, ‘Township Tourism’, Jennifer Briedenhann and Pranill Ramchander identify an increased effort by some commercial tourism companies to include the possibility of home stays in their packages. They refer to Langa township in Cape Town, where home stays are ‘serving as a conduit in helping people overcome prejudices and, through positive interaction between hosts and guests, generate a new understanding that helps to bridge the racial divide.’ The functions of these home stays are similar to those featuring in Village Harmony camps in South Africa. As both Walmsley and Hermann have explained, staying with different people and experiencing their ways of life has enhanced intercultural understanding.

Albeit in several different guises, the concept of providing educational experiences that extend beyond song-sharing and performing has also been an important part of the singing tours to South Africa undertaken by Wren, Rough Diamonds and Salisbury Community Choir. Alyse Pellow explains that, although home stays did not feature in her visit to Cape Town, the Wren team provided many opportunities for participants to learn about the non-musical aspects of the communities they entered:

We didn’t really stay in people’s homes because I think that might have been quite difficult to organise, but I still felt like I found a lot out about their lives. When we visited schools we saw how people were educated and we looked at the sorts of equipment they have, for example. For me this was extremely revealing and it reminded me really of how lucky I was. I started to realise that I had taken so much for granted and I promised myself that when I got home I would respect the basic things I had so much more. I thought I had some idea of

people’s lives over there when I had been learning the songs back home … you sort of feel their struggles in the music, but it really put things into perspective when I was actually there seeing how things worked.\(^\text{468}\)

For John Elliott of Salisbury Community Choir, visiting schools and local community events provided equally revelatory experiences:

We spent time with a lot of schoolchildren and we visited their classrooms. We also went to quite a few local gatherings … jumble sales and things like that. I think we all came away thinking strongly about how lucky we all were and how much we had compared to lots of these people. I felt like I took way too much for granted, and I think this contributed to my wanting to sponsor secondary school children so they could go to university, or so they could pursue their talents further. Yes, it was very eye-opening and it really made me think about my own position in the world.\(^\text{469}\)

In chapter two we discovered how, with his songbook \textit{Freedom is Coming}, Anders Nyberg wanted to encourage teachers and performers to ‘reflect on our own role in the world’.\(^\text{470}\) He urged users of his resource to ask themselves questions about where they stood in the struggle, and insisted that they think about ways in which they might contribute to the ongoing quest for peace and equality both within South Africa and throughout the world.\(^\text{471}\) We have seen how the singing of some of Nyberg’s collected material has indeed caused groups and individuals to reflect on issues of apartheid, and we have also discovered how they have used songs to spread more contemporary messages of hope, solidarity, peace and equality. For the most part, though, these reflections and urges to help were brought about solely through the songs themselves. Many of the perceptions of people’s struggles were initiated primarily by the themes of

\(^{468}\) Interview with Alyse Pellow, 14 October 2014.

\(^{469}\) Interview with John Elliott, 31 December 2013.

\(^{470}\) Nyberg, \textit{Freedom is Coming}, 10.

\(^{471}\) Ibid.
the texts and the aesthetics of the music. Through the types of comments made by such participants as Pellow and Elliott, then, we see how singing tours have presented opportunities to go one step further and make reflections based on more real-time experiences. Both Pellow and Elliott, although having thought about the hardships faced by some black South African cultures through learning and performing songs, have now encountered situations that leave them with memories of physical places and events. From these memories, they are able to consider their roles in society and their abilities to make a difference.

**Making a Mark**

On many occasions, scholars have sought to highlight the negative consequences of the tourism industry. Nicola Macleod, for instance, explains how tourism as an economic activity is blamed for the commoditisation of cultures: ‘Objects and performances that were once created for local consumption, become geared towards the tourism market and are consequently said to be exploited, debased and trivialised’.\(^{472}\) Furthermore, it is often argued that, through brochures, tour guides and other modes of publicity, places and cultures are exoticised and over-romanticised, which stimulates the notion of ‘otherness’ and, in the process, resurrects ideologies from the colonial past. Throughout the singing expeditions I have studied, however, there have been many occasions on which participants have impacted positively on the lives of host communities, and have left long-lasting marks on the lives of others. Sometimes these marks have been rather subtle, and participants have not been fully aware of their significant contributions but, at other times, ways to help have been much more apparent and guests have set the wheels in motion for deep-seated social change. We have already discovered how processes of real-time

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cultural exchange have helped to dilute hostilities and have created opportunities for guests to give something back to hosts. There are, though, some particularly profound examples of how participants of singing expeditions have affected the lives of host communities on a much larger scale.

During the 2013 Cape Town camp we worked extensively with Sisonke Social Circus. Based in Stellenbosch and co-founded by Lionel Chanarin and Megan Hislop, this children’s organisation aims to bridge social and racial divides through the practising of circus skills. Every Saturday morning, children from across Stellenbosch gather in one of the local school halls to learn such activities as juggling, unicycling and trapezing, which they showcase regularly at public performances. As Megan Hislop explains, there is more to this initiative than simple pleasure: ‘We use circus as a medium for social change and personal development. It’s our goal to make circus available as a way of bringing people together.’

Lionel Chanarin, a white South African, was raised during apartheid and therefore witnessed ‘the separation and the divides between different people, cultures, and races.’ These divisions, he insists, are still often visible:

Stellenbosch is considered one of the most divided communities in South Africa, and so having a project like this that brings these children together is very powerful. When you introduce a skill like juggling, there’s no more gender, there’s no more race. It’s just two people working together towards a common goal.

In the early 2000s, Hislop took part in a Village Harmony camp in Corsica, where she met Patty Cuyler. On hearing that a Village Harmony group would be travelling to Cape Town, she contacted Cuyler and suggested that the two organisations should

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474 Ibid.
475 Interview with Lionel Chanarin, 23 October 2013.
collaborate to put on a concert. The idea was that Village Harmony participants would attend a series of Sisonke rehearsals, teach the children a song, and provide some music to accompany a selection of acrobatic routines. All this would then be presented at a performance on the penultimate day of the Village Harmony camp. When Cuyler relayed this plan to me and my fellow campers, there was some initial apprehension. Amanda, for instance, admitted to feeling ‘a bit underwhelmed. At first, I wasn’t really sure what to expect. I mean, how good could these children be?’ Other participants wondered why it would be necessary to attend several long rehearsals if they were only teaching one short song and accompanying one routine. Soon after we arrived at the first rehearsal, however, the mood changed considerably and it became clear that there was much to be gained – both socially and educationally – for us and them. We were taken to the school hall, where we were provided with lunch, and introduced to Chanarin and Hislop. With the aid of a short PowerPoint presentation, they outlined the principal aims of Sisonke and informed us of the proposed plan of action concerning our involvement. Cuyler had not shared any details related to Sisonke’s mission prior to our arrival, and so we had not been aware of the quest for social interaction and integration that clearly underpins its development. Many Village Harmony participants were noticeably affected by Chanarin and Hislop’s address and were keen to start the proceedings straight away.

After the various introductions had been completed, we were escorted into the school playground where children and parents had already started to gather. We were encouraged to interact so as to introduce ourselves and to find out more about both children and parents’ own involvement with Sisonke. A particularly memorable conversation occurred between myself and the mother of two of the circus participants. She had recently adopted a young boy from a local township, and so now her family had

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476 Interview with Amanda (surname withheld), 17 August 2013.
become mixed-raced. She reflected on how attending Sisonke had benefitted both of her children:

I feel sad saying this, but if it wasn’t for projects like this, many of these children just wouldn’t be able to interact. There aren’t many opportunities here really for them all to come together. Although things are definitely moving on, there are still divides in schools etc., and so when I watch my children and other children playing together like this, I just feel so happy.477

Bopape elaborates on the distinctive identity of this community-based organisation:

You just don’t tend to get such golden opportunities to be a part of integration like this. Where I live, there really aren’t many groups that would take on these sorts of activities… For Village Harmony to be involved here is just so special.478

Already, then, we were being made aware that our contribution to this project was much more than a musical one: we were helping to encourage the ideas of integration and interaction that Sisonke so strongly advocates.

After around twenty minutes of further conversation between Village Harmony and Sisonke participants, the rehearsal began. We all returned to the school hall and helped to assemble various pieces of equipment: trapezes, floor mats, juggling balls, etc. The Village Harmony participants were then asked to join in with an energetic set of warm-up activities. Of particular significance was the formation of a human pyramid, in which Village Harmony group members were intermingled with Sisonke children. Hislop explains the importance of this exercise in articulating Sisonke’s identity:

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477 Personal communication (anonymous), 15 August 2013.
478 Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 15 August 2013.
When you form something like the human pyramid, you can’t always work with your friends. You have to work together as a team with people you might not know very well, or who you might have never even seen before. It really brings people together, though, both physically and mentally and this is what our organisation is all about.⁴⁷⁹

Amanda believes that the inclusion of Village Harmony bodies in this activity added an additional layer of interaction:

We were not only mixing races … but also nationalities. There were black South Africans, white South Africans, black Americans, white Americans, British people… It was just incredible to be a part of.⁴⁸⁰

I myself was working with two of Bopape’s teaching assistants and two of the Sisonke children, and when I showed photographs to friends and family back home, many of them commented on the mix of skin colours and the positivity I must have experienced from being part of the formation. Although initially the human pyramid had not been included in the overall routine for the joint Village Harmony and Sisonke concert, it was later decided that it should be featured. In fact, it actually became part of the finale and, according to many audience members, was the highlight of the entire show. As we left the school hall when the concert had finished, Bopape asked us all to gather together and listen to what she had to say. Her words were profound and affected the whole group:

I just want to thank you all for being a part of this whole project. It’s just so positive to see different races coming together like this in a performance. The fact that we have different nationalities here too is just so much more special and you’re really showing the world that we can integrate and this can happen.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Megan Hislop, 23 October 2013.
⁴⁸⁰ Interview with Amanda, 17 August 2013.
⁴⁸¹ Field recording, 17 August 2013.
At this point Bopape, like many of my fellow participants, was tearful and was obviously moved by the events that had taken place. We had clearly left our mark, a mark that would hopefully never fade from the memories of all participants and audience members.

In the case of Salisbury Community Choir, it is financial aid that has constituted their lasting mark on host communities. Following the ensemble’s visit to Cape Town and an exchange trip that is discussed in the next section of this chapter, a fund was set up to help secondary school children enhance their musical education. Members of SCC donate money to students from the Fezeka school, contributing to the cost of singing and instrumental lessons. In some cases, members have sponsored specific students and have provided funds to help them attend university. John Elliott, who is among these sponsors, explains the significance of his and others’ financial contributions:

> It feels good to be helping these children pursue their talents. Lots of them just don’t have the opportunities to have music lessons and to access higher education. We met many of these students in person and gained so much from them. It feels right, then, that we should leave them with something, which is what we are still trying to do.\(^{482}\)

This again highlights some of the more positive aspects of tourism. If SCC had not visited Cape Town and had not encountered the students of the Fezeka school, they would not have launched their sponsorship scheme. Rather than taking from a culture and destroying its integrity, Elliot and his fellow singers are presenting opportunities for its growth and development.

A final contribution I want to highlight here concerns the activities of Rough Diamonds. From the outset, their decision to visit South Africa had begun to affect the lives of one community in a rather powerful way. The Diamond Choir, with whom the ensemble was going to collaborate in Pretoria, were not, in fact, an established group at

\(^{482}\) Interview with John Elliott, 31 December 2013.
the time prior to Rough Diamonds’ involvement. They were a few singers who gathered occasionally and informally to sing at the mine where they worked. When Rough Diamonds approached these workers and began to initiate a relationship, however, it was decided that the group would make themselves into an ensemble under the name of The Diamond Choir. In so doing, the group was able to receive a small amount of government funding and has continued to perform concerts in a variety of locations. Had Davies’s ensemble not come across these workers and attempted to form a relationship with them, they may not have been given the opportunity to form a choir and may not have been given opportunities to perform in public spaces. Again, then, it is the guests who have facilitated the development of a singing culture.

Returning Home

Compared to the other chapters in my study, this part of the investigation has thus far referred only briefly to processes of teaching and learning. Whereas before I discussed specific songs and explained how groups and individuals encountered them as part of their singing experiences, here I have concentrated more on the interactions between hosts and guests that their travels in South Africa have facilitated. Yet the songs themselves are still very much a part of these journeys and interactions. Indeed, it is because of the songs that people participate in the singing expeditions in the first place. It is when people return home, though, that the songs they have learnt and collected arguably acquire the most significance. As singers attempt to cope again with their daily routines and return to their normal lives, performing these songs can often help them to remember the people and places they have visited. Aspects of the music provide them with souvenirs of certain situations, which can stimulate memories of a multi-sensory nature. We have already explored how members of Rough Diamonds are able to conjure up memories of friends they have made and situations they have been a part of through performing the songs they
collected from the Diamond Choir. For Village Harmony participant Sara Brown, there is a similar significance in singing songs taught in South Africa:

> When I sing ‘Ithembalam’, I always think of those high school children who performed it for us. I think of the dancing and the joy of these children, and I think of how we danced with them too. This does affect the way I sing it, I think, and the sound I make.\textsuperscript{483}

The idea of souvenirs, then, is again prominent in Brown’s comments.

> It is not only by performing the songs that participants of singing expeditions are able to pay homage to the people and communities they encountered during their visits. Wren’s Paul Wilson explains how his musical journeys in South Africa have affected strongly his own approaches to cross-cultural teaching and learning:

> In the times I have been there, I have always been struck by the effort people have put into teaching the songs and the importance they have to people. People put so much effort into singing them, into the sound they make. Also, I found that people were really trying so hard to learn the songs I was teaching. They really wanted to get the words right, they were interested in rhythms and sounds, and it was just so dedicated. This made me assess my own teaching of South African songs. I really don’t think we have an excuse to cut back or be lazy. We really have to concentrate on getting the language right, on getting the right approach to sound etc. I suppose I feel this more because I’ve been to South Africa, so I now try to encourage people to learn as much as they can about a song and its culture before they teach it.\textsuperscript{484}

> For Paul Wilson, then, spending time in South Africa and learning from culture-bearers has affected strongly the ways in which he delivers his own teaching and the advice he supplies to others in his position. It is almost as though he believes he has acquired an extra layer of responsibility as a transmitter. In relation to teaching world

\textsuperscript{483} Interview with Sara Brown, 8 August 2013.

\textsuperscript{484} Interview with Paul Wilson, 25 February 2014.
music ensembles in university settings, Ted Solís has discussed the extent to which transmitters are considered cultural ambassadors, and are perceived to be speaking on behalf of the communities whose music they are sharing. In chapter three I explored how choir leaders from different social and musical backgrounds dealt with these responsibilities, and I discussed the degree to which issues relating to authenticity and authority were addressed within the context of their own teaching. For the most part, I concentrated on those directors who had never visited South Africa. They might have spent some time with culture-bearers, but they had not participated in any singing residential camps in South Africa or accessed at first hand any aspects of black South African community life. For Paul Wilson, however, visiting South Africa and participating actively in local musical and non-musical life has intensified his role as ambassador: pedagogical negotiations become stricter and there is a greater emphasis placed on detail and precision. Perhaps he now sees himself, like individuals such as Patty Cuyler and Mollie Stone, as a cultural broker or go-between. Not only does he have experiences drawn from the advice and methodologies of culture-bearers, but he has his own memories and feelings about being in South Africa and interacting with local musicians and community members. All of these experiences affect greatly the sorts of information that is transmitted and the ways in which it is delivered to ensembles.

For Bangor Community Choir’s conductor Sara Brown, participating in Village Harmony camps in South Africa has initiated quite a different attitude towards cross-cultural transmission. In her view, learning from culture-bearers and spending time with local community members has not necessarily given her additional teaching responsibilities. In fact, she believes such experiences have supplied her with an additional layer of credibility:

I feel like my choir will trust me a lot more now I’ve been to South Africa. I feel like they will respect my teaching more because they know I’ve been learning from South Africa and they know I’ve experienced some of the places and people I might talk about. I could tell them, for example, about how a certain song was performed in a certain place. I can give them really clear details about that place and about the reactions to our performance because I was there and I experienced it.\textsuperscript{486}

Again we see how the concept of memories and souvenirs can enhance positively the ways in which songs are transmitted and performed. By drawing on her own experiences, Brown is able to provide detailed accounts of songs and her own memories affect strongly the ways in which she sings them to her choir. The degree to which these accounts are elaborated or altered for effect is open to question and the extent to which information might be forgotten or omitted is also up for discussion, but it nonetheless provides Sara Brown’s choir with an extra sense of security and belief that might be transferred to their own performances. Within all of these instances, then, travelling to South Africa and participating in singing expeditions can influence greatly the ways in which songs are transmitted, learned and performed.

A further point to discuss concerns the maintaining of relationships. How do ensembles go about developing the friendships and musical partnerships they have made during their time in South Africa? In relation to her own fieldwork in Mexico, Ruth Hellier-Tinoco identifies some of the primary challenges that are attached to sustaining regular cross-cultural communication. She explains that the relationships she has developed throughout the course of her research ‘require care and attention’, but achieving this is not straightforward and ‘remains an area of constant concern’.\textsuperscript{487}

\textsuperscript{486} Interview with Sara Brown, 8 August 2013.

Communication, she insists, can be difficult, even with the advancing technological systems. For Matlakala Bopape, pursuing plans made during camps for overseas workshops with British singers has been particularly difficult. Although improving regularly, internet access in some areas of South Africa is sporadic, and communicating via platforms such as Skype or FaceTime is often not possible due to weak and fluctuating connectivity. This also means that emails cannot always be checked routinely. As Bopape explains, during her time with Village Harmony in South Africa and other locations such as North America and Italy she has met many British choir members and leaders who have suggested she visit their home towns with her own ensemble. Yet the majority of these suggestions have not come to fruition:

> It’s very hard when people go back to their own lives and their own towns and cities to stay in touch. We come up with all sorts of exciting plans, but we just can’t keep in touch regularly enough. It’s not as if people can phone easily because it’s expensive, and we might email each other once every few weeks but things do fizzle out easily because of these communication difficulties, you know.489

Additional obstacles can be created by lack of funding and problems with visas. These difficulties have often meant that, although some regular communication might have been sustained and groups have had the space and time to host Bopape and her ensemble, projects have fallen through at the last minute.

Bopape’s relationship with Village Harmony itself has developed strongly, and she has made several visits to Vermont and Chicago where members of the organisation are based. Collaborations with the Chicago children’s choir have resulted in a new set of electronic resources called *Raising the Bar: Traditional South African Choral Music*.490

488 Ibid.

489 Interview with Matlakala Bopape, 15 August 2013.

This DVD and book collection contains teaching instructions for black South African folk and religious choral music, with performances by the Chicago Children’s Choir. The reasoning behind the success of this relationship is, as Bopape explains, due to the fact that contact with Village Harmony has needed to be regular, and teachers such as Cuyler, Stone and Gordon travel to South Africa at least once every other year. This means that projects can be organised more easily. Bopape elaborates:

It’s difficult if you only meet somebody in the flesh once or twice to keep something going.
I’m seeing Mollie and Patty a lot, and we are always having to talk to organise camps.
Because of this, we can work on other things together and it’s easier, I suppose.  

The recent addition of Bongani Magatyana to the Village Harmony team has contributed greatly to the development of its South African connections. In September 2016, the organisation provided sponsorship for a choir festival in Cape Town that was set up by Magatyana. Operating outside of the ‘pervasive competition choir scene’, this festival gave black South African composers musical and financial incentives to write new traditional songs for ensembles to perform. It also included teaching by Village Harmony directors Patty Cuyler and Larry Gordon, who shared songs from Georgia, Corsica and other parts of the world with the participating ensembles. As Magatyana has explained in a short YouTube video, this event presented choirs with opportunities to broaden their own horizons. Not only were they able to learn more about their own country’s vocal traditions, but they were also given the chance to experience songs from further afield. Here, then, we see how again Village Harmony members are assuming the role of facilitators, providing the means for musical cultures to develop and expand. The

491 Ibid.
success of this festival has led Magatyana to make it an annual event, which Village Harmony has fully supported. Organisation of the 2017 festival is now well underway.

As we have already seen, Magatyana’s associations with Village Harmony have also helped to develop partnerships with singing groups in Britain. Although there were some difficulties present, his workshops at Lauriston Hall in April 2015 set the stage for future work with Kate Howard, who is trying to organise further work for Magatyana when funding becomes available. During the workshop Magatyana also communicated with members and leaders of choirs from London, Leeds and other locations in Scotland, with the intention of setting up an annual series of singing workshops led by himself and members of his own choirs. We are now in 2017 and this project has still not taken flight. Magatyana’s access to the internet is relatively regular and he updates his profiles on social media on a weekly basis. Moreover, he appears to respond to emails within a few days of sending. The problems he faces, then, are primarily caused by lack of funding. The UK choirs with whom he has communicated simply do not have the means to finance his visit and he, too, is struggling to find any sponsors. It is therefore unclear as to whether or not his plans to visit the UK on an annual basis will ever be realised.

On some occasions, the reasons for the breakdown of relationships between British and South African groups have been more ambiguous. This has certainly been the case for Rough Diamonds and their partnership with the Diamond Choir. Whilst the prospect of sustaining a long-term and close-knit relationship between the two groups seemed high throughout Rough Diamond’s time in South Africa, it has weakened significantly as time has elapsed. This is due in part to a change in managerial staff at the mine where the Diamond singers are based. A change in contact meant that Davies’s communication with the choir grew less regular. Rough Diamonds had been organising

493 Interview with Bongani Magatyana, 15 April 2015.
concerts to raise money for the Diamonds and had been sending these donations directly to the mine. At first Davies received some video footage of the choir, and was also given some information concerning the communities to which further donations were being sent. Yet these forms of communication gradually dissolved, and soon the choir was forced to stop sending money to the Diamonds. Hillary explains: ‘It was a bit difficult in the end because we didn’t know who was getting the money and how it was being used. We just felt we couldn’t keep sending money really’.

Perhaps this breakdown in communication had been caused primarily by a change in the mine’s staff. Perhaps the new management was not as interested in developing cross-cultural partnerships.

Also pertinent here is Erica Bornstein’s article ‘Child Sponsorship, Evangelism, and Belonging in the Work of World Vision Zimbabwe’. Although Bornstein’s research does not relate specifically to South Africa, she does highlight more general challenges that are connected with the maintenance of overseas partnerships. The article is focused around an analysis of a child sponsorship programme run by the Christian organisation World Vision in Zimbabwe, and seeks to point out the ‘dual consequences’ of transnational processes of giving. For Bornstein, the effects of child sponsorship are paradoxical. Whilst supplying financial aid can transcend economic disparities and initiate relationships on both a national and transnational level, it also has the potential to cause tensions of a more personal nature. For some cultures, accepting gifts and financial aid is inappropriate as it conflicts with certain customs and beliefs. In a similar vein, as Bornstein demonstrates, the ethos of the organisations providing donations can occasionally clash with those of the target culture. World Vision is a Christian

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494 Interview with Hilary Davies, 16 April 2016.
496 Ibid., 595.
organisation, and Bornstein highlights one particular case in which a sponsored child was beaten by her parents for proclaiming her faith in Christianity. Further divides can be caused if only a selection of members of a particular community are receiving gifts or sponsorship for education or developmental activities, and so rather than eradicating inequity, donors may in fact be unintentionally contributing to its accentuation. This is not to imply that such issues are directly connected to the relationship breakdown between Rough Diamonds and the Diamond Choir. I have introduced them here to underline the idea that physical communication problems are only one aspect of the difficulties and ambiguities that surround the development of overseas partnerships. There could be tensions within the Diamond group of which Davies herself is unaware, and so we may never be able to pin down the exact cause of the diminishing relationship.

The challenges I have highlighted here have been less of an obstacle for Salisbury Community Choir and its partnership with students from the Fezeka school. In fact, this relationship has blossomed greatly: we have seen already how a sponsorship fund has been set up to help with supporting pupils through higher education as well as funding vocal and instrumental lessons. SCC’s tour to Cape Town also resulted in an exchange visit in which members of the Fezeka choir came to Salisbury to participate in an arts festival held in the city’s cathedral. The activities that were part of this visit are documented thoroughly in Fezeka’s Voice, a short film that was released commercially in 2009. This film shows the Fezeka choir rehearsing for its concerts in Salisbury, and also indicates that performances were mixed and involved both the host and guest ensembles. Furthermore, it features some material concerning how members of the Fezeka choir adapted to their roles as guests. None of the members had ever travelled to England before and, just as the British singers we have been encountering throughout the

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497 Ibid., 605.
thesis were able to form their own perceptions of South Africa, these young students were keen to share their own mental images of Salisbury. Interestingly, many referred to the city (as they imagined it in advance of their visit) as ‘exotic’ and talked about the streets being paved with gold.\textsuperscript{498} Others associated Salisbury with Hollywood and said they could not wait to see the bright lights and glamour of the place.\textsuperscript{499} When the ensemble arrived, they were surprised by the greenery of the place, and marvelled over cows, sheep and other livestock.\textsuperscript{500} Most of the students were surprised by what they saw, and explained that Salisbury was completely different to how they had imagined it to be. John Elliott, who along with his wife had hosted a student in his home, comments on the unexpected turns of tide in this host/guest relationship:

\begin{quote}
When tourists travel to South Africa they have all sorts of images and expectations of the place, and we did too. We were surprised when we visited about how things actually were, and sometimes it was very, very different to how I had thought it would be. Because of this, it’s really interesting to see how the South Africans adapted to being in Salisbury. I think a lot of the teenagers were surprised because they had expected bright lights and glamorous shops etc. It was just as eye-opening for them as travelling to South Africa had been for us.\textsuperscript{501}
\end{quote}

We can see how the tables are turned when the hosts become the guests. Travelling to England and joining in with SCC’s routines was, for the Fezeka Choir, just as educational as revelatory as the singing tours discussed throughout this chapter. Many of the observations I have made and the points I have discussed can easily apply to this exchange visit. Finally, SCC’s partnership with the Fezeka school demonstrates how

\textsuperscript{498} For information on viewing the film (available to stream on demand) see ‘Fezeka’s Voice’, http://www.fezekasvoice.com (accessed 28 April 2017).

\textsuperscript{499} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{500} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{501} Interview with John Elliott, 31 December 2013.
singing tours and exchange visits can result in successful cross-cultural partnerships that help to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

**Reflection**

The exploration of the itineraries of a selection of singing expeditions to South Africa has revealed some of the ways in which British amateur singers have initiated direct and in-depth encounters with culture bearers and local community members. By leaving the confines of their usual rehearsal or performance spaces, these singers have embarked upon learning experiences that have extended beyond the songs themselves. Although in many ways resembling tourists, often intent upon seeking a break from their normal routines, many have in fact been more akin to cosmopolitans, wishing to close the gap between hosts and guests by participating actively in local community life and forging long-lasting relationships with local people (a notion I explore further in my Conclusion). This type of active consumption has often left singers with experiences and knowledge concerning cultural context that cannot be obtained through written and electronic songbooks, or indeed through the teaching of choir leaders who may have never travelled to South Africa. These experiences and the cross-cultural encounters they initiate can challenge perceptions related to black South African musics and cultures that have been based previously on the nature of the songs themselves and the themes and messages they appear to convey. Finally, by reflecting on the personal narratives and anecdotes of participants of these singing journeys, we have discovered how approaches to teaching, learning and performing can be affected strongly after returning home. Participants draw on the experiences of their travels not only when singing and sharing songs they have collected during their journeys, but also when teaching and/or learning new material with similar themes or musical content.
By discussing the dynamics of the interactions and relationships between hosts and guests that the singing journeys to South Africa have inevitably facilitated, I have provided an alternative perspective from which to conceptualise the tourist experience. As I explained, tourism, and more particularly mass-tourism, has been in the firing line of much critique, but the ways in which guests can impact upon the lives of host communities suggests the need for a more nuanced exploration. We have seen how, through learning and performing traditional black South African choral music in South Africa, guests have helped to promote inclusivity and have, even if they are sometimes unaware of it, set the wheels in motion for social and political change. Moreover, they have often contributed to revival projects that have continued to benefit the musical and cultural heritages of specific communities. In relation to staged authenticity, Simone Abram has argued that the activities hosts employ to provide guests with aspects of culture they are expecting to see can ‘lead to a revival of interest in local activities, and a revalidation of local practices’. In addition, the resurrection of such historic symbols can present locals with opportunities to ‘define and express a continuity that they wish to maintain between the past and the future’. As we have seen, these assessments can be applied to elements of all the singing tours that have been discussed in this chapter. They resonate particularly strongly with the objectives of Matlakala Bopape and Bongani Magatyana who, during the course of Village Harmony camps in South Africa, share songs with participants and arrange performances that set the stage for music revivals both inside and outside of South Africa.

In this chapter, we witness a particularly striking example of how processes of cultural appropriation can be viewed in a celebratory light. Throughout the thesis we have

503 Ibid., 47.
been developing an understanding of how active participation through teaching and learning has provided new standpoints from which to conceptualise and evaluate processes of cultural appropriation. By investigating different approaches to transmission and performance, we have been able to discover the more positive effects of musical borrowing, and I have demonstrated how established criticisms of this activity can often be destabilised. The singing tours we have just explored are, I believe, the most profound examples of active participation we have encountered thus far. Here we see participants’ determination to leave behind their usual routines and enter into the communities of others, to learn about their cultures and attempt to improve their own learning and performing of songs. Motivations to travel and participate in such activities are usually guided by a passion for and commitment to this music that they wish to pursue to their furthest abilities. The cross-cultural relationships forged during tours, although often creating challenges and difficulties as those involved attempt to maintain them, create lasting memories and experiences that are shared with singers back home. Here, then, real-time cultural exchange has been initiated, and power disparities have been evened out. This, then, would seem to eliminate many of the criticisms surrounding cultural appropriation: guests are taking the ultimate measures to learn about and respect host cultures, and the interactions and memories that tours initiate affect positively the lives of all concerned, both musically and non-musically.
Conclusion

In the introduction to this study, I shared a set of questions that were posed by my inquisitive five-year-old niece, who had just listened to a radio presentation featuring my own teaching of black South African songs to the University of Manchester World Music Choir: ‘But you’re not from South Africa, are you? Why are you teaching songs from South Africa? How do you even get the songs anyway, and how do you even know what you’re doing?’ As I reflect on the outcomes and findings of my past five years of research and writing, it seems highly fitting that I should return to these surprisingly perceptive inquiries because, in many ways, they have in fact turned out to be remarkably similar to the questions that have shaped and defined the discussions pursued in this thesis. By investigating different approaches to collecting, teaching, learning and performing, I have discovered some of the many ways in which multi-part black South African songs have been accessed and encountered within British amateur singing circles. My exploration of a representative selection of singing groups and individuals has also demonstrated the extent to which songs have been circulated, and has revealed some of the many different contexts in which these songs have been shared and experienced. By focusing on these various musical, social and political spaces and following the activities of the people who inhabit them, I have been able not only to discover how and why certain songs have become particularly popular, but also to explore why black South African choral music has appealed so strongly to groups of British amateur singers more generally. Also pertinent to this study has been the discussion of the various politics that surround the different levels of access and encounter I have explored. I have investigated the ways in which groups and individuals approach dilemmas related to authenticity, cultural authority and power relations in a variety of rehearsal and performance contexts. My findings have been discussed in relation to critical debates surrounding cultural
appropriation and globalisation more broadly within the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology, and have provided fresh perspectives from which to consider and theorise issues related to cross-cultural teaching and performing through the postcolonial lens. In this final reflection, I bring together the various strands of my research, highlighting intriguing points of intersection and discussing the main themes and ideas that have surfaced in the ethnographic data I gathered.

Particularly prominent throughout this thesis was the theme of interconnectedness. Not only did I discuss the different types of imaginary and tangible relationships that the singing of South African songs has initiated, but I also explored important connections between collecting, teaching, learning and performing. Each chapter has shown how many of the ways in which British amateur singers have engaged with and responded to black South African songs have been guided by a primary set of themes and ideas, as well as by a specific cohort of people and places. In chapter two I explored processes of collecting, focusing on those key groups and individuals who compiled resources to facilitate the teaching and learning of South African songs on an international scale. The ways in which these collectors and pseudo-collectors provided a foundation for future teachers and learners were emphasised: I explored how certain groups and individuals were responsible for introducing certain types of songs and even specific pieces that choirs could later access. I discussed some of the different circumstances and contexts in which songs were collected, and analysed the different types of presentational style that collectors employed in their work, investigating paper, electronic, and human resources. I explored the types of advice offered by these collectors and pseudo-collectors, contextualising it in relation to the creative processes and personal and professional backgrounds of each group/individual. I outlined the challenges faced during presentation and interpretation, discussing critically problems relating to representation, authority and authenticity, and showed how collectors negotiated these
challenges. For some collectors, transcribing songs in standard Western notation and providing separate recordings of full performances constituted the most efficient and effective method to present teaching materials. In other cases, however, these more prescriptive approaches were perceived as inauthentic and/or inadequate for communicating crucial timbral and rhythmic detail. For individuals such as Mollie Stone, providing audiovisual representations of teaching and learning processes was considered the most ‘authentic’ form of transmission. Face-to-face transmission, which presented opportunities for recording teaching and learning processes within specific contexts and situations, was also perceived as a more culturally informed mode of transmission. With these electronic and human teaching resources, users were encouraged to teach songs aurally and thus acknowledge these songs’ musical and cultural roots in the oral tradition.

Without the preliminary work of these collectors and creators, it is unlikely that the teaching and learning discussed in chapter three would have occurred with such vigour and dynamism. Many of the choir leaders and members we encountered in this chapter were introduced to South African songs via the publications of Seeger, Nyberg, Village Harmony and others. Not only have the songs from these resources become popular in different rehearsal settings, but the teaching aids and advice that creators have presented has often inspired choir leaders’ own pedagogical approaches, and has provided opportunities for a diverse range of groups to learn the music. The paper-oriented resources, for instance, have been particularly useful for classically-oriented choirs, and/or for musical directors whose usual learning methods are score based. In the case of the Cosmo Singers, it is unlikely that South African songs would have featured in their ‘songs from around the world’ concert if notated scores had not been available. In other contexts, however, the face-to-face modes of transmission or electronic resources were more favourable as they provided teaching and learning aids for those who preferred to learn aurally. In short, then, it is unlikely that many of the rehearsals I analysed in chapter
three would have taken place without the input of those groups and individuals discussed in chapter two.

In other cases, however, the work of early collectors has functioned as a source of debate. Some choir leaders have interpreted paper resources as inauthentic, and have chosen instead to concentrate primarily on electronic resources and aural teaching. They believe that this descriptive form of representation allows them to provide a more culturally-informed teaching experience that concentrates on aural transmission. Other concerns have related more to the contents of specific resources and the research carried out by their authors. Some choir members and leaders have suggested that cultural contexts provided in collectors’ notes are lacking in detail or are even inaccurate. Resources by Village Harmony, for instance, are sometimes accused of being too specific or narrow-minded: they deal with only one element of South African choral music, but insist that a very specific vocal timbre should be adopted in the singing of South African songs more broadly. These debates, though, have not deterred choir members and leaders from rehearsing songs. Rather they have inspired new generations of groups and individuals to carry out their own research, which has often led to the organisation of workshops and/or the publication of new teaching resources. In these contexts, people might build on their own experiences of travelling to South Africa, where they have interacted with local choirs and communities. They might bring songs back to share with their own choirs, and talk about their own personal experiences of performing. The workshops and resources that are the product of this more current research often advocate a more open-minded approach to teaching and learning. The lines between right and wrong become much more blurred, and there is a greater emphasis on innovation rather than authenticity. Groups and individuals have become increasingly aware that the same song can exist in several versions, and can be changed contextually in response to shifting social and political climates. Yet this work has still been inspired by those earlier
collectors who certainly set the wheels for transmitting black South African songs in motion. Moreover, these collectors provided a preliminary body of repertoire for future teachers and learners to access. Chapters two and three of my thesis, then, are inextricably connected.

Chapter four, whilst exploring some of the many contexts in which black South African choral music is performed by British amateur singers, also highlighted connections with previous processes of collecting, teaching, and learning. Often, the ways in which choir members and leaders acquired songs had a particularly strong influence on how they were performed. If, for instance, a teacher had collected a song during a demonstration or rally, they might try to recreate this environment in a performance, even if the surroundings were rather different. They might encourage more physical movement and audience participation, and they might be less concerned about a polished vocal tone or musical structure. If choirs have learnt songs in South Africa, they might perform these songs back home with quite specific details and/or experiences in mind. Those choirs that rehearsed South African songs with music notation might opt for a more structured or controlled performance with greater detail concerning dynamics, tempi, and musical structure. I witnessed all of these types of performance throughout my research, and this made me more aware of how much the early work of collectors and the later inputs of transmitters affected greatly each presentation. Finally, processes of collecting and transmission discussed in chapters two and three also influenced greatly the ways in which performers approached recontextualisation. For many, it became clear that the existence of multiple versions of the same song, the changing ideas about cultural context and meaning, and the recycling and reviving of specific pieces over time suggested that there was often no rigid performing context. The majority of choir members and leaders I discussed became increasingly aware of the cultural and musical diversity in South Africa, and were therefore less afraid of performing songs with new meanings in new
environments. Such an awareness was informed largely by attending workshops, consolidating songbooks, and acknowledging the fact that the same song can acquire many different performing contexts and meanings as people and communities change.

The singing expeditions to South Africa discussed in chapter five are again connected inextricably with the processes discussed in previous chapters. For the most part, participants of these singing journeys have been motivated by their own teaching and learning of South African songs in their own ensembles. Captivated by the sounds, styles and themes of South African songs, these individuals have often been eager to find out more. They have wanted to deepen and enhance cross-cultural encounters and to learn songs in their original settings from culture-bearers. In addition, a connection and attraction to the songs themselves has often inspired choir members and leaders to seek ways of interacting with cultures and communities on a more face-to-face level, which has led them to participate in these singing journeys. In some cases, the ways in which songs have been taught back home, along with the environments in which they have been transmitted, have shaped singers’ perceptions of black South African communities and their activities. As I explained, however, participating in singing expeditions organised by bodies such as Village Harmony has often opened doors to the unexpected, and singers have come away with completely new or different ideas, images, and memories of the communities whose songs they have encountered in their own choir rehearsals and performances. These memories and experiences are then brought back to home ensembles and can often influence the ways in which songs are performed in the future. Within British amateur singing circles, then, the ways in which groups and individuals have engaged with, and responded to, black South African choral music have been influenced by a close family of processes. Although discussed in separate chapters, aspects of collecting, teaching, learning, performing, and travelling are all clearly connected, and have created a complex network of ideas and opportunities that have facilitated the on-
going circulation of songs and the desire for new and continued research. Each stage has prompted and guided the next, and the group of processes as a whole has presented opportunities for long-lasting and ever-improving modes of transmission.

The investigation of these connected processes of transmission and performance has not only explained how South African songs have been shared within amateur British circles, however. It has also provided some important standpoints from which to consider existing debates related to cultural appropriation more broadly. As I explained in chapter one, these debates have tended to be driven by two contrasting schools of thought. Either appropriation is portrayed in a wholly negative light with the Western consumers being accused of theft and exploitation, or it is perceived in an entirely celebratory light and is seen as the solution for creating a world at one with itself. By following the travels of black South African choral music and exploring how it is welcomed into its new British homes, however, I have shown that there are not simply two sides to the coin. Instead there is a sliding continuum: there are many in-betweens, discrepancies and blurred boundaries. Often there is no clear way of doing things, and there are many styles and approaches. This has been particularly apparent when discussing processes of recontextualisation, which have been pertinent to every chapter of my thesis. In chapters two and three I followed the journeys of collectors and teachers as they attempted to research songs’ cultural contexts. Employing a variety of methods that included conversing with culture-bearers and travelling to South Africa itself, these groups and individuals sought out translations, information concerning performance context and aesthetics, as well as advice concerning how to transmit material in an authentic or culturally-informed manner. In some cases, collectors and teachers believed that a definitive context could be pinned down: they had their own trusted sources of information and were able to supply each song they were transmitting with a clear meaning. Others would not teach a song unless they felt they knew how to ‘do it properly’.
Yet as the chapters progressed, I began to demonstrate that things are not always so straightforward. It became clear that multiple versions of the same song were often in circulation. These different versions often came with different meanings. The song ‘Siyahamba’, for instance, has been described as both a religious and political piece. Sometimes words are different, the melody is slightly altered, and performing contexts become confused or varied. There was, then, uncertainty surrounding which version was right. Is there ever a right way? I also showed how these uncertainties existed among culture-bearers themselves. By sharing information gathered during workshops in which culture-bearers were leaders, I showed how the same song was often given a different meaning depending on the teacher. Each teacher brought his or her own memories and experiences to the song, and this was treated with acceptance. Participants of workshops were told that, in South Africa, songs can change over time as they become part of new communities, new political landscapes, and new personal journeys. Cultural diversity also means that there are many ways of performing the same song depending on where a person lives and with whom they interact. For many British teachers, then, more emphasis was placed on finding new meanings for songs. They encouraged their choirs to make the songs their own, to perform songs with their own voices and in a way that was informed by their own personal experiences. This was believed to be the most authentic way of engaging with black South African songs. In these cases, then, the music was being performed outside of South Africa by British people in British performances but the focus often shifted from complications of recontextualisation to celebrations of interconnectedness.

There were, of course, some situations in which recontextualisation became more of an issue. For some members of The Cosmo Singers, for instance, performing South African folksongs in a concert hall in a presentational style created some discomfort. For others in the same concert, however, this was less of an issue and change was something
to be celebrated rather than lamented. These singers believed they were simply being themselves, and this was better than trying to become ‘South African’. I also showed how, in some situations, a lack of appropriate research might cause unwanted problems. I highlighted a case in which a funeral song had been advertised as a wedding song and was performed in a celebratory manner. What is clear, though, is that there is often no definitive approach to recontextualising many of these South African songs. Often they are characterised by the fact that they can be recontextualised with ease. Many of them are composed in ways that will allow them to function in different settings with different meanings. The examples featured in my study, then, demonstrate that limiting debate by adherence to two definitive and mutually-exclusive schools of thought is unhelpful where appropriation is concerned. In practice, the boundaries are blurred and each case must be treated separately.

Making further thought-provoking and inspiring contributions to existing debates surrounding cultural appropriation are the many intercultural relationships I have identified and explored within this thesis. From the outset I have shown how the sharing and performing of black South African choral music within British amateur singing circles has presented opportunities for host and guest cultures to work together and encourage and promote a mutual exchange of ideas, understandings, and processes. In chapter two I discovered how, whether by travelling to South Africa or embarking on fieldwork closer to home, collectors and pseudo-collectors collaborated with culture-bearers not only to seek out and gather songs together, but also to research their cultural contexts and methods of transmission. More importantly, though, I explored how the majority of these projects were not one-sided: collectors did not simply approach culture-bearers, gather songs, and isolate them completely from their home cultures. Instead, the rewards of collecting were often mutual. In the case of groups and individuals, such as Village Harmony and Pete Seeger, projects helped to raise awareness of and even create
music revival initiatives in South Africa. By researching and gathering folksongs that were at risk of dying out and preparing them for transmission on an international scale, these collectors were presenting opportunities for a specific type of widespread preservation that encouraged continued performance. Smaller national revival projects, then, became international. In the case of Anders Nyberg and Maggie Hamilton, resources raised an awareness of anti-apartheid campaigns in South Africa and presented opportunities for British singers to make their own contributions to an international anti-apartheid movement. In addition, those singers who worked with and collected songs from South African exiles were not only adding to their own artilleries of song, but were also inspiring these exiles to keep alive connections with home and to continue with their own political activism in places where they would not be punished.

In chapter three I explained the important roles played by culture-bearers in rehearsal settings. Again, I showed how these rehearsals were not one-sided: both parties often had something to gain. Bongani Magatyana, who was the guest teacher at the 2015 Laurieston Hall workshop, provides a particularly powerful example of this sort of exchange. In being presented with the opportunity to teach at this gathering, he was able to make his first visit to the UK. He was able to establish contacts, share his own compositions, raise awareness of his own revival projects, and learn songs from other teachers. These songs, as I explained, would then be shared with his own choirs in South Africa. Here, then, ideas of the cultural bazaar and global village are prominent.

Chapter four and five explored some particularly powerful relationships that the performing of black South African songs has initiated. I explained how many British choirs have organised concerts to raise money for communities in South Africa whose songs they are singing. I shared anecdotes from those who sang South African songs as part of anti-apartheid campaigns, and discussed positive feedback that various performers received from South African community members. I followed the activities of those
groups and individuals who participated in singing excursions in South Africa, explaining how these journeys were defined by moments of real-time cultural exchange. I discussed Wren Music, and how its singing tour to South Africa involved teenagers teaching English folksongs to schoolchildren, as well as learning South African songs themselves. Members of the Rough Diamonds Community Choir helped to form and maintain the South African Diamond Choir by travelling to South Africa themselves. I found several of the initiatives embarked upon by Village Harmony campers in South Africa particularly moving, however. Events I described at the Sisonke Social Circus were, for Matlakala Bopape, much more than a musical collaboration. By encouraging children and adults of different races and backgrounds to work together, Village Harmony participants were taking part in efforts to promote social and racial equality and inclusion. For Bopape, it was rare in South Africa to see races coming together to perform so easily and so enthusiastically, and this moved both her and myself to tears. In all of these cases, then, performers have found inspiring and effective ways of contributing to host communities, and developing intercultural respect and understanding. Those travelling to South Africa have functioned as much more than tourists. They instead might be described as cosmopolitans who travel to communities in which they wish to be participants. These different scenarios also emphasise the broad semantic field of the term cultural appropriation. Rather than viewing appropriation as an act of taking, extracting, stealing, or even borrowing, I have demonstrated the need to also discuss this process in relation to encounter, collaboration, exchange and partnership.

Not all the relationships explored in my thesis have been plain sailing, however. I have demonstrated examples in which partnerships have been difficult to maintain because of distance and a lack of communication technology. In the case of Rough Diamonds, fundraising projects had to be suspended due to lack of communication. I also presented instances in which British singers constructed their own perceptions of South
African communities purely through the songs themselves. By considering the melodies, harmonies, rhythms and themes of certain songs, they often conjured vivid mental images of peoples and places they had never encountered. Sometimes these landscapes and images were criticised by culture-bearers: I highlighted a case in which a South African living in London expressed concerns that a choir were singing what they called ‘freedom songs’ with happiness and dynamism. For her these were ‘struggle songs’, filled with sadness and memories of traumatic times in her family life. Perhaps these sorts of relationships might be described as more independent and/or one-way: people take the songs and form their own ideas without necessarily consulting or involving the host culture. Yet even in these situations, groups and individuals are often willing to find out more. They might be aware that their own ideas are only imaginary, and so they might seek out ways to conduct further research. By exploring different styles and levels of relationships between cultures, however, I have once again encouraged a more nuanced approach to cultural appropriation debates. At this stage, it seems fitting to return to an observation made by Ulf Hannerz, in his 1996 volume Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places: ‘It would seem to me that contemporary interconnectedness in the world is really too complicated and diverse to be either condemned or applauded as a whole. Different aspects of it may quite justifiably draw different responses’.  

By describing acts of appropriation that promote active participation, I have highlighted the complexities and ambiguities that surround concepts of right and wrong.

A further objective of this thesis has been to identify the reasons behind the lasting appeal and attractive powers of black South African choral music within amateur singing circles. As I explained in chapter one, community choirs and other similar singing collectives in Britain have demonstrated a particularly lively passion for world songs and,

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504 Hannerz, Transnational Connections, 5.
over the past forty years, have been including them regularly in rehearsal and performance programmes. As I also indicated, however, songs from black communities of South Africa have enjoyed a particularly long-lasting positive reception and continue to inspire choir performances of many different shapes and sizes. The unique experiences these songs offer have been intriguing to explore. In my view, these experiences lie mostly in the many human-powered intercultural relationships that I have explained above. Many of the songs I have discussed in this thesis, such as ‘Nkosi Sikelel’i’, ‘Senzenina’ and ‘Siyahamba’, have formed very real and important parts of community life in South Africa. British singers have responded powerfully to this fact, singing the songs also as part of campaigns to fight for social justice and equality in South Africa. This, of course, was helped by the fact that the anti-apartheid movement was in the international spotlight, meaning that perhaps these songs were more readily accessible and noticeable than other world songs at the time. In addition, many songs have more recently been recycled by British singers to communicate their own politics, to give expression to their own concerns, and to help drive campaigns that relate to contemporary issues. The fact that songs can be recontextualised in this way and can thus maintain many of their original functions and meanings makes them particularly attractive to these British singers. The songs remain ‘real’, full of relevant politics and life experiences.

I have also explored how black South African songs can conjure specific teaching and learning atmospheres that are particularly suitable for open-access singing groups. I shared anecdotes from teachers and learners who found these songs especially easy to put together. The fact that different combinations of parts could be used at different times meant that, even if numbers were small, choirs could produce a performance that was enjoyable and satisfying. Uplifting melodies and rich harmonies filled singers with energy and confidence, and offered moments of mental and physical release. Dance movements offered similar benefits. Choirs were attracted by the melange of foreign and
familiar themes of songs, which often made them easy to learn. These musical ingredients are not present in songs originating from places such as Corsica and Georgia, where harmonies are more dissonant and polyphonic structures are more complicated to assemble, even if these elements are attractive and stimulating for other reasons. The black South African songs I have encountered have also created interesting performing landscapes: they could function in both presentational and participatory performing environments. Moreover, they created opportunities for choirs to roam between the presentational and the participatory: audiences could learn parts of a song and join in, but could also happily sit and listen to a full performance. The songs, then, often broke down recognised boundaries between audiences and performers. This type of performance atmosphere has, of course, been created by other kinds of songs such as gospel pieces and spirituals, but I have experienced it particularly frequently in relation to South African material.

The widespread activity of learning and performing South African songs outside of South African presents scope for some intriguing further study. As I mentioned in my introduction, I would like to explore gospel choirs in Britain and investigate their uses of South African songs. I would also like to focus on British amateur choirs with a predominantly black membership. How do they use South African songs, and is their approach different to the mainly white choirs I have studies in this thesis? In addition, whilst I have focussed on the activities of Village Harmony and a number of other smaller initiatives outside of the UK, I would like to conduct a more detailed investigation of international organisations with connections to South African singing. I am particularly keen to look at the reception of singers with differing nationalities in South Africa. How, for example, would a black American gospel choir, singing South African songs, be received on a musical tour in South Africa? Would they be treated differently to a white British choir? I have also been alerted to some groups in Australia who have embarked
on singing expeditions to South Africa. I would like to learn more about these tours and their organisers. How did connections with South Africa begin? Are partnerships and cross-cultural encounters different to those I have explored in this thesis?

As for the future sustainability and vitality of the music communities I have studied thus far, I see cause only for excitement and intrigue. I am constantly being invited to concerts, rallies, workshops and singing tours where South African songs are being performed. I am approached by choirs who are keen to plan visits to South Africa, and who ask for both my advice and my participation. Songs both old and new continue to be taught and received with ever-more enthusiasm, and audiences still shout for more. So whilst this thesis has come to an end, my relationship with South African songs and their travels will continue to grow: where will I go next? Who will I encounter? What new songs will I find, and who will be singing them?


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