

Composing for Vibrational Sound Installations

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A composition portfolio and reflective commentary submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Masters in Music (Composition)


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Declaration

I, Matlali Matabane, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own. Where I have relied on the work of others, this is clearly acknowledged.

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Matlali Matabane', written in a cursive style.

DATE: 14 February 2025

Abstract

This reflective commentary focuses on the creation of a composition portfolio based on vibrational art installations in Lesotho and South Africa. I consider my positionality as a Black African scholar in the Global South and how technology can be coupled with indigenous philosophies to produce spaces that can be read as culturally contemplative. The three sites selected for the study are Morija Museum and Archives, the Tankwa Karoo, and the Raw Spot Gallery/ the International Library of African Music (ILAM). To do so, I use the African philosophy of Ntu, the ultimate cosmic principle that permeates all nature, to engage in an inter-material dialogues among artefacts, historical sites, visual art, and sound. I situate my study by considering the historical and political events that shaped the establishment of the archive and the archive's effects on the listening and musicking practices manifest as hybridity in the performed compositions.

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2. Tankwa Karoo Artscape Residency - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xezo6taFGAU&t=1s>
3. Raw Spot Gallery / ILAM Installation - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1m6sL9Y9U1OItxAFN7cC-Z6ASk0MISneh?usp=drive_link

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Le kae? (Where are you located in space?)

What place does African philosophy occupy in contemporary installation works focused on sound? Can oral traditions once disrupted by colonialism serve as inspiration for contemporary sound art?¹ Can indigenous intentions for music to function as prayer, history recalling, and law preservation (Robinson 2020, 8) prevail in heritage collections and sites? *Le kae?* is a spatial question in Sesotho, which asks of me —as a sound artist—to think about the situated-ness of my compositional practice through these opening questions. In doing so, I consider my own listening positionality as a Southern African composer with access to and an interest in creating technologies that engage with the sensorium surrounding me, where I live and work in Lesotho² and South Africa. My starting point, therefore, becomes how my use of technology comes into service for the enunciation of music as politically, historically, and spatially situated and responsive. In my art, I consider the colonisation of Lesotho and its resultant effects on land, migration, and identity through cultural expression.

My composition portfolio explores how sound art installations interact with artefacts held within museums and archives that more broadly house and represent the things of heritage collections through the inter-material vibration afforded by sound, which I discuss later in this chapter. The portfolio comprises visual and performance installations across three sites in Morija, Lesotho, the Tankwa Karoo, Northern Cape, and Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa. These performance installations were created in heritage spaces as catalysts of vibration that call and respond to the inherent cultural residue of each site. I used three synthesisers: one digital

¹ I reference Robinson in *Hungry Listening* as an interpretation of colonialist interaction with indigenous culture as an exercise of institutional categorisation (2020, 2). That is — for Lesotho in particular— the philosophy of music, its nature, and value was not based on empirical studies. Rather, these early studies were anthropological attempts to serve the mapping and categorisations of music through Western music philosophy.

² Lesotho is the land mass within South Africa established via annexation by the British in 1864. Lesotho is derived from the word Sotho meaning “black person or black people”, i.e., the prefix “so-” refers to black colour, and the stem “-tho” refers to person or people (Mojela 2016, 93)

(Novation Circuit Tracks), one a sampler (Novation Rhythm), and the last analogue (Korg Volca Keys). The audio output of these combined is 17 channels or tracks that were looped and arranged in various ways. Additionally, performances relied on movement that altered the microphone-speaker relationship, resulting in audio feedback. A looper was introduced in the installations to capture the live aspect of each installation. My acoustic instruments included the *lesiba*,³ a stringed-wind instrument known as the herd boy's gramophone. A steel tongue drum. An ankle shaker. A rain-stick. A three-stringed handmade lute. A voice.

In reflecting on these works, I turn to Nina Sun Eidsheim's theory of music as vibrational practice in her book, *Sensing Sound* (2015) and couple this theory with the African philosophy of *Ntu* to try to understand in retrospect how my work might be situated and to answer the question, *Le kae?*

Framing My Portfolio

Global North and South are political terms. The former, according to Anne Garland Mahler, refers to 'spaces and people negatively impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization' (Hiraide, 2021, 1). The concept of worldview was therefore discussed through the framework of the power dynamics which influence epistemology; the theory of knowledge and its scope, and how an imbalance exists in the knowledge-making that persists within a North-South top-down model.

My point of departure for thinking about African philosophy is specifically guided by the *Ntu* ontology derived from Bantu philosophy. The Bantu are members of any of several peoples forming a linguistically and, in some respects, culturally interrelated family in central and southern Africa. However, this European adaptation of 'Bantu', meaning 'People', is limited as Bantu people would translate to 'People people'. Yet, when investigated etymologically, Bantu is a Plateau Tsonga word derived from the morphemes *Ba-*, *n-*, and *tu-*, which translates to 'the ideal manifestation of those who flew to the heavens who are our familiars' (Inyenyenzi 2024). Thus, *Ntu* (concept) refers to a coalescing force that draws together a set of constituent forces

³ The term *lesiba* (Southern Sesotho and Tswana for 'feather') refers to a class of unbraced mouth-resonated bow with a flattened quill attached to a long string.

that comprise being (Ogbonnya 2014). In other words, Ntu is an ontological category suggesting that being comprises the relationship between various forces in the universe. Then, the Ntu is a type of supreme force that constitutes a spiritual dimension and opens the possibility for a cosmology that extends beyond the perceptible reality (Ogbonnya 2014,111-112). My performance installations sought to explore how art can create a connection with Ntu in heritage spaces.

To explore where my performances are informed by Ntu, I turn to what scholars of Bantu philosophy have argued are the four constituent forces of Ntu (Ogbonnya 2014, 111). These authors suggest that our physical reality, which is bound together by the spiritual Ntu, is constituted by four forces: (i) mu-ntu⁴ (intelligent forces and beings such as humans (dead or alive) and spirits), (ii) ki-ntu (things or life forms such as animals or inanimate objects which the muntu has dominion), (iii) ha-ntu (forces of place and time), and (iv) ku-ntu (manner of being) (Ngangah 2019, 52). Here, Ntu becomes useful as a theory as it encompasses the entirety of existence, comprising the interactions of these four forces.

Ntu is used as a central philosophy informing the compositional considerations of my portfolio. Alexis Kagame (cited in Ogbonnya, 2024;111) explains Ntu further as the ultimate cosmic principle that permeates every nature. I consider this definition as it manifests in the social history of selected encounters between Southern African and European people between the 1800s and 1900s. In my work, these encounters create the socio-cultural circumstances that have produced the culture of the museums and art galleries through which I access the mu(ntu) principle, but they also constitute the very sites that my compositions interrogate. Ki-ntu (animate and inanimate things) becomes a significant focus in my work as I become interested in the inter-materiality of things such as artefacts, instruments, and even the compounds of the earth as this earth forms the heritage sites to which I respond in my performance installations. I do not limit my conception of ki-ntu to acoustic things but consider also how digital synthesisers and amplification devices fall under this category. Ha-ntu (forces of place and time) in the context of this project denotes the forces I encountered in contemporary time (2023–2024) as well as places such as Morija, the Tankwa Karoo, and Makhanda. I consider these contemporary times and places to exist coterminously with instances of time and place spanning much of the

⁴ In the word Muntu the prefix mu- implies a part of, while n- is a pronoun preposition which signifies belonging or attachment and, tu- is us. Therefore Muntu means within or a part of us.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Southern Africa because time in the ontology of Ntu is non-linear (after all, energy cannot be created nor destroyed).⁵ Ku-ntu (the manner in which I approached this project) is expounded in another African Philosophy: Ma'at. In Egyptian philosophy, Ma'at is the principle of order and balance that is often translated to the ethical sphere as justice and truth (Martin, 2008). I return to this concept as a grounding principle in the discussions of each installation performance that follows this chapter.

To consider how Ntu might manifest in the context of performance installations that use sound specifically as a creative medium, I turn to Nina Sun Eidsheim's notion of vibrational practice, which she develops in *Sensing Sound* (2015). Here, Eidsheim posits that sound is a thick event that not only comprises the aural perception of sound waves but is experienced multi-sensorially through material and the body (Eidsheim 2015, 155). To consider sound as multi-sensorial, 'thick event' is to think of sound as a vibrational practice. Eidsheim argues that a vibrational practice of sound stands in contrast to the notion of a 'figure of sound', which, following nineteenth-century Western notions of music aesthetics, prioritises abstract audition (sound disconnected from material). That is, Western musicology is used as the main parameter to know and understand music. Thus, sounding practice is objectified much like a museum might objectify cultural practice (Eidsheim 2015, 51).

A vibrational practice situates sound as an inter-material phenomenon, which regenerates energy through material transmission and transduction within a continuous field. I turn to the notion of sound as inter-material vibrational practice in this project as a heuristic for critique. In particular, I turn to sound as inter-material vibrational practice to interrogate and critique the objectification of heritage sites, specifically in museum and archive curation at Morija Museum (Lesotho) and the International Library of African Music (Makhanda) and to respond to narratives of land ownership (also a form of abstraction and curation) in the Tankwa Karoo.

Epistemic Disobedience

By building inter-material vibrational sound installations and using sound as a medium for enquiry and analysis, I situate my project more broadly within sound studies implemented in

⁵ To scientists, energy conservation does not mean saving energy. Instead, the law of conservation of energy says that energy is neither created nor destroyed.

the Global South. This approach, however, is an act of critique whereby I use sound technologies as tools to amplify black sonic inquiry.

For one, in *Sound Studies from Africa*, Newman and Sacks (2023, 4) highlight the Global North's preoccupation with sound in cities, its place, and the resultant rise in investigating sound as a phenomenon of urban studies. Erasmus and Layne (2023) discussed how, contrary to the West, Southern African sonic studies stems from a decolonial framework, one that is careful not to replicate the asymmetries of the Global North. The historical relationship between these two cradles is established by the West through colonisation. Chattopadhyay (2021, 32) writes on the binary of pre-modern:

The temporal demarcation of using the prefix "pre-" before "modern" suggests that modernity starts somewhere, like a liberating bang; everything else prior was primitive – this is a colonial perspective of upholding the Western dominance and supremacy.

Such are the power dynamics embedded in the texts of sound scholarship as a Western idea. By asymmetry, it is implied that the musical relationship between ethnographers and the native developed from imperialist tension. Chattopadhyay (2021, 32) further explains;

Recording technology altered performance aesthetics for sound practices by limiting the duration, scope of improvisation, and by distributing vocal and instrumental music, and local sounds as fixed objects to a mass audience for the first time.

I propose examining sound not through traditional instrument classifications, but as a lens for understanding the power dynamics that drive the universalisation of Western music practices. This approach reveals how 'world music' becomes categorised as 'subaltern' when measured against Western technological 'progress'—positioning non-Western musical traditions as songs under constant surveillance and tension. Simultaneously, traditional oral practices from the Global South are subjected to investigation through Northern technological frameworks and ethnological research methods. The interplay between acoustic and digital technologies highlights the hybrid nature of contemporary listening practices, which are mediated by devices across diverse social spaces—from site-specific congregations in churches and concerts to curated sound art installations. My practice critically examines these social listening environments, recognising how they are shaped by North-South power hierarchies.

However, it is crucial to emphasise that my focus prioritises pro-expression approaches over purely anti-colonial critique.

To better understand this position, I also enlist Walter D. Mignolo's (2009) theory of 'Epistemic Disobedience', which articulates, in the case of this project, the rupture/disruption of the silencing effects of Western epistemology on indigenous listening positions. In other words, the critiques I develop through my installations are critiques of the Western framework of knowing sound, but which also acknowledge the effects of the forces that bind sound to heritage. I am hereby disobedient of a type of knowing that relegates the indigenous being to silence.

The epistemic silence I am interested in for this project pervades many heritage collections and sites. In museum studies, for instance, indigenous practices, artefacts, and histories are often archived but seldom made to sound out their material resonances. They are thus relegated to a state of material soundlessness (Fourie 2024, 4). Indeed, historically, galleries, archives, and museums in the Global South tend to prioritise the visual over the auditory (Groth 2020, 107).

Where heritage collections and sites have been activated through sonic interventions, residual epistemic silences remain in these spaces (Fourie 2024, 3). These silences might be traced back to the fundamental power dynamics of the cultural assimilation of Western culture by the indigene through the institutionalisation of culture. As Mignolo explains,

institutions are created that accomplish two functions: training of new (epistemic obedient) members and control of who enters and what knowledge-making is allowed, disavowed, devalued or celebrated (2009, 18).

My composition portfolio aims to interrogate this silencing effect of Western cultural institutions such as archives, museums, and heritage sites through acts of sonification created with synthesisers, vocalisations, and the resonant materials of physical spaces of these collections.

In doing so, however, my project also enacts a form of epistemic disobedience against epistemologies of sound prevalent in sound studies that focus on sonic histories and materialities of the Global North. To achieve this, my methodology draws from Erasmus and Layne's approach to a critical reading of the archive as past/present sites for performance 2023,

5). I vocalise, sample the archive, and perform among artworks and artefacts to co-constitute coherent installations.

The compositional practice operates as epistemic disobedience by centring African song structures and instrumentation, which then encounters Western modality through electronic devices and performance styles. The compositions draw influence from the aesthetics of *magae*, *lithoko*⁶, and traditional song forms of the Basotho, merging these with the electronic sonic timbres of digital sounds. Simultaneously, the Western performance paradigm—characterised by the separation of artist/collective from the art piece—was deliberately engaged. These creative tensions prompted an exploration of sound as avant-garde fine art, designed to penetrate the institutional spaces of museums and galleries.

The archive and museum are inherently engaged in the politics of viewership and gaze, where the controlled possession of artefacts creates a separation from their communities of origin. The compositions, therefore, became a means of negotiating bridges—embodying Sankofa as a way of relating to the histories of Southern African peoples and establishing a listening practice that emphasises the revisiting of archived songs. This approach challenges the extractive nature of institutional preservation while creating new pathways for cultural knowledge to circulate and resonate.

This field investigates the material production and consumption of sound, silence, and noise while considering how these have been used in societies over time (Sterne 2012, 2). Sound studies has become interdisciplinary to include race, gender, and other socio-cultural aspects and has moved away from universalist notions of aurality rooted in Western ways of listening (Ingleton 2015, 40). However, even these more progressive studies often assume a fixed listening positionality. As Marie Thompson (2017) posits, the direction of sound studies has shifted from one of identity, culture, and signification to an aesthetic, generalised, materialistic abstract expression rooted in what she terms 'modest white aurality'. What was once the indigene's sonic cultural inheritance passed down through everyday life has become a decontextualised, individualised, and commodified object for the institutionalised square spaces. Kazlauskaitė describes her sonic installations in white cubes as an act of retaliation against the policing and gatekeeping of the object (2020).

⁶ Magae and lithoko are Southern Sotho for male initiation songs and praise poetry.

In enacting a form of epistemic disobedience against the field of sound studies that assumes a modest white aurality, I follow authors such as Dylan Robinson (2020) who level critiques against sound studies as a Euro-American understanding of music's ontology of aestheticised listening. Robinson's notion of 'hungry listening' (2020), or the settler's starving orientation in listening to the indigenous, is particularly useful in articulating the sonic critique around which my project will revolve. His work suggests a reorientation in sound studies in which indigenous life is heard from the perspective of indigenous ears, which is a process that I use in my compositions.

While I take seriously the reorientation of the listening subject, I also situate my practice in the emerging discourse around music technologies and race. In doing so, I follow Alexander Weheliye (2014, 511–2) by emphasising the place of technology in the construction of black music. Whether it be the use of the telephone or the vocoder, technology remains the main medium for music's production, reproduction, and consumption, but it is inherently bound up with black sonic modernities. For Weheliye (2005), this technological sonification of black modernity, which stands in strong contrast to the museumification of black artefacts, is presented as a Du Boisian or 'double consciousness', which states that black people are confronted with two identities: identity from the Eurocentric gaze and one's own identity. In my case, this translates to the quest to participate as a black scholar and sound artist in Western-centred fields of sound and heritage studies.

Three Heritage Sites

My portfolio focuses on three sites to consider the ways heritage collections might be interrogated through performance installations: 1) Morija Museum and Archives, Lesotho, 2) the Tankwa Karoo, South Africa, and 3) the International Library for African Music (ILAM), Rhodes University, South Africa. I chose these three sites for pragmatic reasons. During the first part of the study, I lived in Lesotho, and thus the Morija Museum was an accessible site for developing materials which responded to a colonial archive. The Morija Museum represents a pivotal institution in the preservation and documentation of Basotho cultural heritage. Established in 1956, it is among the oldest museums in Southern Africa and serves as a critical

repository of artefacts, archival materials, and ethnographic collections that chronicle the historical and cultural evolution of the Basotho people. Morija itself holds significant historical importance as a site of early missionary activity and as a centre for education and cultural development within the region. The museum's commitment to safeguarding indigenous knowledge and its role as a site of cultural interrogation make it an ideal location for an installation that critiques European constructions of Southern African heritage.

The second site I discuss is the Tankwa Karoo. Again, developing a performance installation at this site was a pragmatic decision because I was awarded a Tankwa Artscape Residency in April 2023. During this residency, I developed a performance that responded to themes of land ownership and the heritage of the San in this area. The Tankwa Karoo is a semi-desert region in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa and is characterised by its austere landscapes and extreme environmental conditions. This geographically remote area has historically been perceived as a marginal space (Shaw 2017), yet it has increasingly become a site of cultural and historical significance. The Tankwa Karoo, in this sense, made for a compelling context for a performance installation that interrogates colonial and postcolonial narratives of land, identity, and heritage, and considers ways in which Southern African landscapes have been historically constructed and contested.

The third site in this project was the International Library for African Music (ILAM), located at Rhodes University in Makhanda, South Africa. As a student registered at Rhodes University, ILAM made for a compelling and accessible site to consider heritage collections. However, it is specifically because ILAM is a sound archive of indigenous musics of the African continent that I felt it presented exciting opportunities to explore ideas of inter-material vibrations. ILAM is dedicated to the preservation, study, and dissemination of African musical traditions. Founded in 1954 by ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey, ILAM houses an extensive archive of audio recordings, musical instruments, and scholarly materials that document the diversity and richness of African musical practices. As a centre for academic research and cultural preservation, ILAM plays a critical role in challenging Eurocentric paradigms and promoting the decolonisation of knowledge systems even as it grapples with its own colonial legacy (Lobley 2022, 32; 39). In other words, the library's focus on African musical heritage provided a resonant setting for an installation that critiques European notions of cultural ownership and

representation. While ILAM was the focus of the third installation, the work was developed at Raw Spot Gallery, which is also on the Rhodes University campus.

Methodology

My project uses performance to investigate the inter-material practice of vibration of museum collections and art galleries, and as such employs artistic research as a methodology. The basic formula for artistic research considers artistic process (acts inside the practice) and the aim of arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work) (Hannula et al. 2014). In this formulation, the artistic process includes a grasp of the status quo of the practice, documentation and preparation of artworks while arguing for a point of view that involves socio-theoretical imagination and conceptual augmentative innovations. My project grounds itself in this formula wherein installations are designed as part of a feedback model which cycles through performance, dialogue, and documentation.

Concept notes were developed for each of the three installations, each particularised by location, type of space, and the socio-historical context of the cultures within. A visual component was sustained through the portfolio with the use of blankets as a subtle gesture of longing to humanise my otherwise solo digital set-up. The insertion of humanness was also influenced by sampling songs from the Morija Museum and Archives and ILAM. A selection of digital synthesiser sounds was made in advance alongside sampled collections of people in song, circa 1950. (Wits miners' songs - ILAM and the Ellenberger Tapes, Morija). The sonic and performative aspects of these installations were designed to think through inter-material dialogue, i.e. a consideration of the ontological being and the artefacts of their culture.

I have chosen to call the artefacts presented within this frame performance installations. These, for me, are productions in sound art that are immersive, time-based works that merge live performance with site-specific or interactive sound elements. These works emphasise real-time creation and the physical presence of sound in space. To create these performance installations, I use field recordings, electronic processing, or acoustic instruments to construct evolving sonic environments. These performances unfold over different durations.

My performance installations shift between composition and improvisation. Parts of these works are structured and pre-developed, while other aspects rely on spontaneity and live

creation using instruments and synthesisers. Technology is present in my works as I consider how spatial audio systems shape how sound interacts with the audience and the performance environment. This hybridity challenges distinctions among music, sculpture, and theatre, placing emphasis on the ephemeral, multisensory experience rather than a fixed, repeatable form.

Performance in installations that form sound art also explores themes of presence, perception, and temporality. Because these works are designed for a specific moment and space, they resist conventional documentation, existing primarily in the memories of those who experience them. To capture this in a portfolio, I have decided to visually document each performance installation and include photos and video recordings where possible. I also include an account of my own memories of the performances. Then, I have distilled fixed media composition from the first two performance installations (Morija Museum and Tankwa Karoo) and included the full rendition of the performance that formed part of the installation at Raw Spot Gallery. In what follows, I reflect on the three performance installations from the point of conceptualisation through to execution and conclude with a broader reflection across the whole project.

Instruments

The following is a brief introduction to all instruments and software used in the composition portfolio. The Novation Circuit Tracks is a groovebox with two polyphonic synthesisers, four monophonic drum tracks, and two MIDI tracks used to control external instruments. The standalone groove box allows for music to be composed on a sequencer that can be connected to up to 16 other sequences. In this way, the synthesiser can be looped for extended periods of time.

In essence, an oscillator is an electrical sound produced by either a sine, square, triangle or sawtooth wave. The oscillator is passed through a mixer, filters, effects, a compressor, and is channelled into an audio signal. In order to create a unique sound beyond presets, the following

macro knobs are used to change the parameters of the synthesiser sound; (i) Oscillator, (ii) Oscillator ModF, (iii) Amp Envelope, (iv) Filter Envelope,(v) Filter Frequency,(vi) Resonance, (vii) Modulation, and (viii) FX.

Novation Rhythm

The Circuit Rhythm, on the other hand, is a sampler and uses recorded sounds as the basis for sound design. The sound sample can be pitched down, stretched, distorted, filtered and resonated to manipulate the input sound. The sampler was used in the Morija Museum and Archives and the Raw Spot Gallery installations to introduce sounds found in the archives and other percussion sounds.

The Korg Volca Keys

The Korg Volca Keys is a compact analogue synthesiser featuring 3-voice synthesis with three VCOs, a VCF, and an EG for rich sound generation. Its standout voicing function lets users combine oscillators in six modes (Poly, Unison, Octave, Fifth, Unison Ring, or Poly Ring) for diverse sonic textures. Key features include a built-in delay effect with modulation capabilities that mimic analogue tape echo, and a 16-step loop sequencer for phrase recording. The Motion Sequencing function captures real-time knob movements, allowing dynamic parameter changes like filter cutoff and resonance to be recorded and replayed automatically. It was used in my sound design to play both bass and leads, to cut through the polyphonic layers from the Novation Circuit Tracks. Together, the three pieces of gear complement each other, wherein The Circuit focuses on the lower timbres of bass while the higher leads are driven by the Korg Volca Keys. The Circuit Rhythm is used mainly as a sampler and manipulates analogue sound.

Other Instruments

Drums - Steel tongue drum and calabash drum - An 11-tone steel tongue drum and a handmade udo drum (see appendix Fig. 1). Lesiba - One-stringed aerophone-chordophone made with a string, feather quill and stick. Other instruments used in the creative portfolio were the rainstick, a whistle, a singing bowl, and a six-string handmade lute (see Appendix Fig.2).

Synthesiser set up

Synthesisers were a central part of the development of each installation and are always in relation to other devices, particularly the microphone and speaker. The live sound was experienced through the resonance and reflection of sound within a given space. My sound design is mostly shaped by using the low and high pass filters to adjust the sonic resonance of a synthesiser to derive a bass or lead sound.

The sampler was used as a direct intermediary between the analogue (vocal) sound of recorded archives and other sounds. The Circuit Rhythm allowed for the creative shifts in pitch of a sample aimed at mimicking the collective chorus compositions of the Basotho. Other parameters, such as sample length and resonance, are added to create variation in the ambient drones of the Novation Circuit.

Microphones

The microphone placement within each installation was essential for the final recording of the composition portfolio. In Morija and Tankwa, a condenser microphone captured both performances in indoor and outdoor settings, respectively. Since each performance involved movement and changing proximity to the microphone, this rendered the microphone a significant component of the artistic practice. In both performances, my movement functioned as a gain control device, modulating the level of the audio signal entering the sound card. In contrast, the Raw Spot Gallery performance was executed from a stationary position and relied on the capturing of sound through a condenser and a contact microphone.

Chapter 2 – The Museum

Morija Museum and Archives Installation

Morija Museum and Archives, Morija, Lesotho, April 2024

My first composition was designed as part of the Morija Museum and Archive installation, which explored themes of settler colonialism in Lesotho and examined how this site functioned as a centre of cultural assimilation through colonial institutions. The work placed particular emphasis on the church and its resulting museum, archive, and printing press as components of a larger scheme involving land dispossession and the erosion of indigenous cultural identity.

It is only possible to speak of the 'Basotho' as a people after the 1820s, since before then, they were separate clans, namely Koena, Tlokoa, Fokeng, and Taung (Wells 1994, 20). These clans were descendants of Bantu-speaking Iron Age communities who migrated from modern-day Cameroon and Nigeria (Maliehe, 2021,n.p). During the early nineteenth century, the Basotho lost a significant portion of their land to the Boers in the Seqiti Wars.⁷ In response, Moshoeshoe I, the first king of Lesotho, sent two hundred cattle to Griqua hunter Adam Krotz in Phillipolis (now Free State) to procure missionaries from London (Tseuoa, 2020, 3) and to ensure the protection of his land and people under the British. The result, however, saw Moshoeshoe I's territory diminish to a third of its size to the Boers through the Napier Treaty (1843) and the Orange River Sovereignty annexation of 1848, which Moshoeshoe withdrew from in February 1854. Finally, Moshoeshoe I acknowledged the annexation of Lesotho in 1868 (Lelimo, 1998, 7).

The Morija Museum and Archive is an extension of this missionary presence in Lesotho. It is based on collections by Francois and Paul Ellenberger, sons of David Frederic Ellenberger, an early missionary who established the Masitise Church on 1 August 1866 (Lesotho Tribune 2022).⁸ The museum was formally opened in 1956 but only received a permanent home in the

⁷ The Seqiti War was a result of lengthy hostilities between the Basotho and the Boers over the land occupied by the Boers. This war was named after the noise that the cannon balls made as they hit the ground—*qiti!* Sanders, *Moshoeshoe Chief of the Sotho*, 284

⁸ Masitise is a cave museum located at Masitise in the Quthing district in Lesotho. The Cave House was built between 1866 and 1867 by Reverend D.F. Ellenberger after the second Basotho-Boar War forced him to move his family south of the Orange River onto the lands of Chief Moorosi. (<http://masitisecavehouse.blogspot.com/p/masitise-cave-house-museum.html>)

1980s thanks to the efforts of Reverend Albert Brutsch (1916–2004). The museum is now under the ownership of the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), formerly recognised as the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS). The Archives preserve invaluable records that chronicle the distinctive history of the Basotho people. Among these are colonial-era documents, including Blue Books⁹, along with legal and governmental reports from the post-independence period. The collection also features a rich assortment of manuscripts, such as missionary correspondence and church registers, as well as copies of *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, the first newspaper in Lesotho, which has been in circulation since 1863.

Additionally, the collection contains a significant number of French-language materials, with *Journal des Missions Evangéliques* being one of the most valuable, along with a limited selection of German texts. The linguistic section is extensive, including resources in various African languages that connect to missionary activities across the continent. However, the most prominent linguistic materials are books written in Sesotho, the official language of Lesotho. The archives also house thousands of photographs, maps, and monographs that capture both the landscapes of Lesotho and the broader scope of missionary work there.

The history of education is well represented in the collection, beginning with articles from early PEMS mission journals, such as *Basutoland Witness*, and extending to government ministerial reports. Music also holds a prominent place, with early hymnals in Sesotho, *Lifela tsa Sione*, composed by missionaries and later influencing Yoruba musical traditions. Furthermore, the archives document the contributions of renowned Basotho composers of choral music, including J.P. Mohapeloa and others, highlighting their lasting impact on Southern African music.

The Morija Museum and Archives has not escaped the cultural politics of silence and the enunciations that challenge the cause of these silences, and sound offers a valuable site of knowledge production in archives [emphasis added] (Bubaris 2014, 392). My sonic compositions help me think through the complexities of globalisation from the perspective of the global South. The archives become a site that can metaphorically be personified and discussed within the framework of *Ntu*. As such, Morija is read as both *hantu* space-time and *mntu* - a hybrid personification of history which informs my compositional practice. Place is tied to history and the lived experience of the institution from inception to contemporary

⁹ A book of specialised information often published under government auspices.

interpretation of the archives. The Sesotho term for Music is *pina*, derived from the verb *ho bina*, which means to sing. Wells emphasises that 'Basotho music is choral in nature and exists along the spectrum of speech, poetry and song' (1994, 5). My focus is on the unique and often overlooked songwriting spaces of women in the Basotho culture. I draw from the initiation rites of young Basotho girls and use this as a springboard for storytelling and songwriting. Moreover, the procedural elements of the cultural process help map the pacing and movement of the piece.

Initiation occurs during puberty and marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. During the full moon, a young girl will run outside to a nearby *donga* (*lengope*) with her age-mates. In witnessing this act, older women will ululate and kick-start the initiation process. Female initiates at this juncture are called *bsetsana* (young women) and undergo *ho phatsoa*.¹⁰ This marks the initial stage of *ho lika*, which means to sing at night (Wells, 1994, 80). The young girls' compositions comprise songs for entertainment in the form of *mangae*.¹¹ Unlike male initiation school, in which male initiates are taught self-praise, female initiates sing for dance and entertainment (Wells 1994, 95). Female initiates usually give themselves male names and inhabit masculine performativity during the one to six months that they undergo the initiation process. Both male and female initiates are instructed into manhood and womanhood through the *koma*, the sacred song (Wells, 1994, 85).

The final ceremony of female initiation is called *mokete oa lelingoana* or the *mokete oa maliba*. Initiates are led to a *donga* or river known as the *Maliba*. Here, they are introduced to a mythical figure known as the *motanyane oa maliba*, who is responsible for the sexual initiation of the girls or formal sex education (Maitse 1994; Wells 1994, 66). The *motanyane* is then presented with a slaughtered goat or sheep called *marina* (pigeon). After this, the girls have symbolically died as children but are not yet considered adults. They are covered in black ash and water mixture called the *pilo* and seclude themselves from the community for a period of one month (Maitse 1994, 91).

¹⁰ *Ho Phatsoa* is a series of incisions made with a sharp object used to scarify the body.

¹¹ *Mangae* are a series of composed songs developed over the initiation period of young men of the Basotho culture.

Conceptualising the Installation

My point of entry into the archives was David Ellenberger's collection of sound recordings as research material and the museum's exhibition room of artefacts to establish an inter-material sound practice. In particular, I considered Eidsheim's (2004, 64) discussion that inter-materiality is a radical perspective that explains sound as a multi-sensorial experience capable of interacting with both animate and inanimate things. In this sense, I was interested in thinking of ways in which I could create vibrational connections between these categories of things in the collection. The framework of Ntu and considering the forces of interconnection between the beings in the collection was also important as a starting point for the conceptualisation of the composition.

In light of this, my compositions are solo performances as components of installation art. My installations are presented in this western style of the artist-audience relation, which I mediate by including archival material together with a reading into the location of the sites. My selection of digital devices and electronics plays a significant part in the timbre of the soundscapes. The inclusion of other instruments, such as a handmade three-stringed harp, created a sense of personal agency. I return to these compositional influences throughout the portfolio as I utilise both styles of musical styles.

The sonic traditions of the Basotho span across many functions but are fundamentally rooted in the literary oral arts for teaching and the transmission of culture. Songs and music accompany activities such as work, prayers for rain, entertainment and (Mahula, 2025,73). The Southern and Northern Sotho have praise songs for the celestial bodies with initiates woken up at midnight to sing to the stars ; (i) *ho fetola molalatlali*, i.e to turn the rainbow/ Milky Way, and (ii) to sing to the rising and setting sun (*ho hlabisa letšatši*¹² and *ho diketsa letšatši*) (Alcock 2014, 91).

In doing so, I followed Robinson (2020), who echoes the fundamental utility of sound within the indigenous community as a tool for information keeping. In this regard, I thought about the ways in which music is used to preserve law, tradition, history and perhaps above all as a means of inter-dimensional communication for spiritual purposes. This is not to say that indigenous

¹² *Letšatši* - Southern Sotho for sun.

societies did not exercise musicking primarily as entertainment, but rather that there occurs in this proposition the sacrifice of an ontological perception. In conceptualising this performance installation, I aimed to particularise Morija Museum as a colonial administrative hub composed of four agents: the church and the civil administrator through law, education, and economy that sought to enforce a type of ontological cohesion with the European worldview.

I sought to translate this ontological cohesion in terms of museum culture as the extraction and commercialisation of collective cultural heritage. Against this, I propose exploring the listening practices of the indigene, which have been affected through instruction by hymns, administrative language of knowledge production and law making, and finally through the social via the distribution of music as a commercialised media. In seeking to undo this habituation through an artistic critique, I approached the performance installation at Morija Museum through a decolonial lens.

Recalling the Process

Between 21 and 22 April 2024, I installed a multi-media composition among the artefacts in the Morija Museum and Archives' exhibition room. Certain restrictions were placed on the utilisation of the space, and I was not allowed to visually document the installation. I also faced problems accessing the Ellenberger collection, which was not fully digitised and often did not include much metadata for recordings. Despite these restrictions, the museum's collections officer, Keletso Selialia, and Deputy Curator, Pusetso Nyabela, allowed me to sample the collection for the purpose of the project.

The first iteration of the installation was developed on Sunday, 21 April. During this session, I used a speaker and synthesisers to establish the acoustics and reverberation of the exhibition room (see figure 2.1 and Morija Museum and Archives Composition Cover document). I placed my body within the museum space as an artefact connected to the archive and as a muntu with a peculiar relationship with the history of the artefacts, the ki-ntu, before me. Even before a single note is sounded, a mediated ontological conversation takes place between my being and the curated things before me. Who arranged these things in this way? My work is to arrange myself into the order of these things. I was drawn to a royal blanket hung in a corner of the room. I placed a blanket directly below the lehlosi - a chiefly blanket - to symbolically reaffirm the notion that the fundamental life force is both the masculine and feminine. I used a Ndebele

blanket to create a performance base for placing my synthesisers, microphone, gourd drum, and laptop for recording.

The Ndebele blanket, known as comprising the following colours, can be interpreted through Ndebele bead colour theory. Green and yellow signify growth in spring and abundance in summer, respectively (Mashiyane 2006, 117). Blue, on the other hand, is linked to power as in the sky and the ocean; a power attributed to god in the sky and the water serpent in the ocean (Mashiyane 2006, 118).

Opaque red beads, for example, which resemble blood, might be used to signify strife or heartache, while the transparent ones, being likened to fire or lightning, could hint at anger or a host of ominous events (Mashiyane 2006, 118). Lastly, the purple/black motif in the middle signifies sorrow and disappointment (Mashiyane 2006, 118). My interpretation of these colours reflects the dual nature of the human experience across the spectrum of joy and pain. Coupled with the Bantu symbols, which are explained.

I began to improvise around noon. I was trying to create material that can be turned into a loop, which can run to the next day when the museum opens to visitors. I bear in mind that the composition will be listened to over the course of roughly five hours. I started with a drone to which I slowly added the gourd drum in the empty room. I spend the next thirty minutes playing into the space and trying to activate various inter-material vibrations by slowly increasing and decreasing the synthesiser's output amplitude. I create a threshold for this undulation through the microphone placement, which produces feedback when the vibrations and reflections of the room acoustics become too overbearing.

The drone created by the oscillator sustains the composition, but other harmonic sound and speech samples dart across the composition. My sample selection consisted of recordings of the *Lesiba* and speech sourced from the Ellenberger archives. The *lesiba* here represents a type of Basotho nationalism, given how prevalent the instrument is in the country's national imagination and a musicking that is close to the notion of *pina* described at the start of this chapter. The voices from the Ellenberger collection figured as artefacts (*ki-ntu*) of the archive, setting out a purposefully uncomfortable juxtaposition between the vibrational materiality of the *lesiba* and what William Fourie (2024), following Aimé Césaire, calls the 'thingification' of the voices in the sound archive.

To further explore the forces of Ntu, and specifically of ha-ntu (place and time), I include field recordings I made while walking around the town of Morija among my samples. By creating this connection with the museum's immediate present environment, I sought to elicit inter-material vibrations that extend past the walls of the institution. Towards the end of the improvisation, I slowly fade out active sounds and allow the composition to play out as programmed on the synthesisers. I switch off the installation at the end of the day and repeat the process on Monday for three hours from 10:00 am to around 13:00 pm. I let the programmed synthesiser play out as observers occupy the room.

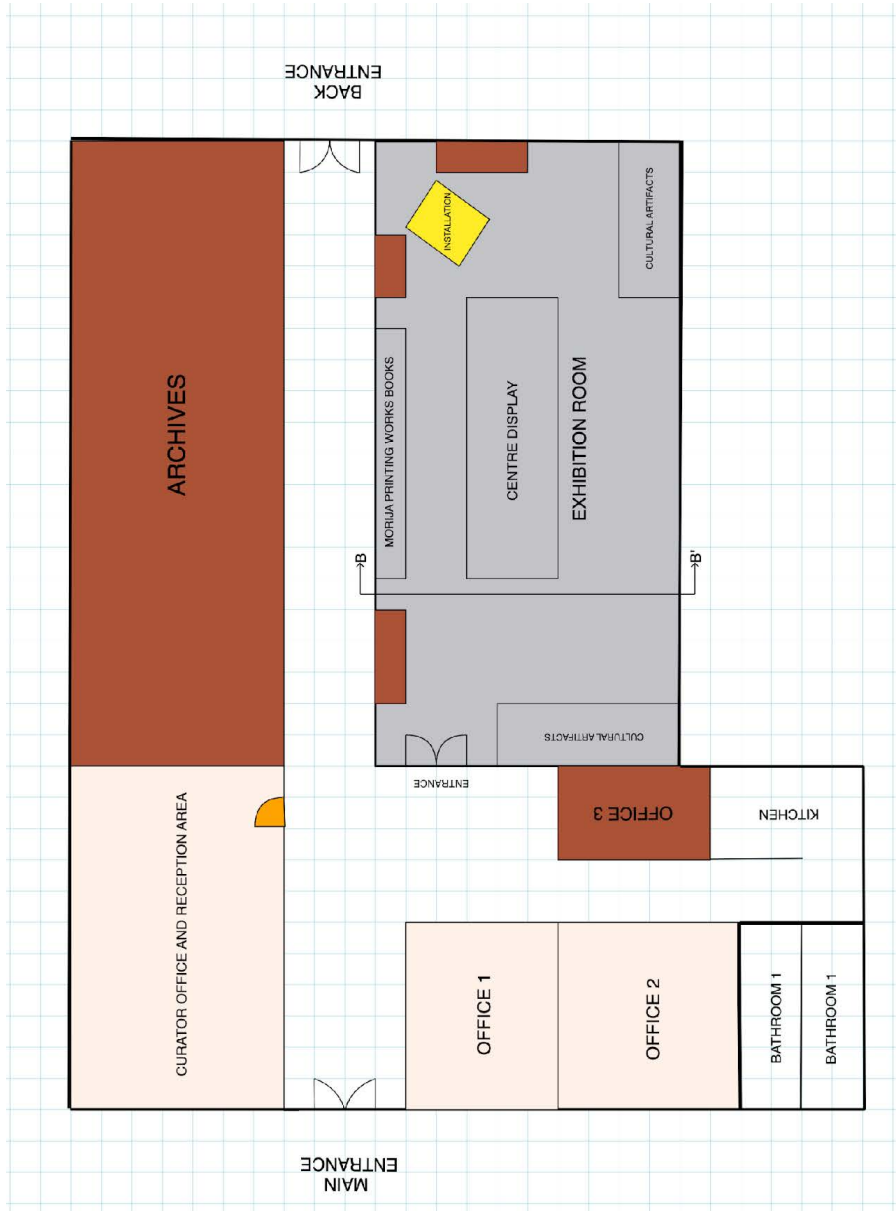


FIGURE 2.1: MORIJA MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES FLOOR LAYOUT

Reflections on the performance installation

The performance installation in the Morija Museum and Archive was bound up from the beginning with the forms of stasis that in heritage collections arrest the vibrational force of the *ki-ntu* (the things of the archive). Negotiating permissions for the performance alone represented a significant moment in which the bureaucracy that is meant to safeguard collections became the very cause of the decay of the collection. The fact that I was not allowed to produce any visual recordings of the installation is perhaps suggestive of this. It is a proclamation which in itself suggests that nothing is allowed to flee the collection, that all inter-material vibration must be halted in time and contained within the archive walls. Fourie (2024) shows how this same logic is built into the very methods of collecting that result in the collections that make up sound archives, which, for him, are resolutely silent spaces. While this is certainly the case, my performance suggested perhaps that the silence of the museum is also a product of our ability as artists, scholars, and heritage managers to recognise the inherent forces of things in the archive: the forces of *ki-ntu* that are active in relation to us as *mntu* within the bigger framework of *Ntu*.

1. Indeed, the contrast between the traditional music of the Basotho and the synthesisers in my performance brought upon a unique discomfort born of an uneasy hybridity. This uneasy hybridity is perhaps indicative of the broader colonial disposition, which Franz Fanon describes when he writes that 'the negro is presented with two knowledges in which to frame himself' (2008, 83). This uneasiness, however, manifested materially when my sampler experienced a malfunction during the performance, and some of the sampled sounds would not trigger. I was aware of its state before the installation, but had no way of repairing the device, which resulted in a thinner composition.
2. This material malfunction, alongside questions of inter-material vibration, highlighted for me the importance of ongoing debates in sound studies concerned with the material production and consumption of sound, silence, and noise in Southern Africa. For one, as a Mosotho, I reflected on how avant-garde music adapts within spaces designed to preserve culture from specific eras, and how hybridity often flourishes in experimental, non-institutional environments. Additionally, installation work that fully occupies space requires considerable resources, a challenge that became evident within this project's

limitations. However, what was more important for me was the fact that these material conditions allowed me to engage my practice through both Western and African worldviews, which often feel alienated from each other.

3. Failure to include samples from the Ellenberger Tapes - Due to the technical difficulties posed by a malfunctioning sampler during the performance, I was not able to include these sounds in my portfolio. I could have added these in post-production, but this would be a misrepresentation of live performance. Now then, did this installation fall short of its intended inter-material purpose of creating a contemplative space within the archive through sound? No. All other components of the installation functioned as intended. The connections to historicity and the contemporary were still upheld by ki-ntu aspects (blankets, artefacts, sound, and performer) and the ha-ntu space-time factor, and the ku-ntu (performance, compositional style) of the installation.
4. The technical aspects of the performance were largely centred around a polyphonic synthesiser sound selected to create a deep contemplative atmosphere through the first part of the composition. The second part of the oscillator moved into a windy, angulating sound. The second synthesiser from the Novation Circuit tracks was manually triggered as single notes to build on top of the first synthesiser. The Korg Volca Keys sequenced to add a shift in pace in the composition. A pre-sequenced loop was played on the analogue synthesiser, meandering between bass that thumped like a drum as a lead line hovered above the musical motif.

Chapter 3 - The Desert

Tankwa Artscape Residency Installation

Tankwa Karoo, Northern Cape, South Africa, April 2023

Preamble

The Tankwa Artscape is a two-week annual residency held in April in the semi-desert region of the Tankwa Karoo. The residency is operated from the Tankwa Tented Camp within the wider vicinity of Stonehenge Reserve. The tented camp lies along the R355 with the Cederberg to the west and the Tankwa Karoo National Park to the east (Stelle 2015, 187). Stonehenge Reserve was home to AfrikaBurn, an annual week-long cultural festival that ran from 2007 to 2019. After 2019, the festival moved to Quaggafontien and Vaalfontein, about thirty kilometres southeast of Stonehenge.¹³ For me, the Tankwa Artscape residency draws from Afrika Burn's ethos of facilitating artistic installations and performances in the desert. I was awarded the residency, which I took up in the middle of April 2023.

Preparation

My proposal for the residency intended to utilise the Tankwa Karoo as a sounding chamber to engage with the history of land dis-/possession of the region. The historical background of the land suggests that the San or /Xam first inhabited this region 10,000 years ago. The Khoi, Bantu, and Trekboers are named as aggressors of these indigenous people, which meant that with my position as a muntu (or intelligent being in Bantu philosophy), I represented an antagonist in this space.

Positioned in this way and cognisant of my positionality within the space's history of land ownership, I tried to use the residency to interrogate questions of migration, land ownership, and dis(possession). Into this complex set of questions, I also tried to fold my cultural heritage informed by Lesotho-South Africa relations across 200 years, through which South African

¹³ Accessed from <https://land.afrikaburn.com/where-is-the-new-event-location/>.

migration into Lesotho threatened land ownership in other ways. The double consciousness of having been both the object and subject of land dispossession became my new frame of reference.

Residency breakdown

(i) April 10–17, 2023

Day 1

The first day started with an early morning drop off in what is called Area 51, about six kilometres east of the main campsite. Our cohort of fourteen residents was encouraged to walk back to camp and acquire a feel for the desert. I connected with the harsh terrain that would become an artistic canvas for the next fortnight. During my walk, I attempted to achieve maximum coverage by deliberately avoiding proximity to the other participants. I walked slowly and occasionally barefoot for about four hours, working out how to approach this new landscape. During the last hour of my walk, I encountered a circular arrangement of rocks that looked like an amphitheatre with a radius of roughly twenty-five meters. Unfortunately, coming back to this potential performance site proved difficult. After two days of searching, I gave up trying to relocate it. Our cohort held a reflection session each night after dinner around a campfire. A ceremonial stick was passed around the circle, encouraging reflective sharing in the form of song, progress, or insight.

Days 2–3

The next two days comprised further by-car exploration of Stonehenge Reserve led by our facilitators Jean-Pieter de Villiers, Kim Goodwin, Leli Hoch, and Tina Bester. We travelled to and from the camp to the boundaries of Stonehenge Reserve, adjacent to the Tankwa Karoo National Park to the west. I was confronted by the reality of unfamiliar material—earth. Specifically, I wondered how I might compose for heritage spaces such as the Tankwa, which has held space for the San or!Xam—our oldest human ancestors. These two days were a brainstorming session as I further devised how my installation would take shape.

Exploration

Days 4–6

On the fourth day, I began experimenting with sounds on a 5000-litre diesel tank located in a junkyard a few meters off the main camp. My tools for developing this composition were a mobile phone, a speaker, and a laptop. These tools allowed me to explore vibration through contact with and resonance of large metal bodies. I had the privilege of spending time with the residency's media specialist, Thomas Barry. He took an interest in my initial experimental tests with sound and gave feedback while providing insight into his own sonic practices. I spent the next two days in the junkyard with the large diesel tank. In the end, I was informed that the tank—being a useful asset to the organisation—was not viable to move and use as a part of an installation. A new site was selected after consultation with the reserve's caretaker, JP de Villiers and I settled for the location below:

Day 7

Rest.

(ii) Week 2 - April 18–23, 2023

The first day of the second week was spent preparing for the final concept of creating a land art piece, which would use an open area as a performance space. My concept was to construct an obelisk at the centre of the space as the Bantu symbol of sunrise and sunset. These two symbols were selected for their potential to be interpreted differently depending on where the observer stands. I oriented the land installation to the East such that the 'hatched' half of the circle aligned with the sunrise during the Summer Solstice in the Southern hemisphere. I determined the installation site by plotting it 222° East along what is known as a ley line,¹⁴ a natural energy line upon which ancient structures are built.

I began by gathering flat rocks of varying sizes, which would be used as the basis of my installation. I estimate that a total of two hundred kilograms of rocks were transported from the camp to the installation site. I also dug a 50mm x 50mm hole, which would be the base of the

¹⁴ Ley lines are believed to be a network of ancient trackways across the landscape, interconnecting with points of both historical and sacred importance. They are straight lines indicated by a series of alignments in both naturally occurring and man-made landmarks (Thurgill 2015, 2).

obelisk. The performance space would have a two-meter radius marking out the sunrise/ sunset arc. Once the obelisk was complete, I used the dug-out desert earth to line the circumference of the sunrise/sunset symbol. Diana Smith, a former residency participant, spent an hour helping create the symbol's eastern half. While we did this, I also created the sonic backdrop for the live performance by programming a bass figure and drone over which I would vocalise and play instruments.

Performance day 21 April 2023

My performance was scheduled for Thursday at 16:00. I played a swirling drone sound for five minutes and began to play a steel tongue drum as a gesture of activation. At this point, my fellow cohort and facilitators had positioned themselves around the sunrise/sunset symbol. I continued by chanting and moving around the installation seen below in Figure 3.3. below.

Over the drone I sang *Malatalian'-a-tsela*, a song with the following lyrics:

<i>Ke malata-il-hana tsela</i>	I am the now who reprimands those who have lost their way
<i>Ngoana'rae a moholo</i>	My father's eldest child
<i>Pitsana ha e na khobe</i>	The pot is without grain
<i>Thatholla o re qiti</i>	Let it be undone and finish

Technical and sonic parameters

My performance was executed and recorded through GarageBand, beginning with a sustained D note on a monophonic Deep Sub Bass that served as a constant drone throughout the entire piece. This foundational bass was accompanied by a polyphonic synthesiser called 8th Wonder, together forming the sonic bedrock upon which elements of voice, shakers, and steel tongue drum were layered. The creative response drew inspiration from the site's expansive landscape, offering an opportunity to envision sound as a grounding element performed for my fellow cohort members. The vocals and mini-kora were processed with reverb and echo effects, creating a lingering resonance that seemed to float through the anechoic desert space.



FIGURE 3.1: TANKWA OLD TOWN LAYOUT



FIGURE 3.2: TANKWA INSTALLATION SITE



FIGURE 3.3: TANKWA PERFORMANCE 1



FIGURE 3.4: TANKWA PERFORMANCE 2



FIGURE 3.5 FINAL LAND INSTALLATION VIEW

CHAPTER 4 - The Gallery

Reflection Pool Installation

Raw Spot Gallery / ILAM Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa

The Reflection Pool installation opened on 14 November 2024 at the Raw Spot Gallery, Makhanda. The installation was a 40-minute performance alongside a Bantu-inspired blanket exhibition. The former comprised 1) vocals, 2) various instruments,¹⁵ and 3) three synthesisers, while the visual language drew from Bantu symbolism. I used this installation to delve deeper into Edshiem's theories of sound, such as 'figure of sound' and "the reduction of the sonic event into that which is static, monodimensional, and inflexible" (Edshiem, 2015, 2). This framework helped me read through Hugh Tracey's sound recordings, as Coetzee's thesis 'Performing Whiteness' (2024) and Fourie (2024, 7-8) have discussed, as a manifestation of Tracey's positionality as an agent of the then apartheid regime. I turn to the archives' *kintus*—thingified objects—to bring them into dialogue with the migratory history of Basotho brought about by the gold mining of the Witwatersrand, contextualised below.

Englishman Hugh Tracey was a musicologist and cultural preservationist known for recording music in Southern, Eastern, and central Africa and established ILAM in 1954 (Coetzee 2014, 2). In his early career, Tracey was the Head of Programmes at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) between 1936 and 1947 (Lobley 2022, 32). With the support of Mr Eric Gallo, Tracey undertook a survey of the music of Africa South of the Sahara between 1947 and 1953 (Lobley 2022, 33; Coetzee 2014, 100). Tracey, as a result, went on to publish, among others, a collection of 210 long-play records under the Sounds of Africa Series (Lobley 2022, 34).

The people of Southern Africa have contributed significantly to the gold mining industry as cheap migrant labour. From 1900 to 1950, South Africa became the world's largest exporter, reaching 40% of global production, which peaked at 67% in 1970 (Nhlengetwa & Hein 2014, 1).

¹⁵ Rainstick, singing bowl and a handmade three-stringed lute.

Recruits from Mozambique, Lesotho, Qwa-Qwa, and the former Cape Province totalled 14,000 in 1890, rose to 534,000 in 1986, and then dwindled to 255,000 in 1998 (Harington et al. 2004, 70). The decline was initiated by the Chamber of Mining to replace foreigners with black South Africans in 1974 (Harington et al. 2004, 67). In 2023, there were around 93,600 people employed by the gold mining industry.

The increasing operational costs and the weakened Rand have led to the closure of gold mines. Zama-zama refers to illegal artisanal gold miners—primarily from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho—who are part of a large gold cartel (Nhlengetwa & Hein 2014, 1). These individuals are compelled by the socio-economic decline in their home countries to occupy abandoned mine shafts, despite facing poor safety conditions and low earnings. The issue of cheap labour in the gold mines mentioned above served as my starting point to conceptualise the installation. The theoretical framework used for the installation is based on the concept of Ntu: the African philosophy of existence, or life force.

Through the work of Hugh Tracey, I recognised intention as a practical approach to developing my own compositional method. According to Eidshiem, the current perception of recorded music, which she refers to as a figure of sound, reduces the musical experience to a single dimension, treating music as mere metadata. This concept of mono-dimensionalism is further examined through Tracey's listening perspective, which positions him on the outskirts of indigenous music, resulting in an abstract engagement with it due to cultural differences. In other words, despite Tracey's extensive involvement with indigenous music through his recordings, writings, and photographs, he has interpreted African music in an abstract manner. This process of abstractification indicates that Tracey's cultural perspective was fundamentally distanced from the cultural practices of the subjects of his collections.

In response, I employed the very 'sonically imprisoned' materials as sound nodes to enhance the intention of revitalising their life force. Through my practice, I draw from archival sonic metadata to create new interpretations in contemporary spaces. Conversely, because of the ephemeral nature of site-specific installations, I regard the music as confined to a particular moment in Makhanda, 14 November 2024—a re-thingification which keeps music within the archive. Nevertheless, I 'thicken' the sonic event by combining the ki-ntu of the archive with the ha-ntu (modality) of proposing the intention of communal trauma healing.

The philosophy of Ntu serves two purposes for my study. Firstly, it situates the installation within a defined geopolitical context, while also challenging the established status quo of Western thought as universal. Secondly, it asserts African philosophy as epistemology attuned to the listening positionality of an African composer. An additional theory that shaped my understanding of the installation ideation is Professor Stephanie Dinkins' concept of Afro-now-ism, which emphasises Afrocentric creation originating from intrinsic cultural centres rather than merely responding to external ideological pressures (Cadle, 2022, 29). Consequently, the Reflection Pool installation is designed as a meditative work, an inter-material immersive performance situated to resonate with Tracey's miners' archive.

Preparation

The Raw Spot Gallery is located on Rhodes Avenue off Lucas Street and is administered by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Rhodes University. My first visit to the Raw Spot Gallery was on 23 October 2024 with Professor Ruth Simbao and Dr William Fourie. I sketched out the three-roomed space with one main space adjacent to two smaller rooms that would serve as a transition and performance. I envisioned the white gallery space as a site for creating inter-materiality between musical instruments, visual art pieces, and sound to create an immersive performance installation. My task then became to theorise a common thread that speaks fluently across all three media, much like the previous work executed in the Tankwa Karoo.

(i) Technical considerations

The technical set-up of the installation involved connecting and adjusting a signal chain suited for the acoustically tight gallery space. Mr Elijah Madiba of the ILAM department was particularly helpful with advising on technical matters. For one, the three-string handmade lute, *mahali*¹⁶, produced considerable feedback when used with a condenser microphone. To counter this, Mr Madiba crafted a small contact microphone. I cut a small sound hole and inserted the microphone into the body of the lute. "This experimental lute features three strings and is

¹⁶ *Mahali* is bride price or *lobola* in Sesotho.

crafted from a calabash body and bamboo neck. The calabash is covered with goat skin, leaving a small hole for three screws to attach the three strings that connect to violin-style tuning pegs.

Below is the layout of the components of the installation spaced within the gallery to spread out the components as discussed earlier.

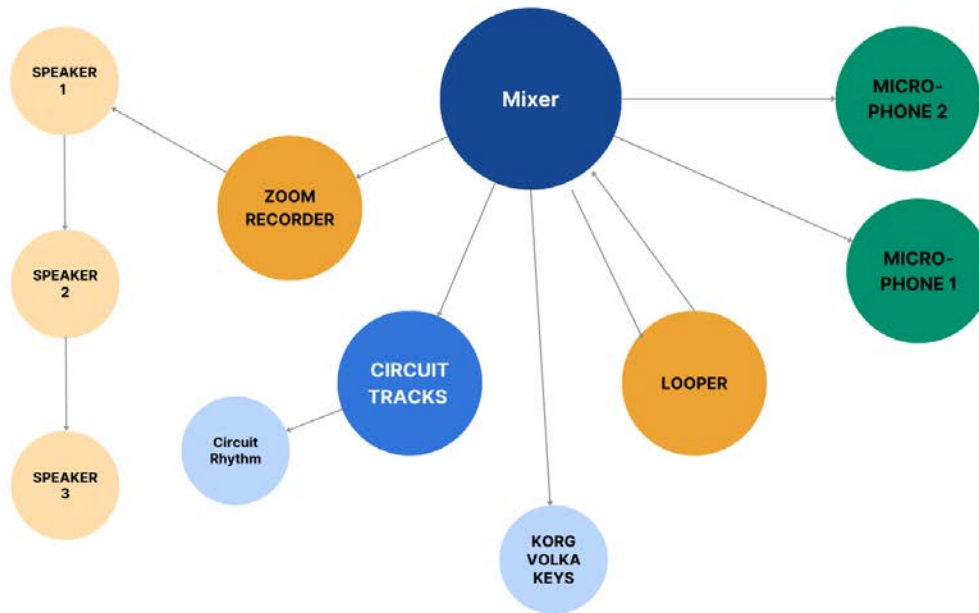


FIGURE 4.1 RAW SPOT GALLERY TECHNICAL SET-UP

(ii) Installation elements placement

Given the limited visual elements of the installation, the components were strategically distributed throughout the entire gallery space. Three blankets were positioned in each of the gallery's three sections, while a large portrait was placed to visually engage audiences as they moved from the entrance toward the inner performance area. Following this same principle, three speakers were connected in series, each paired with an indigenous instrument positioned above to reinforce the conceptual relationship between the performance sound and these metaphorically archived objects. This framework allowed me to explore the theory of

museumification of musical instruments and examine how the installation addresses these objects' separation from human touch. The *Mbira, endigidi* (tube lute), and *thòmo* were chosen to represent Zimbabwean, Mozambican, and Basotho (along with other Southern African) cultures, respectively, all connected to the research through themes of labour migration and the affordances provided by the sonic archive.

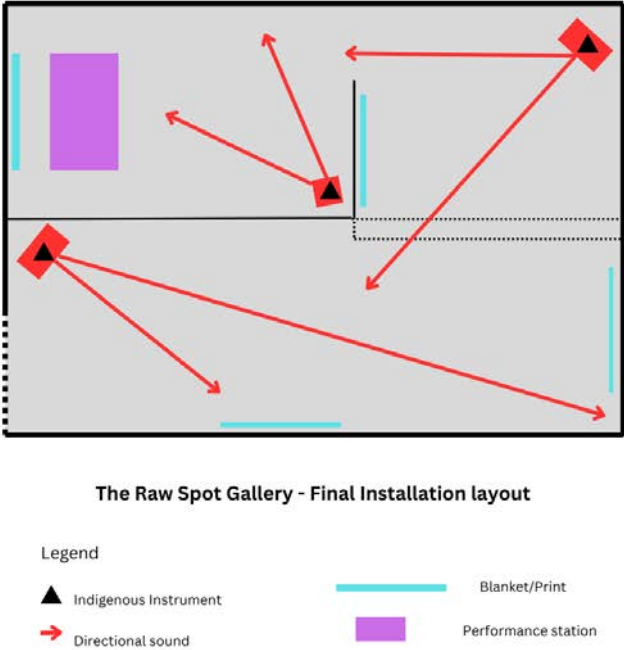


FIGURE 4.2 RAW SPOT GALLERY INSTALLATION LAYOUT

(iii) Philosophical Considerations

Building upon the principles of Ntu, the muntu (person) is an eternal part of the cosmic force and cannot be completely separated from it. I propose that, in scientific terms, the first law of the conservation of energy asserts this as 'energy cannot be created nor destroyed, it can only be transformed'. In this way, the interaction between the archive, artefacts, gallery, technology, and attendees can be connected through the principles of Ntu and therefore introduced into the

sphere of vibrational musicking practice. I thingify the aforementioned agents as means to collapse the mystification of spirit when viewed through scientific methodology. I posit that African Philosophy can synthesise sonic compositions which speak to community-centric challenges. That is, how the muntu is psychologically and spiritually affected by adversity is in fact the responsibility of the community to help each member assess and navigate their universe.

At this juncture, I propose to liken what colonialism is to the indigenous culture; capable of injuring the individual and causing psychological effects akin to those experienced in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Brain Development and Outcomes, n.d) If discussed through a psychological lens, the following pyramid projects what leads to the circumstances that shape the personality of the indigene/culture:

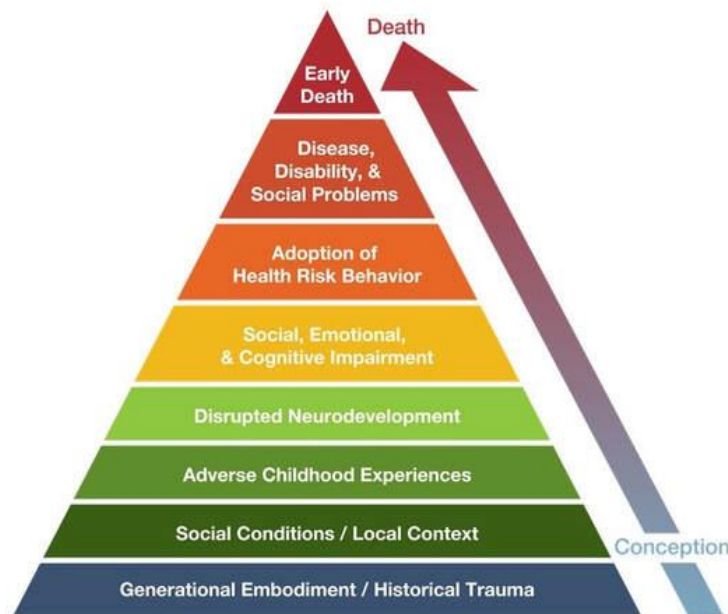


FIGURE 4.3: ACE PYRAMID APPLIED TO THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The loss of land, culture, means of production, self-determination, and history, experienced by indigenous communities under colonialism, is historical trauma. Further, because a sense of community has been severed, such historical trauma remains a source of the depletion of vitality when contextualised through the African understanding of health and wholeness. Being rooted

in dynamism, spirituality, and communalism, the African understanding of illness and mental distress links these directly to the individual's spirit (Monteiro & Wall 2011, 235). I map the historical trauma of Basotho men's migration to the Witwatersrand mines directly to Tracey's recordings as captured instances of distress.

I propose that Tracey's recorded materials are—as music is an agent of emotion¹⁷—encoded with the psycho-emotional states of the mineworkers. Two songs in particular, catalogued as MOA-11-04 and MOA-13-01, which I have for the purpose of this portfolio titled '*O ea kae ngoana morena*' and *Mandlamini* respectively. Below, I engage with them as I circle through the theory of Ntu. They are used to complicate the ideas of personhood in the archive and how the performance interacts with an audience. My composition embodies the intention to create a contemplative space that thickens the thin figure of sound recordings found in the ILAM recordings.

By retrieving material from the archive, I facilitate a philosophical sonic communion with the muntus heard in the mineworker's recordings. In essence, the men's voices were acknowledged as vibratory imprints with which my own vibratory enunciations came into dialogue. In engaging with these historical pieces of music, the installation forms part of a new interpretation of the archive, one which Fourie describes below:

Sound is not engaged as object of the colonial archive but made to vibrate in the inter-material zones of contact, it makes possible the decolonial proliferation of voices in conjuring sound's historiographical operation beyond the monologic of the colonial centre (2024, 14)

My compositional inspiration taps into the cultural sonic artefacts and manifests as a song titled *Fupe* that forms part of the composition; a lamentation song that re-tells history from the vantage point of the casualties¹⁸ of war. The philosophical dialogue offered as prayer resonates with Nina Eidshiem's theory of music as an investigation into relationships and community

¹⁷ Vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion

¹⁸ A person or thing injured, lost, or destroyed. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/casualty>

(2015, 157). Herein, the performativity of the installation through multiple instruments creates, along the line of sonic technology, a musicking practice that communes with the archive.

Reflection Pool Composition Breakdown

00:00 - 09:00 Activation

A sustained bass synthesiser was looped at 17:50 hours to create an atmosphere of open space for guests to encounter as they arrived. I wore head beads called *igwala* to locate myself in the land of the amaXhosa. *Igwala* is Xhosa for close or to be ignorant¹⁹. The headband facilitated my position as guest/outsider within the Xhosa culture. I proceeded to play and loop a rainstick and whistle, and maintained this motif throughout the performance. A Moog mini-looper was used to establish this short musical phrase over three loops to avoid possible feedback from the condenser microphone. Next, I added a singing bowl tuned approximately to B4. I added a layer of analogue synthesis from the Korg Volca Keys. A brief vocalisation of '*Lumela Mandlamini*' was inserted at this point as a gesture of greeting the custodians of the land.

09:00 - 22:00 - Mineworkers Sound Collage

I used samples from the Mineworkers' archive, particularly the song mbira, to create a repetitive loop on which other sounds could be added. I pitched down the call and response section with the lyrics 'O ea kae Moneneko? U ea kae, he o ea kale? U ea kae o sena kobo? O ea kae, he o ea kae?' The use of different pitches of the same sample created a sonic variation in addition to the slicing and reverb effects executed by the sampler.

22:00 - 27:30 Lute and Vocals

¹⁹ *Ho koala* and *lekoala* similarly mean to close and one who is ignorant, respectively, in Sesotho.

The lute and vocal performance picked up from the human (*muntu*) aspect of the previous section. It was composed by triggering drums on the Circuit tracks, accompanied by picking the lute and singing in Sesotho. The song structure was performed using the following formula: intro - chorus - verse - bridge - verse, chorus - bridge - chorus. The song ends with a de-escalation into a second rendition of the mineworker's sound collage.

27:30 - 36:00 Mineworker's lament with Lesiba

This section mirrored the previous mineworkers' collage with additional women singing and clapping. I improvised on the Korg Volca Keys to add some digital tension and urgency soundscape at this point. I used the Lesiba to rebalance the scattering effect caused by improvising on the analogue synthesiser. The addition of a short phrase of a chant from a track titled MOA - 11- 07 over the drone synthesiser introduces a feminine aspect to the mineworkers' section. To complete this section, a percussive sound was added to symbolise the potentiality of communal spiritual synergy through the masculine, the feminine, and drums.

36:00 - 40:00 - Deactivation

The concluding section of the composition was created by reintroducing the singing bowl as I subtracted the percussive sounds and drone. In doing so, I was able to give way to the rainstick and whistle loop to draw the audience back into the initial motif that was eventually faded out. Lastly, the singing bowl was used as a grounding instrument to conclude the installation.

Compositional considerations

The compositional process began once I had access to 33 songs from a part of the Music of Africa - Best of Africa series. My composition was based on Sesotho songs presented in the

traditional call and response style of the makoloanyane—the fresh initiates. Makoloanyane are Basotho boys—between 13 and 16 years—who undergo circumcision as a rite of passage into manhood.

Song 1 - MOA - 11- 04 - *O ea kae ngoana morena?*

(Basotho men)

U ea kae Moneneko?

Where to Moneneko?

U ea kae u sena kobo?

Where are you going without a blanket?

U ea kae u sena koto?

Where are you going without a club?

The symbol for protection in the Basotho culture is the blanket. For example, the Basia clan will bury their dead with the skin of the ox slaughtered for that particular ceremony. Similarly, blankets are used to signify new personhood after initiation and a blanket is given to a bride in the same sentiments.

Song 2 - MOA - 13 - 01 - *Mandlamini*

(Baca Men)

'Me 'Mandlamini is a composition performed by young Basotho girls as a play-song. It is used here to represent the cross-cultural relationships among the Southern African tribes, which have resulted in the transmission of cultural songs. The game is played by two girls or many girls in pairs who exchange the following:

Girl 1: *Lumela 'me Mandlamini x 3 - Greetings Mandlamini*

Girl 2: *U tsoa kae Mandlamini - Where are you coming from Mandlamini?*

Girl 1 : *Ke ts'oa ko toropong x 3. I am from town.*

So continues the inquiry into how *Mandlamini* can afford all the things she possesses. *Mandlamini* asserts that she works; She is a working woman.

During the activation part of the performance, Madlamini was used as a greeting. Lumela functions as a formal greeting that translates to 'acknowledge that I see you'. Playing on the mineworker's language of Fanakalo, the installation taps into the use of other languages to emphasise the communal aspirations of the composition. Fanakalo is a makeshift language necessitated by the multi-cultural amalgamation of different people who worked in the mining industry of South Africa (Pewa, 2001, 22).

Performance Reflection

The composition begins with a rainstick and whistle loop, which is sustained as a musical motif throughout the performance. The rainstick is thereby associated with water, which is usually offered as ancestral appeasement in the form of libation. The whistle, which has become integral to group dances among the tribes of Southern Africa, is also looped. For example, the (i) Xibelani dance by the Tsonga, the (ii) Umxhentso by Xhosa traditional healers (iii), and the Mohobelo by Sotho men all incorporate the whistle for musical direction.




The second part of the composition plays around with sampling material from the mineworker songs. Particular focus was on the looping of song MOA-11-04 slowed down to create a contemplative effect. On top of this, the *lesiba* becomes the prominent instrument during this time to sonically resonate with the Basotho. It is important to note that when I refer to Basotho, I speak of the two million residing in Lesotho, together with the seven million who reside in South Africa.




The third part was a vocal and lute part and functioned as performative dialogue between the muntu and the great Muntu. Fupe, as detailed below, demonstrates injustice through a Sesotho folktale called *Lesika la thole*.

Installation Visual Aspects

1. A portrait is used as an agent representing a figurative cultural body of the Basotho. The portrait was placed in the main foyer and played on the notion of reflecting my personhood during the performance.

2. Three Blankets were used to symbolically represent Basotho as manifest in South Africa, particularly as zama-zamas.
3. Bantu Symbols were used to represent the personal and collective aspirations of the Basotho culture.

#	Bantu symbol	Meaning
1		Our Land
2		Greatness
3		Long life / Sunset
4		War/Hostility

5		Divine Wisdom
6		See(r)
7		Cattle

Sonic elements

Three installation instruments were placed in proximity to the three speakers, as seen in the layout above. These continue the investigation into the concept of vibrational inter-material dialogue between artefacts, space, and personhood.

An Mbira was placed on top of the main performance space speaker

A Thomo (Uhadi) was suspended above a speaker in the main foyer

An endigidi was suspended above a speaker in the secondary gallery space

A lesiba, rainstick, whistle, and singing bowl were used during the performance

A three-stringed guitar and vocals were used during the performance

Two synthesisers were used - Circuit tracks and a Korg Volca Keys

A sampler was used to trigger sounds retrieved from mineworker songs found in the ILAM library

Speakers were also considered as propagative agents within the gallery

The song *Fupe* is inspired by a traditional children's game in Sesotho, which involves one player guessing which of their opponent's hands has a stone. It is a simple game of chance that can go one of two ways - a stone in either hand. In this context, *Fupe* was used in conjunction with *Ralinala*—*Ra* = father of + *li* = plural of + *nale* (unfair advantage, particularly in a competitive race)—as a sonic observation informed by investigating the historical power dynamics of exploitation between Africa and the West at large.

Fupe lyrics

Ke reseroka thota 'na - I praise the wilderness

Senna le mpotsa - Do not keep asking me

*Ke thlamalla hela*²⁰ - I keep going

Ke thlamalla hela - Me, I keep going

*'Maballe*²¹ - God,

'Maballe - Protector,

Mpaballe - Keep me.

Le tena le nthlokela toka 'na - You have no justice for me

'Na ha kea ja khulu - I did not eat the tortoise

Khaoa khaoa - Break, break

Fupe - Hide and seek

²⁰ *Ke thlamalla hela* is derived from Setswana and speaks to a persistence after great distress.

²¹ God. This term is self coined and inspired by Fanakalo, the flexibility to create language on the fly to express in ways current language does not afford

Ralinala - One who places themselves ahead in a race

Fupe - Hide and seek

Khaoa, Khaoa, Khaoa, Khaoa. - Break x 4

Ke 'malicha-li-t'sola 'na - I am a trouble maker

Senna le mpotsa - Do not ask me

Ea mponeng oa le aka - Anyone who claims to have seen me deceives you

Senna le mpotsa - Please do not ask

Ke thlamalla hela - I keep going

Ke thlamalla hela - Me, I keep going

'Maballe - God,

'Maballe - Protector

Mpaballe - Keep me.

'Na ha kea ja khulu, khaoa khaoa - I did not eat the tortoise, break, break.

CHAPTER 5 - Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses and summarises observations made of the three installation pieces. The chapter revisits the thesis's objectives and restates the research methodology employed. Brief overviews of each installation/performance are laid out and expanded with findings and my critical observations. My thesis used performance to investigate the inter-material practice of vibration in site-specific installations in a museum, an art residency, and an art gallery. The basic formula for artistic research considers the creative process (acts inside the practice) and the aim of arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work) as praxis according to Hannula et al. (2014, 15). The same authors state that the artistic process includes a realistic grasp of the status quo of the practice, documentation, and preparation of artworks while arguing for a point. In my earlier discussion of methodology in Chapter 1, I highlight the importance of listening and music-making positionality and engage a decolonial lens to employ technology and cultural-historical identity as active agents of inter-material dialogue.

My research methodology thus follows this formula;

Artistic processes + The aim of arguing for a point of view

(Compositions, sound installations + visual work) + (i) (Repositioning the epistemological centre to incorporate African Philosophy and expression in contemporary spaces), (ii) Advocating for compositional hybridity by merging indigenous and digital instruments as a modality to interact with heritage spaces.

Research aims

The study aimed to investigate inter-materiality as a tool for dialogue between sound and heritage spaces. The body is framed as an artefact within each specific historical space and is poised with technology, sound, and visual art to create responsive installations through

vibration. The three sites are Morija Museum and Archives, the Tankwa Karoo and Raw Spot Gallery/ILAM; the museum, the desert, and the gallery.

My methodological framework is drawn from the philosophy of Ntu. Igbion noted that Africans believe 'that the environment is interwoven with the presence of God' (emphasis mine) (2011, 2). It is this permeating philosophy that facilitates the study of inter-material vibration on a continuum; in other words, the time spaces of the past, present, and future find potential common dialogue within this theory.

Morija Museum and Archives overview

In April 2024, I presented a multi-media installation in the Exhibition Room of the Morija Museum and Archive in Maseru, Lesotho. The sonic and visual piece was an exercise in sounding out historical tensions related to the silencing effects of this archive as Lesotho's first colonial cultural preservation project.

Observations and discussion

The Morija Museum and Archives (MMA) is known as Lesotho's oldest repository of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) / Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa (LECSA) (<https://www.morijamuseum.org/archivalcollection>). It houses a range of books, government reports, documents, maps, and digital records relevant to Lesotho and Southern Africa.

I sought to engage with the history of the space both as a former place for the critique of indigenous cultural practices and its role in the preservation of the musical practices of the Basotho. The church's dual role is apparent in how it discouraged old cultural practices while simultaneously promoting their newly influenced musicking practices in the form of hymns. Language is a chief determiner of consciousness and can be considered the fundamental building block for an individual's worldview. By making the English language an instrument of instruction, it becomes the formative path—a behavioural determinant—which influences the self-image of its recipient. I posit that among other complexities of the archive is the loss of this cultural intimacy, which would otherwise remain intact despite the natural growth of societies. The archive represents a record of a significant cultural turn of the colonised and becomes a cultural reference point that one returns to nostalgically. In what Burnet et al. (2023) describe

as 'silent written material', the archive is part of the wider dynamics of power in the 'double edge sword' of European representation of African culture. In so doing, the writer of history is in a position to include and exclude cultural material according to their interest. Thus, the archive is rendered incomplete.

It became imperative for my study to differentiate the meaning of the archive from each geopolitical gaze. For the West, the archive and collections represent the anthropological objectification of things (ki-ntu) and the use of the muntu's resources for the benefit of the metropolis. On the other hand, the archive serves as a supplementary resource for piecing together the fragmented aspects of indigene culture. Sterne (2012, 2) explains sound studies as the mechanical production and use of sound, noise, and silence and how this has been used across societies; what then is the epistemological relationship among power, epistemological enunciation, and silence in the archive? Literary works, when enunciated, become a part of the phenomenon of sound. Moreover, literary works, as read through a decolonial lens, may be interpreted as the shaping of a worldview. The unwillingness of Europeans to share the entirety of their archival material with the Indigenous people demonstrates how the power dynamics of knowledge-making and meaning can be used for colonial extractivism. My critique of the West's philosophy of knowledge sharing is non-reciprocal in that it successfully gains indigenous knowledge without giving in return all the knowledge they have come across. I argue that because of the violent nature of imperialism, the sharing of information was limited to (i) underplay the destructive history of the West towards native societies through war, looting, and so on, and (ii) to underplay the contributions other societies have made towards society. Epistemological silencing was exercised through colonial education that provided limited information presented as universal, which in reality was a fragmented European epistemology.

To prove this theory, I bring to the fore Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa (1908–1982), who is hailed as Lesotho's first composer. The African Composer's Edition (ACE) published 145 extant works by Mohapeloa between 2013 and 2016, in six volumes and in a complete scholarly edition.²²

I lodge two critiques of this statement. First, the church's proximity to the archive has resulted in the othering of traditionalists who did not fit into the markers of the new Christian ideology. In particular, traditional composers such as 'mesuoe' (male initiation school teachers)

²² <https://african-composers-edition.co.za/composers/joshua-mohapeloa/>

whose compositions demonstrate to the highest degree the complexities of the compositional style of the Basotho were kept at the periphery of the archiving project. In doing so, this unique style of Basotho musicking practice was systematically diminished to a position beneath that of Western musical practice. Secondly, I argue that Mohapeloa was historicised as Lesotho's first composer because of his adaptation to the Western style of choral music. The sidelining of the traditional musicking practices of the Basotho is evidence of the diminished interest in intricate linguistic expression in favour of English.

Challenges of the installation

(i) Composer anonymity—my intention in turning to the archive has been to acknowledge authorship of the sampled musical composition where applicable. Unfortunately, the Ellenberger collection did not have a corresponding metadata catalogue.

(ii) The Museum charged a M(R)100.00 access fee per day for local researchers. I largely depended on audio recordings from the David Ellenberger audio archive and other documentation sourced from the internet.

(iii) No visual documentation was permitted in the exhibition room, which limited the recording of key moments leading up to the installation.

Tankwa Artscape Residency overview

My installation in the Tankwa Karoo was a three-medium piece executed as (i) a series of portraits, (ii) a land art piece, and (iii) a short sonic composition. My installation was conceptualised as a responsive artwork that spoke to the history of migration, land possession, and dispossession in the Tankwa.

Observations and discussion

This residency was my first attempt at land art. I opted to make the installation a three-medium piece (land art, portraiture, and music) to better respond to the vastness of the Tankwa Karoo and create an immersive, thickened sonic event. The land art piece was inspired by the Bantu symbol for life and death (or sunrise and sunset), which became the designated performance space. The land art piece can be viewed from opposite ends to read as life and death. The symbolism of life and death was philosophically mirrored by the red and white blanket. Traditionally, the red ochre symbolises (re)birth, whereas the white ochre symbolically represents death in the Basotho culture.

Challenges

(i) Time management—I underestimated the time it would take to construct the land art piece. The delay in site selection detracted from the time I had to complete the land sculpture on time and limited my practice time for the sonic aspect of the installation.

Raw Spot Gallery / ILAM overview

Reflection Pool was a multidisciplinary installation presented at the Raw Spot Gallery in November 2024. The performance composition was a 40-minute responsive piece inspired by ILAM's Witwatersrand mineworker songs recorded circa 1953. The installation featured three indigenous instruments suspended above three speakers, while three blankets and a portrait were exhibited across the gallery. The Raw Spot Gallery and ILAM were read as historical sites that connected the research(er) materially, where instruments, gallery space, and the other bodies would engage in vibratory dialogue.

The execution of the performance depended on the physical presence of sound and the muntu(s), the vibration of the instruments to produce sound, and the intention of enunciating empathy towards any trauma that might have been captured in the recordings made by Tracey in 1953. Here, Ifo sums up the notion of sound in art installations when he says:

All production of sound depends on kinetic energy, whether the sound source is a loudspeaker or a traditional musical instrument (2018, 226).

On the philosophical level, the installations are situated within the subject of sound studies. Boon profoundly opens up the possibility of looking at music as action in the space-time continuum (2022,10). I consider the installation a culmination of kinetic energy from the samples of Mineworkers from Tracey's collection, the performative action of singing and playing instruments, the reverberation and reflection of sound waves within the gallery, and the presence of those who attended the installation. Here, the manifestations of Ntu as ki-ntu (things), ha-ntu (gallery space and time), ku-ntu (performance), and mu-ntu (performer and audience) became the building blocks for the piece, affirming Nina Sun Edshiem's (2011, 3; 157) statement that the ultimate function of sound is found in how humans create relations with one another.

During this installation, I had the chance to significantly affect the space through both visual and auditory art. Conversely, the Morija Museum and Archive and Tankwa Karoo installations provided opportunities for me to interact with each cultural space in less impactful ways. Sound can either directly or abstractly engage with visuals or sculpture, or the opposite can occur, where the visual components prompt the audience to reflect on the auditory discourse (Iturbide 2014, 11). My close connection with Bantu symbols served as the medium through which the audience—in their various roles—would interact during the installation.

The composition's aim as an immersive presentation was explored. The gallery space held the sonic performance in a manner that shifted with the position of the muntu's present. The structure of the room allowed for the sonic experience to shift according to the listener's relative distance to the three speakers.

Challenges of the installation

(i) Archival distance - The anonymity of the Mineworkers resulted in the thingification of my collaborative composers. Indeed, it is this awareness of my role in the thingification of the mineworkers' archival metadata by sampling despite my intention of post-colonial praxis. The Mineworkers' recordings oscillate between active and passive agents as they

are sounded out during the installation and quickly return to the fossilised state in the ILAM library.

Installation as inter-material vibrational compositions

My philosophical considerations lead to the conclusion that all three installation locations were historically, politically charged. The commonality among the sites was instances of dispossession in one form or another. Morija, the home of the Lesotho Evangelical Church of South Africa (LECSA) headquarters, played a significant role in the assimilation of Basotho into European culture. The Tankwa Karoo, on the other hand, was riddled with a history of land dispossession by the Bantu, Trekboer, and so on, to the detriment of the San/!Xam people. Lastly, my reading of ILAM through a decolonial lens interrogates the archive as part of a larger matrix of power, resulting in the ontological silencing of the indigene in the canon of knowledge-making.

My praxis evolved into pushback against indigenous silencing in the collections with full awareness of the inherent nature of omission and erasure of the archives in cultural spaces.

Limitations of the study

1. The limitations of performance for artefacts and heritage spaces - The success of performing for inanimate things such as the *ki-ntu* (thing) and *in ha-ntu* (space-time), I believe, can be determined by the intention of each installation. Because the audience interaction is secondary to my intention to resonate with artefacts and cultural history, I find significance in the installation itself, in the context of intimacy. Sadowski (cited in Ryding et al. 2021, 3) calls for the need to define intimacy as a context that is relational; this relation affects one's body and embodied self. Thus, little can be said about how the audiences in these installations have experienced them.
2. World-view - Both Western and African philosophies were used to argue for artistic practice. Installation sound art has historically developed in the Global North. At times,

insisting on imbuing the installations with intuitive philosophies required some personal introspection and challenged my own beliefs about what epistemology is, particularly its origins and how to balance both Western and African concepts within the context of this research. In *Epistemological Disobedience*, Mignolo (2009, 8) warns of the dangers of being too centred in one's own background and world-view at the risk of not exploring other interpretations of any given subject. He called this local sociology. Therefore, I expanded my practice by allowing my embodiment to be influenced by each site-specific work.

3. Visual aspects of installations - Most of the visual material used in the installations was drawn from ongoing projects that I did not necessarily create during the research, but somehow fitted into the subject matter of the compositional portfolio. Due to this limitation in resources, the installations were therefore designed with existing works, which heavily influenced the outcomes of the visual aesthetics of the installations.

Hardware and technology - Although the main concept of the research was to merge indigenous instruments with digital synthesisers into immersive sound-making devices, no focused dedication was given to any given instrument. The limitations of being a solo performer were evident in that many timbres and sounds were needed to fill the sonic space intended to occupy sites for contemplation. Simple ambient identifiers, such as slow sustained are not easy to introduce to the African cultural setting. In light of hybridity, it fits well with the experiment with instruments from both the African and Western musical and performance styles.

Conclusion

In this research, I discussed how my approach to composition was shaped by the nature of sound within heritage spaces, which is connected to the appropriation of indigenous resources by European imperial ideologies. The forceful cultural assimilation and land dispossession resulting from colonialism have impacted the musical and listening practices of Southern African indigenous communities. To examine these impacts, I focused on three historically significant locations in Lesotho and South Africa to illustrate how my sonic philosophy manifests through both African and Western ideologies. Consequently, the composition portfolio embodies a fusion of ambient and indigenous instruments, showcasing the multidimensional and trans-cultural nature of sound.

Indeed, Nina Sun Eidshiem's comprehensive theory that views music as a vibrational practice, along with Robinson's advocacy for music as a means of prayer, history preservation, and law, provided frameworks to incorporate archival samples, folklore, and digital sounds into a contemporary avant-garde composition portfolio. The importance of this study evolved into the challenge of reconciling the benefits of Western technology with African philosophy into installations that can be used practically as contemplative spaces. In doing so, the thesis explores sound studies as a modality of African philosophy, in which sound technology derived from the Western Cradle becomes a means to implement restorative elements of African philosophy drawn from the principles of Ntu. Additionally, Ma'at, the Egyptian principles of truth, justice, and balance, was coupled with Dinkin's philosophy of Afro-nowisim to encourage the composition to be effective in the moment of implantation.

In Chapter 1, I highlighted the significance of particularising my study within the Southern African context by coupling sound studies and their possible manifestations within an Afrocentric philosophy. I brought to the fore that Ntu, as the ultimate cosmic principle, became a practical methodology for investigating the thesis's research questions. The Ntu model afforded the research the framework to discuss personhood (intention, cultural history), things (artefacts, instruments), space-time (contemporary heritage spaces), and kuntu (performance), such that both Western and African philosophies are combined to explore and interpret ideas of sound energy.

In Chapter 2, I engaged with the cultural and historical timeline, which facilitated the institutionalisation of the archives in Lesotho. Careful consideration was taken to engage with the heritage site with intimacy despite the archival distance experienced through the anonymising of sampled works that featured in my compositions. My task as the researcher was to engage with the exhibition room as a storehouse of colonialism, keeper of artefacts, and research hub in ways that involved my own personhood and cultural background.

In Chapter 3, I conceptualised a three-medium installation for the Tankwa Artscape residency that led to a different confrontation of migration and land possession between Lesotho and South Africa, more so between the Bantu and the San/!Xam. In this instance, the nuances of being a part of the Bantu took on the form of a dispossessor of land in the Tankwa Karoo. Ideas of life and death were explored in line with the embodiment of both ends of land dispossession.

Chapter 4 turned to ILAM's archive and tapped into the historical gold mining activities of Johannesburg circa 1950. The mineworkers' songs offered the opportunity to mirror the communal musicking practices of the Southern African tribes in light of installation work carried out by me as a solo performer. In the same breath, I read the sonic material and my practice as Fanakalo; a culmination of different languages brought together for a common cause, creating a new linguistic phenomenon that holds space for all parties involved.

My thesis has discussed how spaces such as archives, museums, sites, and galleries give valuable historical and cultural texture to site-specific explorations of heritage and, in my case, sound. Recent years have seen an increase in scholarly interest in sonic engagement, and this research adds to this growing body of work. As a result, my goal of striving towards the multi-pluralistic shift in musical epistemologies has been explored. In doing so, the universality of Western music as a centre is collapsed, birthing a practice that embraces the theoretical and technological tools Western scholarship provides. Thus, a unique balance between the preservationist and healing priorities of African philosophy and the expressive aesthetics of the West has become the makings of this compositional portfolio.

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Appendix - Instruments



Fig.1 - Calabash drum played during the Morija Museum and Archives composition

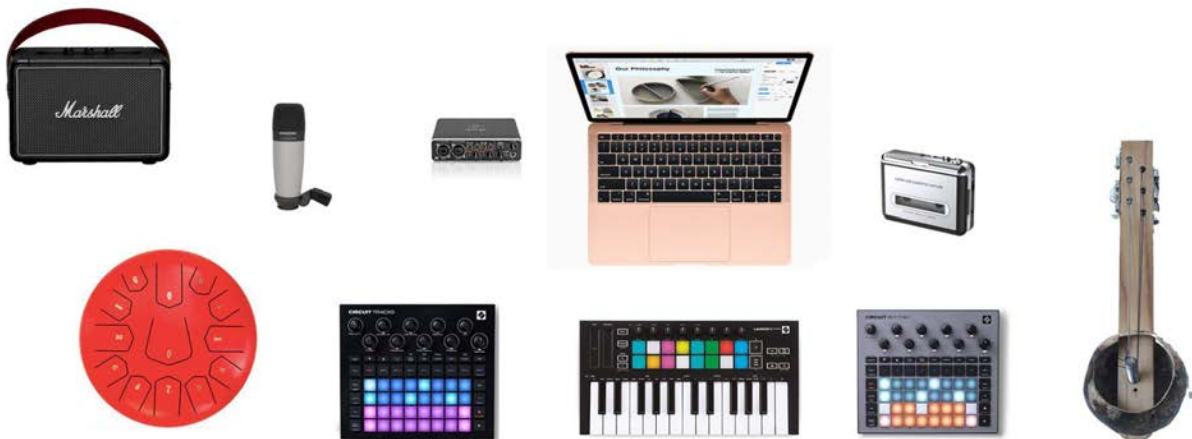


Fig. 2 - Standard performance set-up, which changed from site to site