

Asimbonanga, Nelson Mandela and the preservation of South African history through the use of songs as historical artifacts in South African schools.

Asimbonanga, Nelson Mandela y la preservación de la historia de Sudáfrica mediante el uso de canciones populares como objetos históricos en las escuelas del país.

Resumen

Sudáfrica es una nación con un rico patrimonio cultural y musical, donde también cabe destacar la música de tradición oral, transmitida de padres a hijos durante siglos. Resulta por tanto importante salvaguardar dicho patrimonio, que en cuanto a la música popular, se halla plenamente enraizada en la sociedad, pues conecta con el ámbito de la actividad social y comunitaria de seguir creando y promover dicho legado. Además, parte importante de la historia Sudafricana, nos ha llegado integrada en muchas de las composiciones a través de las letras, un material histórico que podría haberse perdido de no hallarse ubicado en dichas canciones.

De acuerdo con Dovey and Impey (2010), en el África subsahariana, las culturas tienden a ser transmitidas de generación en generación principalmente de forma oral, y de acuerdo con esto, la música ejerce una responsabilidad adicional, ya que no sólo transmite rasgos artísticos por mero entretenimiento, sino que también actúa como vehículo de comunicación e información. Miriam Makeba citó en Hamm (1989) "...Estas canciones son herencia de la casa en la que fui exiliada durante casi treinta años, transmitidas de generación en generación como si de piedras preciosas se tratase. Según Gilbert (2007) el grupo Mayibuye, la narrativa de sus canciones fue generalmente adaptada para recordar ciertos eventos, y ofrece noticias que se entrelazan con poemas de libertad. Cantaban melodías alegres, y en sus letras podía verse la clara oposición al gobierno del apartheid. En Arnold (2002) se afirma que la existencia de canciones no sólo son textos, sino que constituye conocimiento de expresión social, posicionamiento político y que puede transmitirnos una determinada identidad social. Y según el mensaje de de Engh(2013), la música cumple una función importante en la vida de los estudiantes fuera del aula, y por tanto es importante considerarlo como alternativa o complemento a otros métodos de enseñanza, pues un educador es capaz de utilizar las canciones en el aula con el fin de facilitar el aprendizaje. Van der Merwe (2007), también afirma que la música ha sido usada para enseñar historia en los Estados Unidos, pero que en Sudáfrica no se ha llevado a cabo tal utilidad correctamente.

La música y las canciones populares se convirtieron en una herramienta eficaz de comunicación solidaria durante los años del apartheid en Sudáfrica, en su lucha frente a la opresión. Por lo tanto, son material digno de estudio y conservación, que debe ser tratado como cualquier objeto histórico de gran valor. La música de tradición oral, precisamente por su carácter oral, corre el riesgo de extinguirse porque no está siendo preservada. Y puesto que una canción es más que una composición musical, ya que carga historia y cultura intrínsecas, resulta de suma importancia analizar los pasos que deben tomarse con el fin de preservar dicho patrimonio. Con la globalización, cada vez menos africanos o jóvenes Xhosa participan activamente en la cultura musical de sus tribus

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indígenas, por lo que este es el entorno en el que se debaten las canciones populares. Durante los años del apartheid en Sudáfrica, muchos músicos desafiaron la regla de dominación blanca en Sudáfrica, al componer canciones de melodías alegres que ocultaban cierto subtexto desafiador hacia el gobierno, y debido a que existía el riesgo de ser encarcelados o exiliados por tal razón, los músicos cuidaban las letras de forma realmente creativa y exquisita. Músicos como Miriam Makeba y Hugh Masekela, fueron exiliados de Sudáfrica como resultado de tal desafío a través de la música. Muchas de sus canciones están compuestas por letras que arraigan un claro mensaje oculto o bien las caracteriza una evidente connotación cultural, social o histórica que es importante tener en cuenta. En este artículo trataré el tema de la implicación social y política de la música, a través de músicos como Paul Simon y su álbum Graceland. Según lo informado por Meintjes (1990) el proyecto Graceland de Paul Simon es un claro ejemplo de cómo la música puede estar ligada a un significado histórico y social que significa la colaboración social. Graceland está vinculada a su significado social debido a su naturaleza de colaboración entre la música y el proceso de hacer música. El aspecto colaborativo del álbum permite a la gente y a los músicos tener diferentes interpretaciones del mismo, pues cada músico o intérprete llegó al proyecto con un conjunto único de habilidades y experiencias culturales y sociopolíticas. El hecho de que exista mucha ambigüedad política del álbum, ofrece el escenario ideal para estudiar y examinar la contribución de las diferentes implicaciones políticas en relación con el significado musical de un proyecto. El álbum Graceland de Paul Simon no fue creado con la intención de irrumpir en el patrimonio musical de Sudáfrica ni de discutir el clima político de una nación, sin embargo, al final causó mucha polémica, porque era un símbolo del cambio social. También trataré el tema *Asimbonanga* de Johnny Clegg, una canción escrita para Nelson Mandela y relacionada con la lucha del Apartheid, relacionada también con otras figuras políticas como Steve Biko y más recientemente con la muerte de Nelson Mandela. Voy a mirar cómo esta canción no sólo abarca un período de tiempo en la historia de Sudáfrica reflejando su cultura y su estética musical, sino cómo además conecta con la actual situación política de la nación. Me centraré en la importancia de preservar canciones como objetos históricos para preservar una sección de la historia que de lo contrario podría extinguirse, y de que sean estudiadas en las escuelas de Sudáfrica más allá de las aulas de música.

Metodología

La metodología utilizada será una combinación entre la etnomusicología y la etnografía. Los etnomusicólogos no sólo estudian la música, sino que estudian la relación de la misma con la cultura. Algunas de las herramientas utilizadas, serán grabaciones y transcripciones de entrevistas. Según informó Wong (2006), la etnomusicología es una herramienta para pensar sobre la diferencia. Los etnomusicólogos, están bien capacitados para estudiar y explorar una variedad de diferentes nichos. De acuerdo con Meintjes (1990), aunque hay multitud de diferentes definiciones de etnomusicología que se están unificando, hay sin embargo ciertas características comunes que unifican el concepto para los eruditos en el campo. Los etnomusicólogos tienden a mirar la música como cultura y como un reflejo de la misma para quienes la descubran, en lugar de considerarla una disciplina puramente artística. Una de las tareas más importantes de

un etnomusicólogo es viajar a los lugares más dispares y recoger grabaciones e información para estudiar las canciones en su contexto cultural.

1. Grabación y transcripción de entrevistas.
2. Transcripción musical.
3. Colección y edición de audio y vídeo.
4. Ser partícipe y observar un determinado grupo cultural.

Los etnomusicólogos utilizan la música para conocer no sólo qué es la música, sino para entender por qué supone un proceso social. Observan cómo el público y los profesionales se relacionan con el mensaje de una canción. Es un campo interdisciplinario, pues los investigadores pueden tener grados o un propio entrenamiento a base de estudio, antropología cultural, estudios de género, música, estudios étnicos u otros campos relacionados con las ciencias sociales y humanidades, así como folklore. Pero los siguientes apuntes tienden a ser una base coherente que todos los etnomusicólogos comparten. Tener un entendimiento de que la música es una práctica social, pero enmarcada en un contexto cultural al ser una actividad humana. Tener un enfoque global de la música, sin importar el género, estilo o área de origen. Estar involucrados en trabajo de campo etnográfico, participando en la música que está siendo estudiada u observando una tradición musical nueva y diferente a lo conocido, ya sea como investigador o como ejecutante. Los etnomusicólogos estudian música en el mundo y tienden a investigar las conexiones que tiene con todos los aspectos de la vida social. Tienden a impartir cursos sobre música y músicas del mundo de la política, estudios culturales de la música y otros métodos disciplinarios. Los etnomusicólogos también desempeñan un papel importante en la cultura pública. Son capaces de promover las tradiciones y registrar las tradiciones musicales que pueden ayudar a la política cultural de la nación. Podrían también trabajar grabaciones para que la música pudiese llegar a ser valorada por el mundo musical.

Introduction

South Africa, is a nation that has a rich cultural and musical heritage. It is also a nation that has a rich oral tradition of music. According to Dovey & Impey (2010) cultures in Sub-Saharan Africa, tend to be more orally orientated and as a result music contains the extra responsibility of not only transmitting the personal and artistic expression and entertainment to the people but it also acts as a vehicle for communication and information. Music is often passed on from generation to generation by means of an oral tradition. Miriam Makeba was quoted in Hamm (1989) as saying that "...these songs were handed down in my home for which I have been exiled for almost thirty years now from generation to generation like precious stones". Since it is a nation rich in musical and cultural heritage, it is very important to preserve the musical heritage of this nation. Music also forms part of social music making as music is connected with social action, social activity and communal music making practices. Embedded within many musical compositions and lyrics of songs are parts of history and culture that would be otherwise forgotten was it not being kept alive through the songs. Music and song became an effective tool of communicating solidarity during the apartheid years in South Africa during the struggle of oppression. It is therefore important that songs should be studied and preserved and treated as historical artifacts. Since music is passed down orally, there is a danger that this type of music may become extinct because it is not being preserved. And since a song is comprised of more than a musical composition, it is of uttermost importance that steps need to be taken in order to preserve the music as well as the cultural aspects and histories that accompany a given song. Since the world is becoming more modernized and global many young African or Xhosa youths are no longer participating actively in the musical culture of indigenous tribes of their cultures. During the apartheid years in South Africa, many musicians would defy the white domination rule in South Africa by composing songs with joyful upbeat melodies but hidden inside the subtexts of songs were lyrics that defied the government and spoke volumes of the oppression of the people. Since it was possible to be jailed or exiled for defying the government the musicians were careful to write the songs with subtexts unclear to the government. Musicians such as Miriam Makeba and Hugh

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Masekela were exiled from South Africa as a result of this defiance through music. Many songs either have lyrics that have a subtext or have a cultural, social or historical connotation that is important to note. In this paper I will discuss, how embedded within songs lies other truths about history and culture which should be preserved. The album 'Graceland' by Paul Simon was created out of curiosity of the musical heritage in south Africa. It was not written with the intent to discuss the political climate of a nation. This album in the end caused a lot of controversy, because it was a symbol of social change, it did highlight the apartheid regime it spoke volumes of the political current in South Africa during that time and many discussions were created from this album. An excerpt from a Paul Simon interview, I didn't say "I'd love to bridge cultures somewhere in the world, and mmm... where? Maybe South Africa." No, I just fell in love with the music and wanted to play.... My view is instinctually cultural. Looking at things culturally, as I did with 'Graceland'... there's a political implication but essentially I come at the world from a cultural sociological point of view, and they [his radical critics] want to define the world politically. (McNeil Lehrer Report, PBS 25 February 1987).

Johnny Clegg's *Asimbonanga* a song written for Nelson Mandela has been related to the struggle of Apartheid, other political figures Steve Biko and most recently with the death of Nelson Mandela. I will look at how this song not only captures a time period in the history of South Africa, I will also look at how it is able to be connected to the political situation of South Africa currently and how a song is able to capture history and the culture of a nation. I will focus on the importance of preserving songs as historical artifacts in order to preserve a section of history that could otherwise become extinct and this connection between music and history should be utilized in classrooms in South Africa. I am not only referring to music lessons but it should be utilized in other subjects such as history in order to preserve social and cultural parts of history embedded within the songs history. Even though the field of apartheid and music have been highly studied not many studies have been conducted on the use of the relation of music as historical artifacts to be studied in classrooms in order to study the culture and history of a nation through the music

Literature Review

According to Engh(2013) since music forms an important function in the lives of students outside the classroom it is important to consider it as an alternative teaching method. Educators should be able to utilize the songs in the classroom in order to facilitate learning. As reported by Msila (2013) electronic media such as the television, radio and religious institutions tend to be the first mediums children tend to learn songs from and where they are taught to sing before entering school. Even before starting their careers in school children are taught to sing. However in South Africa after, the initial grades music seems to be less utilized in South African schools. In line with Dovey & Impey (2010) Sub-Saharan Africa, the cultures tend to be more orally orientated and as a result music has an extra responsibility of not only transmitting the personal and artistic expression and entertainment for people but it also acts as a vehicle for communication and information. Music and song became an effective tool of communicating solidarity during the apartheid years in South Africa during the struggle of oppression. Music simultaneously conveyed pain and pleasure and subversive but uplifting at the same time by hiding its meanings from the dominant white power government. According to Engh (2013) music has been utilized in a lot of classrooms across the globe as a means to teach a second language because, it develops cognitive aspects apart from South Africa. In accordance with Engh (2013) music also tends to break the boundaries between the different communities that the students belong to

As written by Van der Merwe (2007) music has been used to teach history in the United States of America but not in South Africa has it been utilized or well documented. The student through music is able to get an interactive, perceptual and multidimensional experience in a history lesson. The emotional experiences of people can be reflected through the music, when learning about historical events. According to Van der Merwe (2007) students are also able to feel connected to the people, the time and difficulties the people in the past had to face and this emotional experience passes on the memory of these events. Songs give the student insight into the nuances and feelings of people and their culture through the phrasing, harmonies and melodies that cannot be seen in a report that is solely based on journalism. As quoted by (Goldberg, 2001,96) in Van Der Merwe (2007) “Songs contain the world’s repertoire of personal accounts of life experiences, including children’s songs, songs about love, *Asimbonanga*, Nelson Mandela and the preservation of South African history through the use of songs as historical artifacts in South African schools. 6

courtship, marriage, customs, beliefs, events, religion, struggles, survival and so on.” Through the melodies, harmonies and phrasing, songs give insight into the feelings and nuances of people and cultures that cannot be found in a more journalistic report. As reported by Van der Merwe (2007) music also plays an important part in all cultures of the world therefore, musical artifacts in terms of songs and lyrics should be studied as sources of history and evidence that could give insight into the past and present culture of a nation. Songs could be interpreted analyzed and compared with different sources that are related to the same subject. The lyrics of songs could be handled as historical documents especially in relation to historical events. Students are able to discover what life would be like in another place and time. The learner could be provided with primary sources to examine if any examples are extracted from the music. As written by Van der Merwe (2007) songs should be seen as reminders of the multiple perspectives that we encounter in history as well as the complexities of humans can be reflected in songs. The least meaningful way of linking disciplines is through connection although it is the most utilized and least meaningful way of linking the different disciplines. When learning about history there is a connection that takes place through the music but without the end result of a musical goal. Music serves as the servant of another discipline when there is a connection. It should not be seen as a substitute for music education but as a tool to teach other disciplines such as history. Connection allows for musical materials to be utilized to teach or help an idea in history. Connection requires very little musical understanding and skill that is why most classroom teachers in music utilize it.

According to Van Buren (2007) the role of music and musicianship in terms of shaping and structuring and reflecting a society can be best explained by Bourdieu who discussed the notion of habitus which states that past experiences can be used as a base for enacting and perceiving future experiences. Which shows how musicians can be influenced by social historical or personal and past experiences and how this can shape their future and present practices. There are researchers like Bebe that state that the most important task of musicians is to coordinate the members of African community and music is able to have a number of different roles. As written by Van Buren (2007) music in Africa consists of different layers and segments of meaning and function. Not only does the music have different functions the musicians tend to have different functions as well. As reported by Van Buren (2007) a musician may be an

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entertainer, educator and agent of social change. Music is able to unite communities and one of the most common characteristics of African musical forms is call and response, repetition and the briefness of lyrical phrases, which is able to enhance the ability of music to educate and communicate. In other disciplines the role of arts, which include music, and the influence of society have been explored actively. Educational entertainment strategies have been promoted extensively by communications scholars around the globe. Many of them focus on television radio and audio recordings more than on live music performance.

As reported by Meintjes (1990) the project 'Graceland' by Paul Simon is a clear example of how music can be linked to its social and historical meaning which stands for social collaboration. 'Graceland' is linked to its social meaning because of its nature of collaboration between music and the process of music making. The collaborative aspect of the album allows the people and musicians to have different interpretations of the music as each musician or interpreter came into the project with a unique set of skills and cultural and sociopolitical experiences. Meintjes (1990) states that since there were a lot of political ambiguity from the album, it offers the ideal scenario in which to study and examine the contribution of the various political implications in relation to the musical meaning of a project. How does politics become an important part in musical meaning. Meintjes (1990) then goes on to ask how this process could be explained. The fact that the political is linked with the music demonstrates that the political aspects get absorbed in and communicated through the affective experiences. This clearly depicts the power of music as it has the capacity to communicate through affect and intuition.

As reported by Meintjes (1990) 'Graceland's musical collaboration intertwines with social collaboration. The relevance of these two relationships is not of any particular concern but there is a significance in how one domain is able to merge with the other so that these two different fields may be merged and experienced as one field, even if only for the time it takes for the music to be completed or for the duration of the listening experience. In Arnold (2002, p.161) quotes that 'songs exist not simply as entire 'texts' but as funds of knowledge to be deployed in segments,

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allusions and unframed social expression, in order to communicate and instantiate identities and political positioning. In Gilbert (2007) the group Mayibuye, their narratives in songs were usually adapted in order to incorporate events and resent news that were interwoven with freedom songs and poems. They would sing happy songs with lyrics opposing the apartheid government.

Meintjes (1990) also explains that when South African citizens listen to the song the 'Graceland' album they make identifiable interpretive moves in relating their notions about identity, value, and coherence in order to give the album its meaning. It also allows some notions to be reformed and other notions to be reinforced. There are three ways in which South Africans, respond to the project. The individuals that embrace it are the ones who value the social collaboration it signifies. Those who oppose the social collaboration reject it. However there are some South Africans, who tend to merit the music based on its success as musical collaboration and not on its signification of social collaboration. Sanders (2002) apartheid is an activity of remembering historical contingent.

According to Dovey & Impey (2010) in the film African Jim there is a scene where the people are chanting a song that has happy undertones, when one of the students were boycotting getting off a seat of a white bus but the meaning very sad. In film the context differs depending on who is seeing the film. The American directors of this film were oblivious to the political undercurrent of the song whereas the Black actors were aware that since the department of Native Affairs were funding the production of this film and this scene would have been censored had the department of native affairs understood the meaning behind the lyrics. As written by Dovey & Impey (2010) the content of the lyrics would have been appreciated and understood by the black audience because it had a combination of familiarity and audacity in the scene that could be seen as funny to the black audience since its irony is linked to political charge. The soundtrack of the movie was manipulated in order to communicate to the black South African audience. The music and lyrics during apartheid years in South Africa and the use of the subversive use of African languages in music is a field that has been recognized by Drewett (2004). When one draws upon this scholarship an analysis can be offered where the music in its narrative, technical

and generic manners can be utilized to have a rereading of this film in order to demonstrate the political nature of the music in the soundtrack.

As reported by Meintjes (2004) when the components of music or dance and speech are tightly coordinated when the groove works is described by the term *Isigqi*. This process takes place when all the elements of music are combined and work together in clockwork, in order to make the movement and sound one into an experience that is coherent and together. As reported by Gunner (2008) it is not often seen that a public figure or a politician is linked or associated with a song that it become synonymous with him. But this has been the case with Jacob Zuma the South African politician and now president of South Africa. The song *Umshini wami* (my machine gun) has been linked with him for many years now. In Africa music is seen as the most appreciated art form on the continent therefore it functions in political campaigns. And since it is the most salient art form that is always transmitted through the press at large on a consistent basis and therefore it reaches a wider audience. According to Gunner (2008) public opinion can be influenced because it is constituted from a large powerful platform.(look up and quote allen). The song moved quickly through different constituencies due to electronic media and it became a potent presence in the body politic. As reported by Gunner (2008) the fact that Jacob Zuma used body and song in which a deeper social meaning was understood through his actions. The singer Johnny clegg documented this yearning between fitting the song and dance. Clegg wrote that there is a link between the ideal of social being and the dancing body as migrant workers used this correlation between lyrics and dance when they were in alienation to have power. Gunner(2008) states that the dancers demonstrated their endurance and courage through these lyrics and dances which has been termed by Clegg as *qinile* which denotes a type of resistant masculinity. This denoted a form of empowerment and a moment of understanding even though it is fleeting. Music dance and song gives the participant a portal to rein habit a social space that is tainted. This is how the song *umshini wami* got a response since it was aired by Zuma. His performance denoted sound, body and voice in a public space and a public act of reclaiming voice and sound. The song became a means by which a group of marginalized people inside the dance tried to get the power back and fight back in order to create a change in a new era. According to Gunner (2008) the song is typical

call and response the leader marks his entry by starting to sing and then the congregation responds. This song became the centre of attention by a politician who utilized dancing and singing which caught the structure of feeling in the body politic. This song was played by popular media outlets the Sabc, Ukhoiz fm in television programs and was moved around different networks of distinct communities of speech. It was used, reused and repeated. In Meintjes(2004) a sense of power is experienced by Isiqi when all the components are consolidated momentarily. This idea of Isiqi is quite fitting to the idea that when music works in combination with teaching another subject all the elements of the song the lyrics, the subtext the culture and the history combined with the song could form a type of Isiqi.

Methodology

In line with Wong (2006) ethnomusicology is a tool for thinking about difference. Ethnomusicologists, are well trained to study and explore a variety of different niches.

According to Meintjes (1990) Ethnomusicologists use music in order to not only understand what music is but why it is and they tend to approach music as a social process. They look at how audiences and practitioners relate to the meanings that are conveyed through the music. It is a field that is interdisciplinary. Researchers in this field may have degrees or training in performance study, cultural anthropology, and Gender studies. Music, ethnic or race studies or other fields related to social sciences and humanities as well as folklore. But the following approaches tend to be a coherent foundation that all ethnomusicologists share.

Having an understanding that music serves as a social practice (music is formed but its cultural context and having the view that music is a human activity) Having a global approach to music, irrespective of the genre, style or area of origin being involved in ethnographic fieldwork (by being a participant in the music that is being studied or observing the music gaining entry into a different music tradition as a researcher or performer. As reported by Meintjes (1990) ethnomusicologists study music globally and tend to research the connections it has to all aspects of social life. They tend to teach courses on music and politics world music, cultural study of music and other methods that are disciplinary. Ethnomusicologists also play an important part in public culture. They are able to promote traditions and document music

traditions that may help cultural policy in that nation. They may also work with record labels that enable the music to reach the appreciation of world music.

Discussion

In this paper I have highlighted those songs from the culture of South Africans need to be studied in relation with the social or cultural meaning making of a culture. Songs should be treated as historical artifacts that should be preserved and taught in schools in order to preserve this music. Since there is a rich oral culture in South Africa it is important that the music with its cultural connotations and subtexts be studied in order to preserve its content. There should be a greater emphasis of utilizing songs in history classes in South Africa in order to discuss history and its connotations and to allow for the preservation of music. The idea of Isiqi is an idea which fittingly explains how all the aspects of music should combine together in order to teach the history of a nation and the contexts and subtexts related to the music. Songs then are seen as historical artifacts, which if studied in schools would allow for the preservation of not only the songs but the hidden depths of the nature of the songs.

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