

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8857

Bantu High Life

WITH

Moshe Sephula

AND ORCHESTRA



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1967

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8857

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Band 6: Sifikile (We Have Come) 2:17

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE
Photo: Street Scene in Johannesburg, S.A.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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BANTU HIGH LIFE



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON MOSHE SEPHULA

Moshe Sephula was born in South Africa in 1928. His mother was an accomplished drummer, well known for her hop, skip, and jump on the floors of the huts with her drum on her knees.

Moshe Sephula's early musical studies no doubt began in his home, but his more disciplined work in collecting and compiling South African folk songs was done under Dr. Julius Herford at the Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey, U. S. A., and at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, England, where he studied voice.

The music prevalent in South Africa in the 1930's was highly national in character and content, but Moshe Sephula seems to have followed the cosmopolitan attitudes of his contemporaries. By his setting of little spirituals to Western conventional harmonies, he overthrew the doctrine that African music was in the pentatonic scale and was not subject to outside influences, such as ecclesiastical influences. His first album, "Sing in African," illustrates this European approach to African music. "Bantu High Life" reveals a more modern strain in African folk music, expressing the struggles, longings, and fears of Africans during the last hundred years.

For a number of years Reverend Sephula was employed by the Germiston City Council, South Africa, where he was cultural affairs officer, organizing "Afternoons of Songs" with massed

choirs. His work in South Africa is known far and wide. Reverend Moshe Sephula is now a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Great Britain.

EXPLANATORY NOTES BY MOSHE SEPHULA

The songs you are hearing are contemporary African folk songs.

The pace of urbanization pushed South Africans from rural merrymaking into a highly industrial society with its new technological culture. It was under these circumstances that many spirituals and popular folk songs sprang up spontaneously. Churches were turned into music halls during the week and on Saturdays, and towards God on Sundays. My mother, who was drummer and church choirmaster, gathered a repertoire of these songs—some spiritual, others highly secular.

Note the sharp contrast between the folk songs of the urban and rural communities, due to the different lives they lead.

Characteristics of the African Folk Song

Work songs, love songs, cradle songs, drinking songs, patriotic songs, dancing songs, and mourning songs — this is the wealth of the traditional music of South Africa. The people have a remarkable sense of harmony — though most of them cannot read music.

In "Emgalezweni" there is great use of dramatic recitative, there is a wild savage declamation, and similarly in "Vulindlela." Both songs are on this record. Most of these melodies have a sustained savage yell, which is so evident in some of Handel's arias.

In the words of "Emgalezweni" we have the poet bringing out the beauty of sorrow and the beauty of joy. It is a sad folk song, yet it is pervaded by the unconquerable spirit of the Man who hangs on the cross; the Man who refuses to be crushed or to become embittered by adversity; who weaves a triumphant crown from the thorns that beset His life — a crown that endures even when the flowers of spring are but a memory of lost delights. The song tells also of the day-to-day simple experiences, homely joys, homely sorrows, and homely humors of life.

Here is a song of a group at work:

"Steady land, steady land,
Inch by inch,
Higher and higher my boy,
Pull-away my lady,
Pull-away my lady,
Pull-away my dearest friend."

The melodies are repetitive; there are no cadences or suspensions; neither is there a dominant seventh. The folk songs of Westernized South Africa have a well-defined tonality, with triadic intervals. Therefore they will not sound strange or foreign to the Western ear. In this way the Westerner will be able to understand, even without knowing the language, the joys and sorrows that the black man in South Africa is expressing in these songs.

Record Notes

Bantu High Life Adapted for Voice, Piano, Organ, Guitar, Bass, Drums
Sung by Reverend Moshe Sephula

The setting of these South African spirituals is the Transkei, an area the size of Belgium. On the hills in Umtata, the administrative capitol is a pleasant white house set in green meadows. Here the South African government's policy of bantustans and race discrimination is administered.

From these green mountains, peasants are pushed from the land because of the inadequate yield from subsistence farming in the Transkei and they are drawn to the cosmopolitan cities like Johannesburg.

Little children are deserted by their parents. Their fathers leave to work in the mines; their mothers desert them and their fathers to swell the ranks of unmarried women living on the rooftops of Johannesburg's skyscrapers. The little children surround their grandmothers as chicks surround a hen.

A small portion of this land is described by agriculturalists as flat and gently rolling; the rest, mountainous and covered with bush, is plagued by soil erosion.

SIDE I

Band 1: SALA KAKUHLE (Farewell)

A young man bids farewell to his girlfriend and to his grandmother. The picture here is one of deep devotion, love, and trust. He will honor his vows to marry her when he has accumulated the dowry (lobola).

Sala Kakuhle Sponono,
Sala Kakuhle Sponono,
Ndiyoku sebenzela wena,
Ndiyoku sebenzela wena

Band 2: TULA BABANA (Little Baby)

In response to her son's attachment, though oppressed with loneliness, through a veil of tears, the old

and withered grandmother sings a lullaby to the young ones left behind.

Tula, Tula, Tula Babana,
Tula, Tula, Tula Babana,
Ulile la'ntoni, Ubetue'ngwbani,
Tula Babana umama akakho.

Band 3: BUSY BEE

The young man in the prime of his youth, full of virility and vitality, belongs to a rugby club. In the rocking chair of the train, in jovial rhythm, he sings his club's rallying song.

Ya score Bussy Bee
Pantsi Kwe zopall,
Ya score Bussy Bee,
Pantsi Kwe zo pall.

Sinikellni ndebe,
Sihambe sigoduke,
Sinikellni ndebe,
Sihambe sigoduke.

Band 4: IGOLOWA (Cornfields)

The train in which he travels passes the pleasant farmhouses of European farmers set in cornfields. The sight of peasants trembling at the knees as they carry the sheaves of corn inspires him to join in a work song "We Are Reaping the Corn."

We are reaping the corn,
We are reaping the corn,
We are reaping the corn,
We are reaping the corn.

Band 5: RUA RUA RUA (Cock Crowing)

In contemplation he leans on a window sill and sees a cluster of African huts which lie sun dried in bare scorched valleys. The sound of a cock from these ramshackle buildings arouses his own need to sing.

Wena yise wenkedama
Ndoda yaba hlolo kazi,
Zazi zonke itzizwana,
Ezi ghezu kweklabathi,
Sisi, sisicaka senkosi,
Unaka nozipho,
Sisi, sisicaka senkosi,
Unaka nozipho.

Band 6: SIFIKILE (We Have Come)

This wealth of music enables him to announce his arrival; "We have come Macaleka."

Sifikile Macaleka,
Sifikile Macaleka,
Masidibane, Masidibane,

Masidibane Maswallow. (Mabusy Bee.)
 We have arrived, Macaleka,
 We have arrived, Macaleka,
 Let us now meet,
 Let us now meet,
 Let us now meet Busy Bees.

SIDE II

Band 1: WAARS JOU PASS? (Where Is Your Pass?)

Huistoe gaan na De aar toe,
 Huistoe gaan na my mamatoe,
 Huistoe gaan na De aar toe,
 Huistoe gaan na my mamatoe.
 Hoeragkotla Bokie waars jou Pass,
 Hoeragkotla Bokie waars jou Pass,
 Huistoe gaan na De aar toe,
 Huistoe gaan na mamatoe.

Band 2: NDONGA ZIWELELE (Fallen Walls)

From his digging in the mine he is struck by a thought. The fallen walls inspire him to sing of the fallen walls of justice at the tip of Africa.

The walls have fallen,
 The walls have fallen,
 The walls have fallen,
 At the top of Africa.

Band 3: VULINDLELA (Prepare the Way)

The idea of nationalism is in the air. People in the cities are involved in grave internal political differences: his senses are sharpened. The chorus is a wild chant, bursting out like torrents. "For so long have we been oppressed! For so long have we been oppressed!"

Vulindlela mfo ka mandela,
 Vulindlela mfo ka mandela,
 Besihamba emnyameni,
 Singe nalu Ukhanyiso,

Iminyaka Elithoba,
 Iminyaka Elithoba,
 Iminyaka Elithoba,
 Iminyaka Elithoba.

Band 4: YIHLA MOSES (Go Down Moses)

His abiding concern for his native land with its gentle rolling plains is embodied in his life's dream, to return to it and build up the walls of social justice.

Go down Moses,
 Go down Moses,
 Go down Moses,
 Go down to Egypt.
 Tell Pharaoh, Tell ole Pharaoh,
 Tell Pharaoh, Tell ole Pharaoh,

Tell Pharaoh, Tell ole Pharaoh,
 To let my people go.

Band 5: EMGALEZWENI (Were You There?)

This is one of the most beautiful songs. Its text is built around the Valley of Desolation in Graaff Reinet on the Eastern Cape. The words depict the sad desolate spirit of Christ as he hung on the Cross.

Emgalezweni,
 Waji'ngau Nyana kayehova,
 Wafela Emthini njenge bada,
 Wafela Emthini njenge bada,
 Bambulalu, Yesu Krestu,
 Bamvisim tlungu, Yafinjengele,
 Nge nxa ye thu sonka,
 Nge nxa ye thu sonka Yafinjengele,
 Eyase zuluwini.

Band 6: ABANTUANA (Children's Song)

In the great out-of-doors, children play musical games, their equipment consists of butterflies, squirrels, birds, and stones.

Abantuana Base Wisile bazelu moya,
 Abantuana Base Wisile bazelu moya,
 Yo, Yo, Yo, Bazeli moya.

CREDITS

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 L. Th., Honours Sacred Music, Wilberforce,
 South Africa
 Studied Musicology, Westminster Choir College,
 Princeton, N. J., U. S. A.
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