

Pre-task: Different hats for different music greats

Prince Lengoasa is a trumpet player, composer, band leader, arranger and mentor. Prince was raised in the Salvation Army and studied music and conducting in South Africa at Dorkay House and in the United States. He has played many different styles, from marching bands music to jazz, classical, gospel, world music and mbaqanga. Prince has featured on a number of other people's music and videos and albums. He was the musical arranger for many projects including the sterling Mzansi Music Project and recorded on the classic South African album, *Sibongile Khumalo Live at the Market Theatre*.

The first giant in Prince's life was his dad. To Prince his dad was the finest male human being under the sun. His dad was a funny man and a beautiful soul. He was a minister in the Salvation Army in Kgaleshewe Village, in Kimberley. And Prince joined the Salvation Army. Because of his dad's commitment to work, young Prince got to travel around the country learning different cultures and how to appreciate the diversity we have in South Africa. In Sharpeville he walked in the field where people were killed during the Sharpeville uprising. In Kgaleshewe Village, he met the great Robert Tata Mangaliso Sobukwe. And in Mamelodi he met the great Geoff Mphakati and visited his house; a Mecca of arts and culture where great jazz musicians, painters and poets would visit.

It was in Mamelodi in 1974 that Prince heard Bra Hugh Masekela's albums, *Home is where the Music is*, and *Colonial Man*, with the track, *Vasco Da Gama*. Taking inspiration from elder musicians is one way of learning music and getting inspired. Another way is travel. When Bra Hugh couldn't return to South Africa from the USA due to Apartheid, he started travelling in Africa - to Nigeria, Congo and Ghana. This turned his way of thinking into a more Pan-Africanist view, as he saw the beauty and the importance of other parts of Africa. Bra Hugh's sound changed when he mixed it with West African musicians. From his music being mainly instrumental and voice, now there was an emphasis on the drum, such as the talking drum, the djembe and agbadja drums. So, once we start thinking Pan Africanist, once we think these are our brothers and sisters, it enriches our sound.

Internationally, jazz and hats have always gone together. The big-band swingsters wore the Panama's, the beboppers went for stetsons and afro-berets, fusionistas wore inverted-Andy-Kangol-caps and smooth Jazz bandannas.

But South African jazz takes this to the next level with many of the horn players wearing the peaks and dambuzas, some of the pianists wearing fezzes and sporti's, bass players going for brimmed hats, drummers floppy hats and some even with no hat at all.

So with a career spanning 4 decades, always playing with the very best, Prince has seen just about every hat you can imagine. For him, hats represent different eras in the music. Bra Hugh Masekela loved to wear the 8 piece flat-cap from Germany. Jonas Gwangwa wore the beret. Ntate Caiphus Semanya, wears a toppie, the Muslim skull cap when he performs. And then of course, Bra Winston Mankunku wore the leather cap hanging on the side. The great Afro Cuban pianist, Chucho Valdez wears a Kangol cap facing backwards. Prince also loves wearing his cap like that.

South African jazz is a dynamic entity, evolving with culture, adapting to society's needs, always acknowledging and building up on the innovations of the past. The musical language is passed from generation to generation. Prince stands between the generations of the elders and the youngsters. The big thing for any musician is to teach the younger generation. He teaches at the Music Academy of Gauteng, Bra Johnny Meko's school in Pitfontein, where he is engaged in passing on the musical baton of the elders such as Ntate Jonas Gwangwa, Bra Barney Rachabane and Bra Stompie Manana. The musical baton is not only the discipline of playing an instrument, but it is passing on the legacy and importance of our music. And the best way to keep the legacy alive, is to play the music.

And the great thing about South African jazz, is that it is collaborative. Just like uBuntu in action – if you are passionate about something, there is going to be someone else passionate about it. Collaborations are crucial to the growth of South African jazz because collaboration makes things easier and more beautiful by showing new perspectives and enriching and growing the skills and talents of one and all.

Now, answer the following Pre-task Questions

1. What Prince has learned from this amazing journey is that it is important to find your own voice. You can do this by identifying with somebody and learning from them. And then, finding your own voice. Now, which of the above-mentioned musicians do you identify with and why? Perhaps, tell us which of their songs you are learning from and how you are expressing your unique self through this music?
2. Prince came from the Salvation Army band, playing the classic marching band songs such as “Oh when the Saints.” So many of the great South African musicians have learnt their music through community. What kind of communities do you have access to learn from?
3. SA music icons on the bandstand have their own trade marks in clothing and in particular hats. These trade-marks make the musician look like a performer and stand apart from the crowd. What is your look? And how do you see yourself on stage?
4. Prince says he stands between generations. What do you understand by this and what do you know of the generations that have come before you, and about your own generation of musicians?