

PHILIP TABANE & MALOMBO



Performance of original music by this legendary exponent of Malombo, a highly individual synthesis of traditional African and Jazz styles.

Starring

Philip Tabane, Raymond Motau &
Oupa Monareng



Standard
Bank
National
Arts
Festival

VENUE: BOWLING CLUB



PHILIP TABANE & MALOMBO

Philip Tabane is the son of an Ndebele mother and Tswana father who grew up in Pretoria's Mamelodi Township. As a youngster Philip began playing the guitar by himself, picking up a variety of musical ideas from the neo-traditional, *mbaqanga*, African Christian and American jazz styles that floated around the township. Leaving school after Standard One, Tabane spent his time improvising and blending musical elements into an impressionistic, loosely structured and intensely personal style. He first appeared publicly at the age of

thirteen in 1958 at a variety show in Pretoria, and in 1959 formed the Lullabyelanders, a group with four male voices backed up by Philip's idiosyncratic guitar. The group disintegrated but in 1960 Philip began working with another member of the group, Abie Cindi, who now played silver flute, and African mallet drummer Julian Bahula to create the unique Afro-jazz sound of the Malombo Jazz Men.

Malombo is a Venda word referring to ancestral and other spirits consulted by traditional diviners, and signifies the deeply African spiritual attitude that the group brought to their music. While they rehearsed, developing a new, multi-traditional African music, Philip won successive first prizes in the solo instrumental category at the 1961, '62 and '63 Cold Castle Jazz Festivals in Soweto. Encouraged by radical poet Sydney Sepamla, the Malombo Jazz Men played as a group at the 1964 festival, sharing the prize with Early Mabuza's Quartet. The music of both groups is immortalised on the now classic recording *Jazz Festival of 1964* (EMI Number One N9033).

The music's loose progression of improvised phrases, disjunct melodic and rhythmic lines, and poeticised chanting was puzzling to listeners, who had difficulty explaining its unique appeal. Its roots in neo-traditional music, African church melodies, *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, and the work of American

jazz guitarists gave it a feeling at once indigenous and rural, contemporary and urban. The key, however, was the powerful and visually dramatic style of live performance. Intensely theatrical poetic recitation was vital to Malombo's music, and the group soon became associated with African cultural nationalism and the Black Consciousness Movement. Their initial success led to conflicts within the group, and Julian and Abie were more interested in direct political involvement than was Philip. They split up in 1965, Julian and Abie forming the Malombo Jazz Makers with guitarist Lucky Ranku. This group played for rallies of the radical South African Students' Association (SASO) led by Steve Biko, and Julian and Lucky eventually fled to London in the early 1970's. There they formed a new group called Jabula, officially linked to the exiled African National Congress.

Philip Tabane meanwhile involved the brilliant natural drummer and dancer Gabriel "Mabi" Thobejane (a member of *Kilimanjaro* tonight) in his music, and as Malombo this duo revolutionised progressive indigenous music in South Africa from 1965 to 1977. Their first recording appeared in 1968, and in 1971, Philip and Mabi travelled to the United States where they appeared at clubs and concerts with a number of leading jazz musicians. Free of apartheid restrictions, Malombo

achieved musical recognition and financial success in America, but Philip, a true son of the townships, began to suffer from creative isolation from the sources of his inspiration. In 1973 he and Gabriel returned home to perform for and learn from their own people in the Transvaal townships. In 1977, personal conflicts led to the dissolution of Tabane and Thobejane's musical partnership and since then, both have formed various groups to continue their respective musical styles.

Having performed with such major figures in jazz history as Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Sonny Rollins, Philip Tabane has been remarkable for his ability to capture a multi-racial and international audience while still retaining the respect and goodwill of his township community. He accomplishes this by continuing to follow the same unpretentious lifestyle as his Mamelodi neighbors, while avoiding political involvements that might lead to restrictions. At the same time, his faithfulness to urban African cultural identity has saved him from social and creative alienation and made him a leader in the musical realisation and shaping of that identity.

(Biographical notes based on David Coplan's *In Township Tonight!*: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre, reproduced by kind permission of Ravan Press, Johannesburg.)

JAZZ FOR YOU

PACT's **JAZZ FOR YOU** series is the only platform of its kind in South Africa, utilizing the resources of a major theatre complex (the State Theatre in Pretoria) for the regular presentation of high-quality jazz performances.

During the five years of its existence, the series has clearly demonstrated the benefits of consistently presenting live jazz in this type of environment; to jazz musicians who are accustomed to performing as 'background' music in clubs and restaurants, a concert situation stimulates high levels of creativity and professionalism, while the clearly-structured nature of a stage performance contributes to the extension and development of a discerning audience.

PACT's jazz portfolio was extended this year by the introduction of a parallel series, focusing on the South African jazz and related repertoire. This aspect of the **JAZZ FOR YOU** platform aims to draw attention to the range and quality of South African instrumental music, and is exposing a hitherto uninitiated audience to the achievements of the unjustly-neglected South African repertoire.

The **MORE JAZZ FOR YOU** series was launched with a performance by legendary Pretoria-born-and-raised musician Philip Tabane. It is consequently with great pleasure that PACT brings Philip and Malombo to the Standard Bank National Arts Festival for the first time.

If you would like to perform in the **JAZZ FOR YOU** series or would like more information about this initiative, please contact the following:

Brett Pyper
PACT Music
PO Box 566
PRETORIA 0001
Tel (012) 322 1665, Fax (012) 322 3913