

THE MUSIC

It's a family affair for Pat Matshikiza

EAST LONDON — For jazz pianist Pat Matshikiza, music is a family affair.

Pat, like his older brother Todd before him, learned his music from his father, Meekly 'Fingertips' Matshikiza, who was himself a pianist.

The Queenstown-based Matshikiza family reminds jazz lovers of the famous Jones music family in America. Most members of the clan were involved in music in one way or another, with the most famous of the brood being Quincy Jones, a leading jazz artiste and mentor of many American musical stars.

Pat's father, Meekly, had a collection of music books and taught his children to read staff notation from an early age.

Then, when Pat attended St Matthew's College, he learned to play church music on the organ under the guidance of Mrs Hundelby, an organist from England.

While at Lovedale Institution, where Pat completed his education, he would play the organ in the dining hall during meals.

KING KONG

Although he played in the shadow of his famous brother Todd, who wrote and arranged songs for the famous musical King Kong, he never allowed that to bother him and later blossomed in his own inimitable way.

Pat returned to Queenstown after completing his education but didn't stay long there.

In 1962 he moved to Johannesburg where he found a job at Dorcas House as a replacement for pianist Gideon Nxumalo, backing such stars as Letta Mbuli, Tandle Klaason and Satch Masinga.

JAZZ DAZZLERS

Later Pat joined the Jazz Dazzlers under Mackay Davashe. The combo comprised Kippie Mooketsi on alto, Dennis Mpale on trumpet, Mackay Davashe on tenor, Blythe Mbitjana on slide (trombone), Saint Molekangwe on bass, Early Mabuza on drums and Pat on the keyboards.

The Jazz Dazzlers

PROFILE

by ELLIOT MTSHOZENI

won the 1962 Motoka Jabavu, Cold Castle Jazz Festival and, although top spot the next year went to the Blue Notes group under Chris MacGregor, Pat was chosen as the outstanding pianist at the jazz festival.

He appeared with the Jazz Dazzlers at the Balfair Show held at W. B. Rubusana

with Dick Khoza on drums and Sandile Shange on bass, the combo walking off with first prize at the Lion Match talent contest and jazz festival that year.

HUGH MASEKELA

In the same year, he and guitarist Allan Kwela were asked by Blythe Mbitjana to



Pure magic... Pat Matshikiza at the keyboards.

Park in Duncan Village in 1964, when he sang with Blues Ntaka, Thoko Thomo and Letta Mbuli in the vocals while still playing with the group.

BIG FIVE

In the same year he broke away from the Jazz Dazzlers and joined the Early Mabuza Big Five in the place of Tete Mbambisa, featuring alongside Early Mabuza on sticks, Ernest Mothle on double bass, Borney Rachabane on alto and Johnny Mekoa on trumpet.

After a spell away from the music scene because of a family bereavement — the illness and death of his father — Pat returned to the Big Five and toured Durban with them.

When Early Mabuza's group returned to Johannesburg, however, Pat stayed behind.

In 1969 he paired up

famous Kheya hit and Sikkiza Matshikiza, produced in 1978.

Another Pat Matshikiza Trio followed in 1978 comprising himself, David Romogasa on drums, and Zulu Bidi on double bass. Peter Mkonotela guested on alto and the combo played at the Hillbrow Tower Jazz Club for three years, from Monday to Monday.

In 1980 he took up employment as a solo pianist for Holiday Inns, spending spells at Ulundi and Thohoyandou in Venda before transferring to the Amatola Sun in Bisho, where he is presently engaged.

He said he was impressed by jazz pianist McCoy Tynor, though not forgetting the great Oscar Peterson.

NEW ALBUM

He is busy compiling and arranging a new album to be called Umama, Utato Nomntwana, which will feature the title number Umama... Isingqi Sempumelelo Yabantu, Umthandazo Ngumthandazo, Untabakazi (dedicated to his daughter), The Lonely Man, Taken For A Ride (dedicated to everybody who does not like to be taken for a ride: ukubanjiswa iselalis' pobobe), Ehlathini, Nature's Gift (Africa) and Ntrantrle's Kisses (dedicated to his brother).

The compositions are a mixture of traditional songs, jazz and ballads.

During my visit, he tickled the ivories for me, playing Floyd Cramer's famous hit San Antonio Rose and his own composition Kheya.

MAGIC TOUCH

It was the old Pat Matshikiza everyone knows. His dynamic touch on the instrument is magic. He plays as if he is trying to shake the chords off his fingers.

It was an unforgettable experience and his performance at the keyboards reminded me of such greats as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Lalo Schiffrin, Jimmy Jones, Earl Fatha Hines, Billy Strayhorn and Herbie Hancock.

Long may he tickle dem ivories!

KIPPIE MOOKETSI

In 1975 he joined Kippie Mooketsi — the start of a long and fruitful partnership which produced such hits as their famous Tshona number, Body And Soul, Summer Time, Cherokee, Angels Eyes and Pat's own compositions, the