



STEVE DYER

Steve was born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in 1960. His parents consistently listened to the music of the Western classical masters. He also remembers maskandi musicians walking the streets as they played their guitars, and the Soul Brothers and “kwela” playing on the radio. He began composing music at the age of 10.

Steve completed a BMus degree in performance at the University of Natal in 1981, majoring in saxophone and flute. Refusing military conscription, he then left South Africa and lived in Botswana for 5 years. Here he came into contact with the exile sounds blowing through the horns of Hugh Masekela and Jonas Gwangwa. He helped form “Shakawe” led by Jonas Gwangwa and played in the band for 3 years, where he immersed himself in the mbaqanga music tradition. At this time Steve also listened to saxophonists such as John Coltrane and Winston Mankunku.

In 1988 after a stint in the U.K. he settled in Zimbabwe where he formed the group Southern Freeway. Two albums were produced Southern Freeway (1989) and Indlela yenkululeko (1992). Steve came into contact here with the more introspective and often rhythmically complex mbira based Shona music, as well as reliving some Nguni based music playing with musicians that had Ndebele cultural roots.

In 1990 he joined the Amandla cultural ensemble of the A.N.C on a 7-week tour of Japan.

With democracy on the horizon in 1993 Steve returned to South Africa. After studying briefly at the University of Natal, he relocated to Johannesburg and directed the Soweto String quartet live performance that toured Europe and Australia/New Zealand.

He conceptualised, directed and performed with the first ever substantive Southern African music collaboration “Mahube” in 1997. Mahube toured Southern Africa and Europe and recorded 2 albums: Music from Southern Africa 1998 (SAMA nomination), Qhubeka 2003 (Kora award)). Steve went on to produce 5 Oliver Mtshali albums between 1998 and 2002 including the seminal “Tuku music”.

He has released 6 solo albums since his return to S.A: Down South in Africa – 2000, Son of the Soil – 2004, Lifecycle 2006 (SAMA nomination) Native Art 2007 SAMA nomination, IAP (U.S.A.) finalist), Ubuntu music 2012 (SAMA nomination), and Confluence – 2014. Steve has also composed and performed for feature film and TV soundtrack, as well as for modern dance companies Moving into Dance and Tumbuka, as well as conceptualising and directing numerous shows and collaborations.