



JONAS GWANGWA



A product of the turbulent but musically significant 1950's, Soweto-born **Jonas Gwangwa** electrified the famous Sophiatown music scene, blazing a fiery path in South Africa by establishing and playing with virtually every important band of the era, including the Jazz Epistles, a group that included such icons as Kippie Moeketsi,

Abdullah Ibrahim, Johnny Gertse and Makhaya Ntshoko. In 1961, Gwangwa left his home country to tour England with the hit musical "King Kong", after which he ventured to the United States to further his education at New York's prestigious Manhattan School of Music. He stayed in the US for 15 years, earning his American "break" through the patronage of musical legend Harry Belafonte. Gwangwa has also been a compatriot of a virtual who's who of world music including Ahmad Jamal, Herb Alpert and contemporaries Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba, and Caiphus Semenya.

Believing that "politics and culture cannot be separated," Gwangwa's total commitment to the struggle to end apartheid is intrinsic to his music. An official "enemy of the state" for many years, Gwangwa narrowly escaped death in 1985 when his home was blown up by South African security forces. His lifework crystallised when he served as composer, arranger and musical director of "Amandla", the much heralded worldwide ANC cultural ensemble tour to which he devoted ten years of his life.

A prolific composer, Gwangwa joined forces with George Fenton to create the original score and theme song for the much heralded Richard Attenborough film, "Cry Freedom". The score achieved Oscar, Grammy Bafta, Golden Globe and Anthony Asquith award nominations and won Ivor Novello and Black Emmy Awards.

Gwangwa returned to South Africa in 1991. His life long dream of freedom was realised in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected president of a democratic new South Africa.

MUSICAL SCORES / THEME MUSIC

- "South African Olympic Bid" - theme music, composer (1997)
- "African American Summit" - African American summit anthem, composer (1997)
- "The Beer With the Taste of Time" - Vivo beer commercial jingle, composer (1996)

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- "Generations" - TV soap opera series, theme composer, nominated for SABC Artes Award for "Best Incidental Music" (1995)
- "Soweto Green" - South African feature film, soundtrack composer (1995)
- "Masakhane" - South African RDP community programme, theme composer (1995)
- "Night Moves" - Dali Thambo TV music/variety show, theme composer and musical director (1993-1994)
- "Together Against Crime" - Ministry of Safety & Security rally, theme composer (1994)
- "Ulibambe Lingashong" - ANC documentary, theme composer (1992)
- "Drumbeats" - TV series, theme composer for first episode (1992)
- "Matla Trust Voter Education Project"- theme song composer (1992)
- "Land of Dreams" - BBC film, soundtrack composer (1990)
- "Othello" - British film version, soundtrack composer (1990)
- "Cry Freedom" - Academy Award nomination for original song and score (1987 - 1988)
- "Destructive Engagement" - TV documentary, soundtrack composer (1987)
- "Providence Garden Blues" - George Bass play/artist in residence at Brown University, United States (1984)

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Performed at his majesty the King of Thailand's 50th anniversary celebrations (Bangkok and Pataya)
- Composed music score and performed in Strasbourg, France.
- Composed and performed anthem for Reverend Leon Sullivan, fourth Africa- African American Summit
- 1997 Composed theme music for South African Olympic Bid
- Performed at 25th Anniversary of Van Der Leis Habitat Foundation in Amsterdam Holland
- 1998 Composed score for play "Jonas" my biography and performed it in Noumea New Caledonia and Paris France
- 1998 Composed theme song to E.TV News
- 1998 Toured U.S.A performing in N.Y.C, Chicago, Atlanta and Disneyland in Orlando Flo, on a trade mission by the department of trade and industry

INTERNATIONAL NOTEWORTHY PERFORMANCES

- Strasbourg, France (1997)
- King of Thailand 50th Anniversary Celebrations - Bangkok and Pataya (1996)
- "African Explosion" - band leader/tour of Britain, France, East & West Germany (1989)
- Mandela's Birthday - Wembley Stadium and Hyde Park, England (1988)
- Academy Awards Ceremony - standing ovation performance in Los Angeles (1987)
- "Amandla" - ANC worldwide cultural tour, Artistic Director (1980 - 1990)
- "Main Event" - US tour with Hugh Masekela and Herb Alpert (1978)
- Botswana tour with Letta Mbulu (1976)
- "Festac" - Nigeria tour (1977)
- Miriam Makeba at Philharmonic Hall - Lincoln Centre, New York, Musical Director and Trombonist (1967)
- "The Sound of Africa" at Carnegie Hall - New York with Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Letta Mbulu (1965)

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SOUTH AFRICAN NOTEWORTHY PERFORMANCES

Important Concerts / Tours / Performances:

- "Jonas Gwangwa Live!" - Johannesburg Civic Centre production (1996)
- Parliament Opening Party & UN Art Exhibit Unveiling - Cape Town (1996)
- "Mtshongolo" - Producer and Director for Northern Cape Tour (1995)
- "Tour of Hope" - South African tour with Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela and Tsepo Tsholo (1994)
- "Heal Yourself" - Fundraising Concerts at Standard Bank Arena in Johannesburg and Village Green in Durban (1992)
- "Echoes of Africa" - Johannesburg return concert (1991)