

Dyani-Pukwana alive



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily Argus
June 22, 2001*

“JOHNNY Dyani isn't dead, but he's dying,” I wrote about the legacy of the late East London jazz vocalist-pianist-bassist in this column last year. One of the greatest tragedies any community can experience is when someone who has brought joy and excellence dies forever. At the time it seemed that was what was happening to Johnny Dyani.

Fortunately for the legacy of Dyani, “the jazz lunatic kid” who put South African jazz on the European map, and for jazz lovers here, I am being proved wrong.

Jazzman Albert Spaargaren has for the past several months worked with devotion to put together a vehicle to make the legacy of two of the Eastern Cape's all-time greats, Dyani and alto saxophonist Dudu Pukwana — Dudu, originally from Port Elizabeth, who kept the exiles together, available for this generation and posterity.

The fruit of Spaargaren's labour of love comes in the form of the Dyani-Pukwana Foundation. The Foundation's board of trustees consists of state attorney Island Maqoma (incidentally, a descendant of the great warrior chief Maqoma), Fort Hare University rector Derrick Swartz, Masimanyane director Lesley Ann Foster, CEO Disabilities Employment Concerns Trust Mike du Toit, local port operations manager Nosipho Damasane, and the jazzman himself.

The Foundation's main objective, its deed of trust states, “is to promote the development and appreciation of jazz music in the ... Eastern Cape”.

It hopes to give manifestation to this objective by making funds available for informal jazz education, jazz education in schools and universities, and by sponsoring events from which the public and especially “previously disadvantaged individuals and communities” will benefit.

Intentions are already being translated into action. Come the afternoon of Saturday, June 30, the Dyani-Pukwana Foundation will be launched at the Windsor Cabanas, with the local jazz elite and Buffalo City dignitaries in attendance.

A few hours later, the Foundation will feature South Africa's undisputed jazz guitar king, Jimmy Dludlu in concert at the Orient Theatre. It will be a renaissance moment in jazz history, with Dludlu playing Dyani numbers — the past being mediated through the present. In addition CDs of Dludlu, Dyani and Pukwana will be on sale. What's more, Jimmy has agreed to conduct a guitar workshop in Mdantsane the next day.

Spaargaren told me this week that the Foundation is not only about honouring the best of the past, but also about creating bursaries for future stars. With lots of local talent — most having been mentioned in this



DUDU PUKWANA

Picture by Basil Breakey

column — practicing in backyards and yearning for an opportunity, the Foundation should soon have its hands full in this department.

And so, to service jazz needs around here properly, the Foundation looks forward to public and private support (that's code for money) for its fundraisers, concerts and workshops.

● I mentioned how impressed I was with Reece Timothy last week. Heard this week that Reece was actually SA Music Rights Organisation drumming winner Kesivan Naidoo's first drum teacher. Well, for a comparison of the teacher and the student, and to encourage them of course, visit the Parkside Steakhouse on Friday to listen to Reece and Smokey Swallows on Sunday to check out Kesivan.