

## General Introduction to the Mohapeloa Critical Edition, by Christine Lucia

### An African critical edition

This Critical Edition brings together for the first time most of the music written by composer Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa (1908-1982).<sup>1</sup> It comprises 182 short unaccompanied choral works and one piano work, collectively dating from the late 1920s to late 1970s. It is the first complete critical edition of music from southern Africa, and establishes not only the critical edition in Africa, but also the gravitas of a genre of African vocal music composed as literary-musical work by people using their home language (in this case Sesotho), notating their music in the mission script, tonic solfa, and writing for a culture of choral singing moulded since the nineteenth century as a vital expression of individuality and community. Mohapeloa was one of many black composers of his time, but he was not South African. He hailed from the tiny kingdom of Lesotho, a country with a very small population that remained outside the polity of late colonial and apartheid rule throughout Mohapeloa's life (a life briefly sketched below), and ever since, against all economic and political odds. Lesotho impacted on his lifework in ways that only gradually unfold as his work is studied.

With more than 3 000 pages of notated scores and critical apparatus, this edition challenges the tendency to regard African vocal music from southern Africa as largely improvised and un-notated oral, traditional, or popular music. It also challenges the notion that critical editing is the preserve of Western art music, although the music of 'other cultures' has been regularly edited and published by ethnomusicologists, as James Grier has observed, with 'those in which an oral tradition predominates' posing 'different problems for the editor' from notated music (Grier 2016). Because Mohapeloa's music was notated, it has more in common with Western art music than with any music from a predominantly 'oral tradition', even though its sonic fabric is shot through with traditional and popular African styles.

The process of authenticating and editing this music has been largely informed by the editing of Western art music, then. As Grier points out, 'Editors in ethnomusicology have developed conventions of their own, particularly in regard to notation, that establish their work as an independent field'. A-R Editions, for example ([www.areditions.com](http://www.areditions.com)) produces publications in which the music's transmission 'is oral or relies in part on notation as the starting point for improvisation' (Bohlman 2016).

The tradition of critical editing to which this edition is most indebted is the European style of 'critique-génétique', in which editing is 'based in historical inquiry', 'involves the critical evaluation of the semiotic import of the musical text, which is also a historical inquiry' and relies on 'the editor's conception of musical style, which again is rooted in historical understanding' (Grier *Ibid*). In Africa, this implies that the editor must have sufficient understanding of the historical background of this music to be able to make informed choices, as well as a fairly comprehensive knowledge of critical editing

---

<sup>1</sup> Evidence exists for more works than are included here, but authentic versions have yet to be found (see the end of the *Catalogue of Works by J.P. Mohapeloa*). Once they are found and verified, they will be added to Volume VI online.

internationally, and this combined know-how has been the single most difficult challenge to making the present edition. It could only have been met by using expertise in various areas, notably in the Sesotho language. The work remains, however, the Editor's single-handed endeavour, for better or worse; a journey in the footsteps of a composer whose presence was uncannily felt along the way.

This repertoire, unavailable before in its entirety, gives a remarkable overall account of Mohapeloa's development as a composer: something not possible before. It also gives a unique and vivid account of African daily life in the mid-twentieth century. Other composers in southern Africa may boast greater outputs or more varied repertoires, but none can reveal as Mohapeloa does, such a monumental narrative of the history, environment, climate, landscape, and working and domestic lives of African people over the course of half a century, miraculous in its expressive totality. Mohapeloa's music was previously known through a handful of songs that are still sung by choirs throughout southern Africa, sometimes further afield. But it is barely known elsewhere in the world, and despite a growing academic literature on choral music and decades of choral competitions in southern Africa, scholars and choirs outside the competition circuit are generally unaware of such music, and internationally are unaware of this kind of African choral music, never mind as a large repertoire. Such unawareness can even be somewhat shocking.<sup>2</sup>

This edition collects scores from several sources and groups them into six volumes, arranged in more or less chronological order of original publication. With one exception,<sup>3</sup> all the works were composed in tonic solfa notation and several of them were originally published in books whose integrity is retained: Volumes I-III contain three books published originally in 1935, 1939, and 1947; Volume IV comprises eight songs from a multi-authored church songbook of 1955 together with 39 previously unpublished settings of Psalms and other Biblical texts made for the Dutch Reformed African Mission Church in c.1979; Volume V comprises two songbooks published originally in 1951 and 1976; Volume VI contains individual songs from various periods of Mohapeloa's life but mostly his later years, some of them previously individually published but the majority not.

Each of the six volumes is duplicated (Vols. Ia to VIa), these 'a' versions being identical to Vols I-VI except that tonic solfa notation is added to the scores for the benefit of choristers who do not read staff notation. An audio CD, *African Choral Legacy: Historic Recordings of Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa* (ACE CD001) provides a companion piece to some of the works and is available online, along with the whole edition ([www.african-composers-edition.co.za](http://www.african-composers-edition.co.za)).

Each volume has a short Preface and a list of Contents. In addition, the Edition provides this *General Introduction*, a full *Catalogue of Works by J.P. Mohapeloa*, a *List of Sources*

---

<sup>2</sup> Haeker's PhD thesis (2012) for example, includes statements such as these: 'Most black composers, of which there were few, composed in close imitation of the four-part hymn. Many of these compositions, if written down, employed the tonic sol-fa system, which Christian missionaries taught as a quick means to acclimate blacks to major/minor tonality and the English language. Because most blacks were illiterate, the tonic sol-fa system eventually morphed into dual notation' (12).

<sup>3</sup> The exception is an unpublished O.A.U. anthem, *Freedom in Unity*, which exists in two versions: one for unaccompanied choir in tonic solfa and one for solo piano in staff notation. The latter may have been intended to be an accompaniment to the former, but it has more elaborate harmonies, and is thus treated as an independent piano piece.

that are referred to throughout the edition (not only in this *General Introduction*), and a *Pronunciation Guide to the Sesotho Texts*, since the music has to be sung in Sesotho and English translations are separate from the scores. The Edition gives these translations and brief historical introductions on the inside front pages of scores, and lists the sources used to prepare each publication on its back pages, with a critical commentary on music-textual issues and variant readings.

Musicology in southern Africa has not been able to depend for decades, as musicology in ‘the West’ (or ‘north’) has, on the groundwork laid by numerous repertoires often produced through critical editions. Early musicology’s interpretive work was heavily dependent upon them, and indeed grew out of historical-analytical work on them, in many cases. The regional musicology of southern Africa developed without equivalent regional foundations, so that producing a critical edition at this point in time feels almost like reverse engineering. Because this edition breaks new ground in many ways, its genealogy and Mohapeloa’s life as a composer as well as the tradition of African choral music within which he worked, require some explanation.

### **Mohapeloa’s biography in brief**

Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa was a Mosotho from the Bataung clan, born in the village of Molumong in the Mokhotlong District of the eastern mountains of Lesotho, on 28 March 1908.<sup>4</sup> His was the third generation of a family converted to Christianity in the nineteenth century by the Swiss-French Protestant missionaries from Paris, the *Société des Missions Evangéliques chez les peuples non-chrétiens à Paris* [Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS)]. Joshua Pulumo was the fourth of ten children born to Rev. Joel Mohapeloa and Candace Sehoroeane Matong. After elementary schooling in Molumong, Mohapeloa attended the PEMS Training College in the mission station of Morija in the south, which took him to what we would now think of as the end of ‘middle school’, which in those days included teacher training for elementary school. In addition to academic subjects Mohapeloa studied music, music education and tonic solfa, and learnt staff notation, elementary music theory, and harmonium with Florence Mabile (Mohapeloa 1965). He completed a Junior Certificate in 1927 and enrolled in 1928 at the South African Native College (SANC) in the Cape Colony of South Africa, in order to complete the most senior level of schooling, Matriculation, in 1929.<sup>5</sup> He hoped to study medicine after this, but well before the end of 1929 it was clear that he had contracted tuberculosis. He was forced to leave the SANC and go home to his father’s parish in Mohalinyane, western Lesotho. While recuperating here, he began to compose, as a distraction from the difficulties of a

---

<sup>4</sup> Information for this biography was culled from several biographical sources, mostly not cited at every turn and thus given here collectively: Mohapeloa, J.P. (1953b), Mohapeloa, J.P. (1951b), Mohapeloa, J.P. (1965), Huskisson (1969), Moeketsi (1981), Mohapeloa, J.M. and Phakisi (1987), Wells (1994), and Gill (1997). Photographs illustrating this biography can be found on [www.african-composers-edition.co.za/Mohapeloa](http://www.african-composers-edition.co.za/Mohapeloa).

<sup>5</sup> Matriculation was the school-leaving qualification. SANC is now called Fort Hare University and boasts some famous alumni, including Nelson Mandela. It was at that time the only place in southern Africa where a black person could matriculate.

correspondence course he was following (to keep up his education) and from his weak condition. His daughter-in-law Ntsiuoa Mohapeloa remembers him telling her:

He was so sad about all that, he used to sit in the forest. Sit there, worry, being alone there. Then, he said to me, he would be listening to the birds chirping, you know. Then he started to, you know, love nature, started to appreciate what was around him. He started to appreciate the countryside. He thought, ‘this is a wonderful country, I can write a lot about it’. (Ntsiuoa Mohapeloa, Author’s Interview, 28 September 2006)<sup>6</sup>

He was exposed to various vocal musics as he grew up, including folksong, tonic solfa songs composed by older Sotho composers, European and African hymns, and choruses from Western opera and oratorio.<sup>7</sup> He learnt indigenous stories, dances, games, riddles, tongue-twisters and indeed, as his brother, historian Josias Makibinyane Mohapeloa recalls: ‘the Basotho ways, old and new, that he learned from home, at school, herding, and different kinds of jobs, are evident in many of his songs’. Mohapeloa started a choir at Mohalinyane and tried out his first pieces with them. Their popularity quickly spread to other choirs and districts. By 1934 he had written over 30 songs and in 1935 Morija Sesuto Book Depot published them as *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* [African Songs and Extemporary Harmonizations, hereafter *Meloli I*], in tonic solfa notation, with texts in Sesotho. In December 1936 the Morija Training Institution Choir, conducted by Mohapeloa’s neighbour, Bennie Mashologu, recorded eight of them at the Gallo studios in Johannesburg, which are probably among the first African choral songs recorded commercially.<sup>8</sup>

In 1939 Mohapeloa produced his second songbook, *Meloli II*, and after ‘a year’s intensive revision work on the rudiments’,<sup>9</sup> he took some courses part-time in the Music Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, with the aid of a scholarship given by Basutoland’s Director of Education. Mohapeloa attended lectures by Percival Kirby (who, it is sometimes forgotten, was a composer: he had studied at the Royal College of Music with Charles Villiers Stanford) and by music theory lecturer W.P. Paff. Mohapeloa’s student record at Wits shows that he passed ‘History of Music A.1’ in 1939, ‘History of Music II’ and ‘Counterpoint & Harmony’ in 1940, ‘Counterpoint & Harmony’ in 1941, and ‘Composition only’ in 1942. These did not constitute complete years of study and Mohapeloa thus could not complete a degree or even a diploma, but the musical techniques he learnt reveal themselves as an expansion of his musical grammar in works written after

<sup>6</sup> Nor was he only an appreciative observer of nature: Mohapeloa planted many trees at Molumong and Mohalinyane, as a way of countering the devastating effects of soil erosion due to over-grazing.

<sup>7</sup> Morija Sesuto Book Depot had published a collection of European and Sotho songs called *Lipina tsa Likolo tse Phahameng* [Songs for High School] in 1907, that follows the format common in nineteenth-century British tonic solfa publications by Novello and Curwen, of reproducing popular choruses from oratorios and operas by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Bellini, Donizetti, Weber, Wagner and others. *Lipina tsa Likolo* also contains a number of ‘Alpine’ folksongs, because it was compiled by Swiss-French missionaries.

<sup>8</sup> They are the first eight tracks on *African Choral Legacy: Historic Recordings of Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa* (CD ACE001), published by African Composers Edition as a companion to this Critical Edition. Thanks are due to Rob Allingham for alerting me to the whereabouts of these tracks.

<sup>9</sup> The quote comes from a proposal Mohapeloa made for a study trip abroad in 1968. (See ‘HTC-H051-01’, in the folder ‘High Commissioner-006’ in the Hugh Tracey Correspondence Collection, International Library of African Music, Grahamstown.)

1942.<sup>10</sup> Changes in compositional style in *Meloli III* (1947) and comments he later made in interviews with David Coplan (1976 and 1978) show how he wrestled with such new knowledge and with its affect on his work. Mohapeloa was allowed to study a component of a course that was called ‘Composition only’ at Wits after three years, in 1942, and no details are given in the *University Calendar* about exactly what this course, which could potentially have been the most useful to him, comprised.

A 34-year-old African composer steeped in Sotho folk music and mission-trained styles of choral writing (in tonic solfa) must have struck an odd chord at Wits in the late 1930s. Kirby makes no mention of Mohapeloa in his autobiography, *Wits End* (1967) although he mentions dozens of other former students. Composer Stanley Glasser, who was an economics student at Wits when Mohapeloa was there, warmly remembers ‘Josh’, recalling that Kirby and Paff ‘were highly impressed with Mohapeloa as a musical phenomenon, remarking on his musicianship, originality and imagination of his pieces and somewhat puzzled as what best to do for him’.<sup>11</sup>

Maybe Mohapeloa’s absence in *Wits End* owed something to Kirby’s dim view of African choral music:

[its] form is of the most rudimentary nature, consisting chiefly of orthodox musical sentences without a trace of the devices used by European composers to mitigate the ‘squareness’ of the design or to inject vitality into the melody or character into the harmony. In other words, with very few exceptions, our African composers have made little advance in their art during the last half-century. (Kirby 1979, 85)

Perhaps he regarded Mohapeloa as an anomaly, but Mohapeloa clearly felt indebted to Kirby, because he asked that his first-born grandson receive the English middle name, Percival (Ntsiuoa Mohapeloa, Author’s Interview, 28 September 2006).

While on the Reef, the area around Johannesburg where coal and platinum mines are located, Mohapeloa survived economically by running a choir, the Johannesburg Traditional Choristers. After he returned to Morija, he conducted the church choir, and later formed a community choir called the Baithaopi [Volunteers] Society. He began his day-job, working at the Morija Printing Works as a proof reader, in 1945, the year that he married Mary Stimmiri. They raised four children together, and he stayed at the Printing Works until his retirement in 1973, afterwards teaching music at the National Teachers’ Training College in Maseru, which had been founded in 1975. Aside from attending the Kitwe All African Church Music Conference in Zambia in 1963, Mohapeloa never went beyond the borders of South Africa, although it is clear from a funding proposal that he wrote in 1968 (see footnote 9 above) that he was keen to travel abroad in order to expand his musical horizons. Mohapeloa was still involved in teaching and conducting when he died on 13 January 1982.

---

<sup>10</sup> Course details published in the *University Calendars* of the time list specific techniques, although whether or not these were helpful (or indeed studied by Mohapeloa) is debatable. In 1976 he told David Coplan in an interview, ‘I thought history was not worth listening to’. DC: ‘Because there wasn’t any history of African music...’ JP: ‘Yes, yes’.

<sup>11</sup> Glasser, Stanley. 2009. Letter to author, 8 June.

Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa is buried in the graveyard on the eastern edge of Morija, and in 2011 a tombstone was erected by the family, sponsored by the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Mohapeloa was a member of SAMRO and all his music is still under copyright at this point in time, with SAMRO administering the rights. He was also a founder 'African' member of Hugh Tracey's African Music Society (African Music Society 1948a and 1948b; there was a separate category of membership for Africans). He was awarded an OBE by the British Government in 1961, a Knighthood of the Order of Ramats'eatsana (KCOR) by the Lesotho Government in 1976, and an Honorary D.Litt. from the University of Lesotho in 1978. An obituary published in the newspaper *Leselinyana le Lesotho* [The little light of Lesotho] mentions that he was an honourable member of the Organization of Sesotho Writers, and that the King and Queen of Lesotho attended his funeral (*Leselinyana le Lesotho* 1982, 1).

### Overview of the tradition of African choral music in southern Africa

Mohapeloa belonged to a compositional lineage launched by John Knox Bokwe, 'the father of black South African choral composition' (Olwage 2010/2011, 18), whose first notated composition, *Msindisi Wa Boni*, was published in 1875 and was followed by more than 30 pieces in as many years. With these works and the performance practice culture that Bokwe and others established at first in mission schools and colleges, certain norms in the field of African choral music were created that persist to the present day. 'His own biography became a template', as Olwage puts it: a 'self-taught composer [who] composes almost exclusively for voice; is typically also a choral conductor; and for whom choral practice is a part-time activity' (Ibid). S/he also typically writes in tonic solfa notation, a medieval sight-singing method revived in Victorian Britain by John Curwen in the early 1840s as an educational tool and exported to the Cape Colony's black mission schools (Ibid).

Bokwe's choral music was published between 1875 and 1922 by Lovedale Press and includes several works in the early South African collection of songs and hymns, *Amaculo ase Lovedale* (1885). All Bokwe's manuscripts in Rhodes University's Cory Library for Historical Research are in staff notation. His music was strongly influenced by British Victorian or American revivalist hymnody, displaying an SATB choral style that Olwage describes as 'resolutely metropolitan' (Ibid, 19; Olwage's exegesis of this style elsewhere (Olwage 2003) offers a very different perspective from Kirby, above). The magnetic attraction to such metropolitan styles by composers at the periphery of empire, scattered throughout southern Africa, was to remain a characteristic feature of African choral music's history.

Bokwe also left us with another first, which balances his metropolitanism: transcriptions of musical fragments that date back to indigenous chants ascribed to the first Christian convert in the eastern Cape Colony, Chief Ntsikana Gaba (c.1780-1821). One of these fragments is called *Ulo Tixo Mkulu* [Thou Great God], which became known as 'Ntsikana's Great Hymn' (Bokwe n.d. c.1904) and is possibly the first written record of African music passed down orally from the early colonial era. Bokwe thus set in motion the hybrid Western-African musical characteristics that have pervaded African choral music, whose

language re-imagines in four-part harmony church, classical, and popular styles and is inflected with the ‘traditional’ from various regional African cultures. This creolised new African choral music, so absolutely *not* the monolithic ‘rudimentary’ style derived solely from hymns as viewed by people from Kirby (1979) to Haeker (2012), was paralleled by the development of another choral tradition, *isicathamiya*, and by the development of South African indigenous church music and gospel. But notated choral syncretism became more widespread and varied than these genres did, as a vehicle of communal expression and protest, as has been observed by a number of writers (see for example Mngoma (1981), Mthethwa (1988), Pewa (1995), and Mugovhani (1998)).<sup>12</sup> Bokwe’s peers and immediate successors include Tiyo Soga and Enoch Sontonga, the latter most famous for his hymn *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*, adopted by the South African Native Congress (SANC) as a closing song at meetings in 1919. In an extended version, it became the anthem of the SANC’s heir, the African National Congress (ANC), and since 1994 has been sung as part one of the new South African national anthem (see Coplan 2008).

The third generation of African choral composers, more or less contemporary with Mohapeloa, includes Michael Mosoeu Moerane, Reuben Tholakele Caluza, Daniel Cornel Marivate, Benjamin John Peter Tyamazashe, Archibald Arnold Mxolisi Matyila, and Hamilton John Makhoza Masiza. Their work was advanced through competitions and mission publishers such as Lovedale Press in the Eastern Cape (a British Methodist mission), Morija Sesuto Book Depot (MSBD) in Lesotho (Paris Evangelical Lutheran), and Mazenod Institute in Lesotho (Roman Catholic). These presses were among the first publishers of African choral music: Mohapeloa’s first four songbooks were published in the 1930s-50s by MSBD and other songs by MSBD and Mazenod in the 50s and 60s. More commercial publishers became involved in the later twentieth century, including Shuter and Shooter in Pietermaritzburg who published selections of P.J. Simelane and A.A. Khumalo, and (atypically) Oxford University Press who published Mohapeloa’s fifth song collection in 1976.

Educational publishers supplied small tonic solfa books to the newly burgeoning State school systems of countries such as South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, and Lesotho, so they had a guaranteed large market. Composers of the past fifty years, who include Mike Ngxokolo, Makhaya Mjana, L.B.M. Chonco, Thanduxolo Ngqobe, Shalati Khoza, and Phelelani Mnomiya, could no longer rely on this market, only on the prescription of their works for competitions, ensuring sporadic performances but insignificant income. Considering the size of the repertoire, few African choral works have in fact been transcribed into staff notation since Bokwe’s time, and those few were mainly transcribed for competitions. In 1998 the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) began publishing a series of African choral scores in ‘dual notation’ called *South Africa Sings* which are useful study scores (Khumalo 1998, 2008, 2013); and SAMRO reproduces individual scores on demand. Publication remains, however a major lack in this field, and was a strong motivating factor behind the appearance of this new critical edition.

---

<sup>12</sup> While monitoring protest action as a member of the anti-apartheid organisation, Black Sash, in the Durban area during the 1980s, I heard Matyila’s *Bawo Tixo Somandla* and Mohapeloa’s *Molelekeng* sung spontaneously during political meetings and marches.

## Choral practice

The history of publication relates intimately to different histories of practice among black southern African choirs, to the emergence of the black middle class in the early twentieth century, and to the different religious or education systems to which people were exposed. The tradition of ‘amakwaya’ or ‘iikwayala’ as it is often called (from the Zulu or Xhosa words for choir) is older than the first inter-institutional choral competitions, that date back at least to 1931, when the newly formed South African Bantu Board of Music first held competitions in the Johannesburg area (Vokwana 2004). These competitions, which initially had instrumental as well as vocal categories, prescribed songs annually for some years, enriching the repertoire already developing for classroom use. Conductor-teachers often taught songs by rote because scores were precious resources, and rehearsals were held almost daily. (This is still common practice.) But although tonic solfa songs have proliferated and styles have increasingly taken on regional inflections during the course of southern Africa’s volatile twentieth-century history, choral practice itself has remained fairly unchanged. It remains a community-based, amateur practice, with the majority of choristers unable to read staff notation, rote learning predominating, and competition the centrifugal force holding the practice together.

Annual competitions are organised for school, church, and adult choirs. Lesotho, where Mohapelo lived and worked, has its own competitions, although some Sotho choirs also participate in South Africa’s much larger competition field. The competitions have a lot in common with sport: choirs are like teams, with managers jealously guarding their success and coaches to do the ‘drill’ of note learning. Throughout the year, prescribed pieces are rehearsed in two categories, ‘Western’ (e.g. Handel), and ‘African’ (e.g. Mohapelo), with traditional song/dance also performed in the choir’s regional folk costume, nowadays not usually by the choir itself. Choirs pay to enter the regional and provincial rounds of these competitions which culminate in national finals in one of the major cities – Johannesburg, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Durban – or in the case of Lesotho its capital, Maseru.

Competitions have evolved almost beyond recognition from their humble beginnings into a big business run by the National Choir Festival (NCF), which in the past worked in conjunction with corporates such the Ford Motor Company, Standard Bank, and Telkom, and now works with the Old Mutual insurance and banking group.<sup>13</sup> The affect of ‘massive monetary incentives’ on the culture of choralism as a result of this interface between music and corporate strategy has been critically observed by Thembela Vokwana (2004, 3). Competition finals have been recorded for radio since the 1960s and for television since the 1980s. The NCF makes its own in-house videos that are sold at the following year’s competitions, but these films do not circulate much more widely than this, and are edited to focus on singing rather than on composers, whose names are often not given.

African choral performance is a social as well as musical practice, a reason for showing communal solidarity, not only by participating in competitions but also by singing at weddings and funerals: acts performed by the community for the community. Choralism is a

---

<sup>13</sup> See the Old Mutual website <http://dogreatthings.co.za/music/national-choir-festival/regional-championships/2013-prescribed-music>.



habit, a way of life, sometimes even an obsession of which the NCF Facebook page gives daily confirmation; a major after-hours commitment for people who are working or studying, and a social forum, especially for the unemployed.

Since the first quarter of the twentieth century, external influence has brought about many changes to compositional style and vocal technique, although the African choir from southern Africa retains a vocal sound unlike that of any other choir in the world. White adjudicators have in the past (for better or worse) influenced tone production, phrasing, and intonation – as deemed important to Western styles of choral singing. So have recordings: as soon as prescribed works are announced at the beginning of each year, practitioners rush off to find recordings of the Western works, on which – perhaps because there are recordings to emulate – they seem to spend a great deal more rehearsal time than on the indigenous works, according to laments on Facebook (see also Ndlovu 1997).

Listening to African choir recordings housed in the SABC Radio Sound Archive since the early 1960s, one becomes aware how singing styles have changed. Vibrato, for example, entered the sound only in the early 1980s, perhaps under the influence of operatic or popular music heard on radio, or the rise of the CD.<sup>14</sup> Conducting styles have also changed, to judge from the difference between older and more recent interpretations. The amount of repertoire choirs know has changed less: memorisation of a tiny repertoire for singing repeatedly at local, regional and national (annual) competitions is still the major focus of practice, rather than learning a new or wider repertoire, let alone for presentation outside competitions, never mind for making commercial recordings, which (therefore) barely exist. In short, it is still very much an in-house practice, and it is unlikely that any choir today knows more than a handful of Mohapeloa's songs.

In an unpublished essay on choral music written in 2004, 'Expressions in Black', Thembele Vokwana identifies four main 'expressions' in choral music that had emerged by the end of the twentieth century:

- expressions based on European models, especially Methodist hymnody and Baroque – Classical choral models. (Christian themes, nature appreciation and [themes of] love obviously borrowed from the literature of the English canonic masters read in schools as well as the Bible.)
- expressions based on European models but evoking unity among Africans, social commentary on abuse of substances in urban areas, the dilemma and problems associated with urbanization and civilization.
- expressions with sections clearly adding indigenous aspects of music, sources being the local wedding songs and other types of traditional musics found in rural communities.
- expressions specifically emulating indigenous musical components and themes throughout as well as those that incorporated aspects of *toyi-toyi* as a means of

---

<sup>14</sup> A notable example is the Matthews Singers' SABC transcription recording made in 1980, now housed in the SABC Radio Sound Archive in Johannesburg (LT17863/4, digitised in 1997 as CDT903). The female voices have a striking vibrato, in contrast to most other Mohapeloa recordings from the same year. By 1990, vibrato is the norm on these SABC transcription recordings and now dominates the vocal sound.

voicing anger at political upheavals, reclaiming an African identity and aesthetic. (Vokwana Ibid, 5)

These outline a history of practice in which many musical and extra-musical elements are involved, a practice developing through a huge repertoire of works by many composers over more than a century. In her dictionary *The Bantu Composers of Southern Africa*, Yvonne Huskisson wrote entries on 318 composers (Huskisson 1969). A 1992 supplement contained many new entries on younger composers, and yet she still regarded her research as representing only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ (Huskisson 1992, back cover). Assuming, at a conservative estimate, that there have been about 500 composers since Bokwe, each composing an average of 100 songs, the total repertoire that has emerged historically could amount to 50 000 works. Many of these are lost, however, because very few were published and because manuscripts rarely survive. This is *Gebrauchtmusik*, written for immediate use, and committed to choral memories that may not outlive more than one or two generations.<sup>15</sup> Mohapeloa was extremely unusual in having so many works published during his lifetime, reissued in several editions.

Aside from publication, a partial survival rate for this repertoire has been guaranteed through hand-copying and (later) electronic copying, for competitions or other occasions. It can be argued that African choral songs are seldom regarded by practitioners as ‘works’ in a generic sense but rather as vehicles for competition singing. That this is crucial to the survival of culture, indeed people, is not in dispute here, but given this history of choral music’s use it is perhaps not surprising that the *Mohapeloa Critical Edition* is the first complete body of work by an African choral composer that has ever been considered *as* a body of work. Even within the literature on choral music – and publications aside from those already mentioned include Nhlapo and Khumalo (1993) – the consideration of this music as ‘work’ or ‘works’ is unusual.

### **The use of ‘work’, ‘song’, and ‘catalogue’ in this edition**

#### *Work*

If there is one place where the ‘work-concept’ probably still has currency, it is a complete critical edition, the purpose of which is to make available a new version of all works authored by one person.

In this case, Mohapeloa is author of the texts and composer of the music. His works are registered with the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) and the copyright that subsists in them is held by his legal heirs, Mrs Ntsiuoa Joyce Mohapeloa (the composer’s daughter-in-law) and Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa, her son and the composer’s grandson. They have granted permission for African Composers Edition to collect, edit and publish Mohapeloa’s works in this edition. This concept of ‘work’, the legal one, reminds us

---

<sup>15</sup> An urgent project of collection and archiving awaits here.

that putatively, all songs written by Mohapeloa remain under copyright until 50 years after his death (2032).<sup>16</sup>

The concept of work generally referred to in this edition is a generic one, and the word identifying it in southern Africa is not normally ‘work’ but ‘song’. It is common in the African choral tradition to refer to indigenous composed works as songs rather than choral pieces, choir music, choruses, or part songs – some of the terms used in the West. ‘Song’ in the West implies ‘art song’ – solo song with piano accompaniment – and a few African composers have written ‘art songs’ in this sense, too (see Uzoigwe 1992, Euba 1993, and van Rhyh 2013), but not Mohapeloa.

### *Song*

‘Song’ in the African choral tradition usually denotes a short unaccompanied work for SATB, sometimes with additional voices, an extra Alto or Tenor being Mohapeloa’s preference. The word for ‘song’ in most southern African languages is synonymous with either ‘music’ or ‘dance’: ‘*umculo*’ or ‘*ingoma*’ in isiZulu, for example. Some vernacular words capture the influence the West has had on indigenous song: the Sesotho word ‘*lifela*’ for example reflects the introduction of hymn tunes. The most common Sesotho word for choir song is ‘*lipina*’, derived from ‘*mino*’, which is ‘an abbreviation of *mobino*, derived from the verb *ho bina*, to sing’ (Wells 1994, 5). Mohapeloa preferred to create new words, such as ‘*meloli*’ (whistles), ‘*lithallere*’ (songs sung with trained voices), or ‘*meluluetsa*’ (ululations); and the title of his 1951 songbook was *Khalima-nosi tsa Mino oa Kajeno*, where the word ‘*mino*’ is combined with ‘*Khalima-nosi*’ to create a phrase that literally means, ‘shining stars’ – or perhaps ‘gems’ – ‘of today’s music’. Mohapeloa’s experiments should not be seen in the narrow sense of (re)naming only, but as attempts to forge a new path in a very wide field: the African practice of singing as cultural expression, a practice so widespread, ingrained, and embodied that it was possible for historian Helen Kivnick to declare, on the brink of South Africa’s new democracy in 1990:

It is through their singing that Black South Africans most publicly assert their cooperative identity. And we may be sure that when South Africa’s people draft a constitution that allows them all to live together in true justice and equality, when they install their first truly democratic elected government, these political milestones will have the sound – quite literally – of more than 28 million voices singing. (Kivnick 1990, 336).

### *Catalogue*

The need for a catalogue for this edition is related to its rationale, which is, first, to make available a large repertoire by a composer writing in an African choral tradition nearly 150 years old; and second, to present that composer’s repertoire critically in a way that highlights African music’s relation to Western modernity while revealing its African-ness and its creole-ness. No catalogue of Mohapeloa’s songs existed when work on this edition

---

<sup>16</sup> Intellectual property law in southern Africa is complex, and heirs’ rights are governed by various factors, one of which is how IP was assigned or transferred by the original owner.

began. The new *Catalogue of Works by J.P. Mohapeloa* lists all his songs, each work assigned a ‘JPM’ number – like BWV numbers for Bach but in this case based on Mohapeloa’s initials – and each score an ‘ACE’ number, ACE being the acronym of the publisher, African Composers Edition. There are two ACE numbers per work because there are two versions of every score, one in staff notation only and one in staff notation with tonic solfa added. Thus the first song in Vol. 1, *U Ea Kae?* (Where Are You Headed?), is listed in the catalogue as JPM001/ACE001 and JPM001/ACE002. Each ACE work is also assigned a sequential ISMN (International Standard Music Number).<sup>17</sup>

This Edition follows the *New Grove* practice of giving titles of volumes and song collections in italics and using single quotation marks for individual songs when they are cited from collections, but otherwise using italics for individual songs, which are treated in this edition as separate works. The song collections in Volumes I-V *are* only collections, not cycles: not intended to be performed in their entirety although they could be, and there is a certain integrity of style to each volume with patterns of subject matter emerging within collections. Mohapeloa’s songs are known in the African choral community by individual titles and performed individually, and some began life as ‘occasion’ pieces even if they were later put into collections.

The total number of Mohapeloa songs previously published in tonic solfa notation collections is 132, a figure that does not count reissues of songs in other publications (see below). Fifty-one extant previously unpublished miscellaneous songs and psalm settings are also published here for the first time, making the total number of works in this edition 183. Furthermore, there are a number of titles for which scores have not yet been found.<sup>18</sup>

None of the songs is numbered, but in the revised 2016 edition pagination is continuous rather than confined to a volume. Other revisions include increasing all main type face to 12 point, correcting typos (although some will still have slipped through), and editing all texts written by the Editor, including this *General Introduction* and 183 ‘historical introductions’ on the scores.

### **Previous publication of Mohapeloa’s work**

Mohapeloa’s songs published during his lifetime in five tonic solfa songbooks devoted to his music, and their reprints, are primary sources for this new edition and are listed below, with details of each reprint.<sup>19</sup> The fact that they were reprinted several times testifies to their once widespread use – especially in Lesotho’s schools – but studying the reprints also reveals minor typographical errors and also, more interestingly, microscopic musical rethinks on Mohapeloa’s part.

<sup>17</sup> In southern Africa ISMNs are supplied by the National Library in Pretoria.

<sup>18</sup> The obituary mentioned above (*Leselinyana* 1982, 1) includes the phrase, “During his life we can estimate that Mr J.P. composed 200 songs”. The Preface to Volume VI has a list of possible missing works at the end.

<sup>19</sup> The technical difference between a new edition, where there are changes even if pagination remains the same, and a reprint, where there are no changes at all, is not consistently adopted in the different printings. The fifth book, *Meluluetsa*, was the only one not reprinted

*Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (African Songs and Extemporaneous Harmonizations). Morija, Lesotho: Morija Sesuto Book Depot. 1st ed. 1935; 2nd ed. 1953; 1st reprint 1977; 2nd reprint 1983; 3rd reprint 1988.<sup>20</sup> (32 songs.)

*Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika II: Buka ea Bobeli* (African Songs and Extemporaneous Harmonizations Book 2). Morija, Lesotho: Morija Sesuto Book Depot. 1st ed. 1939; 2nd ed. 1945; 3rd ed. 1955; 4th ed. 1980; 5th ed. 1996. (32 songs.)

*Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika III: Buka ea Boraro* (African Songs and Extemporaneous Harmonizations Book 3). Morija, Lesotho: Morija Sesuto Book Depot. 1st ed. 1947; 2nd printing 1966; 3rd reprint 1977; 4th reprint 1983; 5th reprint 1988. (28 songs, including three republished later in *Meluluetsa*: ‘TY’, ‘Maseru’ and ‘Mafeteng’ – see below.)

*Khalima-nosi tsa 'Mino oa Kajeno: Harnessing Salient Features of Modern African Music*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot. 1st ed. 1951; 1st reprint 2002. (Five songs.)

*Meluluetsa ea Ntšetso-pele le Bosechaba Lesotho*. (Anthems for the Development of the Lesotho Nation). Foreword by Dibarata Ghosh. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. 1976; out of print. (25 songs, including several previously published elsewhere.)

Mohapeloa numbered his 92 songs in the first three songbooks consecutively: *MLA I* begins with no. 1, *MLA II* begins with no. 33 and *MLA III* begins with no. 65. He intended *Meluluetsa* to be published by MSBD as *MLA IV* but was persuaded to give them to Oxford University Press instead.<sup>21</sup> The five songs in *Khalima-nosi* show new trends in modern African music, as the title suggests, and provide a transition between Mohapeloa’s ‘school’ songs of the 1930s and 40s and mature patriotic works from the post-war 1950s and post-Lesotho-Independence 1970s.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to these five Mohapeloa songbooks, eight of his songs appeared in a multi-composer collection of worship music called *Hosanna: Lipina tsa Kereke* (Hosannah: Church Songs) (Morija, Lesotho: Morija Sesuto Book Depot. 1st and 2nd ed. 1955). These are ‘Balisa’, ‘Hosanna’, ‘Christmas’, ‘O, Phokolang’, ‘Molimo ke Moea’, ‘Silevera le Gauda’, ‘Ahe Moren’a Khanya!’ and ‘Na le ’Na?’. ‘Molimo ke Moea’ had already appeared in the Sotho hymnal *Lifela tsa Zione* in 1939 (see below). Two other Mohapeloa songs appeared in another collection of worship music, *Binang ka Thabo* (Songs of Joy): ‘Leheshe-heshe’ and ‘Lehlomla la Thesele le Letle-letle’ (Mazenod: Mazenod Institute. 1st ed. 1963). This book contained four other Mohapeloa songs later republished in *Meluluetsa*: ‘Leribe’, ‘Butha-Buthe’, ‘Maloti a Lesotho’, and ‘Quthing’. To recap, these are the songs that appeared in more than one publication:

<sup>20</sup> It was not called ‘Book 1’ until the 1988 edition.

<sup>21</sup> Mohapeloa, J.P. 1962. Letter to Yvonne Huskisson, 3 August; and Mohapeloa, J.P. 1963. Letter to Yvonne Huskisson, 18 November. (‘Korrespondensie’ [Correspondence], Huskisson Collection, SAMRO, file ‘Mohapeloa, J.P.’); and Ambrose, David. 2012. Conversation with author, July 2012.

<sup>22</sup> The Protectorate of Basutoland attained independence from Britain as the Kingdom of Lesotho, in 1966.

‘Molimo ke Moea’ was first published by MSBD as hymn no. 445 in the 1939 edition of the Lutheran Evangelical Church (LEC) hymnal, *Lifela tsa Ziona*.<sup>23</sup>

‘Moriya’ (*MLA II/38*), ‘The Gay Night Birds’ (*MLA III/77*), and ‘Thoko ea Tlhōlo’ (*MLA III/92*) were also published by MSBD as separate leaflets.

‘Coronation March’ (*MLA II/64*) was originally published in the *Basutoland Teacher’s Magazine* in 1937 in honour of the coronation of Britain’s King George V (Mohapeloa 1937); in 1939 and 1945 this version was reprinted but in the 1955 3rd edition of *MLA II* the lyrics were adapted to take account of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

‘TY’ (*MLA II/35*), ‘Mafeteng’ (*MLA II/55*), and ‘Maseru’ (*MLA II/64*) – reprinted in *Meluluetsa* as songs no. 20, 22, and 21 respectively.

*Lesotho Tsiketsi sa Tlotla ea Afrika* and *Moshoeshoe, Tsoha* – originally published in the Souvenir Programme of the 1966 Lesotho Independence Celebrations (Moriya Sesuto Book Depot 1966, 13-14).

‘Maloti a Lesotho’ (*MNBL/15*), ‘Butha-Buthe’ (*MNBL/18*), ‘Leribe’ (*MNBL/19*), and ‘Quthing’ (*MNBL/24*) – originally published in *Binang ka Thabo*.

### Composition, publication, and dissemination of Mohapeloa’s music

The first edition of *Meloli I* gives an idea of how Mohapeloa’s music was marketed and disseminated. It was first published in 1935 by Moriya Sesuto Book Depot (MSBD), Lesotho, a modest educational mission press that for decades had been publishing school text books, religious books, songs, hymnals and other material, for markets all over southern Africa. An advertisement in the newspaper *Leselinyana le Lesotho* on 23 August 1935 proudly announced:

This book that we are introducing to preachers, teachers, and the Basotho in general from Lesotho and South Africa, is the first of its kind. There are many songs here, composed by a Mosotho, a child of Lesotho, the one whose name appears above. We’ve been hearing some of these songs for quite a while, some in schools, both outside and inside, in praise of fine song. Today we have all these songs together in one book, a book that has been printed well, and which is easy to read. Let everyone rush and buy it, to show that we are rejoicing, and let us give thanks to the first Mosotho composer; because we

<sup>23</sup> Ambrose, David. 2014. Letter to author, 24 June. *Lifela tsa Ziona* is the most widely used hymn book in southern Africa, and is reprinted almost every year by MSBD.

can now teach his beautiful songs and follow the rules he has shown us in the way that he has presented them. (*Leselinyana le Lesotho* 1935, 4)<sup>24</sup>

Mohapeloa was not the first person in Basutoland to compose songs, his ‘love for and understanding of music [having been] founded and honed by’ previous Sotho composers Hope Mosaase, Jeremiah ‘Makoa, Stephen Mosaase, and W. Buti; ‘strong men and forerunners of education in the mountain region’ (Mohapeloa 1965, 1). Expanding their templates and using Basotho traditional music, hymns, quasi ‘African songs’ written by European settlers such as A.M. Jones and a handful of Western classical pieces in tonic solfa notation, he forged a new vernacular choral idiom. At the same time, even perhaps unwittingly, he established a new African literary genre, the song lyric. There was clearly something unusual in this collection that made Mohapeloa’s publisher – hype aside – to call him ‘the first Mosotho composer’.

How were these songs composed, and what did the publisher mean by ‘We’ve been hearing some of these songs for quite a while’? Historian J.M. Mohapeloa, the composer’s brother, explains in his biographical study of the composer:

At the beginning he wrote a few lines, he would then test this with two to three people to hear how it sounded. He would continue with the short song, changing it here and there. He would try it again, and then make changes. He would continue doing this until he had a complete song which was sung by a choir that he formed. It was also sung by other schools ... That choir which Pulumo started continued to grow and its other work was to test the new songs that were composed ... It did not end there. [The choir] started entertainments. At first it sang at Mahalinyane. It then visited branches in Liphiring, Makhalleng and Tsoloane. Pulumo was encouraged by the way people enjoyed his music ... [H]is songs were generally loved; other groups, in addition to Pulumo’s choir, started performing his songs. Those singers visited far places such as Siloe, Thabana-Morena, Mohales Hoek, Mafeteng, Hermon, Maseru and other directions. They went outside Lesotho, and went as far as Bloemfontein, Kroonstad and Johannesburg. (Mohapeloa and Phakisi 1987, 18-19)

Such rapid oral dissemination of the music even before it was published was nurtured by the way music and text appealed to ‘Basotho in general from Lesotho and South Africa’, as the publisher said – and there are more Sotho speakers living outside Lesotho in surrounding South Africa than in Lesotho itself. It was recognisably national, ‘our music’. Basutoland was a fragmented country, and the songs spoke to a wide range of people living in scattered villages who constituted an imagined Basotho community: it can be argued that people were united in their Basotho-ness through these songs. This sense of a shared heritage was enhanced by the way the songs drew on the familiar: folksongs, dances, stories, styles drawn from the hymnal *Lifela tsa Sione*, which must have made people warm to his new idiom. He

---

<sup>24</sup> It cost 2s 9d plus 3d for postage (*Leselinyana le Lesotho* 1935, 4).

gave them something that spoke to their heritage, even while he reimagined and reinvented that heritage for choir, in 4, 5, or occasionally 6 or 8 parts.<sup>25</sup>

*Meloli I*'s appearance coincided with the expansion of the education system in the Protectorate of Basutoland during the 1930s. Several new schools were built, including Basutoland High School in Maseru which opened in 1939 (one of the founding teachers was Michael Mosoeu Moerane), and there was a new impetus to learn songs from tonic solfa scores (Gilbert Ramatlapeng, Author's Interview 4 April 2014; see also Ambrose 1963). Mr T.T.E. Pitso from Maseru, who was sent to school during the 1930s and knew Mohapeloa, explains in an interview with Christine Lucia what happened in those days:

TP From my early days in primary school, Mohapeloa's songs came in handy, at a time when the country needed songs like his in the schools, in particular. I was up in the mountains, a remote school called Lesatseng Primary School.

CL And his music was even known up there?

TP It was all over Lesotho.

CL How did you learn it?

TP We were made to read tonic solfa, sing different parts.

### **'For the coming generations'**

Mohapeloa prefaced the 1935 1st edition of *Meloli I* with a composer's statement, 'Re E-s'o Qale!' [Before We Start]. This is quoted below in full, because it explains Mohapeloa's intention with respect to the time and place in which his compositions first appeared in print, and conveys a sense of his struggle to blend old and new, musically:

Re E-s'o Qale! [Before We Start]

It is well known that to the Black nations of Africa music holds a special place. From days of old to modern times, a Mosotho has sung in his language; sometimes singing sad songs of death or songs of joy that move him to stomp with his feet. Music allows him to bring out all that is in his heart.

It's also been observed by many that this accomplished singing by Africans has been changing with time. A song of a Mosotho of old was repetitive; even though it was a beautiful melody that was made even better by good lyrics and good singing; often the group of words were not more than two; and sounds of the song that are unequal in pitch, not over five (pentatonic). Today we speak in foreign languages and we even sing these 'doremifa' [solfa letters] which even children playing out in the street hum out as 'tralala'. Africanness or old Sesotho is gradually disappearing; what remains of it, has a strong smell of foreignness.

Here, we are striving to embellish and enjoy. All existing sounds have been used to depict all sorts of feelings, irrespective of whether they are African or foreign. However,

<sup>25</sup> For more on how he does this, see Lucia (2011a).



the two groupings [African/foreign] will somewhat distinguish themselves; although they are not standing out in the true sense because we are like the Mosotho of today who speaks two languages at the same time and is not proficient in any of the two, twisting the foreign language towards Sesotho while bending Sesotho towards that foreign language.

We have totally failed to create the loud song of men ‘sehou, pina ea banna’ because in an attempt to have a joyous mood, instead of coming up with two groups of words we have several groups. Even in this grouping of two (the foreign one) we have failed to stick to the usual form, which has clear rules that are well known by those who have read the letters of the big accomplished musicians from overseas. We don’t really follow those rules here [the rules of Western harmony and voicing]. When the sound of the song goes in this direction, instead of allowing it to follow the right path, we threw in three or four notes here and there to embellish the song to create nice songs, ‘lithallere’. It is for these reasons that we are not calling this book a book of songs but a book of sounds and nice songs, ‘meloli le lithallere’ as is, indeed, the case.

Accomplished singers, let’s sing together with understanding, because you have sharp ears and your voices are sweeter than Lesiba [traditional Sotho end-blown string instrument]. Your joy and sadness touch your heart best when they are conveyed in song. Even you bad singers, I invite you to sing along; loudly too. Whatever happens will happen; after all, the Sesotho idiom ‘even the bad singer is allowed to sing for his king’ covers you. As for you who are off-tune: don’t worry, just wait for the song to drag and go real low as it gets out of tune; now throw in a stone [i.e. kill it]. Let us sing together like true Africans! for this thing called song is our speciality. (Mohapeloa 1935b)

Mohapeloa’s experience as a composer negotiating between African and Western musical values is wonderfully stated here, and his reference to ‘African’ and ‘foreign’ elements invites closer analytical study of his music by future scholars in order to see how he effected such a negotiation.

In the 1953 edition of *Meloli I* Mohapeloa expands on the Preface, calling it ‘Khorō’ [Gateway], and adding a final section in which he says,

As long as all our songs are published, the case of African music will be placed completely on the forehead of the court [‘lekhotla’] and African Music will be in the right place, where it is kept for the coming generations, as an example that they can follow, or a place to start when investigating about what proper African music should be. (Mohapeloa 1953b, 3)

This adds a new dimension to his lament in the 1935 preface, that ‘Africanness or old Sesotho is gradually disappearing [and] what remains of it, has a strong smell of foreignness’. In 1953 comes the notion that the ‘right place’ for African music to be preserved for future generations is the printed tonic solfa songbook. Such a notion would seem extraordinary to a Western conductor or music scholar today (and some ethnomusicologists), and would probably have been abhorrent to Hugh Tracey; but it was a

normal idea to Mohapeloa, brought up musically in a dual culture of mission school and traditional music.

The ‘foreign-ness’ of the songs, as Mohapeloa’s publisher hints in the 1935 advertisement for *Meloli I* quoted earlier, comes from the idea that these were ‘nice songs’ that somewhat ‘followed the Western rules’ – meaning, Western ways of writing for voices in four parts. The music showed other Basotho that a Basotho composer had mastered a certain style of Western vocal harmony. As Mohapeloa implies (above), these are not just Basotho traditional songs arranged on paper, songs in two or three parts with one cycle of material repeated in varying ways; they are *composed* songs, written in four-part harmony, with phrases, sections, repeats, sometimes dynamics, and, moreover, quite complex texts written by Mohapeloa himself.

The part-writing in Mohapeloa’s music is, indeed, often very lively, and there can be two lyrics in parallel; the four-part texture sometimes breaks into five or six voices or reduces to three; there are sudden changes of rhythm and harmony; the Soprano parts often lie quite high – indeed all the ranges are wide and require strong, flexible voices; the Bass often goes below the staff, recalling the deep style of Basotho men’s traditional singing, ‘mokhorotlo’ or ‘mohobelo’; the Sesotho lyrics are not easy even for native speakers; and tempi can be quite fast. Mohapeloa is aware of phrasing and the need to breathe, but he makes few concessions to amateur singers. Good intonation, breath control, accurate ensemble, tone production adequate to their expressive nature, and regular practice are all needed in order to do justice to the performance of these songs. Although there are folk elements too – in some of the texts, in the use of pentatonic melodies, in the way some sections are harmonised according to root movement by a 2nd rather than a 4th or 5th, in the strong bass lines – these are far from being simply folk song arrangements; nor are they hymns.

This is really a new and strange, unfamiliar musical territory: songs based on a Western notion of unaccompanied choral music but with Lesotho lyrics, and with elements of Basotho folk music, dance, and poetry and Western harmony. Songs that challenge, but play with language and sound. As Mohapeloa puts it in his 1935 Preface: ‘All existing sounds have been used to depict all sorts of feelings, irrespective of whether they are African or foreign’.

### **‘A book of sounds and nice songs’**

If this was a thoroughly hybrid new genre, then, how should it be – or would it have been – sung? Clearly Mohapeloa did not intend the songs in *Meloli I* to be sung like traditional music, using what he refers to above as ‘sharp’ singing, but with trained voices. This way of singing probably lies behind the idea of ‘nice song’, which relates to the meaning of the word ‘lithallere’ in the title of Volume 1 of this edition.

From 1922 to 1927 Mohapeloa attended Morija Training Institution, commonly known as ‘Thabeng Normal School’ a middle school, between primary and senior secondary level. ‘[In] the years before Pulumo went to this school’, his brother J.M. Mohapeloa writes, ‘music at this school was a bit “sharp”’. When a song was mentioned, he says, people ‘would stand up already shouting. When they sing they would mingle, and move side-ways

until they made a circle. When they were done forming the circle the song was also finished!'. J.P. Mohapelo recalled in an interview with David Coplan in 1976 how in addition, at primary school, 'We sang European composed songs. The words rather terribly distorted, because we couldn't pronounce the English words. Sometimes we didn't know what we were singing about. We enjoyed the noise'.<sup>26</sup> This kind of 'noisy' or 'sharp' singing – whether of African or European songs – was evidently phased out after Pulumo started at Morija Training Institution. By this time, says J.M. Mohapelo,

The music teacher, called E. Pester, was busy teaching music with soft voices, which were used with skill, without being pushed, without being carelessly sharp. Those who were conducting choirs were taught how to direct properly, showing time and how to direct the singers with your hands. They were not teaching only those who wanted to be teachers, although for those music was examinable. All the students who were training to become teachers and other branches, were divided into 'Class Choirs', each group had a director who pointed out the important points of music. They would choose a song which the groups would use on a selected competition day. When the students learned this song, they would be shown how to sing properly and not just making a noise. (Mohapelo and Phakisi 1987, 12-13)

It was in one of these groups that 'Pulumo developed his knowledge of music':

Pester had a chosen quartet of singers whose music was the most beautiful because they were trained with care and patience, such that when they sang, it was mysteriously beautiful. They sang the notes accurately, the voices clear, controlled by the owners. Before the end of the year that Pulumo arrived at Morija, Pester had already noticed that he was talented and selected him to become part of the quartet. His knowledge of music became deeper. (Ibid, 13)

This knowledge was not only of singing but of theory of music, a knowledge that constituted 'the rules' Mohapelo 'has shown us', as his publisher put it in 1935: a system of keys, key relationships, time signatures, notation, chord progressions and elementary harmony, heavily diluted in the mission school – as in every educational context – and in a mission station in rural Lesotho, utterly de-contextualised. There were no pianos, string quartets, symphony orchestras, little exposure to the kind of urban Western traditions out of which the rules sprang. Mohapelo may have been made more aware of some of the contexts than his peers were, by his lessons with Florence Mabile (Mohapelo 1965), but not much.

When Mohapelo left Thabeng to attend the SANC (now the University of Fort Hare) in 1928 to complete his Matriculation he encountered Xhosa and Zulu composers whose music was stylistically somewhat unlike Sotho music, and to different 'African' ways of singing. By the time Mohapelo came to collect his first 32 songs into one volume, then, he was

---

<sup>26</sup> Interview with David Coplan, 1976, card 1.

ready to use a new term for them as ‘songs’, eschewing the usual Sesotho words ‘lipina’ or ‘lifela’ in favour of a new phrase, ‘meloli le lithallere’.

### ‘Meloli’ and ‘lithallere’

‘Meloli’ – pronounced ‘melody’<sup>27</sup> – does not mean ‘melody’ in the Western sense: it is the plural of the Sesotho noun, ‘mololi’, which means ‘narrow, thin thing; whistle; song of a bird’ (Mabille and Dieterlen 1950, 213). In the title of Volume I, it means ‘pleasant musical sounds’ or unadorned natural singing; it could refer to folk song. Throughout *Meloli I* Mohapeloa evokes sounds: of nature, of weather, birds, of games, tongue-twisters and dances, and of rural life in general, so ‘meloli’ becomes a wonderfully evocative portmanteau word connoting both human and non-human sound.

‘Lithallere’ (pronounced ‘ditalleree’) comes from the verb ‘thallera’, ‘to adorn’, which is associated with speech, and hence comes to mean ‘nice songs’ (Mabille and Dieterlen 1950, 381). Mohapeloa translated this word for David Coplan during an interview with him in 1978 as ‘extemporary harmonization’, the title *Meloli le lithallere* reflecting the ability of Africans, he explained to Coplan, ‘to sing in unison or harmonize without forethought – automatically’, showing that ‘it’s not difficult to harmonize; it’s second nature’. To sing and to harmonise are one and the same musical gesture, as it were. Perhaps, therefore, one should not attach too much significance to the *difference* in meaning between ‘meloli’ and ‘lithallere’, but consider their use jointly in this title.

The publishers translated *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* as ‘African Songs and Tunes’, a space-saving solution, perhaps; and very different is the translation made in 1998 by J.S.M. Khumalo, ‘African melodies in decorative counterpoint’ (Khumalo 1998, 28). By using this phrase Khumalo raises the question of how ‘without forethought’ African part-singing – the impromptu addition of parts – was, in the 1930s, as opposed to how carefully and deliberately Mohapeloa composed his songs and wrote them down ‘for future generations’. The idea of spontaneous harmonisation is in many ways a colonial cliché, the West’s view of the ‘Other’ musicking. It denies a degree of self-awareness, or the musical training that Mohapeloa and other African composers underwent, where they painstakingly acquired a foreign, ‘imposed’ knowledge of chord voicing and chord progression in staff notation and a skill in manipulating choral textures. Such skill was hard won, and although one must be careful not to fall into the trap of seeing it as more of a skill or more hard won than learning indigenous music or hymns in the community or at home, informally, we do know that Mohapeloa himself did not quite ever feel he had reached the level of mastery of ‘Western rules’ that he desired, telling David Coplan in an interview in 1976 that ‘my theoretical background was not so good at first, I hope simply because I was trying to imitate what I had heard and seen in print in tonic solfa. I had a very elementary idea of chords, so I exploited that to the best I could’.

The irony, not lost on Mohapeloa, was that the more he mastered Western theory of music the more he wanted to use it, as he says in the same interview, to ‘write in such a way

<sup>27</sup> The Sesotho ‘l’ is pronounced ‘d’ when it comes before the vowels ‘i’ or ‘u’.

that the compositions were African in that they sounded like what people in the villages sing'. In fact, he felt that his songs fell into two categories: 'those that are based on the traditional way of singing, and those which are modelled on the school songs that we sang'.

The word 'lithallere' crops up in the texts of Volume I more often than 'meloli'. Song no. 9 is even called 'Lithallera' – originally 'Lithallere' but Mohapeloa changed the ending to -a in his 1965 manuscript of the work (more details on this ms. below), perhaps to bring out the idea of adornment.<sup>28</sup> This song almost parodies the notion of Western song, with its chorus 'tarara' (mimicking 'falala' or 'doremi'); indeed the text is all *about* Western singing in Africa. The Sesotho text is Mohapeloa's; the phonemic interlinear translation on the left is by Mantoa Motinyane-Smouse, and the translation on the right is by Mantoa Motinyane-Smouse and Mpho Ndebele.

### Lithallera

Tararara ...<sup>29</sup>

Le mona hae, Afrika, re bina ka lithallere,  
Even here home Africa we sing in nice-voices

Ha re hlokofetse,  
When we hurt

Re bina ka lithallere, utloa hle, ak'u utloe,  
We sing in nice-voices hear please please listen

Re le timeletse;<sup>30</sup>

We you disguise-for

E, ke lithallere;

Yes is nice-songs

Re ikaha likou

We build larynxes

Ka meloliloli ea khabo.

With sounds of adornment

Le rōna ma Afrika

Too we Africans

Rea na te fi sa.

We make-nice

Etsoe ntho ena ho bina<sup>31</sup>

In fact thing this to sing

Ke ea habo rōna.

Is of house our

### Fine Songs

Tararara ...

Even here in Africa we sing with fine voices,

When we are sad,

We make good melodies, listen carefully,

You can't tell we are sad;

Yes, these are the fine songs;

We strengthen our throats

With melodies of adornment.

We too, we Africans,

We have fun.

After all, music

Is our forte.

'Lithallere' seems to embrace not only a habit of spontaneous extemporaneous singing – related to (learnt) folksong, perhaps but modified by (learnt) Western practices – but also a way of physically 'adorning' the voice. Words and phrases such as 'tarara', 'bina ka lithallere',

<sup>28</sup> Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa, *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (unpublished manuscript, July, 1965), Richard Cock private collection, Johannesburg.

<sup>29</sup> This seems to mimic the English 'tra-la-la'.

<sup>30</sup> Literally, 'as we elude you', i.e. you can't tell we are sad.

<sup>31</sup> As in some other African languages, the Sesotho word for 'singing' or 'song' is synonymous with 'music'.

‘ikaha likou’ and ‘meloliloli ea khabo’, and the pride with which African song is represented in this song – ‘music is our forte’ (what an understatement) – point to a notion of song and vocal display that uses a cultivated voice.

Drawing a distinction between ‘African’ and ‘Western’ vocality seems an essentialist move in our time, when choirs can sing in many different ways. An American university choir can sing *Lithallera*, for example, very differently from the way the UK’s BBC Singers or a Bulgarian male-voice choir would, or a choir that has arisen because of the ‘natural voice movement’ (see Bithell 2014). But to Mohapeloa, conscious as he was of developing a new kind of African choral work in the 1930s, it had some currency.

### Sources for this edition

Three types of sources were consulted: published scores, manuscripts, and other documents.

#### *Published scores*

Scores in all the published versions listed above are important in a case like Mohapeloa’s, where there are few extant manuscripts. The latest editions of all five books published by MSBD are still in print, on sale at the bookshop in Morija, and most of the earlier editions of those books can be consulted in Morija Museum and Archives (MMA). *Binang ka Thabo* is still on sale in the Catholic Centre at Maseru, outside Maseru. Gathering other sources took a little more effort. *Meluluetsa* did not go beyond a 1st edition and is out of print, but there was a copy in the Library of the University of South Africa, Pretoria. The newspaper *Leselinyana* is housed in MMA. Two individual songs were in the private collection of David Ambrose in Ladybrand (South Africa); Ambrose has the largest private archive of material on Lesotho in the world. SAMRO has songs from larger collections that were republished individually (usually in Morija), and a few other songs or fragments, including ‘Lesotho, Tsiketsi sa Tlotla ea Afrika’ (SAMRO Catalogue AO2950), ‘Eben-Ezer’ (AO2951), ‘Tloholohelo ea Ntlo ea Molimo’, ‘Morija’ (Morija Solfa Leaflets No. 1), and ‘Thoko ea Tlhōlo’ (Praise of Man’s Victory Over Ignorance), described as an ‘Adapted Extract’ from *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika III*. These sources are not always dated. SAMRO has itself re-published two songs from *MLA* in its *South Africa Sings* series: ‘U Ea Kae?’ (*MLA I/1*) and ‘Nonyana Se-nya-mafi’ (*MLA III/66*) (Khumalo 1998, 29-32; and 2008, 61-75). These published songbooks constitute the majority of sources consulted.

#### *Manuscripts*

A few original manuscript sources have survived in private collections, of Mrs Ntsiuoa Joyce Mohapeloa (Hlotse), Dr Karabo Eric Lekhanya (Maseru), and Dr Richard Cock (Johannesburg). Mrs Mohapeloa has part of the ms. of *Meluluetsa* and manuscripts of the miscellaneous songs *Freedom in Unity: O.A.U. Anthem*, *Tholoana Lerato*, *Lesotho Lefa la Rōna*, and *Shoeshoe tsa Moshoeshoe*. Some of these are in large print format: 4 plain A4 sheets glued together and music written with a thick felt-tipped pen. Mrs Mohapeloa’s view

(pers. comm. 29.9.06) is that this was due to the composer's failing eyesight in later life.<sup>32</sup> Dr Lekhanya's private collection in Maseru includes a sheaf of Psalm settings by Mohapeloa in manuscript – harmonizations of Afrikaans melodies made for the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, a missionary branch of the main Dutch Reformed Church in the late 1970s – and a few individual late songs. Dr Cock's private collection in Johannesburg has the original manuscript of *Meloli I* revised by Mohapeloa in 1965, discussed below. A manuscript score in the SAMRO Archive attributed to Mohapeloa, *Thapelo* [Prayer] (file A04669), handwritten in staff notation, is neither by Mohapeloa nor in his hand: it is an extract from a work by Haydn transcribed anonymously from the tonic solfa songbook *Lipina tsa Likolo tse Phahameng*.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Other sources*

Fifty-seven songs from *Meloli* were transcribed into staff notation by Jonathan Edwards, a teacher at Waterford School in Mbabane, Swaziland. His handwritten *Staff Notation Version of Choral Compositions of Mohapeloa* contains the 32 songs of *Meloli I* and first 25 songs of *Meloli II*, without translations (Edwards 1979). Copies of this private publication are housed in the International Library of African Music (ILAM), Grahamstown and Morija Museum and Archives. The present Edition does not always agree with Edwards' interpretation of time signatures, grouping of notes and voice registers, but his volume makes a useful comparison. Transcriptions of individual songs have been made for concerts or eisteddfods from time to time: for example, 'U Ea Kae?' (*MLA I/1*) by Rosalie Conrad in 1987 for the University of Durban-Westville Choir, and 'Mokhotlong' (*Meluluetsa* 17) by Ludumo Magangane and Carl van Wyk in 1997 for the Roodepoort International Eisteddfod.

There is a proliferation of illegal copies in existence, made during decades of practice where copies were hand-written, roneoed, gestetnered or photocopied. Many different versions of individual songs were brought into circulation this way, regardless of whether or not works were published. Such informal diffusion, in a context where oral memory plays a vital role and where copies are frequently made not from original publications but from other copies, saw many variant versions created. To locate all Mohapeloa's scores reproduced this way would be a major undertaking, not attempted for this edition although it would make a fascinating separate study. Although scores are now more or less standardised for the National Choir Festival, there still tends to be no acknowledgment of their source. Prescribed music, is now available online at <http://dogreatthings.co.za/music/files/2012/06/L8839-Standard-Music-Book-2016-PRINT.pdf> and <http://dogreatthings.co.za/music/files/2012/06/L8839-Large-Music-Book-2016.pdf>.

Although composers' names normally appear on such scores nowadays, it is still unclear which version has used to make the score or who transcribed it, and the score is undated. This tendency towards anonymity reinforces the notion that works are not intellectual

<sup>32</sup> J.S.M. Khumalo suggested that this format enabled music to be pinned up on a wall and read by choirs during rehearsals (Khumalo. 2008. Conversation with author, 2 September). Mohapeloa's script, both in his music notation and his song texts, is distinguished by its neatness and legibility regardless of paper quality or size.

<sup>33</sup> See fn. 7.

property but vehicles for winning prizes, handed down by generations of competition entrants but not historically-grounded documents produced at a particular time by composers – and occasionally publishers – who still own the copyright.

#### *Recorded sources*

Morija Training Institution choir recorded eight songs from *Meloli I* at the Gallo studios in Johannesburg in December 1936 or January 1937: *Chabana sa Khomo*, *Ei, Ei, Kolliana*, *Methaka Emang*, *'Mutlanyana*, *Qeu! Qeu! Majoana*, *Tsohang*, and *U Ea Kae?* These tracks were copied by Hugh Tracey and are in the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in Grahamstown. They were reissued on the CD accompanying this Edition (ACE CD001). Three-hundred and seventy-eight recordings of choirs ostensibly singing Mohapeloa are housed in the SABC Sound Archive in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, most of them recorded for Radio Bantu. A few of them are not by Mohapeloa in fact, and some songs by Mohapeloa were designated – in the SABC-speak of the 1960-80s – ‘South Sotho’ or ‘traditional’. All these recorded sources were consulted for this edition and many of them were useful in guiding the insertion of editorial tempi and dynamics, where none existed in the original scores.

#### *Non-musical sources*

Literary sources used to prepare this edition include Mohapeloa’s prefaces to *MLA I*, *Khalima-nosi*, and *Meluluetsa*, which indicate his intention and sometimes his sources of inspiration. Prefaces and forewords written by other people are also interesting: for example Akim Sello’s foreword (‘Mohlatsoa-Sebaea’) to *MLA I* (Sello 1935), Diparata Gosh’s introduction to *Meluluetsa* (Gosh 1976), and Chief Lebua Jonathan’s foreword to *Meluluetsa* (Jonathan 1976).

The Huskisson Collection in the SAMRO Archive contains material acquired by Yvonne Huskisson during the 1960s while she was compiling choral programmes for the Radio Bantu service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). In her capacity as Music Organiser for Radio Bantu she corresponded with most of the 318 composers listed in her 1969 book (mentioned earlier), including Mohapeloa. The documents in the file ‘Mohapeloa, J.P.’ in the SAMRO Archive Huskisson Collection include their correspondence, two original photographs, Mohapeloa’s various lists of his works, two short autobiographies (one in Sesotho, one in English), transcripts of regional (Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa etc.) programmes on African music, and Mohapeloa’s translations of some of his songs. Also in this file at some point was a manuscript, almost certainly the original manuscript, of *Meloli* Book 1, which Mohapeloa sent Huskisson in 1965. The importance of this 1965 Huskisson ms. as a source is discussed below.<sup>34</sup>

Anthropologist David B. Coplan interviewed Mohapeloa when he was beginning his ethnographic research on Basotho music and poetry in the 1970s. Coplan recorded two

<sup>34</sup> It is now in the private collection of Dr. Richard Cock in Johannesburg, who allows copies to be made. A copy made by Mokale Koapeng c.2009 was the one used in the preparation of this edition, and both Richard Cock and Mokale Koapeng are thanked for access to this rare text.



interviews, one in 1976 on tape which he later transcribed onto cards, and one in 1978 directly in note form. These field cards, which Coplan located in his office at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2009, are a rich source for Mohapeloa's thoughts about his music and how he composed it, especially his struggle to combine African and Western elements to his liking. Another useful source for connections between his songs and his life is a biographical essay by historian J.M. Mohapeloa (the composer's brother) and the composer L.M. Phakisi, produced in 1987. This substantial privately published monograph of 47 pages in Sesotho called *Likheleke tsa Pina Sesothong* (The Eloquence of Song in Sesotho) has rich historical data not given elsewhere and includes some musical analysis with tonic solfa examples.

The newspaper *Leselinyana le Lesotho* (The Little Light of Lesotho), housed in MMA, has a number of references to Mohapeloa between the 1920s and 1980s. Many other newspapers, magazines and documents and even one or two individual songs are owned by Professor David Ambrose A typescript by P.M. Mot'soane in Morija Museum and Archives (2004) reproduces some material from Mohapeloa and Phakisi, and one on the Internet by Moroesi Sibandze for the St Louis African Chorus draws heavily on Mot'soane (2004). Interestingly, it also refers to a project aimed at 'transcribing all, or selections of Dr J.P. Mohapeloa's compositions into staff notation' in which student volunteers were invited to team up with Ms Sibandze's 'Arts and Cultural Centre in Lesotho' (Mot'soane 2004). There are many other written sources, pertaining to Lesotho's history (Gill 1997), some music-analytical (Mngoma 1981), ethnomusicological (Coplan 1994), or musicological (Olwage 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010/11). The lists Mohapeloa made for the SABC were consulted, as well as one drawn up in 1998 by a Mr Nchoncho, evidently part of a proposal to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Mohapeloa's birth (Ntsiuoa Mohapeloa, pers. comm. 29 Sep. 2006). Some of the titles Nchoncho lists are difficult to trace: they may not be Mohapeloa's titles but slightly altered first lines, or popular names by which songs became known among choirs, for there are many titles on Nchoncho's list (and also at the SABC) that do not appear in any other source.<sup>35</sup>

### Reliability of sources and the authority of this edition

The approach used in this edition, as mentioned earlier, comes from the Germanic tradition of historical-critical editions whose 'method focuses on the creation of a comprehensive apparatus, linked to an accurately presented, historical text' (Hulle 2011). This is a performing edition: the edited vocal texts here are as historically authoritative as possible and performable by contemporary choirs anywhere. The process of editing involved selecting the best tonic solfa copy-text from among competing versions (printed and manuscript) and preparing a new version of the score in staff notation, with minimal interference to the text, explaining in the apparatus (editorial marks, translations, notes, commentaries) why such a version is considered authoritative. Editorial suggestions on the

<sup>35</sup> See *Catalogue of Works* and the 'Preface' to Volume VI.

score itself are kept to a minimum, there to clarify an aspect of performance that is not self-evident.

The Huskisson manuscript (1965) mentioned above is the authoritative copy-text for Volume I: *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika I*, because it is almost without doubt (in the absence of any other evidence) the original 1935 manuscript used to typeset the 1st edition, with many minor tweaks made by the composer before he sent it to Huskisson in 1965. (Details of what Mohapeloa added or changed in 1965 are given in the critical commentaries on individual scores.) This ms. is thus the last known version of *Meloli I* that Mohapeloa approved. He made extensive changes to the MSBD 2nd published edition (1953) of *Meloli I* subsequently reproduced in all MSBD's later editions, but when came to showing Yvonne Huskisson in 1965 his best work – as any composer wants to do, when asked for samples of their compositions by a major player in the music industry – Mohapeloa returned to his first thoughts as set down in the ms., polished up.

How Huskisson obtained this ms. is explained in their correspondence in the Huskisson Collection in SAMRO's Archive. She must have first written to him (we do not have her letter) in mid 1965, for his reply on 16 July 1965 was, 'Just a line to thank you for your kind invitation to contribute something in your intended publication. I am only too glad to cooperate in a work of this type. As proof of this I am returning the form duly signed and promise to fulfil the remaining obligations shortly'. Five days later, on 21 July, he sent her the manuscript score of *Meloli I*, the Mazenod publication *Binang ka Thabo*, and a covering page attached to the score that read:

I have pleasure in sending you some of my compositions as requested.

1. The songs in manuscript form have already been published (1935) and the copyright for these is in the hands of the publishers, Morija Sesuto Book Depot.
2. The printed copy consists of songs of which the publishers concerned do not claim any copyright reservations. The copyright still belongs to the individual composers.<sup>36</sup>

He 'suggests' three songs from each book, perhaps for Huskisson to use as examples and it's interesting that he refers to songs 'already published in 1935' as if *Meloli I* had not already been reprinted by MSBD in 1953 with his revisions and a preface explaining them. Not one song is without change, and in some songs there are dozens of changes to pitch, to rhythm, the duration of notes or rests, also to keys, text, voicing, and as a result occasionally text. Mohapeloa did not cut out or add sections to songs but tinkered, extensively, with the musical grammar. This 'first reprint' of *Meloli Le Lithallere tsa Afrika I* is technically a second edition, then, rather than a reprint. Much of the change does not affect pagination and none of it amounts to radical differences in the structure or length of individual songs, but the extent of minor tinkering is remarkable. The 1953 edition was reprinted in 1977, 83, and 88 almost without change (there are one or two changes in 1977); the last two editions

---

<sup>36</sup> Mohapeloa, J.P., manuscript of *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika [I]*, [1965, cover page] (Johannesburg: Richard Cock private collection).

appeared after the composer's death in 1982; and there have been no reprints of *Meloli I* since 1988.

Yvonne Huskisson replied to Mohapeloa on 6 August thanking him for his manuscript and assuring him that the SABC would retain the book 'until we know exactly what we require. Rest assured it will be in safe-keeping until it is back in your hands'.<sup>37</sup>

This must be the original manuscript used to prepare the first edition of *Meloli I* in 1935, with revisions made by hand: Mohapeloa would not have been able to rewrite 32 songs (almost 100 pages of music) for Huskisson, by hand, in so few days. There are a few very slight differences between the ms. and the 1935 publication, attributable either to careless typesetting or to last-minute changes dictated by the composer directly to the compositor, that therefore do not appear on the ms.: for example, in *U Ea Kae?* there are ties at one point while the ms. has rests. Generally speaking, Mohapeloa's scores contain very few typos, but occasionally in the ms. ties are very faint and could be mistaken for rests (bar 21 of *U Ea Kae?* is a case in point).

No correspondence has survived which proves that the SABC returned the ms. to Mohapeloa, although in the Morija Museum and Archives (close to where he lived) there is a tantalising display card lying among some first editions of *Meloli* that reads, 'Tonic Sol-Fa Manuscript with its corresponding Printed Book by the African author J.P. Mohapeloa' – but there is no manuscript. Perhaps the card was used for an exhibition at some point, which included this ms. Huskisson's extensive documentation on hundreds of composers remained in the SABC Music Library after Huskisson retired, but during the restructuring of the SABC in the 1990s Huskisson gave her entire collection of scores and documentation on African composers to Dr Richard Cock, then Head of Music at the SABC who later donated it to the Southern African Music Rights Organisation in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, retaining for his private collection only the ms. that Mohapeloa sent Huskisson in 1965.<sup>38</sup>

The original ms. of the 1953 'reprint' has not been found. It was typeset at Morija Printing Works while Mohapeloa himself was working there. Did he dictate the changes (to the 1935 edition) directly to the compositor, or even adjust the lettering and spacing on the compositor's plate himself? There seems no doubt that the changes *are* by Mohapeloa, for in the preface to the 1953 edition, 'Khoró' ['Entrance/gateway'] he speaks about tightening loose ends and making the songs more to people's liking, saying, towards the end, 'Ha ho le joalo tlhopho-bocha ena re tla e òmela' [In this way we will remix this new publication] (Mohapeloa 1953b, 4). Whether or not he was happy with the 'remix' we can only surmise, but perhaps he was not entirely happy, because he did not send Huskisson this 1953 published edition but his much larger and more valuable hand-written manuscript from years earlier. This is the version he wanted her to use in programmes for public radio broadcast and in a prominent publication about African composers. Because it was only 'rediscovered' recently – and I am indebted to Mokale Koapeng for this discovery – and

<sup>37</sup>Huskisson, Yvonne. 1965. Letter to Mohapeloa, 5 August.

<sup>38</sup>“The Huskisson collection was given to me, and I donated it to Samro. The Mohapeloa book I still have, and that is the only item which I retained” (Cock, Richard. 2012. E-mail to author, 23 October). Both Huskisson and Cock refer to the ms. as a 'book' because its format is a foolscap hard-covered exercise book, lined for writing. The size, the copperplate handwriting of titles and text, and the tortoise-shell binding would fit with a date from the 1930s.

was certainly sent to Huskisson in 1965, and but because it contains a few minor changes to the 1935 edition it is referred to in this Critical Edition as the ‘1965 Huskisson manuscript’ or ‘the 1965 ms.’. It has no date, but the accompanying letter is dated 21 July 1965, so when the ms. is referred to it is by the dated 1965 not 1935; and the page nos., which are not Mohapeloa’s but were added later, are shown in square brackets. This manuscript is taken as the authoritative source or copy text for the present edition, with additions from other sources used where appropriate.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the reliability of published sources: most of them were printed in Morija, where Mohapeloa settled in 1945 and lived until his death in 1982. His day job from 1945 to 1978 was proof reader at Morija Printing Works where MSBD books were printed, so he would have been close to the publication process and knew how compositing worked. In comparison with the MSBD publications, therefore there are many more typos in *Meluluetsa*, printed in Cape Town by OUP. Although Mohapeloa proofed this (the Ntsiuoa Mohapeloa ms. mentioned above shows some of his corrections) many errors remained. He described one of the problems with this product as ‘spacing’, saying in his 1978 interview with Coplan that (for example) song no. 7, ‘E, Molimo Ok’o Boloke Motlotlehi le Sechaba’ (MNBL/7)] was ‘spatially poor. Tonic solfa line has 20 rather than 18 typographical units. Proper duration of notes not well rep[resented]. The *Meloli* Books are better’.<sup>40</sup> Part of the problem, he felt, was the inadequacy of tonic solfa rhythm to represent African rhythm patterns which came into his mind ‘more by accident than intention’. This song was ‘1st written in very complic[ated]. manner’, he told Coplan, ‘later simplified – it had quarter notes as 1/6 of a bar. The song is better taught without the score, which does not represent the rhythm adequately’. In both the surviving manuscript version of this song and the printed score the meter is two divisions in a bar subdivided into twos, and fours, which is indeed far from ‘quarter notes as 1/6 of a bar’.

The MSBD reprints occasionally have variants that might be improvements or corrections, and these variants are explained in the critical commentary on individual songs. Some reprints had additional prefaces while others did not. Some reprints are identical. The only difference between the 1st edition (1951) and 1st reprint (2002) of *Khalima-nosi*, for example is that the 1st edition has a photograph in the Frontispiece while the 2nd does not.

## Presentation of the edited scores

Editing Mohapeloa began with the process of transcribing songs manually from tonic solfa to staff notation, a process that is a mystery to most people.<sup>41</sup> Staff notation scores were set up in the Sibelius music software program reading from a tonic solfa score where the voices are not always designated (e.g. SATB) and where the number of voices sometimes varies

<sup>39</sup> These changes may reflect the influence of his part-time study at Wits, where Mohapeloa learnt to have misgivings about his lack of knowledge of Western harmony and counterpoint. For more on this issue see Lucia 2011a, 56-86; and 2014, 219-230.

<sup>40</sup> J.P. Mohapeloa interviewed by David B. Coplan (Morija, May 1978), card 2.

<sup>41</sup> There may be a computer program that does this, but it might not be able to cope with music based on a Sesotho text that can change voicing mid-song and has an idiomatic repeat system, and where variants exist.

during the course of a song, only the context helping to decide what the extra voice part is.<sup>42</sup> Repeats are frequent but formatting them had to vary according to context. Tonic solfa does not use key signatures: the key of a song is stated at the top of the score, for example ‘Doh=F’. Major keys are the norm, and even where a song is in a minor key or modal it is still usually given a major key (doh).

Determining meter (meaning time signature – and this edition uses the spelling ‘meter’, a viable English alternative to metre) was more difficult, since this is not stated by composers of tonic solfa scores but has to be deduced from the way units or bars are divided and subdivided by short barlines, colons, dashes, full-stops, commas, or spaces (rests). The most common metrical divisions in Mohapeloa’s songs are four main divisions, for which 4/4 meter worked best, although duple or triple divisions are also found (2/4 and 3/4). Mohapeloa sometimes divides the bar into six units (6/8) and occasionally there are divisions suggesting 9/8 or 12/8. A major difficulty in transcribing songs was discerning the difference between Sesotho text, pitch letters d, r, m, etc., and commas and colons that denote rhythm – all occurring close together in a fairly crowded space on a small page.

The devil is in the detail. Tonic solfa is a notation system that uses the seven letters d r m f s l t (doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, te) to denote pitch. A choir has a total range of about four octaves, and in solfa different octave registers are shown by means of superscript or subscript strokes or numbers against the solfa letters. (In African choral practice numbers are more common than strokes, but strokes are normal elsewhere in the world and are the Sibelius norm, so they are used in this edition.) This is what a range of four and a half octaves in tonic solfa pitch looks like, using numbers for higher or lower octaves. The normal voice range is underlined:

d<sub>2</sub> r<sub>2</sub> m<sub>2</sub> f<sub>2</sub> s<sub>2</sub> l<sub>2</sub> t<sub>2</sub> d<sub>1</sub> r<sub>1</sub> m<sub>1</sub> f<sub>1</sub> s<sub>1</sub> l<sub>1</sub> t<sub>1</sub> d r m f s l t d<sup>1</sup> r<sup>1</sup> m<sup>1</sup> f<sup>1</sup> s<sup>1</sup> l<sup>1</sup> t<sup>1</sup> d<sup>2</sup> r<sup>2</sup> m<sup>2</sup> f<sup>2</sup> s<sup>2</sup>

Using strokes (which here look like commas or inverted commas):

d,, r,, m,, f,, s,, l,, t,, d, r, m, f, s, l, t, d r m f s l t d’ r’ m’ f’ s’ l’ t’ d’ r’ m’ f’ s’

How is ‘normal’ doh determined, given that not all keys lie comfortably within a voice range? In Mohapeloa’s scores, middle C up to B-flat (d-t) are normal pitches for Sop/Alto and an octave below this is normal for Ten/Bass, because in solfa notation the idea is to avoid too many sub- or super-scripts, just as in staff notation one changes clefs to avoid using too many leger lines.

Returning to the editing process: after clefs, key signature, time signature, and notes voice by voice had been inputted, the text was added, reproducing hyphens (or lack thereof) and spellings exactly as Mohapeloa has them, and noting discrepancies in the critical

<sup>42</sup> This descriptive section may read oddly with its mixture of past and present tense as I try to deal with the problem that the music and the scores ‘are’ – they exist continuously in the present – while the editing process ‘was’ (thankfully) recently finished.

commentary at the end of the song.<sup>43</sup> Mohapeloa's solfa scores show slurs or melismas as underlinings. In the staff notation transcription these are shown as slurs between notes. Syllables are usually not prolonged in the text unless they go over a system or page.

The scores in this Critical Edition are open vocal scores, one voice per stave as in the original tonic solfa score, the difference being that the Sesotho words are placed rather more precisely under every voice. Text is often written only between Alto and Tenor in solfa scores, posing problems when voices have different rhythms. In handwritten manuscripts texts are fairly logically spaced but in published scores the spacing is not always ideal and sometimes it was difficult to determine which syllable went with which note.

All scores have a piano reduction to aid rehearsal. This is not an accompaniment, although in the history of choral practice it has to be said that songs may have been conceived 'a cappella' by default, for lack of keyboards in African schools or community halls and for lack of African pianists to play them. There are one or two historic recordings of Mohapeloa songs in the SABC Sound Archive where choirs are accompanied, by piano or banjo.<sup>44</sup> But the tradition of a cappella choral music in the West that was brought to places such as Lesotho in the nineteenth century undoubtedly also had enormous influence, and choral practice – except for big competitions – is usually an unaccompanied experience.<sup>45</sup>

The apparatus on or around the score includes title, composer, scoring, page numbers, copyright information, historical introduction to the song and translation before the score, and sources, variants, and critical comments after it.

The edition has two staff notation versions of every song, one with tonic solfa notation added above the staves. The argument for presenting a version in dual notation is that many practitioners familiar with this music do not read staff notation.<sup>46</sup> Adding tonic solfa above each voice part in Sibelius 7 is fraught with problems, however: it makes the scores visually cluttered; some tonic solfa buffs might not agree with the way Sibelius 7 handles octave displacement or compound meter; the possibility for many more typographical errors creeps in, because of the hours of extra manual manipulation of solfa characters required on every page. On the other hand, choirs outside southern Africa who have never used tonic solfa might be interested in the dual notation versions and may even learn how to read solfa notation with sufficient skill to be able to sing works that have not yet been transcribed, and hence broaden their repertoire of African music.

Although an editing template was worked out for formatting scores, in practice this was often adapted to allow for notes that lie high or low on a staff, sudden divisions, or extra verses of text. Where possible there are two systems per page, which is easier for choirs to read even if it necessitates a slight reduction in note or staff size. Where there are six or more voices or multiple verses of text, one system per page is generally used.

---

<sup>43</sup> Hyphens were particularly problematic, because many words that in Mohapeloa's early years many have been hyphenated (Sesotho was first written by French speaking missionaries in the mid nineteenth century when hyphens were common) but under the impact of changes to orthography hyphens often fell out of use.

<sup>44</sup> *U Ea Kae?* has been arranged for solo voice and jazz ensemble and *Molelekeng* for choir and orchestra. Copies of these arrangements are in the SAMRO Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>45</sup> The British 'a cappella' rather than the American 'a capella' is used in this Edition.

<sup>46</sup> In other countries in Africa choirs read staff notation, yet in South Africa the habit persists of composing and singing music in tonic solfa.

Regarding repeats: Mohapeloa often wrote songs in two sections, the second of which is repeated; sometimes he repeats the first section at the end of the song, or has more than one repeat in a song. He uses Dal Segno or D.S. for most of these repeats as is the practice in tonic solfa notation, and occasionally Da Capo or D.C. In this edition, repeat bars or D.C.s are used except where complex repeats make D.S. necessary. This sometimes means that 1st- and 2nd-time bars are generated in order to clarify how repeats are managed. If a song begins on an upbeat, Mohapeloa notates the first bar in full in his early songs, even if it begins on the 4th beat. Later on, he begins directly on an upbeat, and because this is the norm in staff notation (unless the rhythm is particularly complex) this is how upbeats are generally notated here. The transcribed song may thus begin and end slightly differently from the tonic solfa score, and bar numbers may thus sometimes differ from those in the original score.

Repeats, like accompaniments, can be approached with an open mind. What Mohapeloa wrote is presented in this edition, but what was sung was often different in practice: as historic recordings show us, choirs sometimes repeated sections where no repeat was indicated, or even whole songs. This might have happened to satisfy the needs of the studio recording or the mood of a live concert situation, or just the love of singing.

### **Presentation of the song texts**

The texts are presented in two forms: as in the original Sesotho, on the score and as separate poems with translations after them on the inside front pages, these poems having in most cases been extracted from the solfa scores. In Mohapeloa's scores, the Sesotho language matches the music word-by-word or syllable-by-syllable, but when words or phrases are repeated (or left out, or incomplete) because of the polyphonic nature of his writing, or where different voice parts sing different texts simultaneously, it took some juggling to represent the extracted text as a coherent poem. Repetitions are deemed essentially musical rather than poetic, unless the context – the meaning and thrust of a song – clearly dictates otherwise. When the Sesotho texts were extracted from the tonic solfa scores, then, decisions were constantly negotiated by the initial translator, Dr Motinyane-Smouse, and I, and later by Mrs Mpho Ndebele and I, about the order in which lines should appear in and how often (or if) repeated words or lines should be shown.

Writing out the texts as poems was essential so that they could be translated, and because there are almost no extant texts written as separate poems by Mohapeloa himself. In this way, this Critical Edition makes available for the first time to literary scholars a wealth of poetry in Sesotho-English that shows Mohapeloa to have been a commanding literary as well as musical figure.

In terms of the way he composed words and music: in his early songs, he told David Coplan, he found it 'easiest to write music, with a theme or subject in mind, then it becomes easier to fit words to it. Idea to melody to words'.<sup>47</sup> Coplan continues:

---

<sup>47</sup> Mohapeloa interviewed by Coplan, 1978, card 6. NB the abbreviations are in Coplan's field notes.

Mohapeloa finds the words a handicap if they are there first. Once the music is there the words just come. The tune sugg. [suggests] the words. Like in his first song ... the music sugg. a folktale about a rabbit & so the words just came. The words then necessitate changes in the melody, to avoid semantic distortion. So the words can damage the melody. To get a word that just fits the tune is a strug. [struggle] & may have to be an ‘expensive’ one. This diff. [difficulty] actually helps to improve the qual. [quality] of the lyrics – the words tend to be commonplace if they come too easily.<sup>48</sup>

Where Mohapeloa did make copies of some Sesotho texts in 1965 for Yvonne Huskisson, these have usually been used for comparison only, because they tend to be summaries that do not ‘fit’ the music. Texts in the scores are what choirs sing, so texts extracted from the scores are what are presented and translated, by and large. Extracting words from the scores was made easier by Mohapeloa’s regular use of capital letters denoting new lines, so he obviously thought of his texts as poems.

Mohapeloa’s few English translations in the Huskisson Collection are used. Mantoa Motinyane-Smouse did all the remaining initial translations, phoneme-by-phoneme, including lines Mohapeloa left out of his own translations – an enormous labour. She then made a fairly literal interpretation of the meaning of each song to create the poems, and these were first edited by South African poet Stephen Gray and later by Mpho Ndebele, who was able to transform some of the lines through her knowledge of the songs – which she grew up with – and of the deeper meaning of many Sesotho words. Mohapeloa is known for his rich use of metaphor, Sesotho being a highly metaphorical language and also a tonal one where meaning sometimes depends on tone, and in the early songs he also uses many elisions and contractions of words so that they conformed to his musical vision. In *Meluluetsa* the Sotho poems were published separately from the songs in the 1976 edition although this proved to be a hindrance rather than a help because of the number of contradictions between in-score texts and the separate poems.

Translations are not there to be ‘sung to’ the notes, but to help non-Sesotho speakers understand what they are singing about. Pronunciation of the Sesotho language is not all that difficult but it is not always self-evident, hence the *Pronunciation Guide to the Sesotho Texts* included in this Edition, that uses international phonetic symbols and English equivalent sounds.<sup>49</sup>

## Editing rationale

There is no standard way of notating scores composed in tonic solfa notation, which has been used as a compositional medium in southern Africa since the 1870s. As with editing any other music there are sometimes problems reconciling notation and practice, or what Richard Taruskin (1995) has called ‘text and act’. In the practice of African choral music, ‘act’ looms large: scores are not prescriptions so much as records of what composers such as

<sup>48</sup> Mohapeloa interviewed by Coplan 1978, card 7.

<sup>49</sup> This can also be downloaded free on [www.african-composers-edition.co.za](http://www.african-composers-edition.co.za).



Mohapeloa have tried out with their choirs already. Once committed to paper, choirs learn a composer's music by rote and a song is quickly memorised. The entire tradition of choral singing out of which compositions emerge is seen by conductors, choralists, competition organisers, broadcasters, adjudicators and anyone else involved as a singing, rather than a composing, tradition. Between the two acts of vocalisation – imaging the music before committing it to paper and then singing it – the score as 'text' plays a fleeting role. Even after so many years of national choral competitions, there is no centralised, systematically catalogued library of scores; composers lend their scores and they disappear (as famously happened to Sontonga's *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*); scores are copied wantonly as if there was no copyright: all this indicates the low value of African choral music as 'text'. Notwithstanding, Mohapeloa saw his scores as reliable and authoritative documents, as explained earlier (and below).

There is no standard rationale for producing a critical edition because so much depends on the repertoire, and in this case there was no direct precedent. The rationale for this one took into account some aspects of critical editions elsewhere and clarified as work progressed, drawing on imperatives the repertoire itself offered and limitations imposed on production. Funding did not allow for an interactive edition with which scholars and choralists could engage and to which they could contribute, which would have been ideal in a situation where widespread public opinion on this music has not been heard before and where there are so many enthusiastic and knowledgeable practitioners. Even though it is a more or less 'static' online edition, however, this still allows for regular updating, for adding or editing information, and for incorporating comments made through the ACE website's contact form.

This edition uses Chicago Manual of Style (adapted) for text and Sibelius 7 for scores, with standard sizes for margins, staves, and notes unless a score looked crowded: stems on middle lines down; no syllable prolongation in texts unless syllables go over a system or page (as per much contemporary vocal score practice); brackets for triplets; lyrics below the staff at default distance; tonic solfa above the staff; tempi placed above the time signature; dynamics placed above the relevant notes, and so on. Adjustments were made to the text on the score as typesetting proceeded, and scores went through many transformations before the present format was fixed.

Editorial additions on the score are in square brackets [ ]. All original dynamics and expression found in printed or ms. versions of Mohapeloa's songs are reproduced and where Mohapeloa placed only one dynamic mark on top of a system, they are given for all voices and positioned more logically in some cases. Occasionally an editorial dynamic is added after a *cresc.* or *dim.*, or an 'a tempo' after a 'rit.', for clarity. Where there are no dynamics an overall one is suggested at the beginning of a score. Mohapeloa rarely used metronome marks but he often gave tempo indications and a metronome mark is usually only added where he did not. Recorded and live performance practices often informed these interpretative interventions – tempo and dynamics – although it has to be said that historic performances themselves also differ widely.<sup>50</sup> Expression marks such as 'rit.' and 'cresc.'

---

<sup>50</sup> There is much evidence for this on the 378 SABC recordings, 22 of which are reproduced on *African Choral Legacy: Historic Recordings of J.P. Mohapeloa* (ACE CD001).

are often found in Mohapeloa's scores, his 'hairpins' as well as his 'cresc.' and 'dim.' are always retained, including where he spreads 'cres ... cen ... do' over more than one bar. Words or phrases that seem odd to us, such as 'con fuoco', are explained in the commentary.

This last comment requires a slight digression: Mohapeloa worked for most of his life in a small village in Africa, had no real peers except Moerane who lived in Lesotho only intermittently (and was not really a friend); there was no music library nearby, and he had few books. This maybe explains 'con fuoco' but there is something more below the surface here, about his scores and African modernity, that needs teasing out. Mohapeloa worked within a hybrid Afro-Western cultural environment in which all influences, all source material, all exposure to new material, was devoid of a powerful, metropolitan, overarching Western historical hegemony. This arguably gave him some freedom to interpret influences and information as he saw fit (although he may not have seen it that way). Any scores or books – and they were few and far between – that came his way were grist to Mohapeloa's contemporary mill, as it were, not to any imagined historically burdened mill from elsewhere. In 2006 the surviving library in Mohapeloa's former house in Morija contained *The World of Music* by Sandved (1957), Ewen's *The Complete Book of 20th-century Music* (1959), and Novello vocal scores of *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Robert le Diable*.

However these books and scores entered his house, what they entered into was a world of African modernistic simultaneity that Mohapeloa shared with many of his generation. Black artistic expression might equally subsist in the modernization of the 'traditional' folksong, the arranged negro spiritual, the constantly developing hymnbook, barbershop harmony, ragtime, and all other available samples of 'contemporary' music, especially vocal; any or all of these kinds of musics were performed by African practitioners, and any or all of them were absorbed by African composers into their style. Any or all of them contributed to Afro-modernity in choral music. The avoidance of what in the West is seen as musical modernity, 'art music of the early twentieth century (Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók) [and] serial or post-serial techniques' (Lucia 2008, 11), was inadvertent: composers in southern Africa in the mid twentieth century, black and often white, too, were generally speaking not exposed to this aspect of modernity. Modernity was represented, for people in the African choral world, by the popular song, choreographed traditional music, jazz, the romantic opera or musical theatre chorus, and baroque or classical oratorio choruses: being 'modern' for Mohapeloa included knowing extracts from *Messiah*, *The Creation*, *The Mount of Olives*, a Mozart mass, or a Donizetti opera.

Returning to the question of dynamics and expression: where Mohapeloa used them in one version of a score but not another they are included, their absence from one regarded as less authentic than their presence in another. They are too important to ignore, for Mohapeloa did not make free with dynamics as some composers do, and in the absence of phrasing (which his tonic solfa scores do not have) they are often indicators of musical shape.

The basic principle underling the editing rationale is that of transcribing in as unaltered a way as possible any words or text on the score, retaining 'given forms of punctuation, contraction, abbreviation, compound words, hyphenation and capitalization, however widely these may vary from modern practice', as Richard Fotheringham's puts it in his 'Editing rationale' for a collection of English plays written for the Australian colonial stage in the

nineteenth century (Fotheringham 2006, lxxxix). Given forms of Sesotho orthography are retained because the rationale is not to modernise music or lyrics but to make both more accessible.

Original spellings with historical warrant and eccentric spellings that are not misleading are allowed to stand, as well as other inconsistent presentations. There is always the possibility in playscripts [or in this case, music scores] that such forms are meant to encode aspects of spoken [sung] language; that is, they are intended, however imperfectly, as guides to the phrasing, emphasis or rhythm of [songs]. (Ibid, lxxxii)

Mohapeloa's inconsistencies are not corrected, in short, because they may have a 'momentary' significance that we can still interpretively reflect on.

He was sometimes inconsistent or silent about stating what voices a song was written for. In tonic solfa scores this information normally appears at the beginning of a song along with the key. *Chabana sa Khomo* for example says at the top 'Key Ab S.T.B.S.T.B.' *U ea kae?* has nothing. Perhaps the rule of thumb was SATB unless otherwise stated; but Mohapeloa did not use that rule consistently, and TTBB was also perhaps considered the 'norm' in the 1930s and 40s.

\* \* \* \* \*

The exploratory freedom of movement associated with whiteness is expressed in the licence to control the means of knowledge production ... while strictly upholding the self-imposed limits and binaries on which its licence depends. If whiteness asserts a right to knowledge of blackness, its freedom to know also asserts a right to its own privacy, a freedom not to be known, a denial of equal knowledge of whiteness.

(Coetzee 2015, 51-52)

It seems important to step away from the third-person, hands-off narrative that this *General Introduction* has been so far, and 'to be known', to introduce a personal note. Why me? Why Mohapeloa? In the post-rainbow, post-African-renaissance, decolonising South Africa of late 2016, my monumental effort can be viewed as monumental hubris. I had to balance many things and overcome many qualms in preparing an edition of music that is so well known to African choirs and yet still so marginal in the academy or in white choralism in South Africa, never mind choralism world-wide.

There is a reason for its marginality, aside from its inaccessibility in African language tonic solfa books. Most music departments around the world are imprisoned in disciplinary myopia. Mohapeloa's music would be seen in them, as it has been by most of my colleagues in South Africa, as either not Western or competent enough or, conversely, as not African or 'Other' enough. (See Lucia 2011a and 2014.) It does not fit the norms of most classical music, world music, jazz or popular music curricula or listening patterns. Added to this, is the erasing effect of its in-house circulation and the lack of commercial recordings. Mohapeloa also threatens to slip between the cracks of ethno/musicological discourse.

It was the combined effect of all these slippages that gave me a reason for retrieving the music from a theatre of multiple disappearing acts. ‘You can no longer write this music out of the script’ is the subtext of this edition; and linked to this: ‘Never again judge this kind of African cultural product as a charming one-off’. A complete edition, with the study of manuscripts and variants and all the other paraphernalia normally reserved for Western music, makes dismissal at least theoretically impossible. I wanted this humble, missionary educated, musical and literary giant of tiny Lesotho to be seen as the major composer he is, and African choral music to be as the analysable, historically embedded repertoire it is. I wanted to present it as an overwhelming body of evidence *in and for itself*, for what it is, within the larger framework of southern African music, in order to counter the tendency to assess it for what it is not.

The other constituency I address here is the practitioners, who perhaps too glibly claim this as ‘our’ music, arranging it and winning large cash prizes for singing it. This is a composer who has been popular with African choristers for more than seventy years but is undervalued as the producer of a comprehensive, historically informed body of work. But I have to remember that this music is not *mine*. It is a hybrid repertoire inspired by traditional Basotho music of which I have only secondhand knowledge, jazz, Western classical music and hymns, many of them Sesotho, and unknown to me. I have sourced some of the influences, but I don’t speak Sesotho and have never sung in an African choir although I have heard choirs often, occasionally accompanied and adjudicated them, and since the 1990s have used African choral music as examples in teaching music theory.<sup>51</sup> I would not have focussed on Mohapeloa if *U Ea Kae?* had not been sung by the University of Durban-Westville choir when I was working there back in 1989, and I have to keep in mind that I am a white, Western trained, retired professor of music living a privileged middle-class life, able to see Mohapeloa’s work *as* a body of work rather than as just *U Ea Kae?*, but unable to ask him whether or not I’m on the right track because I am of the next generation. None of these difference of race, class, culture, language, and generation, can be erased.

I nevertheless offer this Critical Edition to choirs and scholars alike as a new repertoire and a new publication. To Mohapeloa, publishing was as essential a means of ensuring the continuity of African music as performance was, perhaps because during his lifetime he had seen so many oral traditions dying out. As he wrote in the preface to *Meloli I* in 1953, and as already quoted above, he saw scores as ‘nyeoe’ [cases] presented to a ‘lekhotla’ [traditional court] in order to ensure that African Music of this kind is used ‘mehlala eo ba ka e salang morao kapa ba e hlakothisa phuputsong ea seo ’mino oa Afrika e ka bang o nepahetse ha o ka ba sona’ [as an example to be followed or a place to start when investigating what proper African music should be] (Mohapeloa 1953b, 3). That purpose, of keep a continuity between past and present, is the same for this Critical Edition, with one further aim: to present a historically informed body of documents for use by singers and scholars worldwide that gives an overarching sense of what one composer achieved for music in southern Africa.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Gathered together in a music theory book (Lucia 2011b).

<sup>52</sup> For references to works cited here and throughout this edition, see *J.P. Mohapeloa Critical Edition: List of Sources* on the following pages.