

YOU-LOGY

Pre-task : What is your self-worth?

Flautist, saxophonist, composer and bandleader, the late Zim Ngqawana, promoted the philosophies of Innertainment and Zimology. Zim Ngqawana came from a poor family in Port Elizabeth, did not finish High School, started as a singer for New Brighton township events, taught himself the flute, made the grades for music at Rhodes University and UKZN, trained with Max Roach and Winton Marsalis in Massachusetts University and became one of the foremost role-models for South African musicians.

In Africa, the music keeps us rooted. We grew up singing, we grew up chanting, we grew up being taught how to do the praise poetry. Music is forever in us. How we express it and bring it out to the world adds up to that unique flavour of who we are.

It is only in the moment – the NOW - that pure and uninhibited musical expression arises. For some, they call this the muse. When the musician is a channel for the muse, he or she is like a conduit, a rivulet of life's ever flowing ideas. We are vehicles for the muse to act itself out. We keep our vehicle, the physical, the spiritual, the conscious and sub-conscious fine-tuned to communicate the expression of the muse. That is why it is said that music is an infinite thing. It is created and destroyed in the moment, each and every moment, as it takes its form through the coherent synthesis of a series of moments that lead to a conscious response in both the creator and the listener. Through music we realise there is something far greater than I. Through music we awaken to the connectivity of all things. Everything is everything, categoric inter-connectivity. Every aspect of your life is linked to the next: how you treat food; how you treat the next person and how you treat yourself first and foremost. The greater self is our infinite connection to the All. As they say, no man is an island. So, the practice is in everything.

A musician beyond borders is a world musician

Zim Ngqawana deeply loved both the Western classical music of Beethoven and Mozart as well as the African classical music of the traditional Xhosa and Zulu and the Indian classical music. All of these sounds informed his musical palette. Zim was simply a tool of a higher being. The music as a vehicle for messages to come through.

Zim Ngqawana played with many of the greatest musicians from the Eastern Cape. These musicians came from a history of struggle. Playing the instrument was part of

their healing from the struggle. Through playing they lose themselves completely. One of the greats was drummer Lulu Gontsana, who learnt from listening and played from ear. Lulu couldn't read music. Lulu learnt from listening. And Lulu learnt from feeling sound from the age of seven.

When Zim Ngqawana taught at UKZN, he managed to push his students beyond their limits and bring the magic from out of them. Once a student asked him, "What did I get for my essay?"

"What do you want for it," responded Zim.

"60 or 70%," said the student.

"Why are you not saying 110%," responded Zim.

Now, follow this task

1. Listen to the chants, prayers and meditations of any traditional diviners such as sangomas, Christians, Muslims, Sufis, Hindus, Buddhists and Judaists. Which prayer music resonates with you? Meditate with this music – going to a place of stillness and silence - and tell us what inspiration do you come up with?

How does this inform your process of creation?

2. To go within and find that music within sometimes takes a baptism of fire. It is like a pressure stove. The only way to release your colour, expression and emotions of the soul is to go within. Think about this for a moment. Now, tell us what is your golden nugget of creativity.

What is that expression that is most relevant to you?

3. We know that music takes you to that place of inner stillness and silence and perfect focus but what, in the outside world, takes you there?

4. For some, they find their place on the mountain, the inner city parks or the furthest point of the ghetto where nobody ever goes.

Where do you find your place of stillness and silence?