Muziki
Journal of Music Research in Africa

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmuz20

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To cite this article: Boris Gorelik (2020) "Siyahamba": The Origins and Significance of a South African Chorus, Muziki, 17:2, 3-17, DOI: 10.1080/18125980.2021.1927806

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2021.1927806

Published online: 25 May 2021.

"Siyahamba": The Origins and Significance of a South African Chorus

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Abstract

Despite the enduring international popularity of the Zulu Christian chorus "Siyahamba" as a song of protest and praise, South African ethnomusicologists have not yet investigated its origins as well as its cultural and political significance. This article reports the results of an historical study which indicated that the earliest documented performance of the chorus took place in Dundee in the current uMzinyathi district of the former Natal province (now KwaZulu-Natal or KZN), South Africa, in 1952. No earlier publications or handwritten records of its score or lyrics have been found. However, it appears that this musical work has a longer undocumented history, connected to rural Methodist or Pentecostalist communities of the province. It originated in a church environment as a devotional chorus and grew to be closely associated with the anti-apartheid movement after it was adopted by the international campaign against the racist regime from the mid-1980s. "Siyahamba" has been perceived both locally and internationally as a popular song of praise with a strong political significance thanks to the popular songbook *Freedom Is Coming* by Anders Nyberg, the Swedish-South African composer and choral conductor, who made the earliest known field recording of the chorus, and dozens of influential hymnals that include "Siyahamba". Chanted at rallies and public events, the historic South African tune continues to encourage campaigners for change worldwide.

Keywords: "Siyahamba"; chorus; South African protest songs; international anti-apartheid campaign; *Freedom Is Coming*; Anders Nyberg

UNISA university of south africa PRESS | Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

Muziki
www.tandfonline.com/rmuz20
Volume 17 | Number 2 | 2020 | pp. 3–17

https://doi.org/10.1080/18125980.2021.1927806
ISSN 1753-593X (Online), ISSN 1812-5980 (Print)

Introduction

The Zulu Christian chorus "Siyahamba" may be the second best-known South African tune in the world after "Mbube". On the internet, there are hundreds of video clips showing renditions of "Siyahamba" by choirs and ensembles from Caracas to Singapore (Mason 2014, 31). Christian denominations aspiring to broaden their music repertoire have accepted this chorus with its devotional message and it is to be found in nearly 50 official hymnals of churches in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK).

In fact, the chorus seems to be almost custom-made for international audiences. The lyrics are easy to remember – it is just one phrase repeated with minor variations: "*Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos*" (Zulu for "We are marching in the light of God"). The uplifting melody is not only simple and catchy, but its harmonic progression is akin to American gospel music. Along with the international popularity come extrinsic cultural meanings, also evident in the case of "Mbube" (Zulu for "lion"). In a recent collaboration between the Donald Gordon Medical Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Music Division at the Wits School of Arts, students attending the Community Music course wanted to bring live music to the wards by performing for the patients and the hospital staff. The prospective listeners were asked for their preferences. Apart from "Siyahamba", they chose to hear "Mbube", but not the original Solomon Linda and the Original Evening Birds version. They knew the song from the Walt Disney Pictures film, *The Lion King*, therefore they wanted it to be rendered in the Americanised adaptation as "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" (Harrop-Allin et al. 2017, 71).

"Siyahamba" has also been perceived as a protest song since the 1980s, when the music of black South Africans was being recognised internationally as a powerful weapon of the liberation struggle. The chorus was chanted at anti-apartheid rallies in the Western world (Saliers 2014, 413). However, the significance of "Siyahamba" is not limited to its role as a "soundtrack" to the international anti-apartheid campaign and as a popular African entry in influential collections of Christian songs of praise. It deserves a closer study because South African choruses display features of indigenous African music more prominently than hymns (Jordaan 2013, 53).

Given the influence of "Siyahamba", it is surprising that the chorus has been largely overlooked by South African ethnomusicologists. For example, while the authorship of "Mbube" is indisputable, specialists have not attempted to find out who composed "Siyahamba". The history of the chorus in the period before it became an international phenomenon has not yet been thoroughly studied. Not a single academic article has been dedicated to the origins of the tune. This lack of interest is also remarkable because "Siyahamba" appears to be a relatively recent composition, therefore its undocumented origins can still be investigated using oral history methods.

In the academic world, most writing on "Siyahamba" has been done by Americans. The most prominent and widely cited works are by Charles Michael Hawn, Professor of Church Music, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, and Deborah Gail Bradley,

formerly Assistant Professor of Music Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and University of Toronto. Both scholars focus on Western conceptions of the chorus rather than on its origins. Even Bradley's (2001) paper is mostly an argument against cultural appropriation of world music in the West and the fact that the chorus has often been presented and rendered without consideration for the role that it has played in protest movements in South Africa and elsewhere.

The origins of the chorus are not a purely historical matter. If "Siyahamba" has an ascribable authorship, it may be protected by copyright. As Bradley (2003, 14–15) points out, international publishers have benefitted from the chorus, its arrangements, and derivative works because it is in the public domain. However, there may be South Africans or their descendants whose copyright in this work has been ignored.

As a foreigner living in South Africa in the mid-2010s, I was puzzled by the discrepancy between the high status of "Siyahamba" and the indifference of South African researchers towards the tune and its worldwide popularity. In 2015, I published an article in *Rapport*, a popular Afrikaans weekly newspaper, to draw the public's attention to this problem (Gorelik 2015). Being a historian, I searched for the chorus's origins in academic and popular publications and in music archives, and interviewed experts in South African music and church music history. I also tried to verify the so-called "Van Tonder version", related to the Afrikaner family from the former Natal province (now KwaZulu-Natal or KZN), who claim that their ancestor, Andries van Tonder senior (1882–1955), composed the melody and wrote the Afrikaans lyrics of "Siyahamba". I did not know the Zulu language, which is why I could not conduct field studies and interview people who did not speak English or Afrikaans; neither did I have funding for such research.

Thus, the current article is the first attempt to explore the origins of "Siyahamba" using published and unpublished records as well as to engage in oral history for the same purpose. Besides, it is the first analysis of the socio-political significance of "Siyahamba" in South Africa and internationally, tracing its evolution from an obscure African chorus to a protest song of enduring relevance. The historical data presented and analysed in the article provide the factual basis for ethnomusicological research.

Glimpses of Undocumented History

My search for official information on the authorship of the chorus as well as its earliest audio recordings provided clues for further research. According to the Southern African Music Rights Organisation, the chorus is in the public domain, and neither the composer nor the Zulu lyricist are known. Gallo, the country's leading recording company with a catalogue of South African black music covering nearly 100 years (Pietilä 2015, 20), including "Mbube" by Solomon Linda and the Original Evening Birds, could provide no additional information, because it had no entry for "Siyahamba" on its database.

I also made enquiries at South Africa's largest music repositories, such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation Media Archives, the International Library of African Music in Grahamstown (now Makhanda) in the Eastern Cape and the National Film, Video and Sound Archives of South Africa. In their collections, I found no recordings of this chorus produced before the 1980s either in the studio or in the "field". They had mid-century recordings of songs named "Siyahamba" (or "Siya Hamba"), including those by HCA/Young Xhosa Men (1950s), Alfred Tafani and the Midnight Stars (1957), and Spokes Mashiyane and Big Band (1962). Yet none of these was the famous chorus. It also indicates that no commercial record label in South Africa had published "Siyahamba" before it became popular in the West.

Turning to the extant literature, there is also a dearth of information on the existence of the chorus before 1978. In the collection *Amakhorasi Emvuselelo. Revival Choruses* (Sigasa 1974), which was brought to my attention by David Dargie, a South African ethnomusicologist,[1] there are Sesotho (Southern Sotho) lyrics that resemble the "Siyahamba" chorus, accompanied by an English version:

> Sesotho: *Retsamaya leseding / Retsamaya leseding la hae*.
> [Literally: We are walking in the light / We are walking in His light.]
> [English: We are marching in the light / We are marching in the light of God.]
> (Sigasa 1974)

However, since the book contains only lyrics, the melody of this chorus is unknown. It could be a variation on any of the numerous Protestant hymns with the theme of the divine light. Besides, the familiar lyrics of "Siyahamba" are in the Zulu language, not in Sotho. It cannot be established conclusively if the lyrics printed in *Amakhorasi Emvuselelo* (Sigasa 1974) refer to the famous chorus.

I did not find "*Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos*" in earlier published collections of South African hymns and choruses. It does not mean that "Siyahamba" emerged only in the past 50 years. Many choruses have been preserved only in the oral form to this day, so perhaps "Siyahamba" also had a long undocumented history before it was first transcribed (Jordaan 2013, 53).

In the absence of archival and published material, I searched for inferential evidence. Dargie once suggested that "Siyahamba" may have originated among Amadodana, a Methodist society of married men (Hawn 2011, 427). Mokhele Madise, a leading expert in the history of Amadodana, did not corroborate this hypothesis[2] (Madise 2013, 353).

1 David Dargie. Telephone interview with author. 28 July 2014.
2 Mokhele Madise. Telephone interview with author. 25 July 2014.

Dargie maintains that "Siyahamba" belongs to the Protestant tradition, being "a core Methodist chorus among the Xhosa".[3]

The popularity of the chorus among that denomination was confirmed by Peter Storey, a prominent South African Methodist cleric and scholar,[4] and Ludumo Magangane, a veteran Methodist choirmaster.[5] Magangane recalled that he sang it in Sunday school as a child in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Magangane's statement implies that the chorus emerged and spread among South African Methodists no later than in the 1950s. The absence of the chorus in the early editions of a popular Zulu hymnal Icilongo LeVangeli (1905–1933), may suggest that "Siyahamba" had either not been composed or not achieved prominence by the 1930s (Icilongo LeVangeli 1933; Icilongo LeVangeli: The Gospel Trumpet 1938).

The Earliest Documented Performance

Dargie argues that "Siyahamba", like other African Christian choruses, was orally composed.[6] Indeed, there have been no claims by professional composers to the authorship of "Siyahamba". However, Andries van Tonder junior, a South African immigrant to Ireland, states that his grandfather and namesake was the author of the melody for "Siyahamba" as well as its Afrikaans lyrics, "*Ons marsjeer nou in die lig van God*" ("We are marching in the light of God").[7]

That claim was worth investigating because references to it have appeared even in academic literature (Jordaan 2013, 48). It was extraordinary for an Afrikaner to be regarded as the author of a Zulu tune, but, although such choruses are believed to be traditional, they originate from various sources.

The Van Tonder family, originally from Uitenhage (now Kariega) in the Eastern Cape, were among the first Voortrekkers who settled in Natal (Visagie 2001, 267). Reputedly, one of them owned a farm from which the town of Ladysmith later grew. Andries van Tonder senior was the elder at the Dutch Reformed Church (commonly referred to as the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk or NGK) on the farm Paddafontein, 26 km southeast of Dundee (in the current uMzinyathi district, KZN). The gabled neo-Gothic building is a Provincial Heritage Site. According to Deane (1982, 86), "This stone church with its straight end gables and neo-Gothic windows and doors was inaugurated in January 1885. It was named [the Judith Church] after Mrs Judith van Tonder, who donated 58 acres of land as a church farm" (see also Richardson 2001, 219).

3 David Dargie. Telephone interview with author. 28 July 2014.
4 Peter Storey. Email message to author. 31 July 2014.
5 Ludumo Magangane. Email message to author. 22 September 2014.
6 David Dargie. Telephone interview with author. 28 July 2014.
7 Andries van Tonder junior. Telephone interview with author. 4 August 2014.

According to Van Tonder junior, who was seven years old when his grandfather died, his namesake was a farmer and an employee of Union Glass, which had a factory in Talana in the Eastern Cape producing bottles for Pepsi and Coke. A Boer War veteran, his grandfather wrote choruses and hymns for his Afrikaans congregation. Local black residents also attended Sunday evening services there. One of them, Thabo Mkize, who used to work on Van Tonder senior's farm, translated the chorus into Zulu. Mkize reputedly took part in the anti-apartheid struggle, endured harassment by the authorities, and died in the late 1950s.[8]

Van Tonder senior, according to his grandson, made a recording of the chorus with the Afrikaans lyrics in Durban, KZN, in approximately 1953. It was performed by his son and daughter-in-law. Van Tonder junior donated the 78-rpm vinyl disc to the Fort Amiel Museum in Newcastle, KZN, in May 1988. The receipt from the museum serves as proof of the donation, and its authenticity was verified by the museum curator. However, the disc could not be found.[9] Neither the receipt, nor museum records contain a detailed description of the contents of the missing disc, which cannot serve as evidence of the authorship claim.

The only document in the Van Tonder family's possession with a reference to the chorus is a yellowed piece of paper with a barely legible pencil scribble. The note is signed "Dries van Tonder" and dated "27–1–52", the day on which, according to the family, the chorus was first rendered at the Judith church. The handwritten note contains a message in Afrikaans with a basic music score in a notation of the author's own invention. The unconventional notation is clear enough to determine that it is the "Siyahamba" melody. According to the message, the Van Tonders performed the "new chorus" during the Sunday service and were planning to record a Zulu version sung by "Thabo". This is followed by the score and the Afrikaans lyrics. The priest, it is mentioned, believed that the chorus would be a hit, therefore the family "has to [illegible] the words" so that they can make money. Perhaps the illegible part referred to registering the copyright on the lyrics, but nothing in the note suggests that the melody was composed by Van Tonder senior.

Van Tonder junior also gave me the names of several people who would bear out his statements with respect to his grandfather's authorship of the chorus. I tried to trace all those people, but they had either died, without having recorded the story, or could not be identified using the scant information.

It is unclear if Van Tonder senior ever put forward his claim to authorship of the melody. The South African Music Rights Organisation recognises him only as the author of the Afrikaans lyrics. Therefore, in the absence of other contenders for the title, it must be

8 Ibid.

9 L. Eksteen. Telephone interview with author. 15 February 2015.

correct. If the note preserved by the Van Tonder family is genuine, it is the earliest known document of the chorus's existence.

As for the melody, it was probably composed by someone with an intimate knowledge of black African gospel music. Van Tonder senior belonged to the NGK, whose musical culture is quite different from that of Methodists or Pentecostalists. According to Gerrit Olivier, formerly of the Department of Music, University of Pretoria, who grew up on an NGK mission station, "Siyahamba" was not typical – the melody was "too lively and jolly" – of the solemn NGK services of the time.[10]

As a member of the revision commission that produced the current NGK hymnal, *Liedboek van die Kerk* (2001), Olivier studied previous collections of NGK hymns, and none of them resembled "Siyahamba". In the 1950s, it would be unusual for a white NGK community to sing such a chorus in their church rather than hymns based on the Genevan psalm melodies. In NGK mission churches, the European musical tradition also prevailed: hymns of German or English origin, translated into the local African language, were usually sung. Only by the 2000s had the NGK started to incorporate indigenous African melodies in its services.

While many of the apartheid laws separating black and white South Africans, such as the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No. 49 of 1953), had not been passed yet, Van Tonder senior may have heard the Zulu chorus at a non-NGK mission church. Like many Afrikaners in rural communities, he could have been fluent in Zulu and notated the chorus for choral singing. Perhaps "Siyahamba" had not been written down because members of those communities did not know musical notation. In this case, Van Tonder senior was only the transcriber.

Anders Nyberg, the Swedish-South African composer and choral conductor who made the earliest known field recording of "Siyahamba", points out that the chorus starts with a tension which is released by the end of the musical phrase, in the "sawtooth" pattern typical of African music. A similar structure is found in Afro-American spirituals and gospel songs like "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen", "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Come and Go with Me to My Father's House". The African melody propels the singer into action from the outset, with the accent and the energy of the melodic line placed at the beginning of the musical phrase. In the European musical tradition, including that of the NGK, the melody develops the other way around, building up the intensity gradually.[11]

The lyrics refer to the recurrent biblical theme of God as "the light of the world" and Jesus' followers as always walking with "the light of life" (John 8:12). The image of "walking" or "marching" in the divine light often occurs in Pentecostal Christian hymns

10 Gerrit Olivier. Email messages to author. 22–23 August 2014.
11 Anders Nyberg. Telephone interview with author. 4 August 2014.

and choruses, including those found in South African hymnals of the 1920s–1950s. For instance:

> *Ons marsjeer in Gods lig en krag,*
> *Ons marsjeer voorwaarts elke dag …*
> [We are marching in God's light and might
> We are marching forward every day …] (*Nuwe Sionsliedere vir Suid-Afrika* 1934, 125)

> *Wandel in die lig wat God ons gee*
> [March in the light that God gives us] (*Evangelie-Liedere* n.d., 138)

> *Wandel in die lig,*
> *Die heerlike lig van God*
> [March in the light
> The wonderful light of God]
> (*Christen-Gemeente Koortjies* n.d., 14; *Hartliedjies vir Almal* n.d., 26)

> Walk in the light, the light of God,
> We'll walk in the light, the beautiful light … (Hathaway 1946, n.p.)

International Popularity

"Siyahamba" was introduced to Europe and North America by Nyberg. A graduate of the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, he was the musical director of Fjedur, a Swedish group that performed traditional songs of the world. In 1978, they visited South Africa at the invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. The nine young men and women toured the country, singing Swedish folk songs and making field recordings of the music of black Africans.

According to Nyberg, he first heard "Siyahamba" and made a tape recording of it on 3 October 1978. The chorus was rendered for the Swedish guests by local schoolgirls in the village of Appelsbosch in the current uMgungundlovu District, KZN. The Church of Sweden has managed the settlement since the 1880s. The mission station once had Josef Zulu, King Cetshwayo's cousin, among its evangelists (Winquist 1978, 140). The Swedish missionaries established a hospital, the largest medical facility in the area (Gelfand 1984, 201). The girls who sang "Siyahamba" went to the local Training School, which had also been founded by the Swedes. The school admitted students from about 13 years of age (Standard 6) and taught primary education theory. Nowadays, it is a branch of the Coastal KZN College.

Appelsbosch is located nearly 170 km southeast of the Judith church, which was the site of the earliest documented performance of "Siyahamba". The chorus spread much farther within the quarter of a century that passed from the 1952 rendition to the improvised concert for Fjedur members in Appelsbosch. As evidenced by my interviewees, it was already known outside the former Natal province. Yet, in 1978, the

chorus was documented in the same province and in a similar religious, Protestant environment.

On his return to Europe, Nyberg arranged "Siyahamba" for a mixed choir, and Fjedur started to introduce it both in Sweden and other countries. Together with other "songs of protest and praise from South Africa", the chorus appeared in a booklet published in Sweden by Fjedur and the Church of Sweden Mission in 1980. As the popularity of the songs grew in Scandinavia, mostly thanks to Fjedur's renditions on their tours, Nyberg decided to make them available to English-speaking singers.

The new collection, *Freedom Is Coming*, appeared in 1984. It contained music scores (in four-part harmony for unaccompanied voices) with the original lyrics and their English translations (Nyberg 1984, 31). The booklet was offered with a cassette that contained Fjedur's recordings of the South African songs. That same year, Nyberg attended an assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Budapest, Hungary, and the young delegates from various continents received copies of the South African songbook.

"It was an amazing occasion: the whole world united in these songs of freedom," Nyberg remembers: "At that time, the Church was pushing hard to isolate the apartheid regime, and South Africa was a hot topic. We were all dancing and singing, 'Freedom is coming!'"[12]

The US publisher, Walton Music Corporation, distributed the songbook and cassette in the UK and the US. The anti-apartheid struggle was at the centre of the media and public attention in the 1980s. At the same time, international music enthusiasts were discovering South African township music for themselves. Sounds of *mbaqanga* and *isicathamiya* were heard not only by the few who bought the *Indestructible Beat of Soweto* compilations but also by the many who listened to mainstream pop records such as Elton John's *Passengers* (1984) or Paul Simon's *Graceland* (1986).

Since then, the simple and catchy "Siyahamba" with its optimistic message has turned into an international choral standard. Usually in arrangements by Nyberg (1984) or Rao (1991), it is sung in churches, in schools and at rallies. "Siyahamba", which Nyberg calls a "global folk song",[13] has been included in official hymnals of major churches in the West.

In 1989, "Siyahamba" first appeared in *The United Methodist Hymnal* in the US. It has been added to nearly 50 hymnals, starting from the 1994 edition of *Gather Comprehensive*, a collection widely used in Catholic parishes in the US. The United Church of Christ incorporated the chorus, under the English title, in *The New Century*

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.

Hymnal. The Unitarian Universalist Association has "Siyahamba" in its supplemental hymnal *Singing the Journey*. The chorus is also found in the *Chalice Hymnal* (Disciples of Christ), *The Covenant Hymnal* (Evangelical Covenant Church), *Voices United* (The United Church of Canada) and *The Book of Praise* (Presbyterian Church in Canada) (Hawn 2011, 427). *Songs of Fellowship* (1998), a popular Anglican hymnal, has contained "We Are Marching in the Light of God" since 1998. The chorus has also been embraced by Afro-American Christians; it is part of the *African American Heritage Hymnal* (Carpenter and Williams 2001)

In the UK, "Siyahamba" has been a permanent feature in the repertoire of amateur singer ensembles, together with other South African songs such as "Shosholoza" and "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" (Firth 2017, 30). In the US, the chorus is often sung during religious and non-religious marches and processions because of its cyclic structure, chantable lyrics and the theme related to unity and progress, as noted by Hawn (2011, 428):

> The harmonies of "Siyahamba" are accessible to anyone who sings Western harmony. The harmonic progression (I-V-I-V7-I-IV-I-V-I) is familiar to anyone who has sung American gospel songs. It lends itself to harmonizing by ear; indeed, the written music is almost confusing because of repeats, and the use of a musical score inhibits a physical response dictated by the active verb, "marching". Its steady beat embodies a sense of marching. "Siyahamba" is a natural processional at the commencement of the liturgy or at the conclusion of the service when the choir can lead the entire congregation out in the streets to spread Christ's light in the darkness.

A Song of Protest or a Song of Praise?

The context in which "Siyahamba" was first presented to international audiences determined its enduring association with anti-apartheid struggle. "Out of the suffering of the Black People a song is born", Nyberg (1984, 1) writes in his foreword to *Freedom Is Coming*: "The singer can be silenced, but never the song: the hope of a free country, the dream of freedom, this song can never be taken from the people".

In the West, "Siyahamba" has been perceived from the outset as a protest song, one that "emerged out of struggles in the streets and townships of South Africa" (Hawn 2005; Westerfield Tucker 2009, 9). It has been seen as an example of a church music piece that was politicised and appropriated by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa as a song of liberation under the guise of a Christian chorus (Firth 2017, 80).

Bradley (2009, 110) has lamented that most compilers of songbooks and hymnals, unlike Nyberg, fail to present "Siyahamba" as a "freedom song". By withholding contextual information, the publishing industry depoliticises the music and diminishes the chorus's potential of encouraging those who campaign against racism today. According to Bradley (2002, 12), this chorus should be published with commentary describing the oppression of black South Africans under apartheid and the courage of freedom fighters in defying it. Music educators should also mention the anti-apartheid

movement when explaining the significance of this chorus (Hein 2020, 19). Moreover, Bradley (2003, 12; 2009, 110) argues that the arranged versions of "Siyahamba", produced and published in the West, dilute the liberation message of the original a capella version, because they "ignore the original musical and socio-historical context in favour of the opportunity for musical manipulation of the catchy melody and rhythm".

The results of the current study do not support this view of the chorus's origins and significance in South Africa. In the 1950–1970s, at the beginning of its documented history, "Siyahamba" was rendered in rural church environments. I have found no evidence that the chorus was sung at political rallies in apartheid South Africa. To use the wording from the subtitle of *Freedom Is Coming*, "Siyahamba" was probably "a song of praise" rather than "a song of protest" in that period.

However, the chorus was a prominent element of the anti-apartheid campaign in the West. Promoted by Christian churches in their condemnation of the racist regime in South Africa in the 1980s, "Siyahamba" was not deemed a strictly devotional chorus or a "happy African tune". Whether it was sung by freedom fighters in South Africa or not, its connection to the struggle is undeniable, because "Siyahamba" was considered as a freedom song worldwide while international support for the anti-apartheid movement was reaching its peak. In this sense, the concern voiced by Hawn and Bradley is justified; the historical significance of the chorus and the political connotations that its lyrics acquired during the anti-apartheid campaign should be remembered and commemorated.

In the West, "Siyahamba" is still heard at protest marches and open-air rallies, often with altered lyrics. For instance, in 2014, the Open Voice Community Choir performed it during a demonstration against fracking in Manchester, UK. The South African chorus provided accompaniment for the procession through the city streets. The choir sang the Zulu lyrics followed by an English version that suited the occasion: "We are marching to maintain our lands". At the 2013 National Street Choirs Festival in Aberystwyth, UK, there was a demonstration with participants chanting "We are marching in the name of peace" to the "Siyahamba" melody (Firth 2017, 215, 220–221). The South African origin and the anti-apartheid associations of the chorus are less important to the singers today than its ability to inspire and invite participation.

The popularity of "Siyahamba" in South Africa rose in the 1990s thanks to the new imported hymnals. Only after the chorus had been published in five American collections of devotional music, it appeared in *Icilongo LeVangeli* (1996, 257), a Zulu hymnal printed in hundreds of thousands of copies. In the 2000s, the NGK, trying to broaden its range of devotional music to include indigenous South African hymnody, made "Siyahamba" available in the supplement to its official collection, *Liedboek van die Kerk* (2001). The Zulu lyrics were translated into Afrikaans as "*Kom ons wandel in die lig van God*" ("Let us march in the light of God") (Jordaan 2013, 54).

Since the chorus was added to the *Songs of Fellowship* hymnal in 1998, it has been used by Anglican congregations in South Africa. They often render both the Zulu and the English versions in Nyberg's arrangement.

In 2005, "Siyahamba" was chanted by an estimated 500 people who marched in procession from St George's Cathedral through the central business district of Cape Town, led by the Most Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane, the then Anglican archbishop. They expressed opposition to the pending closure of Rex Trueform, a Cape Town garment manufacturing plant which could result in severe job losses (SACC 2005). Obviously, by then parishioners and their leaders looked on the chorus as a protest song. However, it is not clear whether this notion had been "inherited" from their predecessors in South Africa or received from *Songs of Fellowship* and *Freedom Is Coming*. After all, Anglican congregations in the Western Cape usually sang this chorus from photocopies of Nyberg's book (Bethke 2012, 198).

Conclusion

This historical study has shown that "Siyahamba" is a Zulu chorus that emerged in a rural Protestant congregation, possibly in the former Natal province. It had been composed by 1952, when Van Tonder senior transcribed it in Dundee. He is also credited as the author of the earliest known Afrikaans version of the lyrics, while the authors of the melody and of the Zulu lyrics are unknown. The chorus may have existed in an oral form before 1952. The lyrics, with their biblical imagery of walking in the divine light, could be inspired by Methodist or Pentecostalist hymnody. The melody has more similarities with African or Afro-American patterns than with conventional European church music.

Although "Siyahamba" has been associated with the anti-apartheid movement, it was not composed as a protest song and evidently did not feature prominently in the repertoire of anti-apartheid campaigners in South Africa. However, after its introduction to Europe and the US by Nyberg in the 1980s, it was often used in the international effort to end the regime of racial discrimination in South Africa, particularly, because of its devotional message, in the campaign organised by Christian churches in the West.

In the 1990s, the "song of praise" was re-introduced to South Africa through imported hymnals and songbooks as a "song of protest". Nowadays, "Siyahamba" is viewed both locally and internationally as a liberation song. As such, it is still performed not only in church and at concerts, but also at rallies, demonstrations, and processions, sometimes with the lyrics modified to match the cause of the event. In this way, the historic South African tune continues to contribute to current struggles for change.

"Siyahamba" is one of South Africa's most valuable musical assets, and it is time to honour it with ethnomusicological research. Knowing the results of the current historical study, scholars who wish to investigate the origins of "Siyahamba" further would be well advised to explore oral history, because even a purposeful search for

written or published evidence of the chorus's existence before 1952 is unlikely to be productive and time efficient. Now that researchers are aware that the earliest documented performance of "Siyahamba" took place in the current uMzinyathi district, they probably should start by interviewing faith leaders, the oldest members, and the holders of traditional knowledge at Zulu-speaking Pentecostal and Methodist communities in that region.

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