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BLACK HEROES PRESS RELEASE (10 April 2012, South Africa)

### Background

*Black Heroes*, the new solo piano album from Tete Mbambisa, takes its title from a composition dedicated to three great figures of the struggle years – Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. This, the first commercially released solo piano recording by Tete Mbambisa, offers listeners the chance to hear one of South Africa's greatest jazz pianists in the solo format.

The composition 'Black Heroes' was originally written for Mbambisa's iconic album *Tete's Big Sound* which was released by Rashid Valley's legendary As-Shams label in 1976, a few months before the June 16<sup>th</sup> Uprising. Although Bra Tete is quite clear that his music is composed as music, rather than as political statement, he is also clear that both the title and dedication are significant and that as an artist he is also part of the wider community. As Vusi Khumalo wrote in the original liner notes for *Tete's Big Sound*: 'Tete Mbambisa brings to the outside world this sad, sacred story, and puts the Black artist in the forefront.'

Tete Mbambisa has performed and recorded with many of the giants of South African jazz (Basil 'Manenberg' Coetzee, Johnny Dyani, Lulu Gontsana, Dick Khoza, Early Mabuza, Duku Makasi, Hugh Masekela, Nik Moyake, Ezra Ngcukana, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Dudu Pukwana, Barney Rachabane *et al*), and is one of the very few jazz musicians that can claim to have played with the three jazz generations of the last fifty years. He featured in Pascale Lamche's 2003 movie *Sophiatown*, and his compositions have been recorded by The Blue Notes, Adam Glasser, Chris McGregor, McCoy Mrubata and Brian Thusi. His work as a pianist, vocalist, composer and arranger can also be found on many anthologies of South African jazz.

### **A new recording for 2012**

Bra Tete first came to public attention after recording four sides with his vocal group, The Four Yanks, for Gallo Africa in 1962. *Black Heroes* places Mbambisa's Four Yanks classic 'Umsenge' alongside recent compositions such as 'One For Asa', but it is the compositions 'Dembese' and 'Stay Cool' – along with his arrangement of the traditional song 'Mbombela' – that foreground Mbambisa's unique ability to infuse *mbaqanga* with contemporary jazz. The unfettered musical space a solo pianist has to explore ideas, combined with the clarity of the *Black Heroes* recording, provides the clearest insight yet into Tete Mbambisa's creativity. With *Black Heroes* Tete Mbambisa celebrates fifty years at the forefront of South African jazz, and the reason for the enduring popularity of his music remains abundantly clear to those with an ear for harmonic sophistication and rhythmic drive.

Recorded on 14 and 15 August 2010 at the Fisser Hall in Stellenbosch, and edited in York (UK) and Mdantsane (SA), *Black Heroes* was mastered at Skye Mastering by Denis Blackham (mastering engineer for reissues of Chris McGregor's *Very Urgent*, *Our Prayer*, and *Up To Earth*).

The CD contains ten tracks all of which are Mbambisa originals (with the exception of 'Mbombela'). The package includes a 24 page full-colour booklet featuring previously unpublished photographs, a complete discography, and extensive notes.

### **What they say about Tete Mbambisa**

Christopher Ballantine (author of *Marabi Nights*)

"Tete is of course one of the greatest pianists to have come out of South Africa, but before that time Tete had an extraordinary career as a leader and arranger for The Four Yanks, which was an utterly remarkable group." (2010)

Chris McGregor (pianist and composer with The Blue Notes and the Brotherhood of Breath)

"Tete Mbambisa's group with Dudu on the piano; four voices in close harmony, very sophisticated, very modern, superb, with fantastic dance routines. I adored that; they were really very, very fine, very sharp... If one could have heard them in Europe a bit later people would have been knocked out." (1972)

Pinise Saul (vocalist for Dudu Pukwana's Spear, Adam Glasser's Mzansi, and director of the South African Gospel Singers)

"He's an amazing pianist, the world must hear this pianist from home. Hamba Mbambisa! He's got all the harmonies, he doesn't need singers. Everything is there." (2011)

**- ENDS -**

### **Release information**

*Black Heroes* will be available in shops and online from 19 April 2012.

#### **THE AFRICAN MUSIC STORE**

134 Long Street

Cape Town, South Africa

Tel/Fax: +27 21 4260857

Email: [info@africanmusic.co.za](mailto:info@africanmusic.co.za)

Web: [www.africanmusicstore.co.za](http://www.africanmusicstore.co.za)

#### **ONLINE**

<http://www.kalahari.com/>

[from May 2012]

<http://ev2.co.uk/jisa/records/>

### **Press images**

Please visit: <http://ev2.co.uk/jisa/records/press/>

Username and password required, please contact [eato@ev2.co.uk](mailto:eato@ev2.co.uk)

### **Listings**

Johannesburg launch event:

19 April 2012, 17.30 for 18:00

Atrium

School of Arts and Culture

University of the Witswatersrand

No admission charge

Cape Town launch event:

22 April 2012, 18.00

Recital Room C7

South African College of Music

University of Cape Town

R50 (R40 seniors / students)

### **Notes to editors**

This CD is the result of a two-day recording session in the Fisser Hall at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, on 14 and 15 August 2010. It was a joint venture between JISA and DOMUS and the idea grew from a wonderful moment at the end of the 2010 IMS-SASRIM Composers' Panel (convened by Jonathan Eato and featuring Tete Mbambisa, Louis Moholo-Moholo and Zim Ngqawana). After all the discussion and debate had finished Bra Tete started to play the piano as the audience and panellists were dispersing – a gesture that both put in context much of what had been said as well as seeming to capture that which had escaped words.

This recording was financed jointly by DOMUS and JISA on the understanding that Tete Mbambisa would have two days of recording time to use as he wished. Documentation of the recording session and interviews are held by DOMUS for researchers and students to use, however the copyright of the recording and the compositions remains entirely with Bra Tete. All revenue from CD sales goes directly to Bra Tete and therefore all purchases of this recording are directly supporting one of South Africa's most important jazz musicians: no record company or

other organisation will receive any share of the profits. Additional material will eventually be available for purchase at <http://ev2.co.uk/jisa/records/>

DOMUS (Documentation Centre for Music) seeks to promote music in South Africa and Africa by collecting, preserving, ordering and cataloguing the music and documentary collections of composers, performing artists, musicologists and music institutions. As an archive with strong connections to music research DOMUS aims, through strategic projects of research, publication, performance and recordings, to maintain the expressive cultures represented in these collections as an important part of a broad South African heritage.

<http://www.domus.ac.za/>

The JISA (Jazz In South Africa) research pages were set up to investigate various aspects of jazz in South Africa, and the overriding aim of the project is to develop a critical understanding of jazz in South Africa that is informed by the thinking of the musicians who make the music. The JISA research pages are being developed as a freely accessible online resource and feature statements by musicians and research on the music. They are maintained by Jonathan Eato and the project began as a result of research leave from the Music Department at the University of York (UK) and a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

<http://ev2.co.uk/jisa/>