



Ivan Mazuze Ubuntu

Ubuntu /ʊˈbʊntʊ/ noun, South African (Xhosa, Zulu): a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

As with all excellent music, categorisation is most often superfluous. Yes, there are fine examples of Afro Cuban and full-bodied elements of World Jazz here, but from the very opening passages there is so much more. An overriding sense of joie de vivre, of adventure, energy and passion circulates freely throughout this album, which is propelled and steered by a group of world-class musicians.

Inta Muthangela opens the album with the universally loved sound of children at play. This paves the way for the sound of **Ivan Mazuze's** sonorously satisfying alto saxophone. The band joins in on Ivan's adaptation of a popular traditional song from Mozambique that is often performed at happy and important events.

We then head off on a truly delightful musical journey; an album encompassing styles and genres that serve to complement the depth and beauty of Ivan's compositions and arrangements.

Dancing with Malala has a Corea-esque quality to its phrasing and is a great introduction to the effortless fluency of bassist, **Peter Ndhlala**. Ivan switches to soprano sax for the uplifting title track, *Ubuntu*. Following his absorbing solo we meet virtuoso guitarist **Jacob Young**. On *My Two Northern Lights*, Ivan and Jacob perform a reflective and evocative acoustic duet.

The Republic of Dongo (a fictitious country devised by author and global economist, Dambisa Moyo) is a head swaying, flowing ride. Ivan says that, "the album features and is inspired by various 6/8 time signatures from the African continent". The track is impressively punctuated by the immaculate playing of master percussionist, **Frank Paco**.

Water, that most precious of commodities, trickles through a contemplative track featuring Ivan and pianist, **Michael Bloch**. *Kulhula* is a charmingly relaxed piece with a compelling motif and driving bass riffs from the omnipresent Ndhlala. We're back to 6/8 on *Malecon* with Ivan playing flute. There are endearing solos from Peter and from pianist, **Sifiso Makalisa**.

A Short Piece is an inspired and empathic musical dialogue between Ivan and Michael. Like nouvelle cuisine, it presents attractive and stimulating combinations and it leaves you wanting more! Next up is *Hamba Kahle* with its memorable theme, a vigorous groove produced by dynamic band interplay and some vibrant exchanges between Ivan and Jacob.

Ivan went to introduce his newly born baby girl to his grandmother. She and her neighbour are heard in jubilant chant during the intro to *Celebration*. The track also features Ivan on various saxophones and Sidiki Camara on balafon, (a type of wooden xylophone much used by African musicians). Finally, we hear *Talking To Myself*, a reflective ballad featuring the warmth and emotion of Ivan's alto playing and a lovely and sensitive solo by Michael.

The word 'Ubuntu' is often used in a philosophical sense to mean 'the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity'. For Ivan, it means: "To give, without the expectation of receiving, thereby supporting the improvement of the individuals and communities around me". He says that the album is inspired by African urban living and its development and also by some of southern Africa's great contemporary composers, like the late Bheki Mseleku.

Ivan Mazuze personifies generosity of spirit on this album. There is a kind of benevolence and compassion about his work that lifts you, makes you smile and feel good inside. In the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Music is the universal language of mankind".

THE BAND

Ivan Mazuze is quite literally, a man of the world. Following 7 years of classical music studies (piano) in Mozambique, his country of birth, he switched to saxophone(s) and flute and completed his academic education with a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Since 2009, when he moved to Norway, he has been playing a major, award-winning role in World Jazz through his recordings and performances throughout Europe and Africa.

Jacob Young, born in Norway, was introduced to jazz by his American father. He's been playing guitar since the age of 12 and studied at the University of Oslo and the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in Manhattan. His principal teacher was the legendary, Jim Hall. Jacob has worked with amongst others, Rashied Ali, Marc Copeland, Junior Mance and Larry Goldings. He has recorded three albums for the ECM label.

Michael Bloch is a Norwegian, mostly self-taught pianist, saxophonist and composer. Equally comfortable as leader or sideman, Michael works with the cream of Scandinavian musicians such as Petter Wettre, Magni Wentzel, Terje Gewelt, Staffan William-Olsson and Trygve Seim.

Sifiso Makalisa (affectionately known as 'Titch') is a highly acclaimed pianist and composer who started classical lessons at the age of 7 and later graduated from UCT College of Music with an honours degree in Jazz studies. He has performed and recorded with the likes of Judith Sephuma, Selaelo Selota, Max Vidima and Emily Bruce and is a regular at top international jazz festivals.

Peter Ndlala began his musical education on bass and piano at the age of 17 when he began studying at M.A.P.P. (Music Action for People's Progress) in South Africa. He has worked with Winston Mankunku Ngozi, Sylvia Mdunyelwa, Rene Mclean (son of Jackie) and a host of African and European star musicians too numerous to mention here. He has toured the world incessantly and is very in demand as a recording studio session musician.

Frank Paco started playing drums at 11 in Mozambique. He has emerged as one of the most interesting percussionists of his generation. A career highlight was the 46664 Mandela AIDS concert where he performed with the likes of Queen, Bono, Jimmy Cliff, Angelique Kidjo, Brian May and Peter Gabriel. He has also worked with Jonathan Butler, Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela. He has recorded on more than 40 albums of which 10 received awards and 4 were nominated. Frank has also worked with Losen Records artist, Hildegunn Øiseth.

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