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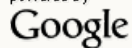
TITLE | Musical Echoes

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Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking in Jazz

Author(s): [Carol Ann Muller](#), [Sathima Bea Benjamin](#)

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Description

Musical Echoes tells the life story of the South African jazz vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin. Born in Cape Town in the 1930s, Benjamin came to know American jazz and popular music through the radio, movies, records, and live stage and dance band performances. She was especially moved by the voice of Billie Holiday. In 1962 she and Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) left South Africa together for Europe, where they met and recorded with Duke Ellington. Benjamin and Ibrahim spent their lives on the move between Europe, the United States, and South Africa until 1977, when they left Africa for New York City and declared their support for the African National Congress. In New York, Benjamin established her own record company and recorded her music independently from Ibrahim. *Musical Echoes* reflects twenty years of archival research and conversation between this

extraordinary jazz singer and the South African musicologist Carol Ann Muller. The narrative of Benjamin's life and times is interspersed with Muller's reflections on the vocalist's story and its implications for jazz history.

About The Author(s)

Carol Ann Muller is Professor of Music at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Focus: Music of South Africa* and *South African Music: A Century of Traditions in Transformation*.

The South African jazz vocalist and composer Sathima Bea Benjamin is the founder of Ekapa Records and a Grammy-nominated musician who has released a dozen recordings, including *Dedications*, *Cape Town Love*, and *Musical Echoes*. In 2004, South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, honored her with the Order of Ikhamanga Silver Award in recognition of her musical artistry and antiapartheid activism. Benjamin lives in New York City.

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Musical Echoes begins with an evocative reading of an image: the album cover of South African jazz vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin's European studio sessions with Duke Ellington, *A Morning in Paris* (1997). The photograph captures a moment of diasporic intimacy, an encounter between a young woman and a jazz patriarch, articulating Africa, Europe, and America within a mid-century Afro-modernity. Seen from the present, the image is also a sign of remembrance, restoration, and renaissance. While the album cover communicates Black Atlantic conjuncture, frozen in time, the sounds resonate history.

Musical Echoes tells the life story of the South African jazz vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin. Born in Cape Town in the 1930s. She challenges still dominant androcentric and Amerocentric jazz discourses, offering alternative frameworks that allow us to consider the dynamics of race, class and gender within whose maelstrom Benjamin shaped her sound." - Gwen Ansell, *Mail & Guardian*. "Muller examines Benjamin's experiences with apartheid, her exile from South Africa, and how these experiences helped form her career as a jazz musician. Benjamin's life story is quite colorful, and Muller effectively captures the essence of that story with this call-and-response nature of the presentation and with a writing style that is both lyrical and precise.

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