

Jazz and Robbie Jansen

Freedom and unforgettables

Only Jansen silenced the vuvuzelas at concerts in the Western Cape during the World Cup. Here we publish some moving tributes to this musician who played inspiring jazz.



Robbie Jansen performing at a special family day concert of the Garment and Allied Workers' Union (Gawu), a forerunner of Sactwu, in Zeekoevlei, Cape Town, 1989.

He took a stand for justice and his music and his voice speak for the ideals of justice and peace. His musical legacy continues to shape the connection between the communities and people of the Western Cape. (*Congress of South African Trade Unions*)

The Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu) mourns the passing of music legend, Robbie Jansen.

We will always remember how, together with the legendary Basil 'Mannenberg' Coetzee, his music inspired two generations of our trade union activists – since the

1970s and the dark apartheid days to the promise of a better life for all at the advent of our country's first democratic elections in 1994.

We will remember fondly Robbie's rendition of 'Archie Bongo', played at many freedom rallies from the late 1970s, and its haunting lines, 'Freedom where have you been hiding yourself, I've been looking for you all over.'

We salute his collaboration with Basil Coetzee and Abdullah Ibrahim on the groundbreaking 'Mannenberg is where it's happening' and call on the people of Cape Town to use this as an opportunity to help strengthen the Proudly Manenberg Campaign.

Robbie's cover versions of 'What's Going On' and 'Georgia' will, for us, remain classic unforgettables. We will miss the 'Cape Doctor' and call on the Western Cape provincial government to name a street after him and on the national government to bestow national honours on him. (*Andre Kriel, general secretary Sactwu*)

'I'd like to go through the old freedom stuff. As most of you can see we are still fighting for our freedom – it's not just about colour anymore.' (*Robbie Jansen quoted in The Independent*).

'Freedom is the central theme threading through Jansen's work and life: free jazz. Freedom jazz. Spiritual freedom and the freedom struggle. Freedom was not his bumper sticker; it was his inquiry and quest. The composition 'How I'd love to feel Free' is maybe his finest ode to freedom... his search for the elusive freedom is aggressive: music and words rise to a crescendo of sibilance, 'Ons soek hom. Ons moet hom kry. Ons sal hom kry. Ons gaan hom kry' (and bee bah, beee bah, the horn mimics a police siren.) Again a cooling, calming flute solo after the heat of the freedom search.' (*Mail & Guardian 6 August 2010*)