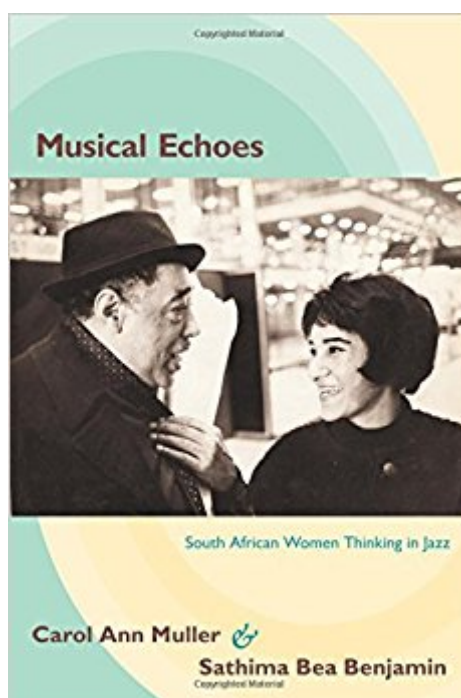


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Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking In Jazz (Refiguring American Music)



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Ibrahim has cited the loss of information as one legacy of apartheid, and the broader context
in those gaps is also key to the appeal of Muller's meticulously researched
book. - Marcus O'Dair, Jazzwise
"Muller . . . does a remarkable job in

piecing together Benjamin's life, work, and significance within the context of post-apartheid history.

• Brian Morton, *The Wire* "Muller's biography-plus, of and with Sathima Bea Benjamin, is welcome for many reasons; first and foremost because it spotlights a brilliant architect of song who is far less well known than she should be. But Muller goes further. 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 engaging and highly descriptive. Recommended. All readers.

• D. J. Schmalenberger, *Choice* "The story of this magnificent South African artist is, by itself, worth the price of admission. To this, Muller adds a rich (and largely unexplored) archive of jazz history and a host of useful theoretical tools, which, presented with stylistic grace and a spirit of ethnographic empathy, will likely make *Musical Echoes* a landmark in contemporary music scholarship and the contemporary Black Atlantic.

• Ryan Thomas Skinner, *Research in African Literatures* "Musical Echoes not only introduces a very important vocalist, Sathima Bea Benjamin, to audiences who may not know of her. It also makes a great contribution to scholarship on jazz, world music, cultural theory, and the African diaspora. It challenges us to reconsider and revise the nationalist narratives that characterize much writing on jazz, and it provides a new framework for discussing the production, circulation, and transformation of musical cultures.

• Farah Jasmine Griffin, author of *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* "Sathima Bea Benjamin ought to share company with the likes of Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Betty Carter. . . . [She] never compromis[es] her own musical vision, refusing to either remake herself into an American jazz singer or into what the world imagines to be authentically African. She is who she is, Sathima Bea Benjamin, South Africa's greatest jazz singer and one of the best the world has ever known.

• Robin D. G. Kelley, *JazzTimes* "[A] fascinating biography. . . . (Bobbi Booker Philadelphia Tribune) "Ibrahim has cited the loss of information as one legacy of apartheid, and the broader context of filling in those gaps is also key to the appeal of Muller's meticulously researched book.

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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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