

# **INKOMO IWILE, BY PHILIP MILLER AND TSHEGOFATSO MOENG**

## Nine Moments for Dumile Feni's *African Guernica*

*Inkomo iwile*, this isiZulu phrase translates to 'the cow has fallen'. In Southern African cultures, particularly among Nguni-speaking communities such as the Zulu and Xhosa, cattle are far more than livestock — they symbolize life itself. Cattle are central to social structures, spiritual practices, and communal well-being. When a cow falls — especially in a ritual or symbolic context — it signals profound disruption, loss, or catastrophe, as life's sustaining force is upended.

We have come together as collaborators to respond to Dumile Feni's *African Guernica* through music and words. We deliberately avoided composing programmatic music that would impose an artificial narrative on the drawing or attempt to stage a direct musical dialogue between Dumile's work and Picasso's *Guernica*.

Instead, we sought to allow both artworks to evoke distinct emotional resonances within us — as individual creators and as collaborators. These resonances include references to spiritual and ancestral cosmologies, the raw horror and brutality of apartheid, the cruelty of war and its enduring aftermath, and Dumile's haunted and isolated life in exile. Throughout we use the enigmatic stream-of-consciousness texts or declamations inscribed across many of Dumile's drawings alongside vocals, brass, string instruments and largely non orchestral percussion.

A cursory look at Dumile Feni's works reveals how deeply interconnected his art was with music. From his early days as an artist in Johannesburg, he was immersed in the world of South African jazz — socializing with jazz musicians and designing album covers during that vibrant era. His love extended across genres: kwela, mbaqanga, and American free jazz. While this rich jazz heritage provides one sonic foundation for our compositions, we also draw from African song traditions, spiritual chants, and the rhythms of protest. Through these shared impulses, we invite you to experience the music moments as a personal and collective response to these works.

Philip Miller and Tshegofatso Moeng, March 2026

## FIRST MOMENT: RE-ENACTMENT OF THE VERWOERD KILLING

Lyrics by Vuyisile Mini

**Nantsi ndodemnyama      Here are the Black People**  
**Verwoerd pasopa!      Beware, Verwoerd!**

## SECOND MOMENT: A WILD FELLOW WHO HATES ENGLISH

Lyrics by Winston Ngozi & Tshegofatso Moeng

**Tlang basadi, re bone dilo**

Women, Come! We have seen  
[things] a lot.

**Re bona dikgomo, re bona lefatshe**  
**Wee! Kgomo e wele!**

When we see cattle, we see land  
Woe! The cow has fallen.

**Tlang banna, tlang le reetse**  
**Kgang ke eo**

Men, come! Come and listen  
Here's the story [issue]

**Re bona dikgomo, re bona lefatshe**  
**Wee! Kgomo e wele!**

When we see cattle, we see land  
Woe! The cow has fallen.

**Zabuy'inkomo emasimini**  
**Ejakula amathole eqibitheka**  
**Wathin'umama, yakhal'inkomo**

The cattle have returned from the  
fields.

The calves are ejaculating/milling  
about.

Mother said, the bull bellows.

## THIRD MOMENT: THIS IS NOT A FUCKING POEM/ HALLUCINATE FOR APARTHEID

(from Dumile Feni's *You Wouldn't Know God if he Spat in Your Eye*, 53 m scroll)

Contribution thought composition  
is the

delicate Presentation in description of the  
habitually indifferent, rigidly constructed

Extensive psychological

Barriers in defense,

hallucinate for apartheid

Familiarity kingdom of the lost, which is  
The Protection against the infinite curio(u)s changes of nature  
In the finale analysis we are all one.  
My understanding for the  
analyses  
in familiarity conversation  
at the university of life  
And your monstrous precious love  
and other Intelligent themes  
of nature  
Only you can change my child  
This composition is not meant to be a fucking poem!

Dedications:

Miriam Makeba! Mongane Wally Serote! Duke Ellington! Cosmo Pieterse!  
Nina Simon! Stevie Wonder! Ravi Shankar! Max Roach! Ray Charles!  
Moeletsi Mbeki! Pep Nduni! Mos Nosisi! Cecil Taylor! Michael Jackson! Thelonius  
Monk,  
Brutus!

## FOURTH MOMENT: TURNING THE MULE RIGHT SIDE UP

(from Dumile Feni's *You Wouldn't Know God if he Spat in Your Eye*, 53 m scroll)

Turning the mule right side up  
Something about love better still  
Turning the mule around top side of the moon

## FIFTH MOMENT: WHAT WILL YOU TELL THE CHILDREN DEAR GOD?

Lyrics by Philip Miller, Nokuthula Magubane & Tshegofatso Moeng

Uzothini ezinganeni?  
Uzothini kwal'isizwe lethu?  
Uzothini kwa bancane...  
Mhla bekubuza?

What will you say to the children?  
What will you say to our people?  
What will you say to the young ones...  
When they ask you!

## SIXTH MOMENT: SHARPEVILLE 1960

"His coffin is open; our coffins are closed."

## SEVENTH MOMENT: ISKHOVA

Free from my mother's womb  
How should I  
describe death  
Owl I knew you then  
Owl I know you now

Dumile Feni, 1972

## EIGHTH MOMENT: MOTHO

Lyrics by Tshegofatso Moeng

**Hole, kwale dithabeng, hole kwale di  
nokeng  
Dithabeng tsa Bohosi, di nokeng tsa  
bophelo re a bitswa!  
Tseya kgato. Nako e khutswa.**

By the distant mountains, the distant  
rivers.  
The sacred mountains of royalty, the  
rivers that give life, we are being  
summoned. Make the necessary steps.  
Time is short.