

TRAVELS WITH DOLLY

DIALOGUE, NARRATION, & ON-SCREEN TEXTS

0 = First frame of picture

Text: Vancouver, Canada, 1998 Travels with Dolly

Part I

00.25 Narr: This is the annual boat trip around Vancouver. All the film folk attending the International Film Festival are invited.

What I like about the Vancouver Film Festival is that it's very low-key, shunning the hoopla of circuses like the Toronto Film Festival.

The character of the Vancouver Festival reflects both the nature of the city, and that of Alan Franey, Vancouver Film Festival's Czar. This is Alan surveying his domain. 00.53

00.57 Narr: You won't see me because I am behind the camera, but I am on the boat because I have arranged a retrospective of South African films from the early 'Fifties.

This was a unique period in South Africa's cinema history when, for the first time, a few films featuring black musicians managed to get made. 01.15

01.32 Narr: These films were a breakthrough in the hitherto all-white South African film industry, but by the middle of the decade, it was all over – apartheid had killed it.

These images are the only records that we have on film of the range of musical talent that flourished in the black townships.

01.52 Fleur Matthewson: Turn around, and there's Peter with the camera.

Dolly: Yah

Fleur Matthewson: There we go.

02.00 Narr: Now, the lady on the left is Dolly Rathebe. Dolly was South Africa's first black female film-star. She and I had been friends since the 'Nineties, when I was working on a documentary about cinema and apartheid. 02.12

02.16 Narr: Dolly had been a township girl with a reputation as a church singer when she was discovered by Scottish actor-turned-producer

Eric Rutherford, who, an outsider in South Africa's white society, was immediately struck by her star quality, and gave her the female lead in his film AFRICAN JIM. 02.34

02.34 (Dolly sings)

02.52 Narr: Made in 1949, the film was a smash with South Africa's black population, and

established Dolly as what was hitherto unknown in that country, a black star.

Narr: After AFRICAN JIM, Dolly made one more film in the early 'Fifties, and then apartheid clamped down. She would not appear on screen for another 30 years. 03.13

03.19 Voice: Dolly Rathebe from South Africa!

(sings)

03.28 Narr: Before she came to Vancouver, I had arranged for Dolly to stop off to sing before Nelson Mandela, who was visiting Toronto for the Mandela Children's Fund, at the Skydome there. 03 38

(singing)

03.58 Joy Searl: That was a good one!

04.01 Narr: In Toronto, Dolly was singing with Lorraine Klaasen, the daughter of her old singer friend, Thandi Klaasen. 04.08

04.09 (Voice) Lorraine Klaasen!

04.11 Narr: I asked Dolly what Mandela had said, when he wagged his finger at her.

He'd said, "Dolly, you should have told me you were coming!"

This was a surprise for the South African president – Dolly was Mandela's favourite singer.

Mandela was in Toronto with his wife Graca - Dolly had sung at their wedding. 04.29

04.32 Narr: Dolly had been a popular singer in South Africa – at one time, the most popular – for over half a century, but this was her first visit to North America. During the forty year reign of apartheid, Dolly had never left her native land, so had been unable to establish an international reputation. 04.52

04.54 (Dolly sings)

(05.25 Text: Paul Blaney)

(05.43 Text: Themba Tana)

05.43 Narr: This is Themba – Themba Tana, a South African musician who has made his home in Vancouver. Themba has pulled together a number of local musicians to play back-up for Dolly in the few performances she will give while she is here. 05.55

(06.32 Text: Kathy Kidd)

(06.41 change of scene)

(07.20 Text: Pacific Cinematheque, after screening of AFRICAN JIM)

07.24 Dolly: Thank you.

(Scene: Dolly on phone)

07.52 Dolly: Because it was no place to stay, nobody could stay there...

07.57 Narr: A telephone interview takes Dolly back to her life in apartheid South Africa of the 'Fifties.

At that time, she lived in a place called Sophiatown.

Sophiatown was famous as a South African melting pot, a vibrant area where many cultures – Zulu, Tswana, Xhosa, Sotho, Shangaan, even mixed blood Coloureds – mingled and flourished. 08.19

(08.19 singing)

08.44 Narr: But the problem with Sophiatown was that it was part of Johannesburg – which was designated a white city. In the 'Fifties, Sophiatown was earmarked by the new apartheid authorities for ethnic cleansing. 08.57

09.10 Narr: Thousands of people were forced out of their homes, which were torn down. Sophiatown was levelled. 09.16

09.22 Narr: The people took with them whatever of their belongings they could salvage and carry. 09.26

09.29 Dolly: Your children, the stove, the pot, the what, whatever, and dump it, just dump there. 09.36

09.45 Narr: Sophiatown was turned into a ghost city – until whites built a new city, called "Triumph". 09.51

09.53 Narr: The former inhabitants were moved to a new township that bore the rustic name of "Meadowlands", but which sat on the open veldt, with none of the vibrancy of Sophiatown. 10.04

10.06 Dolly: We - we were staying far, the Blacks were never allowed to stay near the Whites, you'd drive about two or three or four miles out of town. 10.14

10.25 Narr: Blacks had now been shifted well away from what were now all-white towns where blacks could come only to work. 10.31

10.51 Narr: But that didn't stop some whites from wanting to hear black musicians. 10.56

10.56 Dolly: There were some whites who really loved our music. There were nightclubs where Blacks, you know, could go inside, go in there and come out without the police knowing. And from

there you must now see your way home. And now, on our way out, they'd be there, the Flying Squad to arrest us, looking around if there are any Blacks. 11.18

11.20 Narr: Any young black woman, alone in the white city in the early hours after the night-clubs closed was immediately suspect as a prostitute, and liable to arrest.

Dolly was detained many times after her illicit nightclub gigs. 11.34

11.38 Dolly: I was always a victim. 11.40

(11.44 Scene: Street and boutique)

11.20 Narr: It is Dolly's pleasure to scour the second-hand clothes boutiques on Main Street. The clothes are better quality than she would find in the used clothes stores at home, and she is looking for bargains for herself and her extended family. 12.34

13.00 Joy Davis: There must be a mirror somewhere, eh?

13.05 Yasmin Tayob: My name is Yasmin, it's wonderful to meet you. I saw your photograph, and I recognized you! Yes, because my father's from South Africa, and I was looking at these photos, and I was looking at you, and I thought, That's that woman from the photographs!

I actually bought one of the books to, so I -

Dolly: About the Schadebergs, oh -

13.24 Narr: Yasmin is talking about a book by the great South African photographer Jurgen Schadeberg. Schadeberg, as a young German immigrant to South Africa, in the 'Fifties had worked for the upstart magazine for blacks, *Drum*. He had trained many black photographers who nowhere else would have been welcomed in what was considered an all-white preserve. 13.45

13.48 Narr: It was Schadeberg who created Dolly as a celebrated pin-up for the townships. He chronicled her career over half-a-century, and she appeared in a number of his photographic books. 14.00

14.01 Dolly: I'm in that book.

Yasmin Tayob: Yeah. I wish I had my camera, I could take your picture.

(Laughter)

Anyway, all the different photographs, and all the different experiences with each person, with each person ...

Dolly: Yah. And you saw Dolly Rathebe?

Tayob: Yes, I did.

Dolly: Ah, it's a small world.

Tayob: It is.

Dolly: Yeah. 14.21

14.21 (Scene: In car)

Narr: While Themba shows Dolly Vancouver, they swap gossip about friends in the music scene back in South Africa.

(Light conversation)

(14.51 sign: "Musqueam Administration")

14.51 Narr: We are on our way to visit the reservation of the Musqueam people.

14.59 Narr: Leanne Hensel of the Musqueam Band is showing a map that bears the original place names of the region. 15.05

15.08 Narr: Around Vancouver, there are many First Nations people living on reserves. Like the original inhabitants of South Africa, all the land was once theirs, but it was taken away by white settlers. 15.19

15.20 Narr: The difference between Canada and South Africa is that in Canada, the native peoples form a small minority – whereas in South Africa they are the majority. In both countries, the struggle for a just resolution of the land issue continues. 15.36

15.42 Narr: The indigenous people of both countries are intent on discovering their “lost” history, a history suppressed and distorted by white rulers. 15.50

16.09 Computer (Musqueam words) "Not with the hand..." Note that there is both "ja" and "s"...

16.23 Louise Point: UBC (University of British Columbia) is helping us to bring our language back.

16.27 Narr: Like all the languages of the indigenous people of North America, the Musqueam language is in danger of disappearing. It is a daily struggle to preserve it when speakers are dying out.

Louise Point: ...and also hear the late Arnold Garringer on tape, and get the correct pronunciation...

16.40 Narr: Despite the increasing domination of English, in South Africa, the situation is not so desperate. Many black South Africans speak three or four languages.

The Musqueam and Africans find many comparisons in their traditions, often focused on the ancestors. 16.56

16.57 Louise Point: Yeah, there'll be a potlatch ceremony, and then my son will receive my grandfather's ancestral name, Chialtset.

The song they sing to that, it goes:

(sings)

and it carries on, then you've got the warrior dancers running around, the warriors are the protectors of the woman. 17.26

17.27 Dolly: We also, when the elders of the family dies, like my father dies, or my mother dies, in

fact, when my father died, then my mother's got to mourn for the whole year. To be sure about, you know...

Themba Tana: What's interesting here is, after a year, to, to free the spirit, after a year, it's like -

Louise Point: ...if I want to show my grandfather's picture, then I have to have a family meeting, with my cousin, and my aunts and uncles, and to discuss when we're going to have it. It'll probably be at our lodge out here. There will be a picture, one big picture of my grandfather.

18.14 Themba Tana: So, since he passed away, you can't look at the photos?

Leanne Hensel: Oh, yeah, we can. We have to wait for a while before we can...

Louise Point: Like, I was taught by grandpa not to hang up the pictures for at least a year. So after April 24, that's when we buried grandpa, we can hang up his picture again. 13.31

(Exterior)

18.54 Louise Point: Put your arm around her, baby.

13.06 Carl Point: Bye, auntie.

12.12 Themba Tana: You've opened your heart to us -

Louise Point: Yeah, I wish I could share more of our culture with you. Usually when you do something, you have to give a gift offering, I feel badly about not having a gift.

(19.50 Text: Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia)

20.00 Narr: For Dolly, as for the Musqueam people, in a world that does not value history, there is a fierce determination to hold on to the traditional.

20.13 Narr: In North America and in Africa, First Nations people share a veneration for their ancestors, who continue to watch over them, and judge their actions. 20.22

(21.05 Scene: Rehearsal)

21.10 Kathy Kidd: Themba, do you know the root for this song?

21.28 Themba Tana: (Hums). Then back.

21.32 Narr: For this rehearsal, Themba has gathered a group of local female musicians. I call it "Dolly's First All-Woman Band – Except for Themba". 21.43

21.49 Kathy Kidd: OK. OK, tell me when it changes.

(Dolly starts to sing click song)

22.19 Narr: For the Canadian musicians, the township beat is a novelty, and has to be learnt. 22.24

23.48 Kathy Kidd: We'll fade out, and Dolly will be doing the clicks there.

Karen Graves: What's it called?

Dolly: It's the Click Song.

Kathy Kidd: The Click Song. 23.53

23.54 (Text: Fairview Presbyterian Church)

24.03 Chang Hwa Kim: OK.

Anna: You don't go back until here.

Chang Hwa Kim: Yeah, yeah. OK.

I'll just give you the sound. 24.15

(sing Nkosi Sikelele i Afrika)

25.06 Narr: Dolly has been invited to a local church. She is going through the South African national anthem, *Nkosi Sikelele i Afrika* – which is also a hymn. 25.16

25.32 Narr: Nkosi Sikelele is always an emotional experience for Dolly. For South Africans of her generation, the anthem has a special significance. The music carries a longing for freedom that was only realized in 1994, with the first democratic elections in South Africa.

It was only after those elections that the song became the national anthem. 25.57

26.27 Angela Strauss: Dolly? It's so good to meet you. Angela Strauss. Are you Anna? It's so nice to see you. I can't believe that you're here. This is so wonderful. It was quite by accident.

Anna: I know, I know.

Angela Strauss: I'm so glad that you could come.

Yeah.

26.48 Narr: Dolly meets other members of Vancouver's considerable South African community.

26.54

26.54 Angela Strauss: I don't think Hanna or Tana would know your singing. Bit young.

(27.03 Anna and Dolly speak in Xhosa)

27.18 Angela Strauss: Who is here today who was born in South Africa? 27.22

27.24 Angela Strauss: Yea.

27.28 As you can see, we are people from all over the globe - where's our globe? Got it? Yeah. And um - ... (laugh) Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing, we're all sitting on one spot.

Gideon Strauss: As you can see, Vancouver and South Africa are on opposite sides of the world. So there are people who belong to the family of God in Vancouver, and even to the very ends of the earth.

28.02

28.05 Angela Strauss: Today, we're going to learn a new song, and it is actually a prayer, it's called "Nkosi sikelele i Afrika" - "God bring peace to Africa".

(28.19 hymn begins. On screen translation)

Lord, bless Africa

May her spirit rise high up^[L]_[SEP] Hear Thou our prayers^[L]_[SEP]

Lord bless us.

Lord, bless Africa^[L]_[SEP]

May her spirit rise high up^[L]_[SEP]

Hear thou our prayers

Lord bless us

Your family.

(Chorus) ^[L]_[SEP]Descend, O Spirit^[L]_[SEP]Descend, O Holy Spirit,

Lord bless us^[L]_[SEP]Your family.^[L]_[SEP](Repeat)

(29.08 Text: Rossini's)

29.20 (Voice of) Linton Garner: The voice is just a little bigger, huh?

Dolly: Learn the song, and turn it - I've got it. You people inspired me. 29.30

29.30 Narr: Dolly has been invited to sing at Rossini's. 29.32

Dolly: I had the voice - there's no way, I'm not turning back.

Narr: There, she meets the house musician, the distinguished jazz pianist Linton Garner, and they swap tales of the jazz greats. 29.43

Dolly: Charlie Parker -

Linton Garner: - I mean, the first one, now, was - I'll tell you who was in the first one. I was lucky to be in that. The headliner was Duke Ellington, the next headliner was Nat Cole, the next headliner was Sarah Vaughan. Imagine all of them in one show? 30.02

30.03 Narr: Dolly left Africa for the first time only after the fall of apartheid, so she heard the musical giants only on records and saw them in films.

Linton Garner: Isn't that wonderful?

Dolly: There all gone - Duke Ellington -

Narr: Linton has played with them.

Dolly: Satchmo - they're all gone.

Linton Garner: Yes.

(30.22 begin piano)

31.03 Linton Garner: If he's got any sense.

32.08 Narr: Dolly was one of the pioneers of township jazz, which you could loosely describe as an adaptation of American jazz to an African beat. But her career was built as much on classical jazz as on township. She modelled her singing on Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan – she even looked like the young Billie Holiday – and she was a blues singer in that great tradition. 32.32

(32.34 rehearsal scene)

33.24 Dolly: Where is this other piece? There's another piece.

33.34 Narr: Kathy has delighted Dolly by giving her one of her collections of music, and Dolly is trying out one of the songs.

33.50 Dolly: All right, here we are. (low chat)

(34.00 piano)

34.20 Kathy Kidd: The last one is?

38.02 Kathy Kidd: It's beautiful.

38.06 Dolly: Blow them in South Africa!

38.12 Kathy Kidd: South Africa, here we come!

Dolly: South Africa here we come!

Kathy Kidd: Canada, there we go!

38.21 (subtitle) *They just fit in right!*

(Chat)

38.33 Dolly: You all just go to town, do your thing.

Kathy Kidd: OK. OK, sounds good. Then you come in -

Dolly: - again, then just fade it.

Kathy Kidd: Oh, just fade it. OK.

38.52 Dolly: That's played most in the shebeens, when they're having a ball, and -

Kathy Kidd: In the shebeen?

(Laugh) 39.00

39.01 Kathy Kidd: What's a shebeen? That's your party - party house?

Dolly: We make like a beer - a beer - like a bar. Where they (Xhosa) How shall I put it?

Themba Tana: It's er, her place, or your place, anybody, or my place, and hang out, music ...drinks, and...

(39.27 Text: Dolly's shebeen, Mabopane township)

39.28 Narr: Dolly knows very well what a shebeen is. Off and on over the years, she has been a "Shebeen Queen", opening up her parlour over the week-end to entertain, and to quench the considerable thirst of township-dwellers. 39.42

(Chat)

39.47 Kathy Kidd: With the drums, Themba?

40.17 (subtitle: *This tune is nice.*)

40.23 (subtitle: *They've got it now.*)

40.25 Kathy Kidd: "I don't care - my man drinks too much, but I don't care what they say about him."

Dolly: Yeah.

Karen Graves (voice): He's mine.

Kathy Kidd: He's mine!

Dolly: I always get the love and everything, yeah, and he's drinking a lot, but I couldn't care, he gives me all the love in the world.

Karen Graves: He's a slob, but he's mine? 40.44

(41.02 Text: Nyala Restaurant)

41.49 Text: TRAVELS WITH DOLLY, PART I
VANCOUVER
END 41.56

TRAVELS WITH DOLLY

bold - shadow - outline

Credits

Technical assistance Avi Bryant
Shebeen shot Daniel Riesenfeld

Clips from *African Jim*
courtesy of Erica Rutherford

Clips from *Come Back, Africa*
courtesy of Cineteca di Bologna
and Rogosin Heritage

Skydome performance
courtesy of CBC

Music

Golden City Blues
based on *I lost my Sugar in Salt Lake City*
by Johnny Mercer

Ntyilo by A. Silinga
Gallo Africa &
Gallo Music Publishers

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika
by Enoch Sontonga

Back o' Town Blues
lyric by Louis Armstrong
music by Luis Russell

Laku Tshon' Ilanga
by Mackay Davashe
Gallo Music Publisher

Into yam
Click song
traditional

with thanks to

Burcu's Angels Funky Clothing
Rossini's

Angela & Gideon Strauss
& the Congregation of
Fairview Presbyterian Church

Assefa Kebede
&

Nyala Restaurant

Leanne Hensel,
Louise & Carl Point
of the
Musqueam Band

Joy Searl Davis
Fleur Matthewson
Yasmin Tayob

Special thanks to musicians:

Chang Hwa Kim
Paul Blaney
Linton Garner

Lorraine Klaasen & Band
Kathy Kidd
Karen Graves
Twyla Brooks

Dolly's First All-Woman Band
-- except for Themba

a documentary by
Peter Davis

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Dedicated to the memory of
Kathy Kidd
Linton Garner
&
Dolly Rathebe