



During slavery, January 2 was the only day in the year slaves had a holiday. They danced in the streets. It is still celebrated on this date as the Carnival. After the end of slavery, about the 1850's, it was continued by the colonial working-class society. Today anybody can join a Kloops (club) that competes each year. The first three

winners in each category get a trophy to keep in their Kloopskamer (clubhouse). Categories include "best dressed," "best march," and so on.

"The Carnival came from the slave trade, the dregs of the community, the rough ones. It was tagged with so many negative aspects. The middle class 'coloreds' went to the mosque and church and were taught the right things and kept their kids away from the Carnival.

"It's different now. The majority of parents and kids of the technological age have their own opinions. They are much more advanced. Carnival is respectable now.

"It is so in our blood. No matter which class you are from, once the fever hits you, you can't help but be part of the whole thing. Mac's father, Mr. Mac, was a leading figure in the Carnival. He played the sax and the banjo.

"Mac wrote music for all the instruments in the 'Goema Symphony Number 1,' violin, flute, cello and sax. The first time I heard it I thought he was pushing the bar so high he's leaving some of us in the dark. He's not just talented, he's gifted.

"The Zulus and Khoi have tribal dancing, and we have the goema. That is our musical culture. That is who we are. I'm blessed."



Aykes Swartz, plays guitar in the Cape Town Goema Orchestra.



I wanted to find out about goema music. There is all kinds of jazz in Cape Town, and goema is related.

Everyone said Mac McKenzie was the best goema musician. Staff in a music store told me where to find him.

His 82-year-old mother answered the door, wiping her hands on a dishcloth. "He is in his studio in the backyard," she whispered. I waited until he finished up with Wesley Valentine, a bass-guitar student.

Then he put the kettle on for a cup of tea. "What we are doing here is a Cape Town composers' workshop. We have six concerts of the Cape Town Goema Orchestra coming up. We are always challenged by not having a music education. It's expensive. Going to University of Cape Town costs 31,000 rand. Where is one going to get 31,000 rand? We don't charge money.

"People here are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we are trying to put music in the schools, open their minds - from asking a student to play a 'C' and they don't know where it is on the guitar, to where they can write and hear orchestration. I learned to play by ear and taught myself to write music so I

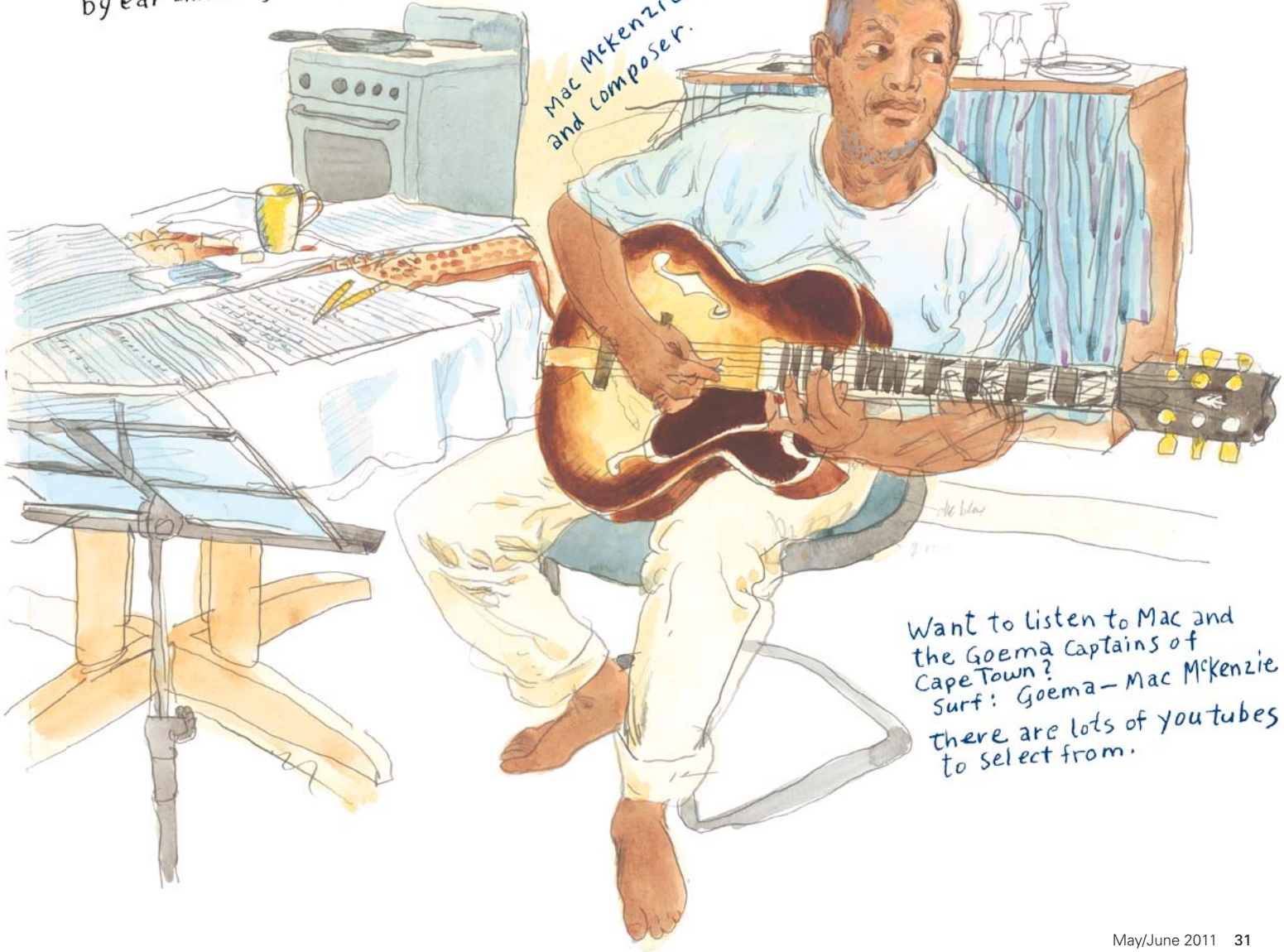
could get royalties for my work and put bread on the table, which is what we all want to do in life.

"It is a slow journey. We don't use computers. It is a pencil, an eraser and music paper. We are Creole, mixed people, colored. Our ancestry has disappeared. We come from the first people of the world, if you know your business. Our brains have been stripped bare of knowledge of where we come from. They danced to the goema drum. The Carnival is goema. We call our music goema."

Mac plucks the beat on his guitar. "I march out each year with the Carnival group. The sound has the mixture of all the world. You can hear Indian, Khoi, San, Malaysian, Indonesian, Jewish, European. Cape Town was the one port that everyone had to come to.

"I compose it with quieter tones, a sophisticated version of what one hears in the street. I can now play goema with classical musicians."

Mac McKenzie - musician and composer.



Want to listen to Mac and the Goema Captains of Cape Town? Surf: Goema - Mac McKenzie. There are lots of youtubes to select from.