

## Info

*Band Name:* Satori is a Japanese word that means *understanding, awakening, and enlightenment - a movement from darkness to light.*

*Genre:* jazz, gospel, goema, township sounds and more.

*Band members:*

Lead Vocals: Zara Ally  
Background Vocals: Lisa Ally, Ashley Ally and Erol Ally  
Acoustic and Electric Guitar: Erol Ally  
Keyboards: Ezra Erasmus  
Bass guitar: Eddie Steyn  
Flute and saxophones: Ashley Ally  
Drums and Percussion: Kevin Ally

*Year of founding:* 2014

*City of founding:* Johannesburg, South Africa

## Description

The Satori project is special as it brings together two generations of the Ally family into a creative unit with celebrated and renowned musicians Ezra Erasmus and Eddie Steyn.

**Ashley** a founding member of Satori, collaborated with various artists, including recording with Louis Jean, an internationally acclaimed reggae artist, with Thutukani from the Lucky Dube band and Paul Hanmer.

**Ezra** has shared stages with international artists such as Joe, Bebe Winans, The Manhattans, Akon, The Black Eyed Peas and John Legend, amongst others. Recent accomplishments include performance at South African Idols and The Voice Nigeria.

**Eddie** a graduate from The Jazz School of Music from the University of Cape Town directed and produced the Graceland Documentary with Paul Simon by TIA Films. He has performed with local and international artists, including Jimmy Dlodlu, Sibongile Mngoma, Mimi Mtenjwa, Maleh, Swazi Dlamini, Hugh Masekela, Chante Moore (US), Tamia (US), Andrew Young (UK), Loyiso Bala, Ayo Solanke (Nigeria), Chad Saaiman and Johnny Clegg.

**Erol** has played with some of the best talents South Africa had to offer, including, acclaimed drummer, the late Lulu Gontsana, internationally acclaimed pianist Paul Hanmer, saxophonist Robbie Jansen, international recording artist Jonathan Butler, saxophonist Winston Ngosi Mankunku, Feya Faku, Paul Petersen, Benedict De Maar, Frank Paco to mention but a few.

Lisa and Zara's musical history and affinity can be traced back to the numerous hours they spent as toddlers accompanying their dad Erol to numerous rehearsals for concerts and festivals.

**Lisa** studied classical piano as a child but chose singing as her interest in music progressed. Her exposure to music developed her love for performing.

**Zara's** career started at the age of 5 when she performed for Nelson Mandela in Cape Town at the St Georges Cathedral. She won a gold medal in the South African National Championships of the Performing Arts in 2006 at the tender age of 13. That same year, she represented South Africa at the World Championships of the Performing Arts in Los Angeles, the Olympics of the performing arts

world. She brought home four medals, a gold, two silver and bronze. At 14, she joined a girl band, Atom, which went on to make history as the youngest ever South African band to be nominated for the SAMA awards. Their hit single, Gone by the Minute, was on Highveld Top 40 for a few weeks. Besides being an accomplished singer, Zara is also a songwriter. One of the highlights of her young career is as a guest on the Smooth Jazz Cruise in the Caribbean in 2013, with a line-up that included Jonathan Butler, George Benson, Marcus Miller, Bob James, David Sanborn, Angie Stone and Candy Dulfer. Cape Town-born Zara is the lead singer for Satori.

**Kevin** played in, and led various contemporary school bands across a range of genres, Jazz, Orchestral and Rock. He has been professionally trained and mentored by internationally renowned session drummer, Neill Ettridge (Mango Groove) on an ongoing basis since 2005. Highlights of his budding career include performances with local composers Paul Hanmer and the late Errol Cudumbey.

The band's first album, titled Satori, is a tribute to their late father, Francis Ally. The generational, historical and cultural heritage of this band brings together a fusion of Western, Asian and African influences (KhoiSan) that interestingly defines the sound and rhythms of Satori.

Research indicates that the KhoiSan may once have comprised the majority of living humans on the planet, for much of the past 150,000 years. South African former President, Nelson Mandela, mapped his genetic ancestry subsequently revealing some KhoiSan DNA. It is also suggested that KhoiSan people may be direct descendants of mankind's oldest common paternal ancestors.

## **Releases**

### **Satori (album, SatoriMusic South Africa, 2015)**

#### **Track list:**

- 01 Summer
- 02 Vuya
- 03 Reflections
- 04 Weeping
- 05 Satori
- 06 Spring in Joburg
- 07 All that I need
- 08 Weekend Special

### **We are Africa (album, SatoriMusic South Africa, 2017)**

#### **Track list:**

- 01 We are Africa
- 02 What has become of us
- 03 West Coast Jive
- 04 Visitation
- 05 Forever Young

## **Concerts Performed:**

Commemoration Concert in Cape Town – Secretary of Parliament of South Africa  
Berlin – Nelson Mandela 2<sup>nd</sup> Commemorative Concert  
Jazz in the Garden

Zoo Lake Jazz Concert  
Jazz in the Garden  
Victory Theatre - CD Launch and Concert  
The Orbit Jazz Club  
The Little Theatre in Port Elizabeth – Homecoming Concert and CD launch  
Parkview Jazz Concert

### **Press Releases:**

Eastern Province Herald      written by Mark Carrels

The Ally clan has a rich musical history of note, no better underscored than by their late father, legendary Port Elizabeth jazz pianist Francis ‘Frank’ Ally, who not only laid a platform for the genre in the region, but also left an indelible footprint behind for others to follow.

It is therefore, appropriate and timely that a few of his offspring, who have joined forces under the moniker, Satori, have decided to return to their Port Elizabeth roots for a “homecoming” concert. The colourful, talented and gifted Johannesburg outfit, comprising brothers Erol Ally (guitar), Ashley Ally (flute, alto sax), Kevin Ally, (drums), siblings Zara and Lisa Ally (vocals), and internationally-acclaimed musicians, Eddie Steyn (bass) and Ezra Erasmus (keyboards), will lay bare their eclectic mix of contemporary jazz, R&B, African and gospel sounds at a special concert at Port Elizabeth’s Little Theatre in Belmont Terrace.

The family’s enduring musical touch is no better demonstrated by the fact that Zara (main vocals) and Lisa’s musical slant has been passed on to them by father, Erol, while Kevin has under the studious mentorship of dad, Ashley, grown into an accomplished drummer.

The band’s debut CD Satori was launched at a packed Victory Theatre in Johannesburg in November - with jazz pianist Paul Hanmer as special guest - an indication that the band had finally arrived. Most of the tracks feature original compositions such as Summer, Weeping and Satori. An exception is 80s hit Weekend Special, written by PE singer Melvyn Matthews – a close friend of the Ally family - and made famous by the late Brenda Fassie. The hugely talented Zara shows the full range of her vocal abilities on beautifully sung track, “All that I need” acknowledging a spiritual influence that certainly illuminates the band’s achievements.

However the band are not averse to playing popular cover versions, among them a well-orchestrated haunting rendition of Bob Dylan’s Forever Young and Chaka Khan’s Through the Fire, with Zara showing off her exceptional singing talents once again.

Satori is a Japanese word meaning “awakening” and “enlightenment” and according to the Ally’s is a suitable reference points to the Chinese heritage of their mother, who still lives in the family home in PE’s Korsten suburb.

The energetic group of musicians, who are certainly at the peak of their musical powers, recently returned from showcasing their talents at the Nelson Mandela Tribute Concert in Berlin by special invitation to packed out venues in the former East German enclave.

Erol says of the trip in December: “A truly mind-blowing experience from a cultural perspective. Berlin is a rich melting pot of artistry of many different genres, an important reference point where culture and history meet.”

Ashley, who is one seriously successful businessman of national and international repute, leads the band on flute, alto and tenor saxophone. Ashley, after studying under well-known classical music teacher, Ann Catt in Port Elizabeth in the 80s, further honed his talents during a period of “exile” in Germany in the 90s – in between completing his studies in Urban Planning.

Erol is something of a virtuoso guitarist and arranger, whose talents, gifts and proficiency add a touch of class and distinction to any occasion. Erol may have cut his teeth in jazz guitar, but with nimble dexterity, is able to transfer his deft chord progression skills from a jazz standard in one set, to backing it up with a sublime R&B riff in the next.

Influenced by jazz guitar legend George Benson and mentors Paul Petersen - formerly of legendary and defunct Spirits Rejoice and brother Neville Ally an accomplished bassist and classically trained

guitarist – Erol has mixed it with the best in Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. Now based in Johannesburg, he is also performing regularly to a sold-out Monte Casino venue.

The family did not decide to embark on their latest musical journey as an afterthought. Their fans and hangers-on knew all along these are a seriously talented bunch of musicians. However family life, studies and careers took precedence, while any ideas of playing as an organised ensemble - or recording an album - were relegated to the back of their minds, up until now that is. And their thousands of fans in the Bay, who have been fortunate to experience the unique musical talents of the Ally's before their move to Johannesburg some years ago, are certainly being rewarded for their patience.

Some things in life, like good wine, take time to mature and evolve. So it is with the Ally's; it has taken years of honing their talents -in between focusing on other priorities - to have the stars finally aligned for them. A musical alchemy come true.

More importantly, their musical journey that has culminated in a cutting-edge album, is a celebration of the esteemed legacy of their father, Frank, who was a mentor to many of the country's foremost musicians. Among them, trumpeter Feya Faku, jazz saxophonist Zim Ngqawana, and jazz drummer Lulu Gontsana, who have both passed on.

Another feather in Satori's cap, that demonstrates their growing popularity among jazz fans, is the fact that the band have been invited to perform at top live jazz venue, the Orbit, in Johannesburg. Join the band at the Little Theatre, Belmont Terrace on Friday for a unique, extraordinary musical story of a family bond that straddles Port Elizabeth and beyond.

Label: SatoriMusicSouthAfrica