

Durban jazz legend Theo Bophela at his home in Inanda

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KHAYA
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Jazz man is still hitting the high notes

At the age of 80, jazz musician Theo Bophela is far from finished. After completing his music diploma at the Durban University of Technology at the age of 62, Bophela is now teaching music to aspirant musicians at the same institution.

He has enjoyed an illustrious career spanning more than five decades and has performed for the likes of boxing legend Muhammad

Ali.

Sipping ice tea in a reclining chair is not his idea of how to spend his golden years. In fact, retirement is not even part of Bophela's vocabulary.

"There is an unwritten idiom that a musician only retires when he permanently owns land six feet deep. That's when I'll retire," says Bophela, who obtained 19

distinctions while completing his diploma. I decided to study at a very old age because I believe that knowledge is power. I remember when I went to enrol they asked me if I wanted to enrol one of my kids and I said: 'No, me?'"

Bophela still performs with his Durban group, Nqwelo Africa Jazz, which was formed in 1997. –
Sphumelele Mngoma