

Introduction

The Study of Zimbabwean Music by Zimbabwean Scholars

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This book provides a transdisciplinary approach to Zimbabwean music by Zimbabwean scholars. It not only covers aspects of Zimbabwean music from a musicological point of view, but also opens up a wide range of subjects of broad academic interest in Africa and elsewhere. Themes of interest include music and land reform; nationalism in relation to musical culture in Zimbabwe; music with regard to the youth (such as dancehall music); the use of gospel music for religious and political purposes; the interrelation of specific types of music (for instance, *mbira*) in rural and urban spaces; the relationship between people living across borders (for instance, Shona-speakers along the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique); current understandings of the liberation struggles since 1980; historical approaches to Zimbabwean music during colonial times; and music and gender.

The importance of a transdisciplinary study on Zimbabwean music

This book aims to provide a solid foundation for future studies on Zimbabwean music, either historically (in the precolonial and colonial eras) or in the contemporary (postcolonial) period. Departing from a purely musicological perspective, this book also analyses the different musical realities in the Zimbabwean musical culture, such as Zimdancehall, *mbira*, *sungura* and *chimurenga*. Furthermore, it provides a study of the functionality of traditional dances such as *chinyamvera*, *jichi* and *xinombela* in both a traditional and a contemporary context. Sociologically, these musical cultures in Zimbabwe reflect the political and economic texts in which music is produced, including the consumption patterns of music distributed through official, public and private dissident circuits, as Maurice Vambe mentioned during the editing of this book. The importance of this book is perhaps its ability to provide various perspectives on Zimbabwean music from different disciplines in the humanities by Zimbabwean scholars, and its exploration of relevant and contemporary aspects of music that have not been studied by international scholars, such as certain historical approaches, gender studies, sociological aspects of music in urban and rural areas, or the music industry in Zimbabwe.

The book also introduces audiences to the different rhetorical styles, voices and tones through which music generates surplus meanings, which the various authors unearth and explore in their different chapters. The originality of this book is in its capacity to register shifts in understandings of the idea or identities of Zimbabweanness as represented through music in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. While constructing a linear historiographic narrative that confirms, affirms and also contests other narratives of the nation, a book on Zimbabwean music that foregrounds transdisciplinary connections will also cultivate a self-reflexivity that is able to contest the notion of Zimbabwean music by various local scholars.

The editors of this book believe that a transdisciplinary book on Zimbabwean music written by local scholars is important for the study of Zimbabwean music because it offers a valuable contribution to postcolonial studies. Furthermore, the transdisciplinary study of music functions to demonstrate the importance of music in its social context in Zimbabwean studies. The book examines music as an artistic and social form of expression and, thus, it examines Zimbabwean music from two perspectives; namely, the participant (musicians) and observer (audience). This dual perspective is highlighted with reference to rural or urban spaces, and gender. As a result of this duality, the semiotic relationship between music and society is addressed throughout the book. The book also provides perspectives on musical cultures that reignite debates on topics that would not normally be accessible to international scholars in the Global North. Therefore, this book breaks new ground essential for the study of Zimbabwean music.

International scholars writing on Zimbabwean music since the sixteenth century

The first reference to Zimbabwean music by a Westerner is found in 1586 – the Portuguese missionary Father João dos Santos writing about *mbira* music (Tracey 2015: 130). Andrew Tracey (132) also makes a reference to the German explorer Carl Mauch, who attempted to transcribe three *mbira* tunes performed near Great Zimbabwe in 1872. These references feasibly help us to prove the existence of *mbira* music for more than 430 years, but they do not provide any information about the musicological study of *mbira* music or its semiotic interaction with society.

Since the 1940s international scholars have regularly published academic studies

on Zimbabwean music. In particular, general studies of lamellophones (*mbiras*) have been extensive, as evidenced by the work of international scholars such as Arthur Morris Jones (1949), Hugh Tracey (1961), Gerhard Kubik (1964, 1965), Robert Kauffman (1969, 1972); Andrew Tracey (1970, 2015); Paul Berliner (1975); John Kaemmer (1989); Ernest Brown (1994); Thomas Turino (1998), Johannes Brusila (2002); Banning Eyre (2015) and Tony Perman (2015). These scholars have written on different aspects of *mbira* music, although, according to many academics, the most popularised study of *mbira* music is *The Soul of Mbira* (Berliner 1978). Berliner offers extensive research on the *mbira* and its social context in rural areas, where it functioned to connect families with their ancestors through all-night *bira* ceremonies.

In contrast to the ethnographies on Zimbabwean music by international scholars, this transdisciplinary study offers a specific study of *mbira* music in different rural and urban contexts from insiders' points of view by scholars such as Perminus Matiure (Chapter 1) or Vimbai Chamisa (Chapter 6). Matiure is an *mbira* performer and the head of the Music Department at Midlands State University in Gweru. He offers a new musicological perspective on *mbira* music from a practical and creative point of view, given that he is able to provide a self-reflectivity about the migration of *mbira* music into urban spaces in postcolonial Zimbabwe.¹ Matiure provides new views on *mbira* music in rural and urban spaces from his position both as an academic and as a Zimbabwean, and from this particular context, contests Berliner's popularised *mbira* studies.

Apart from the studies on lamellophones in Zimbabwe, there have been other aspects international scholars have focused on – for example, Turino's (1998) work on the notions of nationalism, cosmopolitanism and globalisation in Zimbabwean music from the 1950s to the late twentieth century. Turino's study is mostly based on urban spaces in an attempt to focus on different forms of music that portray Zimbabwean identity in colonial and postcolonial times. The author uses cosmopolitanism and globalisation to examine the influence of external musical genres in Zimbabwe since the 1960s, such as jazz, kwela, Congolese rumba and Kenyan benga. Turino also discusses *chimurenga* music through the influence of *mbira* and electric ensembles in the post-1980 era. However, most of Turino's

¹ With regard to the rural and urban context of *bira* ceremonies, Andrew Tracey made a documentary entitled *Mbira Dzavadzimu: Urban and Rural Ceremonies with Hakurotwi Mudhe* (1975). This documentary is a valuable resource to understand the different aspects of *bira* ceremonies in urban and rural Zimbabwe.

work focuses on Harare and not other cities in Zimbabwe, such as Bulawayo and Gweru. In contrast, this book is a combination of various studies on Zimbabwean music in different urban contexts, including popularised music genres such as Zimdancehall.

In relation to the study of music in Harare, Barbara Mahamba's work on the history of Mbare (a township in Harare) from its genesis in 1907 to the 1970s (Chapter 7) serves to draw a comparison with Turino's study on the music in Harare. Mahamba emphasises the importance of the black middle-class population in sustaining the musical culture in the historical township of Mbare during colonial times. The middle-class black population rented venues or helped to provide income to artists, so that within the oppressed black population, the richest ones tended to help to sustain the local culture economically and through venue provision.

Another relevant aspect studied by international scholars on Zimbabwean music is music censorship during postcolonial Zimbabwe and more specifically after 2000 (Eyre (2001, 2004, 2015; Thram 2006). Eyre, for example, analyses the different forms of music censorship by the postcolonial Zimbabwean state. Eyre's book (2001) mostly concentrates on the post-2000 era when the new agrarian reform took place in the country and many artists served to promote the state policies as a response to the political threat of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). As a result, Eyre offers a reflection on how state politics was able to control musical expression in Zimbabwe. In relation to the discussion on music censorship in Zimbabwe, this book offers different points of view from insiders on music during the land reform process. In Chapter 3 Tinashe Innocent Mutero offers an in-depth analysis of how *chinyambera* dance in Gweru provides a criticism of the ZANU–PF policy and a form of artistic resistance towards the censorship law in Zimbabwe. In Chapter 10 Bridget Chinouriri and Munyaradzi Nyakudya offer valuable criticism of how the land reform policy structured music production during the 2000s in order to promote the state's view of new forms of equality through land redistribution.

Zimbabwean scholars writing on Shona music

Since independence in 1980, several books essential for music education in Zimbabwe have been written and published by Zimbabwean scholars – for example, *Music Rocking*

from Zimbabwe (Zindi 2013), *Women Musicians of Zimbabwe* (Makwenda 2013), *Songs That Won the Liberation War* (Pongweni 1982) and *Zimbabwe Township Music* (Makwenda 2005). A more recent publication is Mhoze Chikowero's *African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe* (2015). Chikowero's book is a detailed description of how local music was contested in colonial Zimbabwe by Rhodesian forces. The author addresses the importance of music during the liberation struggle, from its genesis in the 1890s to the independence of Zimbabwe. Chikowero points out the representation and sovereignty of Zimbabwean culture as a social form of resistance during colonial times and as the representation of national culture after independence. Our transdisciplinary book offers a wider array of opinions of Zimbabwean scholars with regard to the different historical periods mentioned above. Together, Chikowero's contribution and this book will offer new academic literature on Zimbabwean music by local scholars.

The narratives of Zimbabwean scholars on the study of Zimbabwean music have been extensive in academic journals from the Global South, such as *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa* or the *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*. One of the most published scholars has been Maurice Vambe. Although Vambe's discipline is based on English literature in Africa, he has been able to cover many issues regarding Zimbabwean music, such as the notion of *chimurenga* (2004, 2011); music and gender in post-independence Zimbabwe (Rwafa and Vambe 2007). In particular, it is important to mention that the notion of *chimurenga* (from the Shona, 'revolutionary struggle') covers three main periods in the music of resistance and independence in present-day postcolonial Zimbabwe: the first liberation war between Zimbabweans and the British in the 1890s; the war of independence against the Rhodesians during the 1970s and the agrarian reform in the 2000s as a revolutionary input promoted and implanted by the state. The notion of *chimurenga* has been used and contested by different Zimbabwean scholars to describe the various historical periods – see, for example, Andrew Manyawu (2014), Vongai Nyawo (2012) and Memory Chirere (2008).

There have also been Zimbabwean scholars who have concentrated on other aspects of music – for instance, Blandina Makina (2009) on the music of Sam Monro as a white Shona-rapper regarding his criticism towards the state and Ezra Chitando, Masiwa Ragies Gunda and Joachim Kügler's (2007) edited collection on the use of Christian religion in

the social discourse of Zimbabwean music. Furthermore, one has to emphasise the various doctoral dissertations and Master's theses – for example, Mickias Musiyiwa's (2013) doctorate, 'The Narrativization of Post-2000 Zimbabwe in the Shona Popular Song-Genre: An Appraisal Approach', offers an in-depth analysis of the uses of history and musical culture by the political elite in Zimbabwe in order to produce new music that emphasises the goals of the government, thereby providing an insider's perspective on a topic previously only written about by international scholars such as Eyre (2004). Vimbai Chamisa's PhD is an examination of the music industry in Zimbabwe in relation to popular musical styles such as *jiti*, *mbira* and *chimurenga*. Laina Gumboreshumba's (2009) Master's thesis offers a unique analysis of Andrew Tracey's contribution to the analysis of *mbira* music by providing an organised and concise study of the *mbiras* found in Zimbabwe.

Chapter summary

The chapters in this book have been organised into parts as follows: (1) Indigenous ('traditional') music and its transformations; (2) Zimbabwean urban popular music across time; and (3) The rise of dancehall in Zimbabwe: regarding transdisciplinary studies.

Part 1: Indigenous music and its transformations

This part is made up of various transdisciplinary chapters that analyse the continuum of traditional music and its transformations in Zimbabwe through education, the music industry, gender studies and film.

In Chapter 1 Perminus Matiure offers an analysis of *mbira* music in urban spaces, mostly focusing on Gweru and to a lesser extent Harare. Matiure covers the historical period from 1980 to 2015 and shows how *mbira* music migrated from rural to urban spaces. The chapter provides a criticism of other literature on *mbira* music by international scholars with regard to the use of *mbira* and how the urban context affects the way in which *mbira* performances are different, depending on whether they are in rural or urban areas. The urban performances are meant for entertainment; therefore, the spiritual cosmos of *mbira* based on calling the spirits is restricted to rural areas.

With regard to rural areas, in Chapter 2 Renias Ngara and Doreen Sibanda offer a

study of the Karanga and Tsonga people in relation to the educational codes of certain dances that promote gender equality and virginity as a social value among adolescents in Chiredzi and Mberengwa in southern Zimbabwe. These dances are the *xinombela* in Tsonga and the *jichi* in Karanga.

In Chapter 3 Tinashe Innocent Mutero analyses how *chinyambera* dance is used to build criticism against the Zimbabwean state. He exposes *chinyambera* dance as a form of resistance in relation to the different forms of music censorship by the Zimbabwean state. Mutero provides a musical and social analysis of the *chinyambera* dance band, Tavirima, and its performances as a form of necessary rebellious expression in urban spaces such as Gweru.

In Chapter 4 Renias Ngara examines the gender roles in Shangwe dances among adolescents in the Gokwe region. This chapter provides insight into the functionality of dance and its various messages related to the period before entering into adulthood for teenagers. It both values and questions the hierarchical systems of the elders in the Gokwe region.

In Chapter 5 Maurice Vambe explores the film *If Vagina Had Teeth* and the rainmaking ceremonies of the Shona people of western Mozambique. He analyses the notion of Shona identity and its similarities and differences in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, through the Manyika and Ndau people respectively. In addition, he also touches on the power of Shona women to control men's actions in a patriarchal society through rainmaking ceremonies. In general, this chapter provides a valuable view on Shona culture with reference to the borders imposed during colonialism that separate the Shona people in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

In this part of the book, a study of the Zimbabwean music industry provides a valuable criticism of the values and representations of national music, as well as the sustainability of this industry in a national context. Vimbai Chamisa's Chapter 6 examines the use of *mbira* music by contemporary artists, such as Oliver Mtukudzi, Chiwoniso Maraire and Thomas Mapfumo. The musical arrangements by these artists are often based on the polyrhythmic variations of *mbira* music and the influence of certain traditional songs such as 'Nemamusasa', 'Nyamaropa', 'Taireva' and 'Bangidza'. The artists mentioned above are promoted internationally as 'Made in Zimbabwe' because their music is based

on traditional *mbira* variations or, in at the very least, on the use of lamellophones during live performances.

Part 2: Zimbabwean urban popular music across time

In this part of the book the semiotic understanding of music during the colonial and postcolonial period is brought out and Zimbabwean culture along the southern African borders and is also considered.

In Chapter 7 Barbara Mahamba provides an in-depth analysis of the township of Mbare in Harare from 1907 when the first residential area of black people was established in the capital. Mahamba emphasises the importance of the black middle class in sustaining musical culture from the beginning of the twentieth century until independence.

Victoria Butete's Chapter 8 is a deep analysis of the Zimbabwean music industry in relation to the interaction of musicians and promoters. Butete's chapter addresses the challenges for Zimbabwean artists, including (but not exclusively) the economic problems since 2000. In addition, Butete provides a valuable critique of the interactions between musicians and the music industry's agents in Zimbabwe, portraying the difficulties Zimbabwean musicians have in sustaining themselves through music.

Urther Rwafa's Chapter 9 examines Simon Chimbetu's lyrics as representations of the voiceless in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe in both urban and rural areas. Chimbetu is not only a respected musician in Zimbabwe, he also participated in the liberation struggle during the 1970s. Thus, Rwafa's analysis of Chimbetu's lyrics provides an important analysis of a Zimbabwean's sentiments during the different phases of independence and post-independence. According to Rwafa, Chimbetu's lyrics portray a nationalist sentiment as much as a valuable criticism of the Zimbabwean government.

As part of historical research on Zimbabwean music, in Chapter 10 Bridget Chinouriri and Munyaradzi Nyakudya examine the use of music during the land reform from 2000 to 2010. The redistribution of the land in Zimbabwe has been one of the most extensively discussed academic topics in Zimbabwe and generally in Africa. This chapter offers an examination of how the government used music to promote the land reform in Zimbabwe. Given that after independence most of the land was occupied by 4 500 white farmers, the necessity to redistribute the land was clear, but was also used as a form of

control by the government in the 2000s. This chapter provides an account of the first ten years of the agrarian reform programme and shows how music played an important role during this period.

Part 3: The rise of dancehall in Zimbabwe – regarding transdisciplinary studies

In Chapter 11 Rekopantswe Mate offers an analysis on Zimdancehall as a musical style that connects the artists with the people who live in the townships around Harare. Mate analyses the socio-economic context of the 2000s and how it affected the Zimdancehall industry as a system of piracy, promoters, fans and media.

On the theme of music and gender studies in urban spaces, this book offers two chapters on Zimdancehall in relation to manhood and the objectification of women. In Chapter 12 Manase Kudzai Chiweshe and Sandra Bhatasara examine the hegemonic masculinities of Zimdancehall, such as certain attitudes by male artists towards the control of women's agency. This chapter also provides an explanation of the social conditions of male Zimdancehall artists, with regard to unemployment and the patriarchal forms of survival in harsh economic conditions in Zimbabwe.

In Chapter 13 Ruby Magosvongwe examines songs in Shona by some of the emergent Zimdancehall artists, such as Tocky Vibes, Shinsoman and Killer T. In Chapter 14 Itai Muwati, Tinotenda Mwamuka and Charles Tembo critique the stereotype of African women as docile and explore how their agency is portrayed in Zimdancehall lyrics.

Finally, Zifikile Makwavarara and Albert Nyathi provide an analysis of Zimdancehall in Bulawayo produced in Ndebele. The authors observe that Zimdancehall in Ndebele has been highly influenced by South African kwaito, given its close relationship to Tswana, Zulu and Sesotho.

In total, the different parts of this book provide an analytical overview of Zimbabwean music that could become the foundation of further studies on the subject. It is hoped that this book shows Zimbabwean music as a legitimate terrain in postcolonial literature for local and international scholars and also proves the value of Zimbabwean scholars' offerings on this and other related themes.

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