

Mbira”, and the next chapter (Chapter 7) presents transcriptions in this system of the basic mbira parts of all ten songs on the CD. This alone is a useful source for learners, along with the six transcriptions in the previous two chapters that can be painstakingly pieced together from the various notation styles.

I should point out that the pictorial notation ascribed to me on p. 54 is not from my booklet “How to play the mbira (dza vadzimu)” but is a rationalization of an animation in one of my mbira films, “The technique of the mbira dza vadzimu”, which was not intended to be a notation system at all.

The book does a good job of covering important aspects of Dutiro’s mbira world in England. Perhaps it is the world’s good luck that conditions in Zimbabwe have driven so many great musicians out, along with the millions of economic refugees who are all waiting for sanity to return in their homeland.

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The Flamboyant Rooster and other Tshivenda Song Stories, Edited by Jaco Kruger and Ina le Roux, Illustrated by Deon Coetzer, School of Music, North-West University, Potchefstroom: South Africa. 149 pages, ISBN: Will supply.

Salungano! Salungano – Here comes a story!

Jaco Kruger and Ina le Roux present a beautifully illustrated collection of Tshivenda song stories (*Ngano*) in a compilation of twenty-seven translated oral narratives from Venda living in the mountainous Soutpansberg region of South Africa. The *Ngano* are not only entertaining tales which conjure up images of grandmothers and children gathered around evening fires, but are also ancient artistic maps of the human condition that provide a privileged view of human relationships in an African society. Often using animals as metaphoric characters, these stories are reminiscent of *The Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling and are a delightful vehicle for imparting important social themes and moral lessons.

Having attended an *Ngano* storytelling performance facilitated by Jaco Kruger at a conference at North-West University in 2006, I witnessed the warmth and lyricism of the song-stories and was concerned about how the translation into an English, written form would affect the overall feel. I should not have worried however, as these issues are comprehensively and sensitively dealt with by Kruger and le Roux. *The Flamboyant Rooster* includes translation and presentation descriptions (p. 18) as well as a performance and pronunciation guide (p. 19) which direct the reader in order to facilitate authentic storytelling in both a classroom setting and at home.

As a mouth-piece of the Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE), this book is aimed at providing suitable teaching material in the Arts and Culture learning area but is presented in a style which makes it accessible to all enthusiasts of folk tales.

There are no lesson plans or suggested educational goals, but rather a short passage at the end of each tale which highlights the themes and explains the meanings hidden within the poetry of the verses. Being song-stories, each *Ngano* would not be complete without musical transcriptions of accompanying melodies (the songs that accompany the stories). These are clear and presented in staff and tonic-solfa notation making the collection available to scholars of both musical languages.

Although offered mainly from the perspective of rural women, this *Ngano* collection includes stories told by men. A poignant touch added by the authors is that each story is preceded by a short biography of the storyteller which lends an intimacy to the collection and makes the subject matter in each *Ngano* more accessible. Yet another feature is a comprehensive list and erudite description of themes which appear in the *Ngano* (p. 9). These explanations give the reader added insight into the lessons dealt with in the stories and are a form of critical moral reflection. Themes presented range from climate and wildlife to more complex issues such as patriarchy, sexual violence and *Ngano* as a site of consternation.

Specific characters stand out in the stories such as the favourite villain of the animal kingdom (who undermines the authority of larger animals), the hare *Sankambe*, whose resistant tactics are popular and amusing and make fun of the distinction between the ruling and non-ruling classes (see “Mr Hare Scrubs his Heels” p. 34). However, more serious themes are often conveyed by other animals such as the lion (an authoritative figure). In the story “The Lion who Hunted his Daughter” (p. 112) the themes of sexual abuse and incest are confronted and the final conclusion is far from happy. Other characters too are involved in the complex webs of conflict and interdependence which make up the core of the stories, and it is the editors’ clear explanations that make this compilation fascinating.

When these stories were collected in 1991 and 1992, *Ngano* narrator numbers were dwindling and several of the storytellers were experiencing memory loss because they no longer had opportunities to present their tales. Kruger and le Roux write, “While *Ngano* performance may have passed a point of no return, its ancient themes still resonate strongly in contemporary life, and one may still, although not without effort, find a few skilled narrators in some communities”. This collection therefore serves not only as an educational resource but also as a historical documentation of an ancient and disappearing performance art.

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