

general public from appreciation of the wonderful music it contains".¹³ Hugh Tracey himself expended vast energy in pushing to get his recordings heard and circulated as widely as possible. The first thing I expect *The Very Best of Hugh Tracey* to achieve is to send listeners back to more recordings of the broad and rich musical traditions contained within every song. And then, ideally, perhaps musicians and researchers, like Michael Baird, will continue to track the changes and current health of exceptional musical traditions such as the mountain herding music of Lesotho.

Noel Lobley, Oxford University

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Zanzibara. 4 volume CD series, published by Buda Musique, Werner Graebner, producer. Detailed booklets for each volume in French and English. Titles: *Ikwani Safaa Musical Club Volume 1*; *L'âge d'or du taarab de Mombasa Volume 2*; *Ujamaa, le son des années 60 en Tanzanie Volume 3*; *La mémoire de la musique zanzibari*, Volume 4.

Over the last ten years the French record label Buda Musique has demonstrated a laudable commitment to the preservation and presentation of African popular music. The label's crowning achievement has to be its Ethiopiques series, which has interested a generation of American and European music lovers in Ethiopian music, and sparked international careers for some of Ethiopia's greatest artists; the series currently stands at 23 cd releases, and two dvds. The artistic and financial success of this series encouraged Buda Musique to replicate the Ethiopiques model with the popular musics of several other African countries. First up was a five volume series that traced the history of Angolan popular music from the late 1950s to the 1990s. The label's latest series is called 'Zanzibara', and as the name suggests, it is devoted to the popular music of Zanzibar, the Indian Ocean archipelago off the coast of mainland Tanzania. So far Buda Musique has released four volumes of Zanzibari music, and I am pleased to say that this series lives up to the high expectations raised by the Ethiopiques series.

All four of the volumes have been compiled, or more appropriately, curated, by Werner Graebner. I say 'curated' because each of these four volumes more closely have more in common with well-conceived art exhibits than with most modern reissues of African popular music. As he did with his previous releases of East African music on his own Dizim label, Werner Graebner pays detailed attention to the visual layout, artwork, and color schemes of each of the four Zanzibari releases. The notes to each CD are stuffed full of beautifully drawn maps, rare archival photos, and thorough notes in both French and English. The visual appeal of these releases is enriched by very well researched notes that introduce the listener to the history of Zanzibari music in general, provide histories of the groups on each disc, and full translations of the lyrics to all of the songs. And I am pleased to report that the care and attention that have gone into the

¹³ From liner notes to *Tswana and Sotho Voices – Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho 1951, '57, '59* (SWP 017/ HT 11) p. 2.

presentation of these recordings are more than matched by their musical interest. Each of these four volumes is full of moving, charming and exciting music.

The first volume of the series is devoted to the Ikhwani Safaa Musical Club, one of Africa's oldest and longest-running orchestras. All of the tracks on this CD of the Ikhwani Safaa – one of Zanzibar's greatest 'classical Taarab' orchestras – were recorded by Werner Graebner in Zanzibar and Dubai. This twenty-piece orchestra which features several violinists, the accordion, guitar, qanun, keyboard, guitar, and a half-dozen singers perform a dignified version of Taarab that demonstrates the music's hybrid origins; their music is rich with the spices of the Persian Gulf and of the Swahili coast. The musicianship is wonderful, the arrangements tasteful and the singers are more expressive than most in contemporary Taarab.

The second volume of Zanzibari music features sixteen tracks from the Golden Years of Mombasa Taaarab, 1965 to 1975. This release is one of the most enjoyable and rewarding reissues of East African music I have heard. There are standout performances by some of Taarab's 20th century legends; there are particularly enjoyable tracks by Zuhura Swaleh, Zein I'Abdin, and Matano Juma. These recordings are perhaps less stately than those of the Ikhwani Safaa but I think most non-specialist listeners may find them more accessible.

The third volume is the most easily engaging, if not necessarily the richest, of the series. This CD presents seventeen selections by some of the great Tanzanian Dansi bands of the 1960s. Each of these tracks are masterpieces of Swahili Rumba, a musical style that is heavy on guitars and horns and which owes more to Congolese popular music than to the musical influences of the spice islands. The disc features four tracks by the East African legend Mbaraka Mwinshehe and his Morogoro Jazz Band, five each from the Atomic Jazz Band and the Nuta Jazz Band, a pair by the Jamhuri Jazz Band, and one stellar cut by the Dar Es Salaam Jazz Band.

The fourth, and I hope not final, volume of the Zanzibari series is dedicated to Bi Kidude, a female musical legend of Taarab and different genres of ritual song from Zanzibar. The recordings on this disc were made between 1988 and 2006 and feature the different sides of Bi Kidude's musical personality. This release must be particularly commended for re-establishing the international reputation of a great artist, a reputation that had been weakened by previous shoddy releases by European producers.

Whether you are a specialist in East African music or an uninitiated listener curious about the music of the Swahili coast, these four volumes have plenty of music and information to keep you gleefully busy for days. Here's to hoping that the Zanzibari series will establish itself and grow to over twenty volumes like it's predecessor on the Buda Musique Label.

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