

BOOK REVIEWS

Central African Guitar Song Composers, the Second and Third Generation. *Field recordings 1962-2009.* Gerhard Kubik and associates. Department of Musicology, University of Vienna, Vienna Series in Ethnomusicology 3, 2009. 49 pp. CD 25 tracks, booklet, photographs.

Gerhard Kubik should be hailed for his perseverance in presenting his unique and original point of view. Already the most-published researcher in our field, long may he continue to write up his wide discoveries. If he is also idiosyncratic, no one so original could fail to be. This CD with booklet follows up on a small family of his previous publications on central African guitarists, always nourished in the background by his close relationship with the Cewa guitar music and musicians of Singano Village, Chileka, Malawi, and spreading from there to every country in central Africa.

Seven countries are represented here with guitar songs by finger-style soloists from Didier Mwenda, son of the renowned Jean Bosco Mwenda, to Acooli singer Faustino Okello to Daniel Kachamba of Singano and eight others. The continued inventiveness of acoustic guitarists is amply proven, still surviving after 50 years of competition from the electric guitar. What is also proven is Kubik's ability to found new areas of study and theory, justified by years of fieldwork on the spot.

Andrew Tracey, International Library of African Music

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Ancient Text Messages of the Yorùbá Bâtá Drum Cracking the Code. Amanda Villepastour. 2010. Farnham: Ashgate, SOAS Musicology Series. 173 pp. photos, transcriptions, CD. ISBN 978-0-7546-6753-7 hb, ISBN 0754667537 pb.

In 1960 and 1963 when I spent several months of fieldwork in Oshogbo and Iragbidji (a smaller town nearby), mostly working on the *áló* story-telling Yorùbá tradition, *bâtá* drums were hard to come across, the tradition was considered to be almost extinct. It was the article by the Timi of Ede, Laoye I "Yorùbá drums" which appeared in the journal *Odu*, 7 (1959): 5 – 14, that set the pace to a reversal of historical trends, and the tireless work by Ulli Beier, resident in Oshogbo, and Duro Lapidó who later became well-known with his theatre plays. It is not by chance, therefore that Múráínà Oyèlámì, one of the young men originally associated with Duro Lapidó's Mbari Club would be invited to the Iwalewa House, in Bayreuth (Germany) founded by Ulli Beier, to carry out studies of *dùndún* and *bâtá*; and Iwalewa House published his book *Yorùbá Bâtá Music: A New Notation with Basic Exercises and Ensemble Pieces*, in 1991.

Amanda Villepastour took her first *bâtá* lessons in 1998 from Múráínà Oyèlámì, but she was critical of his work using TUBS notation (p. 127). A year later she travelled to Nigeria working in a variety of places, especially Èrín-Òsun, and making acquaintance

with several *bàtá* drummers, among them Chief Alhaji Rábiù Ayándòkun who would eventually become her main collaborator, both in Nigeria and in the UK during her fellowship at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. It was soon clear to her that she would not attempt to write another tutor for the *bàtá* drum, but embark on an “analysis of the drummed speech surrogacy system and *ẹnà bàtá*, the coded spoken language of *bàtá* drummers” (p. 10).

So, what exactly is the meaning of *ẹnà*? — Villepastour writes (p. 91) that it “is a generic term for code-talking” and that it “implies some form of secrecy or exclusion of certain people...”. Obviously, it is something like a set of expressions, with lexical items that have special meanings, that are group-internal. In a sense, languages by secret societies (although *bàtá* is not part of any Yorùbá secret society, such as *ogboni* etc.) could also belong here, even “gang languages” in the West. It is however, important to understand that *ẹnà bàtá* is not a special language as such, it is Yorùbá, but certain words are used with special symbolic meanings. As to the purpose of *ẹnà bàtá*, the author of this study clarifies that “for contemporary *alubàtá*” (that is those who play *bàtá*, the expert performers) “speaking *ẹnà* appears to be less about protecting ritual secrets and more about asserting a common lineage identity” (p. 91). A most important discovery by the author, resulting from her studies was that “*ẹnà bàtá* encodes Yorùbá syllables with the vocables used to transmit strokes on the *bàtá*” (p.91). A rudimentary scheme of these “vocables” or mnemonics is found on page 104.

Although the author modestly states that she was not someone with particular training in linguistics, the book is a most important contribution not only to the study of *bàtá* message drumming, but to the study of the Yorùbá language, its representations on “talking” instruments, and many adjoining areas of research, including the organology of the *bàtá* set and Yorùbá culture history in general.

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Memory, Music and Religion: Morocco’s Mystical Chanters. Earl H. Waugh. 2005. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. xix, 260 pp. illustrations, musical examples, glossary, index. ISBN-10 1570035679. ISBN-13 9781570035678.

A survey of various catalogues and web sites reveals that there are a large number of books on Sufism and music. Many of them exploit the current fixation with esoteric spirituality in the west, while others pursue a direction, of which Qureshi’s (1986) pioneering book on Sufi music in India and Pakistan, is a significant example. Her book, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, reveals the complex world of the Sufi movement and the role and function of music in worshipping and creating a community of listeners who draw on symbolic meanings, which may have preceded the advent of Islam in those countries. Qureshi’s book, the first western scholarly music ethnography of Sufi music, is all the more interesting since