

* MUSIC FROM MOZAMBIQUE III. Cordophonic instruments, wooden xylophone, percussion, by Ron and Ophera Hallis, 1983. No.FE.4319, Folkways Records, 43 W. 61st St, NYC, USA 10023.

The title does not mention it, but about nine tenths of this record is in fact Chopi music, from the Quissico (Chisiko) area, Inhambane district, of southern Mozambique, and should have been described as such. (It may not be the case with a company called Ethnic Folkways, but I wonder if the lack of the word Chopi in the title has anything to do with the current antipathy towards 'tribalismo' in official Mozambique circles?)

The record gives an interesting selection of music performed on three different Chopi instruments, the *shitende* braced, gourd-resonated bow, the *shivelani* mouth-resonated friction bow, and the best known Chopi instrument, the *mbila* xylophone, both solo and in orchestra. The accompanying notes give good descriptions of the first two instruments both primarily associated with the Tsonga, the dominant group in southern Mozambique. The *shitende* is the popular man's entertainment instrument, played also in several neighbouring countries (*dende*, *umakhweyana*), and the *shivelani* (*xizambi*, *chimazambi*) is a musician's instrument, in my opinion the most efficient of all the mouth bows in terms of the audibility of its harmonic melodies.

We hear first (Side 1/1) quite a rarity, two songs accompanied by two *shitende* tuned what sounds like a fourth apart. The *shitende* is practically always played singly, one reason presumably being the difficulty of tuning it to another instrument. When Chopis, who otherwise treat things Tsonga with condescension, play *shitende*, they nevertheless tend to preserve typical Tsonga musical elements, such as movement in parallel fourths. One notices immediately here the recordist's undervaluation of the voice, as in most of his other recordings on this and the preceding disc, reviewed above. While the bows are clear, the voices are in the background, which is the reverse of most musicians' preference, but does of course reflect a common tendency of field recordists.

1/2 is one of those rare, virtuoso performances: Fernando Naife of Timbala, accompanying himself on *shitende*, sings a humorous song with brilliant rhythmic vocal effects. Then follow several items of *shivelani* playing. Because of the way in which the palm leaf 'string' has to be excited, by a rapid movement of the rattle-stick on the notches carved on the bow stave, *shivelani* players have a special way of adapting songs for the instrument, often involving rhythmic transformations of great complexity (Tom Johnston wrote about this in *African Music* 4/4 and 5/1). On 1/6 one can hear an example of this in another rarity: a duet with *shivelani* and *mbila* (xylophone). Given Chopi musical inventiveness it is not surprising, but it is a combination I have not heard before. The piece they are playing is not described, but it is fairly certainly a movement from the *timbila* dance, probably one by the *mbila* player, Makauziane wa Sufa, himself. If one could only hear the words, which are again in the background...!

Most of the rest of the record is devoted to *timbila* orchestral music, and my criticisms of the previous record are also valid here. A big difference however, is that the Shipamanine orchestra from Maputo which takes up most of the second side is, I should say, a superior group, to be compared with those of the two leading composers of the present day, Venancio Mbande of Chisiko and Shambini wa Makasa of Mavila. In fact not only that, it is even playing several of their well-known current compositions on this record! No matter that it is made up of "garbage-collectors and street-sweepers" using "tin-can resonators"; this is a group that knows what it is doing, under a strong leader (pictured but not named), who can obviously inspire the discipline and energy that Chopis admire in a *timbila* performance. The leader's own *mbila*, incidentally, can surely not be a "tin-can" instrument, both from its sound and from the picture, a top view of a well-made sneezewood-key instrument.

Some bits of the above information, plus a date (5 Mar 82) a tiny fragment of one of the shouts, transcribed inaccurately, and a photo of the *chinzumana* double bass *mbila* being played, constitute practically the entire information given about this performance, in contrast to

the quite detailed and interesting notes on the bow music. Again Hallis mentions Hugh Tracey's book *Chopi Musicians* but gives no sign of any knowledge he might have obtained from it, or used as a key to elicit further information from the performers.

As with the preceding record, here is what *timbila* music I **think** is on this record:

Side one

Cut 5. Spooni Willessene, solo *mbila*, singing what must be one of his *mzeno*-movement compositions, 16 rattle-beat cycle, but the voice is over-shadowed by the *mbila* and the words almost inaudible.

Cut 7. *Timbila* orchestra of Buque, Zandamela. *Kuhauzela* shouts (transcribed) followed by *Mabandla*(?) movement, x 16. Thin sound, probably a small group, overmodulation of dance whistles, song lost in background.

Side two

Cut 1. Shipamanine *timbila* orchestra, Maputo, first six movements of complete dance (usu. 10-12 movts.). It would have been better to leave out one or more *mitsitso* in order to include the *mzeno* movement, normally considered the crux of the show. Excellent performance; unbalanced, unfocussed recording, probably made largely from the back of the orchestra. Sometimes mike moves around the side to catch some singing, usually too late!

1. *Mtsitso* introduction, x 16.
2. *Mtsitso*, x 22. (*Mitsitso* often use unusual cycle numbers like this)
3. *Mtsitso*, x 16.
4. *Mtsitso*, x 8, with song.
5. *Mngeniso* (?) dance movement, x 16, with song.
6. *Chibhudhu* (?) dance movement, x 8, with song.

Cut 2. Finally, the 1/10th of non-Chopi music is a 5m. 47s. track of drumming for the *Zora* dance of the Gitonga of Inhambane, performed by a group of fruit sellers in Maputo. Women singers start off, but are immediately drowned by the battery of five drums of graded size and struck sheet of corrugated iron (photograph) which continue their unvarying barrage without any help from a change of mike perspective into an eventual fade-out. Good stuff if you're there, if deafening, but not record material, especially in such good company. Who would not rather have heard the Shipamanine *mzeno*? ANDREW TRACEY

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