

## FILMS ON AFRICAN MUSIC

Andrew Tracey of the International Library of African Music and Gei Zantzinger of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, have combined over the last three years to make several films of interest to readers of *African Music*.

1. "Mgodo wa Mkandeni" 45 mins.
2. "Mgodo wa Mbanguzi" 45 mins. Both colour, synch. sound.

These are real-time, two camera documentations of two complete performances of the "mgodo", the famous Chopi dance with xylophone orchestra, filmed respectively in the villages of Mkandeni and Mbanguzi, near Quissico, Inhambane district, southern Moçambique in mid 1973. They are the first filmed record of the complete *mgodo* in its home surroundings. In a certain respect, they may also be the last, in that since Moçambique independence many of the chiefdoms have been abolished and by so doing, the traditional basis of music patronage has been removed.

There is no commentary, but subtitles are given at the first appearance of each song line, first in Chopi, then in English. The movement names and composers are also identified. Anything further in the way of explanation would have intruded on the appreciation of the rich visual activity. For subsidiary information the films are accompanied by an extensive Film Companion giving full social and musical background as well as the complete words of the songs.

The film at Mkandeni was made to give an idea of the spirit and mood of the *mgodo*; it was filmed with high speed film in the village's normal dancing ground in the shade of a tree. The Mbanguzi film, on the other hand, was made in sunlight, and shows the structure of the performance, the dance movements and the xylophone technique with clarity.

A high fidelity stereo recording of the Mbanguzi performance was also made at the same time, and may be ordered from Traditional Music Documentation Project (Director, Curt Wittig), 3740 Kanawha Street NW, Washington DC 20015, USA ("Mgodo wa Mbanguzi" KS-2202). The Mkandeni performance is also available on tape only.

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### Provisional titles

3. "Mbira: the technique of the Mbira dza Vadzimu" approx. 20 mins.
4. "Mbira: Mbira dza Vadzimu: religion at the family level" approx. 60 mins.
5. "Mbira: Mbira dza Vadzimu: urban and rural ceremonies" approx. 45 mins.
6. "Mbira: Mbira dza Vadzimu: Dambatsoko, an old cult centre" approx. 40 mins.
7. "Mbira: Njari: Simon Mashoko's traditional and church music" approx. 35 mins.
8. "Mbira: Matepe dza Mhondoro: a musical healing party" approx. 20 mins.

All colour, synch. sound.

These six films, made in 1975, attempt to introduce the viewer to the world of the *mbira* (alias hand-piano, lamellophone) of the Shona people of Rhodesia, and its use in their religion. Three types can be seen, the *mbira dza vadzimu* (Nos. 3-6), the *njari* (No. 7) and the *matepe dza mhondoro* (No. 8).

The first film is an introduction to the musical technique and sound of the *mbira dza vadzimu*, played by Ephat Mujuru, a leading *mbira* player. With commentary by Andrew Tracey and using animation and freeze frame techniques, it includes a demonstration of some of the rhythmic and harmonic elements of the music, of the use of improvisation, of different styles of playing a song and of the combination of two *mbiras* in duet.

The other five films focus each in turn on one *mbira* player and show him in action in his home surroundings, taking part in various ritual and non-ritual activities.

No. 4 focuses on voluble Gwanzura Gwenzi, a Salisbury clerk and family head. It shows some of his life at work in town, at home in the "township" outside Salisbury, and hosting an all-night *bira* or spirit séance, the main expression of Shona religious ritual, at his home in the country. His

sister is the family medium, his grandfather the spirit who possesses her, and the guests members of his family, past and present, and neighbours.

No. 5 focuses on Hakurotwi Mude, singer and leader of a professional group of *mbira* players. An intense and religious man, the film watches him in the kind of performances, at an informal urban Friday night *bira* or *nhandaro*, at a sacrifice and at a funeral, which have made him one of the best known Shona musicians of the present time.

No. 6 focuses on Muchatera Mujuru, the leader of one of the few remaining traditional cult centres in Shona country. It shows him as a spiritual man, yet concerned with his waning authority in a changing Rhodesia. Various aspects of the life of his adherents at Dambatsoko are seen, including ceremonies in the big *banya* ritual house, at the *mutoro* hut, at the *rushanga* shrine and at a sacrifice, as well as some of their daily economic activities.

No. 7 focuses on Magwenyambira Simon Mashoko, a rural Catholic catechist and *njari mbira* player famous in Shona country. In addition to the traditional spirit repertoire, he has adapted the *mbira* successfully for use in the Catholic Church. We see him moving and performing in both the traditional sphere, at a beer party and a dance party, and also at a catechism class and a Sunday church service held at his home.

No. 8 is a vignette of the music and activities at a healing party held in northeast Rhodesia at the home of a sick woman. A trio of *matepe dza mhondoro mbiras* was played, under the leadership of Saini Murira, together with rattles, drum and singers, and dancing by two mediums, who interrupt the music to attend to the patient.

These films can be obtained, for rental or purchase, through the Psychological Cinema Register Catalog, Audio-Visual Services, 17 Willard Building, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. 16802.

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Stereo recordings of the players in these films, recorded on a different occasion, are available from Traditional Music Documentation Project, at the address mentioned above.