

adequate but often the pictures lack style and personality and they cheapen the appearance of the book. The presentation of the pulse-line transcriptions is poor. Often a transcription finishes half way down the page and the rest of the page is taken up with empty staves. In the chromatic scale on p.178, the accidentals are incorrectly written and there is no clef.

As regards language and style, there is evidence that the author had difficulty in deciding at what level to pitch the book. For example, the language in chapter 3 is rather simplistic, that in chapter 8 is suitable for a general adult readership whilst the appendix on sound is often dense and technical. This may be the biggest problem with the book: its approach to its readership. It is meant as a guide to all music teachers in Zimbabwe but the level of knowledge of music teachers in this country differs greatly from school to school. In one institution, the music teacher may have a thorough grasp of western music and is simply looking for a source book to provide detail relevant to the Zimbabwe context; in another school, the teacher may have a detailed knowledge of African music but have had little or no formal training in the subject.

Nevertheless, the general balance of the book is good though the author has tried to take a holistic approach which, whilst understandable, means that the quality of the chapters is uneven. The author seems to know that in many areas her book may be almost the only suitable source material available and so she tries to cover every angle relevant to the subject.

Then again, if there are areas in the book which are difficult to follow, one should remember that the text is meant to act as a complement to working with musicians who would describe and explain their work and perhaps provide assistance with the building of instruments.

But, when all is said and done, it is a pleasure to have, at last, a comprehensive, well-researched, scientifically accurate resource book on an important part of Zimbabwean music which is of practical use for most music courses in this country. Even so, we still need a lot more books like it!

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SOSIO-ETNIESE DANSE VAN DIE VENDA VROU, by Cora Burnett-van Tonder, HAUM, Pretoria, 1987, 155pp, 62 line drawings, 23 colour plates, music and dance transcriptions, Tshivenda glossary, index, Afrikaans text..

Burnett-Van Tonder explores the social environment of Venda traditional dance in this book. She treats dance as a cultural microcosm, and provides a detailed explanation of its social functions. Her discussions are supported by line drawings, colour photographs, musical transcriptions, and choreographical analyses.

While the title of the book indicates a discussion of women's dances, Burnett-van Tonder in fact provides a relatively detailed discussion of Venda traditional dance

culture as a whole. Also, two dances which are presented in case study form (*tshifasi* and *malende*) are performed by both sexes. Reference to women's *tshikona* dancing (reedpipe dancing formerly performed by men only) is an unfortunate omission.

The book is based on Burnett-van Tonder's Ph.D. thesis (1984), a project in the field of African choreography. This perhaps explains the difficulty the author has in coming to terms with her well intended but debatable objectives, namely to promote Venda traditional dance as a wedge against "cultural impoverishment" and cultural "alienation", and a means towards intercultural understanding.

Burnett-van Tonder's objectives, especially her emphasis on the promotion of traditional culture, are perhaps best understood in terms of the nature of the political environment in which she carried out her research during the early 1980s. In accordance with the policy of separate development, Venda was declared an independent state in 1979. The ruling Venda National Party conducted a vigorous campaign to assert the hereditary position of traditional political leaders. This campaign was accompanied by the promotion of traditional social mechanisms (such as dance) which supported traditional political rule. Political opposition was suppressed, and political schisms, although present before and after the declaration of independence, were subdued. Freedom of speech was curtailed, and overt government opposition was avoided. By contrast, public expression of nationalism was widespread, and gave an outward impression of social cohesion.

However, public criticism against any government inefficiency appears to have emerged at least by the middle 1980s in various traditional dances. This kind of criticism soon became commonplace in the face of ongoing political oppression and accusations of corruption and ritual murder made against certain government officials. And because traditional dance had been promoted by the government to cultivate political support, abstention from participation in dance also became a means of political opposition.

This suggests that contemporary dance performance practice should be emphasised in the promotion of intercultural understanding. Many Venda people are concerned about the loss of certain traditional values, and some of them promote these values in traditional dancing. However, contrary to widely-held romantic views on the so-called cultural isolation of Venda, traditional values in Venda society are continually integrated with borrowed cultural patterns. Venda people do not concern themselves with retaining elements of traditional culture unless they can integrate them into a strategy for survival. Thus traditional communal dance still functions in certain rural communities where it is used as a platform from which to address community concerns. However, during the middle and late 1980s traditional dance became viewed by many young people as "primitive" and for the "uneducated".

There can be little doubt regarding the positive cognitive value ("cultural enrichment", pp.67-9) of the cross-cultural exploration of Venda dance. However, it is debatable how far the cross-cultural sharing of "Venda-being" (Venda-wees, p.67) can be taken through participation in dance. It is arguable that the performance of music which involves closely cooperative effort has the potential to generate

heightened levels of interpersonal consciousness among any performers. However, the kind of reactions elicited by music are largely culture-specific, and people engaged in cross-cultural musical performance tend to project their own cultural values onto the other culture (Kubik 1985). In other words, participation in Venda communal dances cannot make people become "Venda", nor does it allow them to "move outside" their own culture (p.67).

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References

Burnett-van Tonder

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LIEDER IN ERZÄHLUNGEN DER BULSA: EINE MUSIKETHNOLOGISCHE UNTERSUCHUNG, by Ulrika Blanc, *Forschungen zu Sprachen und Kulturen Afrikas*, Band 3, LIT Verlag, Münster und Hamburg, 1993.

The Balsa are peasant farmers of northern Ghana, whose millet-based mixed agriculture is combined with the keeping of livestock. They number about 7000, live in scattered small farms, and speak a language falling into the Voltaic (or Gur) sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of Niger-Kordofanian, in the classification of Greenberg. They are said to share with their Kasena neighbours, and more remarkably with the extinct Guanches of the Canary Islands, the ability to communicate over long distances by whistling. Like so many other African peoples, they are greatly given to story-telling, which, according to Agalic, fulfils a variety of social functions, didactic, exemplary and entertaining. In such story-telling the reactions and interventions of the audience are integral, and the full flavour and structure of the story are best captured in live recording and/or filming. Since the 1960s the Balsa have been the subject of a number of data collections by Professor Rüdiger Schott of the University of Münster and his associates; this book is the latest publication in a series edited by him.

Its title is carefully worded, and at first suggests a comprehensive study of the songs which are embedded in a great many, but not all, of the narrative recitations. In fact, it presents an analysis of only a very small fraction of the enormous repertoire which Schott has assembled, and even that fraction is selected from only two types of tale. Since the classification of tales adopted by the author is that of Schott himself, which tends towards rather extreme subdivision, we cannot be completely certain what these categories would mean to the people among whom the stories originate; and the author herself admits that her choice is arbitrary. The main defects of her