

he died in his home at Singano on the 25th July 1987, at the age of only forty years.

One wonders sometimes what would have happened to the Kachamba brothers, and indeed to the whole Singano musical corpus, had they never been taken up by Gerhard Kubik. Their careers might have been different, but it is unlikely that they would never have attained some measure of international recognition. One must pay tribute nevertheless to that most considerable figure in African ethnomusicology, for the part he has played not only in making the Singano school of African popular music widely known, but for his personal concern and friendship for the musicians as individuals. His scholarship and analytical powers are very well shown in the pamphlet which accompanies the cassette. It is appropriate that one of the songs should be a tribute to him.

G.T. Nurse, London

* * * * *

"ROOTS OF RHYTHM: MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF EAST AFRICA", video with booklet, Jacaranda Designs Ltd, Nairobi, 1995.

A promising title leads to nothing but an example of the trivialisation and commercialisation of African culture. An apparently African boy with an English regional accent wanders into a Nairobi music shop, sees a vision of a pop group performing, and next wakes up in the bush surrounded by four people making musical instruments. One would naturally expect these to be experts, but no...none of them appear to assemble or play their instruments with any sign of expertise. The boy then tries, and fails, to play the instruments, the shot returns to the group in the shop, now including the 'traditional' musicians, all attempting to mime to the pop soundtrack, and that, unbelievably, is it! The accompanying booklet invites the reader to purchase 'Afri-kits' containing "authentic, hand-crafted instruments" and other goods. Nowhere is there any indication that these instruments are not toys but the tools of a real culture. This publication regrettably does not touch it.

Andrew Tracey, International Library of African Music

* * * * *

ORIGINS OF THE POPULAR STYLE: THE ANTECEDENTS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY POPULAR MUSIC, by Peter van der Merwe, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, pp.352.

As the author intimates in his Preface, this book is the fruit of some twenty years' passionate sleuthing through the annals of parlour song, folk-song, hymn, ballad, early blues, and other sources available to him. Van der Merwe is extremely good at sourcing examples and has tracked down some gems. The discoveries he has made are fascinating and concrete and he has revealed many unexpected connections. The theory underlying his quest and the conclusions he has drawn from it are, however, harder to pin down, and it is this lack of theoretical framework that bothers me most,