

vigorous presence and importance of music throughout African and African-American life. The types of music and the use of music in the videos varies. In general scenes from life as performance, music serves as background, in others the musical performance is center stage.

The volume covers videos (but not films) currently available for rental or purchase. The materials deal with sixty-eight countries of Africa (all of Africa) and the African Diaspora. They come in many different languages and were produced for a range of purposes, and presumably, with a range of skills. Each item is given not only title and description but also information on availability, video format, distributor and cost.

The entry descriptions are most often based on publishers' catalogues, since it was manifestly not possible for the author to view all of the items; they therefore vary in length, detail and perhaps usefulness. They are clearly distinguished from those written by Lems-Dworkin herself. Here, for example, is part of her entry for Les Blank's 1978 video *Always For Pleasure*: "Magnificent *bouillabaisse* of various New Orleans musical traditions. Considerable coverage is given to Mardi Gras celebrations in the Black community, especially 'Black Indian' component...Music is everywhere...Superlative photography."

In sum, this is a fine treasure trove of materials, that fills an important niche. There is no other compendium of this sort available. Lems-Dworkin is also the author of *African Music: a Pan-African Annotated Bibliography* (London: Zell, 1991).

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THINKING IN JAZZ: THE INFINITE ART OF IMPROVISATION, by Paul Berliner, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 883 (music texts 250pp)

This is an impressive work running into some 900 pages, including an Appendix of 250 pages, 50 pages of endnotes, and a 15 page bibliography. The author's intention is to "unravel the mystery" of jazz by gaining access to "the private inner world of jazz performance". This is done by interviewing musicians, most of them relatively unknown, about how they learnt their craft and how they practise it. The material is organised into eighteen chapters, each dealing with a specific aspect of the jazz musician's growth and work.

The musicians speak about their childhood environments in which they were first introduced to jazz and other African-American musical styles. They talk of "hangin' out" with other musicians in the neighbourhood, of entering into casual apprenticeships with older musicians, and of adopting mentors. Then they discuss what it is to improvise, to work in groups, and to perform professionally. They relate revealing and musically pertinent anecdotes about their experiences, and through their voices and Berliner's own astute comments, there emerges a vital and intriguing picture of the world of jazz, in which there is enormous richness and diversity.

Particularly impressive is the Appendix, in which he provides transcriptions and notated musical illustrations and examples of points that are made in the main body of the text. For the musicologist or serious scholar, this appendix is the nitty-gritty of the whole affair. There are examples of song-forms, of different ways in which melodies might be interpreted (even before the solo), examples of chord-voicings, chord alterations and substitutions, often taken from actual performances. There is a comparison of two solos on *Dippermouth Blues*, the one by King Oliver, the other by Armstrong. There are examples of the way jazz players quote

other tunes, including Parker's witty reference to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in *Cool Blues*, and quotations from other improvisations. Berliner analyses different cadential patterns (turnarounds) and gives examples of contrasting approaches to solo piano playing. There are analyses of solos by Miles Davis and John Coltrane, and most interesting of all, transcriptions and analyses of rhythm-section work and of the rhythm section in relation to the soloist, to show how musicians interact with each other in the course of a performance.

Of particular interest is Berliner's examination of the jazz vocabulary, the stock-in trade repertory of melodic patterns and formulas that constitute "a community of ideas" that is constantly being added to and referred to. Berliner discusses the "lives of licks" for example, he identifies a lick that first appears on a Miles Davis recording from 1946, and that then recurs on various subsequent dates, including a reference to it by guitarist John Scofield in 1991. There are also examples of what the author calls "personalisation of a vocabulary pattern", where individual musicians interpret and recast familiar turns-of-phrase. There are examples of ways in which musical ideas can be combined and extended, and Berliner discusses the "logic" that lies behind the unfolding of an improvised solo.

Thinking in jazz is an undertaking of love and respect, and Berliner has made a rigorous and unique contribution to the literature. However, I do have some misgivings, and here they are. There is considerable overlapping and repetition of interview material: certain points seem to be laboured unduly, and Berliner (or his editor) seems to be intent on incorporating into the overall picture even the most trivial of insights or comments on the part of a musician, presumably because he is keen to eschew what he calls "outsider perspectives" and to emphasise the 'authenticity' (this is not a word that he uses) of his study. It is also puzzling that so much important analysis is relegated to the Appendix, and is not integrated in the main body of the text, presumably for the same reasons.

I detect some concession to academic fashion here, as if Berliner is determined to be 'correct' and rather enjoys his anthropological mantle. He says that "given the most fundamental finding of ethnomusicology — that the bases for musical knowledge in aesthetic values, goals and outlook can differ substantially from one culture to the next — understanding how the artists themselves viewed the issue, how they defined their own musical practices, was of central importance".

Now the question is, who are the "artists themselves"? Who and where are the people who are to give us enlightenment, whose prerogative it is to share with us the essential truths of jazz? If Berliner is wary of "imposing outsider perspectives", then who are the "insiders"? For example, Berliner himself is a jazz trumpeter and an American. Is he an insider or an outsider? The word "community" keeps cropping up, as if it has some magical presence and a self-evident meaning, as if there is such a thing as a community over and above the individuals that comprise it. Furthermore, are we talking about the African-American community, the African American jazz community, the community of jazz musicians in the United States, or the international community of jazz musicians?

African-American culture is often taken as being the ultimate cradle, reference point and source of jazz. This is on account of the origins of jazz and that fact that jazz is generally practised by African-Americans, and that many highly influential musicians have been African-American. Initially Berliner accordingly seems to conceive the jazz community as inhering in African-American culture. Then he drops the African part, and speaks of the "American jazz community" that "cuts across boundaries defined by age, class, vocation, and

ethnicity". Finally totally carried away now by his liberal-humanistic vision of a universal, united humankind with jazz as its appointed musical language, he enthuses about jazz supporters "with diverse national and cultural backgrounds who have adopted the community's music as their own "(do they then become honorary members? I ask) and with an "abiding devotion to the music that binds this diverse population together".

Berliner cannot decide whether he is a relativist or a universalist; he cannot decide whether jazz belongs to a particular group, or whether it belongs to anyone. On the one hand he claims that jazz can only be properly explained by those who are *really* jazz musicians, those who are accredited members of "the community", but on the other hand, he claims that jazz is a universal music, capable of being adopted by all kinds of people.

It is significant that Berliner adopts a non-historical approach to the music, as if jazz simply exists, as if it could somehow transcend the specific spatial and temporal conditions under which it developed. The ubiquity of jazz has as much to do with economics, the media, and so-called "globalisation", as it has to do with any inherent universal appeal on the part of the music. Jazz is not the only music to have acquired widespread popularity, as Berliner the mbira-player should well understand.

At one point Berliner refers to the notion of jazz as "a symbol of rebellion, a musical emblem distinguishing individuals from their contemporaries or from their parents". He should make more of this angle. Jazz is full of quirky, often unlikeable and anti-social eccentrics with a solitary vision and a highly problematic relationship to "the community", and it is often such loners who have been at the forefront of new movements and changes in direction. Jazz is not a static traditional music rooted in a timeless, unchanging, isolated community: it is the music of individuals thrown into a constantly shifting, confusing and threatening environment, who are urgently trying to create an identity for themselves, using whatever creative resources are at hand. The idea of a "jazz community" represents precisely the kind of romantic abstraction – an imposed perspective – that Berliner is ostensibly trying to avoid.

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NIGHTSONG: POWER AND PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA, by Veit Erlmann, Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press 1996

This book is the culmination of many years of research on Zulu male choral competitions in KwaZulu Natal by German ethnomusicologist, Veit Erlmann. It is concerned with the experiences of Zulu men who are forced to leave their rural homes and families for extensive periods at a time in search of wage earnings on the mines and major city centres. It examines the complex historical construction of "embodied imaginings" by a displaced people, codified in song, text, choreography, theatrical gesture and scrupulous style. These symbols are re-enacted every weekend through an intricate network of choral competitions, staged always deep into the night in squalid township hostels or in disused halls in downtown city spaces. Each week, the performances by these dignified, shimmering choirs provide momentary respite from the alienation and hardship of their fractured lives.

Nightsong commences with a warming introduction by Joseph Shabalala, the "godfather of Isicathamiya" a founder of the internationally acclaimed group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo. In each of the 10 chapters thereafter, the book proceeds with a painstaking review of the evolution of various aspects of the performance practice.