

## References

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***Ugandan Music in the Marketing Era: The Branded Arena.*** David G. Pier. 2015. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 8 images, 5 figures, 2 tables, index, 203pp.

The focus of this ethnographic study is the Senator National Cultural Extravaganza, a music and dance competition created to market a brand of Senator beer to rural Ugandan communities using strategies of participatory marketing. David Pier highlights the perspectives of sponsors, organizers, and participants of the Senator Extravaganza competition to demonstrate how the ideologies of a global marketing era play out in Ugandan contexts where they are shaped by local histories and intertwined with the development discourse of NGOs and state-sponsored initiatives. Pier takes care to emphasize the agency of the performers, most notably women's groups, arguing that they take ownership of their participation (and subsequent promotion of the sponsor's beer product) by mobilizing a traditional mode of promotion known as *okutumbula*. A unifying theme of the book is therefore centered on the layered complexities of an emergent culture of promotion that Pier claims is increasingly characteristic of Ugandan contexts as well as across Africa and the Global South more generally.

It is through the lens of promotion that Pier is able to weave together ideas from a broad range of scholarship, including works from ethnomusicology, gender studies, market theory, heritage management, and development studies. I found a particular strength of the book to be in the way the author effectively applies marketing concepts to his primarily ethnographic investigation. He does this by drawing from works in

cultural studies and anthropology that frame marketing as a cultural set of practices, which allows Pier to investigate the Senator Extravaganza competition as an arena where top-down agendas are complicated by bottom-up manoeuvres of group promotion and social networking. In this way, Pier's insights provide a valuable contribution to understanding the relationships between participatory marketing, development discourse and cultural safeguarding.

The first chapter of the book tackles the East African Breweries Ltd. (EABL) corporate vision for the Senator Extravaganza competition which is a top-down marketing project aimed at the "peri-urban" consumer (34). Pier focuses on the considerable tension that exists between the EABL and the two culture brokers that are hired to realize this vision. He problematizes their relationship as essentially reproducing colonial strategies of using culture brokers to engage in "indirect rule" (51), but argues that this method of corporate sponsorship, although problematic, allows for a certain degree of freedom and creativity in the performance of traditional music and dance. The second chapter offers an important follow-up to this section as Pier goes into depth about conceptions of Ugandan traditional Music, Dance and Drama (MDD) and how they have been shaped and constructed over the last hundred years as distinct sets of practices belonging to a diverse number of ethno-linguistic groups and their associated geographical regions. Pier highlights the development of multicultural MDD within the National Schools Competition in post-independence Uganda and how it has served as a model for the structure of the Senator Extravaganza based on the experiences of the hired culture brokers, Kintu and Alibatya. The negotiations conducted by these two figures are central to the story as they appeal to the demands of EABL while at the same time maintain their personal commitment to uplift rural communities through the continuation of traditional music and dance practices.

After demonstrating how EABL adopts government strategies of multicultural nation building in chapter two, chapter three then turns to the beer company's strategies of associating with the "Ugandan imaginary of grassroots development" (85). Pier's investigation of the roles of women's development groups in the competition is at the heart of his argument, as he draws from gender studies and his own ethnographic research to explore the ways in which performers promote themselves while simultaneously engaging in brand promotion. The focus of the chapter is on the overlapping and sometimes conflicting schemas of promotion enacted by women's groups as a response to EABL's marketing plan. Pier elaborates on their roles as mediators between local communities and the competition's corporate sponsor based on established structures of participatory development as well as traditional patron relationships. Importantly, Pier shows how the women's groups also choose to promote themselves as professional performance ensembles invested in winning the competition. In these circumstances, the author demonstrates how tightly regulated restrictions on women's bodies in performance contexts often necessitate the inclusion of men and therefore introduce complicated gender dynamics into the group's activities.

At this point in the reading, my notes were punctuated with numerous questions

pertaining to the specific musical content of the Extravaganza, which Pier decided to encapsulate within the fourth chapter of the book. Here he provides a detailed analysis of a particular song medley called “*Omwenge* Senator Mulungi” (available to the reader as an online audio file) in order to assert the musical basis of *ng’oma* as a potent social institution. His approach to music transcription and analysis draws extensively from African music scholarship as he explores the social significance of hocketing lines and the centrality of the vocal refrain. Of particular interest are the ways in which he uses music analysis to investigate the intentions of the Tugezoku Women’s Group, who craft a progressive narrative into their song medley using recognizable grooves and melodic devices to signify shifts from deep tradition to “modernity-within-tradition” (135). The stylistic flexibility of the Senator competition’s song category of “creative item” shown in this analysis is then juxtaposed against the constraints of the non-corporate arena of music promotion in chapter five. Pier begins this section by detailing the decline of the Senator Extravaganza competition in 2013 and provides two examples of alternative support solicited from UNESCO and the Swedish NGO, Selam. He incorporates heritage and development studies into his argument to effectively problematize the participatory-development discourse of “trigage” and “technocracy” among international NGOs (142). I found this chapter to be an especially interesting discussion that connects Pier’s ideas to broader contexts of international aid and contributes a much needed perspective to studies on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

Pier’s book will no doubt serve as an excellent foundation for researching the branded arenas of other traditional-style music and dance competitions in the Global South. One that comes to mind in particular is the Chibuku Neshamwari dance festival and competition in Zimbabwe that is run by Delta Beverages with similar strategies of marketing Chibuku beer. Within these branded and competitive spaces, we learn from the author how the marketing era may actually create possibilities for traditional modes of promotion. In his account of witnessing the Senator Extravaganza, for example, he asserts how “the playing of traditional instruments visibly kindled an energetic, unpredictable community focused politics, while the Senator message seemed to recede into the irrelevant background” (173). This interpretation of *ng’oma* demonstrates the political power of traditional music and dance performance, even within the controlled spaces of a commercially sponsored event. In response to the limitations and unpredictability of this type of sponsorship, Pier suggests that emerging efforts to sustain traditional music cultures should “encourage experimental integrations of the old and the new, fully respecting the distinctive practices of each” in a way that goes beyond sampling traditional sounds for “new digital grooves” (175). His work offers a valuable place from which to pursue this idea, not only by looking critically at interventions stemming from commercial, state and NGO initiatives but even to include our own interventions of applied ethnomusicology that engage with these other realms.

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