

OBITUARY

Andrew Tracey

For all of us here in Vienna, the news about the death of my life-long friend and colleague Andrew Tracey has been a shock, more so even because we were thinking that he was well and participated online in discussions at Weimar in November last year on the occasion of the ICTM Conference 2023. Andrew has been someone with whom I was sharing continuously our field experiences, in addition to an inspiring personal relationship lasting over sixty years, actually since 1962 when his father, Hugh Tracey, first invited me to visit the International Library of African Music (then: African Music Society) in Roodepoort. That year I did not yet meet Andrew personally; I understood that he was deeply involved in worldwide tours with his musical show *Wait a Minim*. But in 1963, when I followed an invitation to give lectures and make radio programs in London, I eventually met him and became fascinated by his interest in my studies of xylophone music in Uganda. He had even learned some of the compositions from my transcriptions. We then played together *amadinda* in London, and I also had a cost-free opportunity to attend a performance of his *Wait a Minim* show. That year was the beginning of your lasting friendship, with meetings in person from time to time. There are many humorous episodes I will always remember. As always when visiting Grahamstown where the ILAM had resettled, I was staying in Andrew's home, reading books which he had selected for me, such as Stephen Jay Gould's *Dinosaur in a Haystack*, 1996. Driving to his office at the ILAM in the morning, there was on the way a certain sharp street corner which he had begun to rename "the Gerhard corner", because I had complained that he was driving too fast around that corner. So whenever I visited him again he drove by intention just at 20 miles per hour, until I noticed it. These are those little things that have made our relationship unforgettable beyond musicology. I will also never forget that Andrew, whenever I stayed in Europe for some period, used to send me a rolo of chocolate to influence my depressions and cheer me up when needed. In my files there are many, also funny letters we used to write to each other. And once in the 1970s he visited me in Vienna, when my mother was still alive. Suddenly he fell down from an unstable sofa in my apartment. My mother got worried, but he laughed, he had not hurt himself.

In 1991, Moya A. Malamusi, his five-year old son Yohana and I were visiting and staying with Andrew and Heather in Grahamstown on our way to Namibia. The little boy discovered the swing in their garden and was very happy with it. Andrew helped us a lot finding a used car for our trip to Namibia, where we would start a three-year research project on musical traditions country-wide. The Honda car we bought with Andrew's help was an unbreakable model, and it would last for some years.

I could tell many more stories and talk about highlights and humorous episodes during our sixty-year friendship. But this will have to wait and be scrutinized by

posterity on the basis of our correspondence which is preserved in our private Culture Research Archive Kubik/Malamusi in Vienna. In my opinion, Andrew Tracey was one of the world's most outstanding and prolific researchers in African music, with continuous new discoveries particularly on mbira music, its history, tunings and performance by Shona-speaking musicians/composers in Zimbabwe. This began in 1961 with his lessons under Jege A Tapera, from whom he learned the first steps of playing *mbira dza vadzimu*. At that time we were both among the very few students of African music following A. M. Jones' approach of actually learning to play African musical instruments under instruction by expert performers in Africa. Andrew had understood A. M. Jones perfectly including the latter's experience of an individual reference beat by musicians playing together drums or log xylophone, what Jones used to call "cross rhythm". In that sense Andrew also once made a very instructive transcription of a Shona threshing song which his father had recorded in 1932 from a Shona/Karanga speaking group of workers on a farm: "Chakaruma ..." etc.

He had also learned many of Mwenda Jean Bosco's guitar compositions, playing them perfectly, including "Bombalaka" with the correct beat reference. In the timbila xylophone group of his Mozambiquan friend Venancio Mbanda, Andrew also took part and once in Grahamstown I filmed their performance. But Andrew was also a wonderful performer on steel-drum in his own Steel Band which always got my lively applause, moreover since I had expanded my studies in the 1970s to "New World" African musical developments, notably in Brazil.

For me, Andrew has been part of a new 20th century young generation of musicologists with an inside or "emic" approach to the study of African music. He became a multi-instrumentalist, also trying his hands on the *valimba* gourd-resonated xylophone of the Zambezi valley and participating in the *nyanga* panpipe dance of Nyungwe-speaking people. All this enabled him to develop new ways of musical transcription based on the acknowledgement of elementary pulse-lines instead of time-signatures as in staff notation. He transcribed many of his friend Venancio Mbande's performances for a re-edition of his father's standard work *Chopi Musicians*, first published 1948.

My colleagues at universities in the European Union and I feel scientifically deprived by the loss of our colleague and friend, Andrew Tracey. In addition my personal relationship with Andrew had its own specific expressions which I can never forget. Andrew sometimes phoned me sporadically, or all of a sudden I happened to find a rolo chocolate roll in my postbox!

Gerhard Kubik