

## THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF AFRICAN MUSIC PERFORMANCE IN ZIMBABWE

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### Abstract

*This article is concerned with the historical transformations of Zimbabwean music performance, particularly popular music. It covers mainly the colonial period and to a limited extent the first ten years of independence. The article analyses music-making and performance as cultural production. The musicians involved in the process of cultural production are characterised as 'cultural workers', that is, professional and non-professional, commercial and non-commercial, rural and traditional, urban and modern individuals, whose occupation or part of their occupation involves culture. The article investigates the processes that have led to the evolution of what we may refer to as 'commercial cultural workers', that is, popular music performers who make part of or their living from the music. Among the processes behind the evolution are colonisation, urbanisation and transformations within the political economy of African societies. These processes occurred within the context of colonial institutions such as churches, the army, private companies, municipalities and the mass media. These changes led to the specialisation and commercialisation of cultural performance.*

### INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH ON CULTURAL production and cultural workers in Africa has largely concentrated on the history and nature of contemporary performance, especially its role in society, and the effect of colonialism and political independence; how performers have partly effected, and responded to these changes (Coplan, 1985; Waterman, 1990; Manuel, 1988), and on the political economy of cultural production sometimes referred to as the commercial performing arts (Coplan, 1985; Manuel; Andersson, 1981; Impey, 1992). However, there has been little systematic academic investigation of how African societies have produced full-time professional commercial cultural workers, especially entertainers, other than documentation of their activities. This article does not purport to fill that gap, but to contribute to the efforts being made towards fulfilling that need.

I use 'cultural production' to refer to the conscious creation of cultural or artistic services and goods for both purely aesthetic and personal purposes, and commercial purposes (Girard, Breton, 1982, 32-42). By 'cultural worker' I mean a professional and non-professional, commercial and non-commercial, rural and traditional, urban and modern individual

whose occupation or part of her or his occupation involves culture. In this article I also use 'cultural workers' or 'professional cultural workers' to refer to performers who make a living from music-making.

In this article I investigate the categories of internal and external processes that were behind the evolution of these workers. To generalise broadly, there were two important processes, which we may characterise as internal and external processes. The article very briefly examines cultural production embedded in its precolonial 'indigenous' social environment. Local transformations within the political economy of African societies seem to have led to the specialisation of cultural performance. These internal transformations have been noted particularly in West Africa where urbanisation took place prior to the imposition of colonial rule (Waterman, 1990). In many countries this transformation was influenced by external factors in the form of influences from Asia, Europe and North America initially through trade and later through colonisation. My chief concern in this article is with the transformations of music performance in Zimbabwe during the colonial period and to a limited extent, after independence, particularly before 1990.

There has been some notable research on popular music that suggests that commercial cultural workers in Africa in general, and in Zimbabwe in particular, were mainly a product of African adaptations to the colonial political economy that transformed their economic and social systems of existence and occupations in many ways. Urbanisation and industrialisation as consequences of European colonisation produced new urban lifestyles, social networks and gender relations, which were in many respects different from those in indigenous rural societies. One of the social groups that was crucial in the emergence of commercial entertainment was urban African women, who were usually not hired in the formal sector. In effect, urban women have been perceived as 'providers of public entertainment' (Impey, 1992). To analyse music performance as part of people's lives in cities in Southern Africa and especially in Zimbabwe, this article pays particular attention to how urban musical performance figures in African people's struggles and strategies to maintain or alter their ways of life during times of dramatic social upheaval, a phenomenon that has been noted in other parts of the world by Turino (1993, 5). According to Gilbert and Gugler (1992, 2, 62), these changes, notably in colonial societies, were a consequence of a historical process of the incorporation of Africans into the world capitalist system.

One of the strategies used by migrants to survive in the urban environment is to adapt to new circumstances, usually drawing upon various resources including cultural forms like performance. These migrants, in particular popular music performers, have been characterised and studied with focus on musicians as cultural brokers, mobile individuals

skilled at manipulating multiple expressive codes in heterogeneous environments (Coplan, 1980). To examine the evolution of professional cultural workers, I draw on the explanatory frameworks of David B. Coplan and Veit Erlmann. Coplan (1985, 50, 94) and Erlmann (1991, 137-8) explain cultural production as processes of artistic creation grounded in people's everyday life, within which cultural workers attempt to make a living by acting as cultural brokers between various aspects of life, such as work, politics, cultural expression and entertainment. Within this framework, cultural work in general, and the emergence of cultural workers, is not viewed as an autonomous process but as an aspect of the larger issues of industrialisation, people's adaptation to urban life and the politics of the day (Erlmann, 1991, 138). Although some research and writing on popular music has been going on in Zimbabwe, like most academic writing on Zimbabwe in general, and particularly on post-independence cultural politics, critical works on popular music present Harare pop music as being representative of the national scene. Other regions and cities hardly feature in what are considered as leading works. The production of much popular music has occurred in towns like Mutare (e. g. the Runn Family), Gweru (Ebony Sheikh), Kwekwe (Wells Fargo), Victoria Falls (Mandebvu), Masvingo (Tafara Madondo Sounds), Whange, Gwanda, Binga and Plumtree and Bulawayo (Solomon Skhuza, Ebony Sheikh, Black Umfolosi and the now disbanded Ilanga that started off from that city), but this is hardly acknowledged in academic writings. Most of these writings are primarily factual. Therefore there is no academic work to date that gives a serious and balanced analytical picture of the popular music scene in Zimbabwe.

### PRE-COLONIAL PERFORMANCE PRODUCTION

Pre-colonial music performance production was embedded within society's activities of daily life that ranged from birth, through life, to death. As demonstrated by the research and documentation done by Merriam (1982, 127) and Berliner (1978, 20-25) music was integrated into the process of community living, in people's personal lives, in social organisation, in work or economic life, religion, celebration, political life and history. In embedded performance, the arts are repositories of the values and attitudes of human actions and aspirations. As demonstrated in the documentation work of Makwenda, performance was produced within people's personal lives, their social organisation, politics and social control, gender and religion (Makwenda, 1990, 97; Lloyd, 1993). Religious activities, work and celebration were some of the contexts of performance production and consumption. Music was found in specific contexts like rites of passage, for example birth, marriage and weddings, death, house-warming activities, beer drinking, war, coronation, homage to a ruler, politics, hunting,

harvesting and general work, vulgar play, boasting, herding, lullabies, children's play, and royal praises. The principle governing traditional artistic production is that its subject matter is drawn from the actual activities of people in their living surroundings. Examples include walking songs, sculpture that serves as a chair, and majestically decorated houses of Ndebele-speaking communities of Southern Africa (Mnyele, 1988, 297-302).

In most African kingdoms there were professional state praise singers, medical practitioners, diviners and healers who were rewarded for their services. Although music was integrated into almost every aspect of society, there were some traditional professional artists who specialised in political music production. These professionals were called bards or griots (in West Africa) or *izimbongi* (in Nguni societies of Southern Africa). S. I. G. Mudenge's research on pre-colonial Zimbabwean history (1988, 100-101) has shown that King Mutapa had a number of professional musicians, dancers, praise singers and jesters 'for the amusement of the court and for ceremonial occasions'. In the neighbouring kingdom of Sachiteve, praise singers and jesters were known as *marombe*, and they praised the king in song with the accompaniment of drums, irons and bells (*Ibid.*).

Studies of the characteristics of African music, among them by Merriam and Berliner, have dealt with music as an integral part of the societies that performed it. Thus in his work on *mbira* music in Zimbabwe, Berliner (1978, 1-2, 20) examined the connection between Shona traditional *mbira* music and family ancestral spirit possession, and the symbolic relationship between the *mbira* instrument and the structure of Shona villages and the cosmological teachings and practices associated with initiation ceremonies. In the process he noted that to date *mbira* music and its accompanying instruments were partly embedded within social relations and in traditional ceremonies. David Lan's (1985) work has also demonstrated the political embedment of traditions of spirit mediums and music in the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, during which old forms of performance such as music and dance took on new significance.

Changes within African societies, for instance processes of performance production leading to professionalisation, have a long history in Africa (Barber, 1987, 13). In some societies urbanisation was a feature of African life before the coming of colonialism. In his study of the social and economic organisation of *juju* music performance in Nigerian urban settings, Waterman (1990, 3, 157) found that specialisation in economic production was evident in pre-European lineage-based craft associations of the Yoruba. Similarly in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, archaeological evidence has shown the existence of social differentiation amongst people with functional specialisation, which gave a special status to craftsmen such as blacksmiths and builders in stone. Such specialisation marked the beginning of

urbanisation at Great Zimbabwe as early as the 12th century AD (Connah, 1987, 206). In performance culture too, the earliest transformations were indigenous and they were prompted by socio-economic developments within African societies (Manuel, 1988, 22–23). Another study that supports this argument was conducted by Collins and Richards on West African *juju* and highlife music (1989, 12–13, 37). In their analysis of the social context of this music they concluded that long before colonisation and even contact with Europe, local merchant capital was a major transforming influence on the socio-economic development of West Africa in general, and on popular music in particular.

### THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

#### Africa

Long before colonisation Africans were trading with Arabs and Europeans. In Southern Africa, starting in 1652 it was hunters, prospectors and missionaries, who paved the way for colonisation. Over the course of the subsequent centuries, a capitalist economy that depended crucially on African labour took shape. With the new economic system came Christianity, writing and urbanisation. Africans were recruited to work for colonists in mines, farms and cities for wages. In the process, they were exposed to many aspects of foreign culture and to education. Although not all people were able to get wage employment, there was a huge influx of people from the rural parts of the continent to urban centres in search of work.

The colonial economic system excluded women, by not employing them in the formal economy. Women were encouraged to remain in the rural areas to maintain fields and take care of children and the elderly. Up to 1958 there was little participation by women in wage employment (Southern Rhodesia Report, 1958, 120). Some women did find their way to towns in spite of colonial policies directed at keeping them in the rural areas (Barnes, 1991). Because they were rarely employed, women resorted to alternative sources of making incomes. It was some of these women and the wives of urban workers who were partly responsible for transforming a number of indigenous cultural practices in urban areas into commodities that were produced or made available for sale. Among them were liquor brewing, sex and entertainment (Bonner, Hofmeyr *et al.*, 1989). These activities were sometimes provided in women's houses that served as shebeens (illegal beer halls) and venues for parties which featured music. Thus these women provided the interaction between the colonial industrial system and music through their efforts to make a living within urban space. Although little scholarly attention has been given to their contributions to the scene of colonial urban music, women probably

played an important role, directly as performers and indirectly as supporters, in the rise of cultural workers.

### **Southern Africa**

The South African reserves or homeland policy and migrant labour removed people from their local context of music-making. This created a musical void in the lives of Africans especially those in cities. European music filled some of this vacuum. In order to make a living, some African musicians adopted foreign music (Andersson, 1981, 16). In South Africa, some Africans began to adopt foreign musical instruments like the concertina from English settlers, the banjo and violin from the Malay people and the guitar from both Portuguese settlers and the Arabs. Radio, gramophones, records and guitars filled in some of the urban musical vacuum. The selling of records in Southern Africa by European record companies introduced to Africans the commoditisation of music (Andersson, 1981, 23). Meanwhile there were some Whites such as Hugh Tracy who showed interest in African music, and recorded traditional musicians all over Southern Africa. In 1927 he tracked down Zimbabwean singers to Johannesburg to record for Gallo. His first signings were George Sibanda from Bulawayo and Jean Bosco from Zaire. In addition to this he founded the International Library of African music. In later years Hugh's son, Andrew Tracy, worked at Kwanongoma College founded in Bulawayo by Robert Sibson. The College's main aim was to develop Zimbabwean African music through research (Andersson, 1981, 19-20). These activities, the entertainment 'vacuum', and the high level of unemployment contributed to the rise of amateur African entertainers in music, theatre and drama, and soccer.

Some of the earliest entertainers of music for sale were members of the urban poor who, according to one observer, comprised 'an assimilated, disenfranchised, impoverished, socially marginalised class', consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of hoodlums, pimps, prostitutes, vagrants, sidewalk vendors, drug addicts, musicians, miscellaneous street people and assorted unemployed migrants (Manuel, 1988, 18). Similar observations are available from Lagos, where street musicians, or 'palm-wine' guitarists as they were called, wandered the streets in the evening in search of informal social gatherings where they could perform in exchange for food, palm-wine, beer, or a few shillings (Waterman, 1985, 87). In the South African city of Johannesburg, Black urban workers who did not have recreational facilities, found some solace in shebeens where musicians jammed on old guitars, concertinas, pianos and home-made percussion instruments, and produced a genre of township popular music called *amarabi* (Andersson, 1981, 23).

Fairly similar processes have been noted in Zimbabwe (Chinamhora, 1987, 261-263). With growing unemployment in the cities of Bulawayo and Salisbury (now Harare) in the period following World War II, street

musicians entertained people in pubs, at bus-stops, shopping centres and in streets. They played mainly banjos, penny whistles and traditional hand rattles (Zindi, 1985, 3; Makwenda, 1990, 91). In West Africa, this creativity has been interpreted by Waterman (1990, 9) as part of economic adaptation by 'migrants mak[ing] a place for themselves in the city'. These performances in the urban environment support the Coplan-Erlmann characterisation of cultural workers as people who survive by combining social, political and economic resources. Such cultural productions were not autonomous, but part of the process by which cultural workers negotiated wider issues of unemployment, cultural dislocation and limited entertainment facilities.

### THE EMERGENCE OF URBAN CULTURAL WORKERS IN ZIMBABWE: LABOUR AND LEISURE

After the establishment of the colonial state power in Zimbabwe, colonial administration in form of government agencies and offices was set up. This state was manifested in various forms, and operated under the influence of some of the major institutions such as private companies and their subsidiary services like marketing.

One of the cornerstones of the colonial economic system in Zimbabwe was the system of migrant labour. What may be characterised as urban cultural workers evolved within this system. Thus, the force that seems to have been chiefly responsible for the changing context of music performance in colonial Zimbabwe was the political and economic struggle between Europeans and Africans. African performance culture, as Wolcott (1974) points out, was being used as an adaptive strategy to survive economically and culturally. Music seems to have moved into another environment, that of the capitalist context and, as I describe below, particularly supported by private enterprise.

Although the evolution of cultural workers was a product of long-term waves of historical development, a variety of colonial institutions and the gender division of labour that underpinned them were of central importance to their subsequent development. Among these institutions were the Christian church, the British army, mission and government schools, municipalities, private companies, the entertainment sector and the mass media. After 1980, there were additional institutions that fostered the development of popular music, namely the Zimbabwe College of Music's Ethnomusicology Programme, the Zimbabwe Union of Musicians, ZIMIA (Zimbabwe Music Industry Association), ZIMRA (Zimbabwe Music Rights Association), Amakhosi Theatre Productions, the Drama Department at the University of Zimbabwe, Black Umfolosi, ZACT (the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre), the NTO (National Theatre

Organisation), Kunzwana Trust and other related organisations and associations. As I discuss below, colonial urban institutions were particularly crucial in the evolution of cultural workers. That is apparent from the fact that to date that history is still affecting the nature of the arts in the country.

## COLONIAL INSTITUTIONS

### **The Christian church**

Some of the earliest Europeans to show an interest in African culture were Christian missionaries. By and large, they viewed African culture as 'primitive' and associated African music and its instrumentation with paganism. Thus they justified the imposition of Christian and European music and culture on Africans. The music took the form of hymns, and the church became an important vehicle for the introduction of Western music (Manuel, 1988, 86). Another institution that the church used was the school, since African education was the preserve of missionaries until 1920. In the church, Africans learned to play European musical instruments.

After the Second World War Africans in many Christian churches were allowed their own musical expression. Musicologists from the Methodist, Roman Catholic, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden studied the characteristics of traditional music in order to determine how best the music could be incorporated into those churches (Jones, 1992, 29-30). Musicians such as Dumisani Maraire, Simon Macheke, and Chawasarira wrote hymns which were published for use in church. This was done through the Ecumenical Arts Association that was formed in 1968. Later Africanisation covered all the arts: drama, the visual arts, creative writing and music. Out of these activities emerged a large body of music in the form of original compositions and adaptations of traditional tunes (Axelsson, 1984, 1993). Some traditional Ndebele and Shona songs were given new words from the Christian bible. This transformation of indigenous music helped to shift some of its aspects to the church. Another change was the incorporation of African instruments like drums and rattles. Some of these instruments were probably incorporated into popular music performance after having been legitimised by the Christian church. As African music was being incorporated into Christian music, it adopted instruments such as the guitar and Western musical arrangements. The people who were responsible for these changes were the African church members in conjunction with the leadership of these churches.

While the production of this music was oriented toward the African church congregations, it also contributed to the subsequent rise of cultural workers in the form of musicians and bands. One of the well known



mission-based groups was the St. Paul's Musami Band which in 1972 recorded the song 'Mvura Ngayinaye' [Let the rain fall] (Zindi, 1985, 6). A number of contemporary prominent Zimbabwean musicians started their careers in the church. For instance, Lovemore Majaivana started singing in his father's church at the age of 15 (Chinamhora, 1986). Thus, the Christian church provided a new context for the performance of African music. Although there is little academic work (Axelsson, 1984) on the role of the church in the development of popular music in Zimbabwe, research on this issue has been conducted in other African societies, for instance, the Yoruba of Nigeria. From his research on African music, Euba (1989, 17-20) concluded that Africanised churches provided a fertile context for the construction of syncretic music forms, and that the Africanisation of Christian musical performance functioned as a training ground for musicians blending elements from African, African American and European musical traditions.

### **The British army**

The role of the army in the evolution of popular music as cultural production has received some attention in scholarship on colonial Africa. British colonists taught Africans military music, like brass band music that was used by the army for military functions. Peter Manuel (1988, 18) has noted that in West Africa, regimental bands were introduced in the 17th century and that 'by 1750 a number of British-style bands with native musicians were extant'. The generation of brass musicians that emerged out of this development contributed to the creation of an indigenous hybrid music. In East Africa, T. Ranger (1975, 9-14) has shown that the *beni* dance appropriated European military uniforms and the music of the brass band. This influence of European military brass bands on African music dating back to the end of the 19th century has also been noted by Stephen H. Martin (1980, 29-31). It was the Germans and the British who introduced the music to the coastal regions of Tanzania and Kenya, where Africans are said to have been attracted by the military bands themselves, marching drills and the colourful parade dress of the European soldiers. The missionaries in East Africa encouraged local people to adopt either Christian hymns or military band music, so that they abandoned their 'pagan' traditional music. Missionaries saw the subsequent adoption of this music as one of the "symbols of the Africans' abandonment of their wicked drums" (Martin, 1980, 32).

Similarly, in West Africa, some of the earliest African popular musicians were former members of colonial army bands; it was also through military history that some Black music forms from the Americans were re-planted back in Africa. Besides providing musical training for Africans in colonial armies, the army bands also contributed to the birth of musical events

which imitated the process of the military brass band performance (*Ibid.*, 35). Although there is little research on this issue in Zimbabwe, these observations raise interesting questions concerning the role the military played in the evolution of cultural workers in that country. In contemporary Zimbabwe there are a number of popular musicians and music education instructors who received part of their music training from the colonial army band. Today the Zimbabwe national army and the police force each have bands that hire musicians to play music. Some of these musicians have received some of their musical training at the Zimbabwe College of Music. The country's national anthem was arranged by the army band, and the music was composed by a member of the police band.

### **Municipalities**

Municipalities or city councils were established in the early days of the colonisation of Zimbabwe as part of the racial effort to control Africans in urban areas through accommodation, skills training, recreational and health facilities. The Municipal Areas Act of 1897 and its subsequent amendments empowered municipalities to control African activities in cities (Mabogunje, 1990, 128). This segregation was anchored in part on what has been called the 'sanitation syndrome', that is, the Europeans' fears of being infected by Africans (Swanson, 1977, 387-412; Curtin, 1985, 595-613). African workers, who were mostly male, lived in socially segregated housing in the locations, away from their wives and families, while they earned enough money to pay their hut or poll tax and to return to their permanent homes in the rural areas. The municipal system was meant to ensure that Africans would never be permanent urban dwellers, while ensuring a steady flow of cheap labour. Since the workers lived away from their wives and were deprived of most of their rural recreation, colonially induced immorality set in.

The colonial economy forced men into migrant labour leaving their wives and families in the rural areas. Because of the predominance of men in the urban areas, prostitution and beer halls arose to meet some of their needs. In order to exploit these developments economically, and to control Africans, the liquor industry and the colonial state set up a brewery in 1913 and recreation rooms in 1914, to provide some form of entertainment for Africans. From about 1930, the Bulawayo municipality for instance showed some interest and concern for the social needs of Africans by providing various welfare services. The Welfare and Community Services department set up girls' and boys' clubs through which skills training in arts and crafts, performance, sports and games, music and drama were provided. The municipal halls featured films, talent nights and socials or beauty contests, ethnic dances, and ball-room dancing. The municipal beer gardens became the loci of cultural activity and an important source

of innovation in music and other forms of performance among urban Africans (Wolcott, 1974, 83). Beer gardens provided a context for cultural creativity. Here, Africans from different ethnic groups exchanged cultural information and shared their insights about various aspects of European culture. In Bulawayo for instance, besides being drinking places, the gardens provided some leisure in the form of ethnic singing and dancing. Thus Africans used the gardens as community centres that provided a focus for social networks that in turn were part of the adaptation to urban life. From a political economic viewpoint, one might also argue that the beer gardens and the cultural performances that took place outside the work place channelled African activities in a way that was functional to capital. To the colonial state, as a regular means of recreation, the consumption of beer and ethnic dances in municipal beer halls provided the escape for workers who were potentially hostile to the state (Jackson, 1987).

The other major locus of Africans' activities was the municipal hall. Each township had its own hall where among many activities, ball-room dancing was held. This was one of the performances of music that exposed Africans to European traditions. In the colonial period Bulawayo had one of the country's most thriving ball-room dancing cultures. As late as May 1966, a guild in Bulawayo was formed in Makokoba township to cater for ball-room dancing and other activities like indoor and outdoor games and table tennis (Masiye Pambili, 1966).

The municipal welfare policy also produced cultural workers like footballers, actors and musicians. Some of the cultural organisations that evolved as a direct result of municipal welfare activities were Amakhosi Productions and Iluba Elimnyama; musicians and bands like Dorothy Masuka, Paul Lunga, Jazz Impacto, Lovemore Majaivana, Harare Mambos, Thomas Mapfumo, Ebony Sheikh, Ilanga and *imbube* bands like Black Umfolosi and Sunduza; and fine artists like Adam Madebe.

Through the system of offering contracts to musicians as resident bands at beer halls the municipalities contributed to the development of commercial cultural workers, especially popular musicians. This gave to amateur or street musicians who had learnt how to play musical instruments at municipal youth centres the opportunity to have access to European musical instruments, a regular wage and sometimes free accommodation. In addition to this, these contracts provided some form of employment. By 1959 there were over 200 well-known bands in Salisbury and Bulawayo among them the Capital City Dixies, De Black Evening Follies, Jazz Crooners, The Echoes and The Melody Makers (Zindi, 1985, 4).

Another institution that created a context for cultural work was the broadcasting services especially the African wing, and the recording industry. The Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) pioneered the

recording of indigenous African music that was used for radio programmes. The performers whose music was recorded were paid one shilling per song if the song was broadcast on the radio (Zindi, 1985, 3). Some programmes were also set aside for African music, although most of the recorded music that was played in these programmes was Cuban, Zairian, Zambian and South African. Yet in the early 1930s when recording companies in South Africa discovered the Zimbabwean market, the production of music as a commodity created for mass consumption was incorporated into the African urban expressive culture in the country (Impey, 1992, 72). The first company in this venture was Gallo that set up a branch in Bulawayo; it was followed by Teal Record Company that was established in Salisbury. The main interest of the two companies was to sell foreign, and not local music. However, in the early 1970s, Gallo recorded the music of the Green Arrows, followed by the Great Sounds, Harare Mambos, Tutenkhamen Band, Springfields, Otis Waygood and the St. Paul's Musami Band.

The music of this period was heavily influenced by Zairian *rhumba* and South African *mbaqanga*. Thus popular music performance was being shaped both by colonial and business interests. The nationalist struggle and the war of liberation that followed these changes forced business interests in the recording industry to recognise African music. Record companies did take advantage of the war fever among Africans and recorded revolutionary music for the first time in the country's colonial history (Zindi, 1985, 6). Popularly known as *chimurenga* music in Shona society, music performance was used in the war to instill determination, inspiration and hope among fighters and everyone who participated. *Chimurenga* songs did more than serve as a catalyst in cementing people's solidarity; the Zimbabwean war songs provided the opportunity for Africans to revitalise traditional performances to suit their changed circumstances and needs (Pongweni, 1982). The war also provided the context for the creative and political blending of indigenous and Christian music. Thus, during the war music performance served to re-instate a sense of human dignity and the vitality of oral culture rooted in local heritage. This music was eagerly embraced by Africans. The colonial recording companies that had ignored African music soon realised the commercial potential of liberation war music, and they recorded some popular musicians who used this idiom. In short, the recording industry played an important role brokering between colonial institutions and Africans. In fact, the revolutionary music might not otherwise have received as much recognition as it did.

#### **Private companies**

Besides municipalities, private companies also contributed to the emergence of African urban cultural workers. These companies provided

entertainment like traditional dance and popular music for their workers. Some of the performers were employees of those companies and they used company instruments. This practice was not unique to colonial Zimbabwe. In South Africa in the city of Durban, dance groups that competed among themselves in the early 1900s (Coplan, 1985, 64-65) were supported by large industrial concerns like Lever Brothers, Dunlop and the South African Railways as an outlet for off-duty energies of large numbers of men housed in barrack-like compound housing provided for them (Spiegel and McAllister, 1991, 79-81). In many South African mines open air dance floors and amphitheatres were developed. In Zimbabwe, Mangula Mine management scouted for musicians in Harare, who would entertain mine workers using instruments of the mining company (Zindi, 1985, 30-31). In Bulawayo, the Shabani and Wankie mines organised traditional dancing competitions and displays that were attended by dancing teams from the two mines.

Besides funding cultural activities and recreation for African workers, private companies like fashion shops, manufacturers, and firms specialising in beauty products also sponsored street musicians who imitated the recorded music from South Africa, Europe and the USA to promote their products such as soap, skin-lightening creams, cigarettes and food (Zindi, 1985, 4). Lever Brothers for instance sponsored some musicians to promote their sunlight soap; the British-American Tobacco (BAT) company used township amateur bands to promote its products in the townships. Most of these companies had their own instruments that were used to play the commercial music.

The entertainment and hospitality industry also played a major role in the emergence of cultural workers. Like other commercial institutions, hotels and private clubs purchased musical instruments that hired musicians to promote their businesses. Some private companies sponsored music competitions like battle of the bands and festivals in order to market their products to Africans. Most of these bands were predominantly male. In effect, this was in keeping with general colonial employment practices and local African patriarchal practices.

Taken together, colonial institutions such as churches, the army, schools, clubs, drinking houses, dance halls, African locations and private companies were central in the commercialisation of music and the emergence of commercial cultural workers in Zimbabwe. Coplan has characterised this commercialisation process as a product of changing interaction between cultural workers, colonial institutions and working class experiences in the urban areas of South Africa (1985, 5). The process I have described so far for Zimbabwe indicates that fairly similar developments took place there.

## INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

The impact of the demands of international products and the mass media have played significant parts in the shaping of composition, production and marketing of Zimbabwean popular music (Impey, 1992, 73; Jones, 1992, 35). The international factor dates back to the 19th century. The earliest foreign influences came through South Africa, Zaire, Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi through workers, who constituted a large proportion of the migrant labour force in both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa (Chinamhora, 1987; Makwenda, 1990, 92). Workers from Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi who laboured in Zimbabwean mines, farms and factories brought with them the music to their fellow Zimbabwean workers (Tutani, 1990). From the early colonial days, Zimbabwean popular music was influenced by music from neighbouring countries through migrant labour, the mass media and touring music groups especially from South Africa and Zaire (Makwenda, 1990) and Zimbabweans working in South African mines. The colonial broadcasting services that were based in Lusaka brought in Zairian *rhumba*, Zambian and Malawian music influences. Other influences came from abroad after the federation. From Europe, America and the Caribbean came the influence of blues, jazz, soul, rock'n'roll, disco, funk, country music and reggae particularly in the period 1960 to the 1970s. However this regional influence changed after the new political context of independence set in, in 1980. International sanctions that had been imposed on Southern Rhodesia in 1965 were lifted and the country was admitted into the international community. The international economic system resumed its direct interaction with Zimbabwe through trade and aid. Locally, political change resulted in the re-instatement of active participation by Africans in the political and economic system of the country. Institutions that had previously been controlled by the colonial government were now fully opened up to Africans, who for the first time in the history of Zimbabwe became the recognised main consumer group in the national economy. While the new government did not promote musicians abroad, it used music as a political tool and a means of reconstructing African values, as well as a source of revenue for the state in form of taxes and foreign currency.

One of the effects of the lifting of sanctions was the availability of foreign popular music as a commodity in Zimbabwe. Foreign musicians began to tour the country. Large international concerts held in Harare and Bulawayo attracted many Zimbabweans. Because the preference for foreign music and entertainment over local styles is a widespread feature of the leisure sector, large international concerts held in Harare and Bulawayo attracted many Zimbabweans. As Impey (1992, 119) points out, the preference for foreign commodities is a common Zimbabwean phenomenon

that permeates all aspects of the nation, including its economy. Zimbabwean musicians were also able to export some of their music to foreign audiences especially those in Europe and North America.

The watershed in Zimbabwean music in relation to the international influence was the invitation of the Jamaican reggae musician Bob Marley by the Zimbabwe government 'to entertain the masses of Zimbabwe during the birth of a new nation and the inauguration of a new leader' (Zindi, 1985, 7). An estimated audience of 100 000 who watched the celebrations was exposed to reggae music that came out of a sound system, whose technology had never been seen before in the country. Marley's tour had a major impact on the status of popular music to the extent that it convinced some officials in the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture to purchase a public address system for future use by both local and foreign performers. The then Recreation Council of the ministry later legislated in favour of establishing music bodies to promote the music industry. At this point it seems that the political dimension of music performance that had existed in pre-colonial societies was being resuscitated in a very public way. Such acceptance of popular music as an integral part of contemporary society has occurred in other African nations, for instance in Zaïre (Pwono, 1992, iv). In Zimbabwe the public administration of culture since independence has not been as successful as expected. The National Arts Council which is directly responsible for culture, is said to have been rocked by scandals surrounding the misuse of funds and poor management.

After Marley, a couple of foreign reggae bands, notably from Britain such as Misty in Roots and UB40, performed in Zimbabwe between 1981 and 1984. These concerts and the selling of reggae records in the country after 1980 not only popularised reggae music and Rastafarianism among the African youth, but also helped to keep popular music within its pre-independence concern with political and social issues, especially the plight of Blacks (Zindi, 1985, 22). The powerful political messages in the music influenced African youth in the former segregated townships to search for their history and identity; these messages also appealed to musicians to participate in the task of recapturing African values. The wider society had come to expect musicians both as public performers and the traditional custodians of culture, tradition and customary practices, to educate, inform and entertain the public (Kaseke, 1988).

Bob Marley's invitation to the independence celebrations by the government seemed to have elevated the status of popular musicians by Zimbabwean society both politically and economically. Full time musicians like Dorothy Masuka, Green Arrows, Lovemore Majaivana, Thomas Mapfumo and the Bundu Boys earned some respect and acceptance as workers (Zindi, 1985, 71). Musicians in Zimbabwe were then getting involved in music business, like their foreign counterparts who had shown local

artists the potential economic benefits from popular music performance. To illustrate this, Zindi (1985, 20) uses the example of the British reggae band Misty In Roots, who after their five months of shows in Zimbabwe in 1982, bought musical equipment, a big car for touring purposes and a farm from some of the proceeds of their concerts. In short, Zimbabwean society was beginning to change its negative perception of popular musicians.

Tours by foreign musicians had particular impact on popular music. At these concerts local musicians rubbed shoulders with international stars, who were very highly impressed by their music. This marked the beginning of performance exchanges between Zimbabwean and foreign musicians. Eventually a trend on the part of foreign audiences especially in Europe and America towards an appreciation of non-Western musics, in particular African music, set in (Jones, 1992, 35). These audiences have particular interest in the so-called 'ethnic' or traditionally based *ingquzu/imbube* and *mbira* music by artists like Majaivana, Ilanga, Black Umfolosi, Dumisani Maraire, Ephat Mujuru, Stella Chiweshe, Thomas Mapfumo and The Bundu Boys (Impey, 1992, 120). Jones postulates that international audiences will continue to be receptive to new and old sounds emerging from Zimbabwe in the foreseeable future (1992, 35).

Some of the most notable tours were those by Hugh Masekela and Buwa, and Graceland in 1987; and in 1988 Gregory Isaacs, the Human Rights Concert, Abacusch, P. J. Powers, and the Jazz Festival that featured three South African bands, Sakhile, the Brubeck Ntoni Quartet, Tananas, and Zimbabwe's Mudzimu. These shows featured some local musicians who were later able to crack the overseas music market through their exploration of indigenous sounds (Impey, 1992, 120). However local musicians did not make as much money abroad as their foreign counterparts did in Zimbabwe.

The influx of foreign musicians created unfair competition for the local musicians and forced them to take their performances out of the country into the international context. They realised that like foreign music in Zimbabwe, their music could receive some appreciation from European and American audiences, where people were searching for exotic African images and music among them 'jungles, drums, bare breasts, sweaty bodies, mysteriousness, spirituality and primitivism' (Impey, 1992, 173). This trend was also fuelled by foreign promoters of international popular music and record companies, who since 1980 intensified their scouting for African musicians for the European and American markets. This change suggests that every sphere of Zimbabwean life was subjected to these world influences. Thus Zimbabwean musicians who started to consider the overseas market were probably responding to the economic pull of the centre in Europe, North America and Japan. Musicians cannot ignore these forces because it is the overseas market that controls the so-



called Third World economies. There is a growing number of Zimbabwean musicians who have either toured Japan or marketed their music there. The influence of this external market helps to explain the major forces behind the changing contexts of music performance.

Some international concerts seemed to have reinforced the traditional role of music in society. In traditional society, music has a direct functional role. Since these concerts addressed issues like violations by governments of human rights, and children's rights in particular, they were playing a functional political role. One of the concerts 'Human Rights Now' was sponsored by Amnesty International in 1988 and featured Bruce Springsteen. The fact that the target of the show was apartheid in South Africa and that during the performance the audience signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, demonstrates that it had been brought to Harare on a political ticket (Thornycroft, 1988). Although this tour was not a new phenomenon, foreign tours have helped some musicians revive performances in solidarity with the liberation movement in South Africa. Foreign tours also contributed to the growth of audiences who attended live music performances through which most bands in Zimbabwe earn their living (Zindi, 1985, 69).

Among the social groups who participated in the earliest post-colonial interaction between Zimbabwe and other nations were popular musicians. They did this through their performances. Although they might have been primarily concerned with making a living from their music, they also expressed the country's culture and identity, using the independence experiences to appeal to their audiences. The obsession of Zimbabwe artists, particularly of musicians with the overseas market is part of their brokerage role between foreign and their national worlds. In fact, Zimbabwe has managed to sell a good image of itself through popular musicians like the Bhundu Boys, Dorothy Masuka, Thomas Mapfumo, Stella Chiweshe and Lovemore Majalwana. The success of these groups demonstrates the creative link between politics and artistic production in the cultural mediation of popular music.

### **The mass media**

The survival of popular music hinges on the mass media that comprise records and both audio and video tapes, compact discs, radio, television, film, computers, digital technology, newspapers and magazines. The mass media is an aspect of the world system by virtue of its widespread circulation that links the centre of the system and its sub-systems. The mass media that play one of the major parts in the changing contexts of music performance, comprise an industry in itself that is very crucial to the music business. Although the major media, that is, radio, television and the press continue to be controlled by the Zimbabwean government,

private business companies use them for their marketing purposes through what are called sponsored programmes.

The mass media industry disseminates information through concert and record reviews, biographies of musicians, fan clubs and articles, radio broadcasters, music televisers and music reviewers in the popular print media. The mass media are also important to popular music for marketing purposes especially within the context of music performance as a commodity (Impey, 1992, 71). A good deal of selling and buying today is facilitated by the mass media especially in urban areas. The mass media are also shaping popular music performance and heterogeneity, flexibility and personalisation in people's lives by pushing local music towards standardisation and homogenisation through mass produced commercial records and tapes. The mass media has therefore given the performance of popular music a commodity orientation, by increasingly separating the music from its primary audience.

At independence the former colonial institutions of the mass media were opened up to Africans. The re-establishing of media links with foreign countries made international television and radio programmes available to Zimbabwean musicians. The new Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation was restructured into four radio and two television channels. One of the radio channels plays mostly African music, including hit parades that are sponsored by record companies and programmes. A new policy giving more air time to local African music contributed to the changed context of African popular music. One such change was the setting up of an organisation to protect (administer) composing musicians' performing rights, the Zimbabwe Music Rights Association (ZIMRA) in 1982. Besides protecting musicians' performing rights, ZIMRA collects royalties on musicians' rights. One of the main sources of royalty revenue for musicians is the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) which pays musicians for playing their music on radio and television as part of programming and in commercials. Although it took ZIMRA some years to reach an agreement as to how much the ZBC had to pay to composers, the final settlement resulted in a licence on the terms sought by ZIMRA. According to the contract the ZBC pays to ZIMRA a percentage of their advertising revenue rather than a lump sum once a year as suggested by the former, i. e. ZBC (Atkinson, 1991, 7).

Another mass media context that popular music has moved into is cinema, since all media can include background music. Two of Zimbabwe's feature films *Jit* (1989) and *Neria* (1991) and a number of documentaries use the popular music of some leading Zimbabwean artists as an attempt to portray changing African culture and values within their dynamic socio-economic environment. In this context cinema and its accompanying music are used to entertain and communicate certain values to an audience

composed of the local population, business organisations and tourists especially those from abroad. In the process, music is permeating many aspects of human life. Besides politicians and the business world, popular entertainers are among the social groups that dominate the mass media. As Coplan and Erlmann have suggested, urban entertainers serve as brokers between various sectors of society.

## CONCLUSION

This article has identified some of the most important processes that underlie the professionalisation of popular music in urban Africa as colonialism and urbanisation. Colonisation played a significant role in transforming the context of music-making and performance by introducing the capitalist economic system and the notion of the market and money (Geschiere, 1992, 161). This led to the commercialisation of music that had been embedded within social relations and traditional ceremonies as Africans were adapting to urbanisation and industrialisation. As Spiegel and McAllister (1991, 1-3) point out, migrant workers used music as a cultural resource to adapt to, and express, ongoing changes in their lives.

This article has described how some of the embedded music in Zimbabwe is gradually moving towards commercialisation. This process, aided by the mass media, occurs within the overall context of socio-economic change and the professionalisation of cultural production. Although a former era's embedded music seems to be moving towards a commodified entertainment form, music performance and production today does not exist as a form isolated from politics, business and religion (Erlmann, 1991, 2). Contemporary Zimbabwean popular musicians cannot make a living by separating music from these other aspects of their lives. Today's cultural workers are important mediators between these worlds.

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