

THE MUSICAL SCENE IN UGANDA VIEWS FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN¹

by

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This article is a collaborative effort between a Ugandan scholar specialising in theatre studies and currently teaching in the United Kingdom and a British ethnomusicologist who taught in Uganda during the 1960s and has since maintained his musical research interests there. Firstly we present a composite view of musical life in Uganda. Later in the paper we present our own separate ideas (even where they overlap).

We have retained Bantu prefixes commonly used in association with the names of the various bantu-speaking groups. So for example: musoga = a person of the place called Busoga; basoga = people of Busoga; ki (the adjectival prefix) gives kisoga = of Busoga.

Bwemba nnyimba saagala anyumwa²: savouring activity and diversity

Uganda is one of Africa's smallest countries but with a population of around sixteen million people composed of around 15 major ethnic groups each with their own languages. With the notable exception of the music of the Baganda people, living in the central region (and of its court music in particular) Uganda's rich and varied traditions of music and dance have received very little attention from scholars and this is especially true for the past two decades. For this one can mainly blame the political troubles that beset Uganda from around 1972 following the rise to power of the military dictator Idi Amin and his successors Godfrey Binaisa, Paulo Muwanga, Brigadier Okello and Milton Obote. Not only did this deter or prevent foreign scholars from visiting Uganda but local scholars also, returning fresh from the USA and UK in the early 1970s, proudly carrying their PhDs, with dreams of carrying out serious research into their own traditions. What did they do during the next two decades? "We tried to dodge bullets" was the wry reply of one, Christine (Lule) Kiganda, who had acquired her specialist training in Literature and Folklore in Los Angeles and had returned in 1971 keen to begin examining the traditional oral arts of her own people.

This did not stop a few determined spirits from continuing to realise their dreams. The munyankore composer, the late Benedicto Mubangizi, living in extreme poverty in his home village in western Nkore away from the most troubled areas and having

¹ This is an English version of the article published in French in *Cahiers d'Ethnomusicologie*, No. 9, 'Nouveaux enjeux'.

² "When I'm singing I don't want to hear people conversing", a stock phrase in the repertory of baganda professional singers.

retired early from his work as a teacher-trainer, continued to research the song traditions of his region and use the knowledge gained in developing a liturgical repertory for the Catholic Church in Western Uganda. His own output was huge. It included half a dozen Masses, over 265 hymns and songs and the compilation of a hymn book subsequently adopted for use throughout the diocese.³ He trained choirs and adjudicated as music festivals and was also a prolific writer and historian, publishing 30 books including several novels, numerous collections of traditional tales, epics and other folklore. He also wrote a detailed unpublished study of the origins, kinship and history of the parental clans, recorded from the oral tradition of elders. But Mubangizi was an exception – a genius, driven continuously in spite of poor health to satisfy his muse.

Many educated Ugandans, often because of their education, were targets for both Amin's and Obote's hit-men during their reigns of terror, and their main preoccupation was simply staying alive and protecting their families to the best of their abilities. Some were killed; a number sought refuge in other countries and only now are returning to take up their work once again. One of the results of the upsurge of interest in 'world music' in the West is that several talented Ugandans who found the means to get a formal musical training overseas have been tempted to stay in the countries where they studied, for they can earn far more giving workshops and courses there than they can if they returned to look for a position at Makerere University's department of Music, Dance and Drama or in one of the 'bush' colleges now proliferating under the name National Teachers' College in the different regions of Uganda.

Village music

During the period of strife lasting over a decade and a half, rural Ugandans were forced to revert to a purely local subsistence economy. With no money for batteries (even if they were being imported – which happened rarely) the once ubiquitous transistor radio which in the 1960s could be heard in villages in the most remote corners of the country could no longer saturate the ears of the people. Musical change and the influence of the popular music and the ideology of the West was minimised. Whenever possible music and dancing still found their rightful place in the important rituals and affairs of life – marriage rites, birth of twins, circumcision (in those areas where it was still practised), last funeral rites and in schools, churches and other institutions. Years of insecurity and the absence of western music were years when traditional forms of music-making were strengthened. Somehow local troupes had continued to meet and practise their regional musics, indeed, the activities of village based troupes and culture clubs had for long been recruited by one 'government' after

³ Entitled *Mweshongorere Mukama* (Let us praise the Lord), Marianum Press, Mbarara.

another as way of disseminating political messages.⁴

Village groups proliferated, despite all difficulties, perhaps because of them, for communal music and dance was seen as one way of coping with the visions of destruction, murder and bloodshed that confronted the people daily. The amount of music-making which one can observe in Uganda today is astounding. In spite of all the talk of endemic poverty and corruption, of Ugandans acquiring the dependency syndrome, Westerners cannot fail to be surprised by the proportion of human and financial resources found for such cultural intangibles as music and dance.

One result of official encouragement of cultural activity at a village level was the formation of hundreds of women's groups throughout rural Uganda. Successive governments have attempted to mobilise rural women whether for political purposes or in furthering development and education. Song and dance occupy a central place in the activities of these clubs. Themes such as household management, hygiene, child rearing, proper cultivation techniques and awareness of the dangers of AIDS transference are all the concerns of women and are promulgated in song. Until 1986 when Museveni and his National Resistance Army finally freed most of Uganda from the murderous rule of Milton Obote and the rag-tail remnants of the his army, nobody took the propagandising in such songs seriously. And in any case the facility for parody, for spontaneous invention of new texts, and devices such as parallelism and allusion made it perfectly easy for any overt meaning of songs to be undermined. Praise of dictators is no longer a theme of such songs. Instead women are urged to work hard and to realize their potentials in the cause of personal, local and national development and to haul themselves up out of the dire poverty they experienced for so many years. A typical choral refrain for one of the songs of a basoga women's club goes:

Mboine kirabu eyerimira, maama, ezwaala mangoye (I have seen the club members who work hard in their gardens wearing a variety of [nice] clothes⁵)

The act of performance, however, allows for much more than simple prosaic statements like this, for the habit of improvisation and variation making gives room for many other more personal and topical utterances from a soloist. Over ninety percent of the songs of the women's clubs are composed in traditional style and accompanied by local traditional drummed accompaniments and hand-clapping, though for a change the women quite enjoy attempting harmonized songs, of the kind some might have learned in school, and with varying degrees of success.

⁴ Urban examples of this are the Heartbeat of Africa troupe up to around 1980, the Dancing Cranes during the years of Obote's second rule, and the Ngaali Ensemble since 1986, the era of the National Resistance Movement. The latter began as a core of students and lecturers at Makerere University department of Music, Dance and Drama in collaboration with the cultural department of the NRM secretariat and aimed to represent Uganda through dramatised music and dance. Although the message behind their major project, the musical play *Mother Uganda* (first performed in 1987), is that of reconciliation, it also has a political tone which focuses on the achievements of the government.

⁵ Recorded by Peter Cooke, tape PCUG94.5.5, soloist Mrs Nakadaama Muwaya with Kyebajja Koobona women's club, Nabitovu village, Busowoobi, Iganga District, March 12 1944, also on CD VDE-925 (Disques VDE-Gallo).

The several semi-professional men's drum and dance troupes which I visited in Busoga (Eastern region) in 1987, all were noted to have enlarged and diversified their instrumental ensembles (Cooke, 1995). Formerly such variety was unknown: in the 1960s the popular musical ensemble for partying in the Busoga villages had been at most a combination two or three lamellaphones and a flute. Larger ensembles for public ceremonial music might have been composed of xylophone, flute and drums. At that time pan-pipes were played by only one clan in the whole country. To find most groups now combining xylophone, pan-pipes, flute, lamellaphones, fiddle and percussion was somewhat of a surprise. Polyrhythmic interlocking of these different instrumental timbres produces for the outsider an almost bewilderingly rich tapestry of sound.

This diversification of instrumentation was partly inspired by the former National Ensemble which, under the musical leadership of the distinguished muganda musician Evaristo Muyinda, had been resident at the National Theatre in Kampala up to the early 1970s and had provided the music for much of the national dance troupe Heartbeat of Africa. This was Muyinda's so-called 'Kiganda orchestra'. Its personnel were mixed ethnically (though with baganda and basoga musicians forming the majority) and the whole was modelled on the lines of a western ensemble with groups of instruments of contrasted tone colours (tube fiddles, lyres, flutes, pan-pipes and zithers), mingling and contrasting their sounds with those of xylophone, drums and rattles. Musicians at Makerere University's Department of Music, Dance and Drama later experimented with similar instrumental combinations using them in theatre productions like Rose Mbowa's play 'Mother Uganda'. In both cases the ethnically blended ensemble served as a symbol of what most Ugandans would wish for: "a harmonious existence with all Ugandans playing together like musicians" (Kasule, 1993: 206).

Another influence was the decision in 1968 to promote a programme of instrumental music teaching in schools that encouraged the playing of African as well as European instruments. This gave the option of performing on Ugandan instruments in the curriculum examinations. Regular competitive festivals at primary and secondary levels provided further encouragement and since the 1970s the festivals have expanded to include sections for African instrumental ensembles, duets and solos. It also incorporates a section for traditional folksong and dance. This development has enabled large numbers of schoolchildren to gain proficiency on African instruments as well as knowledge of their traditional song repertory. This was important because so many primary and secondary schools offer boarding education and thereby remove children from traditional learning contexts.

The *adungu* harp of the Alur people of northwestern Uganda provides a striking example of the effect of this policy (and of Amin's policy of giving northern Uganda a higher cultural profile). They can now be used in school classrooms programmes and also heard in village drinking huts in many parts of Uganda. The *adungu* is now

frequently played in a consort of three or four sizes with the bass instrument having an overall length of nearly 2m. Interestingly one finds it either being used in a very traditional style, that is tuned pentatonically with a playing style involving the customary interlocking of parts, or tuned heptatonically with the harps combining to provide simple triadic harmonies such as one hears in the Congolese guitar music known locally as 'Zairwa'. But consort playing is in any case a feature of traditional performing practice in many areas of Uganda.

In the 1960s in Acholi and Lango, for example, groups of youths carrying their *lukeme* lamellaphones would meet together regularly for ensemble playing (a practice which is as lively as ever today) often holding inter-village competitions at weekends under the patronage of some local chief or wealthy trader. The hocketing trumpet dances of the Alur provide another example. But the western harmonies of the harps (and of some lamellaphone groups) are a sign of increasing familiarity with western music resulting from increasing experience of church music, of the teaching of Western music in schools and, of course, of the all-pervading sounds of Euro-American, Caribbean, Latin and Congolese and West African popular musics on the air waves.

One other phenomenon of village life deserves a mention. During the troubled decades Western religion was perceived by many rural Ugandans to have provided inadequate support and this perception, combined with a breakdown in the national health infrastructure in the face of a tremendous rise in ill-health, saw the previously somewhat clandestine activities of traditional healers come into the open. The healing and medicinal work of such people is rooted within a framework of ancestor worship and spirit appeasement and demands the use of mediums and various types of trance. Music and dance are vital ingredients in these activities. Moreover, since traditional culture and traditional belief go hand in hand the leaders of such cult groups (eg. the *cwezi* ancestor cult in Bunyoro and the corresponding *swezi* cult in Busoga) take on the role of guardians of traditional culture and extend their patronage to local performing groups. Two competent drummers, a chorus of cult members wielding large calabash rattles or singing into mirlitons (voice disguisers) and sometimes a xylophone are essential participants in *swezi* rituals in Busoga and are sometimes preceded by performances of songs and dances given by invited local troupes. The cults have a large membership and are well-organised on a national basis with the Uganda Traditional Healers and Cultural Association serving as a central organisation.

Royal court music

Some of Uganda's peoples can through their oral traditions trace the lineage of their kings back for three-quarters of a millennium. When the British first arrived in 1862 with the visit of J.H. Speke he was entertained at the palace of Banda, just outside present day Kampala. This was the official home of the proud Kabaka Muteesa I, the king of Buganda. There Speke had time to write brief accounts in his

diary of the various musical activities he observed at the palace. Buganda was at that time the most powerful of a number of kingdoms in the Lake Victoria region and as elsewhere in Africa the number and size of musical ensembles patronised by a ruler was an index of his power. Over the centuries various Kabakas had appropriated new musical styles and instruments for their own use at court. In the 1950s and 1960s Mengo palace, home of Muteesa II was a veritable Mecca for musicians and dancers.

The musical traditions of the Kabaka's palace have received considerable attention from western scholars (Anderson, Cooke, Kubik, Wachsmann, Wegner) particular interest being shown in the the repertory of two xylophones (the large 27-key *akadinda* and the smaller 12-key *entaala* or *amadinda*) and the *Abalere ba Kabaka* (the king's flutists). However, as a result of the constitutional crisis in 1966 the four kingdoms of Buganda, Nkore, Tooro and Bunyoro were abolished by government decree and the battle of Mengo saw Idi Amin's battalion invading and burning the palace of Muteesa II on the orders of the then Prime Minister Apolo Milton Obote.

The Kabaka's police force, which used to parade in public to the tunes of a uniformed Western style wind band, was destroyed during the attack and those palace musicians who could do so fled, vowing not to perform their music again until the Kabaka was reinstated. It was assumed (and sometimes claimed) by outsiders that during the next two decades the royal musical traditions must have perished. This was only partly true. The visit to Europe of Evaristo Muyinda and his concert party in 1986 demonstrated that there were still musicians alive who knew some of the palace repertory. My research visit in 1987 established that in some of the villages formerly charged with the duty of supplying musicians to the palace, the royal repertory was still being passed on to a younger generation. This was especially true for the *akadinda* and *amadinda* xylophone traditions. There was in any case little shortage of *endongo* lyre players like those who used to perform for the king, for lyres are still popular in wedding bands and the Kabaka's *Abadongo* ensemble (which contained lyres, fiddles and flute) seems to have been modelled on wedding bands. But very few of the original members of the *amakondere* (trumpet) orchestra were still living in 1987 and the same was true for the *endere* flute band and probably for the *abatenga* (tuned drum-chime players) also. The Kabaka's own private harpist had died during the intervening period and it seems that there is apparently now only one expert harpist who could possibly take his place. This is Albert Ssempeke, a highly versatile and expert instrumentalist, well known throughout Buganda and becoming increasingly well known in the UK and Scandinavia by reason of several visits since 1988 to teach and perform, sometimes with his wedding band of musicians and dancers called 'Aboluganda Kwagalana' (see the cassette "Ssempeke!" in the bibliography, and the cover of this journal). However, hereditary palace appointments fall into abeyance less easily and a meeting with Kawuula, the new young hereditary keeper of the royal drums (some of which during the attack on Mengo palace had

been hurriedly taken away to secret hiding places) confirmed that new drums could be commissioned, and others re-headed according to the proper rituals at any time on receiving the formal command from the heir to the throne

In 1993, with the agreement of President Museveni and Uganda's ruling National Resistance Council, Ronald Mutebi was installed as 36th Kabaka of Buganda – beating on his own personal drum to signify his accession to the throne. The people of the former kingdoms of Bunyoro and Tooro had each voted to have their king – Omukama – reinstated. Nkore, the fourth 'nation' was an exception, the majority of banyankore, being Iru commoners, preferred not to see a royal family which belonged to the minority Hima ethnic group restored again to power and privilege. The Omukamas had supported fewer musicians at their palaces than the Kabaka of Buganda, preferring instead to bring in special groups such as their *mpango* trumpet bands from their home villages for state occasions. Indeed, for these musicians the concept of serving only their King seemed not as important as for the Kabaka's musicians. In 1967, just one year after the abrogation of the kingdoms the trumpeters of the Omukama of Bunyoro were observed playing in public at trade fairs and on national holidays.

The present state of these ensembles has still to be investigated but there is no reason to suppose that they have ceased functioning as the following case might illustrate. In the early years of this century, Nyindo, a son of Musinga, the King of Rwanda, had been sent to rule over Bufumbira county in the south-western corner of Uganda. His rule was soon suppressed by the British administration. Nevertheless one hereditary musician-family of flute players there (playing the wooden cone flutes *iseengo*, which are played in hocket style and which had their parallels in the palaces of the Omukama of Bunyoro and the Omugabe of Nkore), was still maintaining the old royal repertory and performing it in public over half a century later in 1968, but this time at party political rallies and other public events. Ugandans it seems place a high value on their musical traditions and hereditary musicians may often look for fresh patronage in order to preserve their art and their status.

There has as yet been no revival of palace musical traditions in Buganda – but then the new king Mutebi has had little time to consider such matters. His country palace at Bamunanika was badly damaged in a disastrous fire in 1990 and rendered virtually uninhabitable and he has not yet established a home on the scale of his father's former palace of Mengo nearer Kampala. The royal family are considering creating a 'cultural village' on the hill where Kabaka Muteesa I met Speke, at Banda next to where some of the royal family still have a home. Banda may well become the locale for the revival of some of the former palace ensembles. However, knowledge of most of the unique repertory and the unique playing techniques rest now with a small number of musicians and it remains to be seen if the will is there to revive the music before that knowledge is forgotten.

Music in Kampala

The capital of Uganda has always been a cosmopolitan city – home to a large number of expatriates who organised their own cultural events but were also after independence in 1962 opening them up to the Ugandans themselves. By 1968 the Kampala Singers, performing oratorios and other choral works contained a sizeable number of young Ugandans in their ranks – able musicians who had learned to read music and sing in four parts in secondary school choirs taught by enthusiastic expatriate missionary-teachers. The more exclusive Kampala Players were a typical British amateur dramatic society performing their plays in the smart new National Theatre opened in 1959. The large Asian section of the population too had their own festivals and had built several picture houses where the latest Indian films were on show. This of course all ceased when they were expelled by Amin in 1971.

The only African group, formed in 1949, was Wycliff Kiyingi's drama group which gave concerts and programmes of short plays with music and dancing in community centres around Buganda. Kiyingi also wrote for radio and television and his radio series continues on air. A group of civil servants and other professionals formed the Nyonza Singers in 1961 to perform a mixture of Kiganda folksongs and dances, Afro-American spirituals, and new songs using Western harmonies.

During the 1960s Kampala's bars and night clubs hosted numerous 'Congolese' and Kenyan musicians in addition to a small number of local artists. When, for various reasons, Amin's rule caused the wholesale exodus of all these communities, Ugandans were ready themselves to make the abandoned buildings homes for their own cultural pursuits and entertainments even if it meant that the frequent curfews prevented them meeting in the evenings. Today the Kampala Singers society has been revived and gives regular performances though several other new musical groups perform music that appeals more to the taste of the average Ugandan. The Kampala Players have been replaced by numerous theatre companies – mark of rapid growth of a lively tradition of popular theatre in which music and dance plays a central part.

Kampala's nightclub scene is dominated by The Afrigos Band which plays to full houses at weekends, often in hotel gardens. It is composed of musicians from various backgrounds: some were apprenticed to Zairwa (Congolese) musicians in the 1960s, while the lead singer also has a background in church music. Others either learned from other pop musicians or acquired skills while at school. Their styles reflect these various backgrounds, and are blended in with traditional styles. This, together with their lively beat and topical and humorous lyrics accounts for their popularity and they clearly follow in the tradition of the travelling musicians.

The Ebonies on the other hand play a different brand of music. Most of the personnel have a strong church background and some have even taken examinations of the London-based Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music. Not unexpectedly their music relies heavily on western musical forms and instruments (electric keyboards, synthesizers etc.). Their songs are topical and they blend together

drama, dance and music. Occasionally they rely on traditional musicians (eg. the late Evaristo Muyinda) to train them in the basics of folk performance, to write and adapt traditional songs and even at times to perform with them on their traditional instruments. But their music does not have a traditional flavour and their audiences are just as likely to go on to listen to and dance with The Afrigos Band the same evening.

The 'Kadongo Kamu' genre is important in Kampala's musical scene. Kadongo Kamu was begun by one man and, encouraged by Radio Uganda's annual talent festival, has grown into the most influential popular music genre both within Kampala and beyond. It illustrates better than any other genre the interaction between Ugandan music and Western popular music, yet it is unique. Like the traditional travelling musicians, the performers combine all aspects of African and African-Caribbean oral forms with popular western styles. Their instruments include the steel-stringed folk guitar, traditional drums, western drum-kit, traditional string instruments and, for the special effects that can be achieved with it, the microphone. The music is readily available on audio-cassettes and its popularity is ensured by the topical and social issues discussed in its songs, and by comedy and hyperbole. Kadongo Kamu performers were also the first to take their art out to the people in the small trading centres and slums around Kampala, performing in abandoned bars, community centres and school buildings when no other drama group would venture out. Theirs was a guerilla theatre operating during a period of extreme insecurity and, economically equipped with props and instruments they could vacate a venue within minutes on getting warning of approaching soldiers.

Today, all the above groups display the cross fertilisation of western and traditional Ugandan performance styles, and the synthesizer and amplifier, even when not present on stage, have become essential equipment.

Among those Kampala musicians who are not involved with church music the following are notable: the late Peter Lwanga, Wassanyi Sserukenya and Elly Wamala. Peter Lwanga obtained post-graduate qualifications in music at Makerere and was the main composer for The Ebonies. His music blends together traditional and western forms. Elly Wamala is one of the surviving popular composers of the 1960s and is still a popular performer. A television producer by profession, he runs his own band The Mascots. His early songs were released on discs but now are available on cassette. Although he has a background in church music his own style is influenced strongly by Latin American and South African township styles. Wassanyi Sserukenya is a founder-member of the Nyonza Singers and composes both sacred and secular music. His best known works are his compositions and arrangements for the two most popular Luganda plays "Makula ga Kulabako" (Kulabako's beauty) and "Oluyimba lwa Wankoko" (the song of Wankoko). The former, the first musical play of its kind, has been performed countless times on stage and television and has also been filmed. Although a mechanical engineer, Sserukenya is a skilled player of a number of

traditional instruments and is knowledgeable in the music of all the Bantu-speaking traditions. He is also proficient in Western musical styles including popular music. Through his compositions, his use of instrumental ensembles and choreography he has been the major influence in the contemporary development of musical theatre in Uganda.

Conclusion

This all too brief survey of musical life in Uganda illustrates that at village level at least, local traditions are not being swamped by foreign music and its accompanying ideologies and that there is still a high degree of participation by all, even if such participation is no longer based solely on the occupants of a homestead or village or clan. There is an extra layer of activity – that of the performance troupes – based around a community group or social club or bands of semi-professional performers.

In Kampala and the few other small towns there is much more evidence of a musical syncretism taking place. The recent opening of several private radio stations, which compete with the official Radio Uganda, and the recent influx of foreign goods long denied to Ugandans, including television sets and video- and audio-cassette recorders, cassettes and CDS, means that in the absence of any policy of cultural ‘protection’ more and more Ugandans are learning the attractions of the music of the West. Veit Erlmann’s remark: “We can no longer talk about the music of a West African village without taking into consideration the corporate strategies of Sony, USA domestic policy and the price of oil”, may be beginning to apply to the Ugandan situation (Erlmann, 1993: 4). Yet Uganda’s increasing familiarity with Western music has so far lead to a proliferation of genres rather than any discernible diminution of its own traditions. Furthermore the lack of any official attempts to control the kind of musics being performed, whether live or via the broadcasting media, means that decisions regarding change in repertory or performing practice remain with the musicians and their audiences. Apart from the attempts to teach bi-musicality within state education systems there has been no attempt to institutionalize traditional music-making of the kind one sometimes finds in European countries.

Most ethnomusicologists recognize today that change is endemic within any culture, that traditions never stand still because humans are creative, have imaginations, are inspired by novel ideas, and are ready to enrich their musical palettes with anything they can handle effectively and furthermore to take full advantage of any new technology that might become available.

Albert Ssempeke was delighted to able to make use of a multi-track studio when he came to Edinburgh University as its first African Musician-in-Residence in 1988. Paradoxically this delight stemmed not from the fact that he could experiment with new ideas but rather because he could now reconstruct the sound of a centuries old palace tradition of flute playing which no longer exists in Uganda and which may never be revived. He, like the Kabaka’s musicians, is among the most conservative

of musicians – concerned with the status quo. For them, if one's king goes so goes the patronage which sustains them and their families. His work of reconstructing a flute band on tape grew from the challenge and opportunity presented by today's technology.⁶ His next step was to take back with him the master tape so that he could market it locally in his own country. There is indeed a considerable amount of local production of cassettes and this is not the sole preserve of the urban pop musicians. One scholar visiting Sirage, a peasant-farmer and leader of a small troupe based in a tiny village in the heart of rural Busoga discovered that he was already producing and selling cassette recordings of his group's songs.⁷

What of the ethnomusicologist?

AN INSIDER'S VIEW : SAM KASULE

Since Idi Amin Africanised Uganda individual research by Uganda scholars and by such people as theatre directors wishing to make immediate practical use of their research has intensified. However, this research is uncoordinated and worse still, because music knowledge has always been private there is a tendency among scholars to keep their materials to themselves. Not even visiting scholars will get access to such materials with any ease. The exceptions are sacred compositions, mostly stimulated by the activity surrounding the Uganda Martyrs celebrations in 1977 and 1979. It should also be noted that indigenous researchers have extended their work beyond their own ethnic boundaries for a variety of reasons, be they practical, political or academic.

There is little being done to record contemporary musical developments. While the music is readily available on audio cassettes the recording quality is often poor and because of the ephemeral nature of popular forms the recordings soon disappear from the scene. In addition to recordings held at the Uganda Museum mentioned later two other sources of recordings are the Radio Uganda and the National Theatre archives where the present writer was able to access a large collection of past and contemporary performances. Much of the theatre's collection is on video-tape but may not be of high quality.

There is little likelihood that the kind of recording industry existing in Kenya or South Africa will take root in Uganda. Apart from three musical groups, most groups inside Uganda, including theatres groups like the Bakayimbira Dramactors, have their own basic recording facilities for producing small runs of cassettes for sale. Ugandans are wary of government control and intervention, and while Bills like the Broadcasting Bill, which incorporated a clause on censorship, existed in the past, the rules are no longer observed. The Ministry of Culture and Women in Development which should encourage musical and other performance arts and which might be tempted to intervene with regard to content has for a long time been staffed by political appointees who have very little contact with the recording industry. As

⁶ The title of the cassette is "Ssempeke!". See discography.

⁷ Personal communication from James Micklem, Edinburgh.

Cooke later notes, Ugandans will manipulate controls to serve their own interests anyway.

Groups of performers responsible for the emergence of new musical genres have already been mentioned. Within Uganda The Ebonies have dominated the scene. However, some of their music productions met with mixed reception because Ugandans from all walks of life, while they attended the shows in numbers, readily criticised them for performing and copying Western music and not basing them on traditional folk forms and styles. Overseas groups led by Geoffrey Oryema and Samite (Sam Mulondo) enjoy great popularity outside Uganda. They use Ugandan music, structures, songs and dances merely as a base with which to create a potpourri of musical items which, to Ugandans at home, are considered a mutilation of the folk originals.

Politics has had a definite impact on musical performance and on contemporary music forms. As we have seen, when the state replaced the royal kingdoms it embraced the latter's role as principal patrons of the arts though not with much success. Musical performance remains inventive, syncretic and above all, unofficial. We need to establish the important relationship between new Ugandan history and new Ugandan music. The ethnomusicologist who wishes to survey and record Uganda's music has to be aware of the political climate of the present post-authoritarian state and its recent history if he is to arrive at a meaningful interpretation of the scene. He should certainly endeavour to carry out collaborative work – both through research and participation in music making – and should certainly widen his field of investigation to include contemporary musical manifestations of all kinds.

Traditional music is also dynamic. Because contemporary musical recordings should re-represent the musics of Uganda, suggesting boundaries and syncretisms of styles, the visiting ethnomusicologist should juxtapose the preserved recordings of the past with contemporary performances, for when Ssempeke attempts to reproduce the old music of the palace, what emerges is a text which has been impacted on by his own experiences, and by changes in the cultural, political and social climates of Uganda. As for the indigenous researchers and other musics, it is a constant source of fascination for them to hear sounds and techniques in these other musics that resonate with their own, and to observe how the two interact.

Lastly, indigenous musicians as well as researchers need feedback on all research conducted in the country by outsiders including recordings. Unless this happens recordings still remain potted knowledge. As mentioned earlier the Ugandanisation of Ugandans by Amin helped promote their interest in things Ugandan and there is in fact a wide market for well recorded Ugandan music (traditional or popular) within the country.

AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW: PETER COOKE

Firstly it must be clear that there are many rich and varied musical traditions in Uganda which are still totally unresearched, and until Makerere University is able to establish a solid tradition of ethnomusicological research it seems unlikely that Ugandan scholars will be in a position to do the work themselves. When Benedicto Mubangizi was discussed at the beginning of this paper it was not mentioned that it was his attendance at an African Music research seminar given at Makerere by the late John Blacking in 1965 and at a later course given by this writer that gave him the confidence and sufficient competence to to embark on thoroughgoing field research in his native Nkore. There is room for further international cooperation in musical training as well as research in Uganda.

Secondly, it should be taken for granted that researchers pick on a subject because it really interests them. Time and time again researchers have found that simply focussing one's interest on some musical activity can, whether or not it be a 'threatened' tradition, can quite unintentionally give it the 'shot in the arm' which it may be ready for and give it a new sense of worth and status.

Thirdly ethnomusicologists in addition to writing good quality accounts of their research should also make fine quality recordings – and furthermore, archive them properly so that they are available should anyone else decide they want to learn more about the particular tradition that was studied. One day in the not too distant future Uganda will have its own sound archives. A small start was made when this writer enabled the Uganda Museum in 1993 to make cassette listening copies of the reel-to-reel recordings made for the Museum in the 1940s and 1950s by Klaus Wachsmann. The copy-tapes had been stored in the vaults of the Museum for decades and they had escaped the plundering visits of soldiers, who had repeatedly stripped the museum of any removable object considered to be of value. But the museum had lacked the means of playing the reels. There are also several hundred hours of recordings in the private archives of foreign scholars which should one day be copied and returned to Uganda as soon as funding is available for establishing such an archive. Tokumaru's concept of 'fieldback' – the feeding back of the results of one's research (not just in the form of PhD theses) to those who were researched – is more than appropriate for countries and regions like Uganda, where resources are so scarce (Tokumaru, 1977).

Fourthly there is ample scope for collaborative enterprises between foreign and local scholars on a basis of equals, with each bringing their own particular insights and resources to bear on the enterprise. The resulting materials should be designed to be as useful in Uganda as they might be elsewhere. This is not simply to ensure as wide a market as possible but also so as to be a useful control, helping to ensure that the insights provided by the materials find as ready acceptance among knowledgeable Ugandans as they might among less knowledgeable outsiders. When I attempted the production of two instrumental tutors in collaboration with Ssalongo Kizza at the

Institute of Teacher Education near Kampala (for Teach Yourself the Budongo) and with Albert Ssempeke (for Play Amadinda) the process of discussing, selecting and creating the materials proved an invaluable learning exercise for all parties.

Fifthly, it is clear, at this moment at least, that virtually anything envisaged on record for the popular end of the 'world music' market is going to find willing producers and customers. Among the few Ugandan musicians who have engaged in such enterprises are Samite and Godfrey Oryema (see the discography). Both musicians have made other countries their homes and in both cases the resulting packages could be classed as 'fusion' music. In the case of Samite he reworked a number of children's songs in collaboration with a guitarist from St. Louis, USA, a percussionist from Barbados and a Senegalese drummer. Such products are attractive compilations – attractive it must be admitted to both Westerners and to many Ugandans living abroad but, as Kasule earlier notes, such potpourri arrangements are not attractive to Ugandans at home. As for Samite himself, who plays to full houses in the USA, he also began with misgivings and he (or perhaps his ghost writer) tells us in the CD liner notes:

At first I was somewhat hesitant to let people from other parts of the world with different musical backgrounds have any input into my music. Fearful that my original ideas would get swallowed up or lost, I was surprised to find the final interpretation of my music was much richer, enhanced by the multi-cultural elements each player brought to my Ugandan material.

There is nevertheless the danger that this becomes the kind of music that mainly represents Uganda overseas, and world audiences could then be excused for thinking there is no such thing as polyrhythmic interlocking in Ugandan music, that its pitch systems are no different than those of the West, for example, and even that there is no longer any village music. It is important that one persuades record companies to go beyond the 'international artiste' and studio-type recordings when adding to their catalogues of African music, and to provide more than a possibly misleading 'aperitif' to Uganda's music. If this proves impossible then scholars should consider publishing the best of their field recordings privately – if necessary without the aid of the big record producers and certainly without allowing them to tart them up with techno-gimmickry or suggesting that more 'competent' or 'acceptable-sounding' musicians from elsewhere are brought in as a sop for the Western market.

Finally it must be re-stated that scholars themselves cannot preserve traditions no matter how they might feel about their worth. The local practitioners might want to do so, or they might not. They may still have a place for the traditional functions and contexts along with the traditional repertoires, or they may move the repertory into the context of theatre and concert hall and make changes to ensure the success of the old within the new context. One would hope that traditional oral learning habits are also maintained, because otherwise traditional techniques of variation-making and creativity might be inhibited. Despite the high status often

given to the ability to read musical notations (much new Ugandan music is notated in sol-fa notation) one would hope that the shortcomings of such notations are well understood (in any case, today, tape or disc recordings could well take the place of much notation). Scholars can do little about most of these things, however, and perhaps that is how it should stay.

Uganda is to some extent experiencing the kind of cultural imperialism that Reebee Garufalo has illustrated. (Garufalo 1993) But there is little sign as yet of the powerful forces of the recording industry, of the broadcasting media and of institutionalisation dominating and eventually obscuring Uganda's indigenous traditions. In any case Ugandans have shown in the way they have used and are using popular theatre that they are well capable of manipulating such controls in their own interest. The internal dynamics of resistance and opposition that work against the kind of domination that Garufalo referred to are present for sure within Uganda.

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