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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Africa: Folk Music Atlas by Leonardo D'Amico and Francesco Mizzau

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a continuity of expressive culture over almost three centuries. Additionally, she offers the reader interesting insights into the derivation of specific words in the song texts—etymologies from such far-flung sources as Hausa, Arabic, and Yoruba. McDaniel also presents a new theoretical contribution to the discourse on acculturation and towards the ongoing scholarly polemic surrounding the notion of African retention—that of “the reversal.” Reversal, as she sees it, is “an adaptation that manifests itself in the exchange of roles in social relation” and, along with other patterns of acculturation such as continuity, reinterpretation, and syncretism, may take place while the original concept/aesthetic is more or less maintained.

*The Big Drum Ritual of Carriacou* weaves extensive research with thoughtful, interdisciplinary interpretation. While the views of some of the older Big Drum practitioners are well integrated into the study, the book might have benefited from the perspectives of some of the younger exponents of the tradition today, such as Carriacouan folklorist Winston Fleary, leader of Carriacou’s most active Big Drum ensemble. Despite this, *The Big Drum Ritual of Carriacou* is a welcome contribution to the study of traditional music and dance in the Caribbean and is highly recommended for all those interested in the African diaspora and Caribbean studies.

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## References

- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. 1988. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, Paule. 1983. *Praisesong for the Widow*. New York: Penguin Books.

**Africa: Folk Music Atlas.** Leonardo D’Amico and Francesco Mizzau, editors. 1997. Firenze, Italy: Amharsi Edizioni Multimediale. 96 pp., 1 CD-ROM, 3 audio CDs. CD-ROM requires Windows 3.1 or Windows ’95 for operation.

This compact multimedia introduction to musics in Africa is an “interactive musical atlas.” It provides some overviews and some details, though some questions are left unanswered. The CD-ROM is divided into five primary sections, roughly corresponding to divisions in the book. The match of content between CD-ROM and print versions of the same section varies. For example, the section “Ethnohistory” has the edited version on screen and the fuller version on paper. Conversely, the section “Modern African Music” presents the complete essay on screen. The latter presentation provides a good example of the interactive features: within the es-

say are numerous hyperlinks to specific performers, whose song samples can be accessed with a mouse click.

"Vocality" includes subsections such as "Memory in Song" and "Singing in Daily Life and At Ceremonies." The former presentation has a link on the word "song" in the essay which brings up a performance of an unidentified ensemble. The video clip (with kora and balafon) is interesting, but with no information it is enjoyable but not educational. The subsection "Features of [Singing] Style" does a better job at imparting information. Five sound examples match text descriptions of style such as "melismatic singers" (Senegal example), "antiphonal style" (Guinea), and "Southern Africa" singing styles.

The presentation of the "main musical instruments of Africa" focuses on about twenty instrument families. The entry for each one contains song samples, an introductory essay, photos, and sometimes video clips. One name for each type of instrument is given, with names for related instruments used by other ethnic groups also included. For example, "dundun" contains written information and photos and sound clips of various hourglass drums with tension cords, including the Yoruba drum by that name, and limited information on about ten other drums of similar construction.

The lists of "related instruments" should be viewed with caution as they are sometimes erroneous. For example, the entry for "ekibulenge" (Nande musical bow of Zaire) has a large list of supposedly related instruments. However, several (such as the *seperewa* and *goge*) are chordophones but certainly not musical bows. One wishes that the editors had done more careful homework.

The topical essays under "Musical Instruments" have the same text on paper and on screen, with the latter version having audiovisual links. These essays discuss topics related to African instruments such as functions, taboos, speech surrogates, anthropomorphism, trance, and aesthetic preferences of "buzzing" sound.

My favorite section is the "Folk Music" interactive map, presenting the music cultures of a selected number of ethnic groups across the continent. "Music of the African Peoples" groups the twenty-seven ethnic groups into seven main clusters; the entry for most ethnic groups contains written, visual, and recorded materials. Some well-known groups such as Mandinka are represented here; some lesser-known musical traditions are also found, such as videos of a Comoro Islands trio and a Dogon lithophone from Mali.

In general, the texts provide an accurate overview, though simplified due to space, and they are often based on established research (though not always credited). For examples, the materials on the Shona mbira tradition are based on Paul Berliner's book; an explanation of "African rhythm" is il-

luminated by quotes from A. M. Jones and John Chernoff; a story collected by Hugo Zemp is included; Chopi materials are based on the Traceys' research; the introduction to Venda musical culture is owed to John Blacking.

However, mistakes are made, some of which will be pointed out here. The subsection on the Ashanti people contains audiovisual material from the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, where music from all over the country is taught. A non-Ashanti performer of that school is shown with the *gonje*, the horsehair fiddle of northern Ghana hundreds of miles away, and the *gonje* is misidentified as a typical Ashanti instrument. In a discussion of speech surrogates, it is stated that the Akans of Ghana "use two drums together (atumpan and fontomfrom) to communicate messages," when actually each of those drums comes in pairs. Under the "balafon" entry, the buzzing membrane on the gourd resonator is identified correctly as a "spider cocoon membrane" on the CD-ROM, and mislabeled as coming from a "spider's web" in the book. The song examples for "balafon" include what sounds like *amadinda* xylophone music though it is inappropriately labelled with West African terminology as "two balafons." Photo captions tend to be simplistic, such as "singer with cow bell."

The three audio CDs, one each for "Voices, Winds & Strings, Drums," contain a total of forty tracks. With the audio portions of the CD-ROM, there are about five hours of audio materials. The performers of each audio CD selection receive an introduction in the book.

The quality of video clips varies considerably, and could stand to be improved. There are twenty-five minutes of video footage altogether, but it's scattered throughout the CD-ROM. An index would be most valuable. Despite some limitations, this set of multimedia material is helpful, informative, very portable, and a lot of fun to use. "Africa" is the first volume in the World Music Atlas proposed by the publishing team in Italy; may the next seven volumes be this good or (hopefully) better.

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