Zimbabwean Mbira Music and Modern Spirituality in the Western United States

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

James Daniel Lindroth, BM

Graduate Program in Music

The Ohio State University

2018

Thesis Committee:

Ryan Skinner, Adviser

Isaac Weiner

Michelle Wibbelsman

Abstract

Zimbabwean music found its way to the Western United States through a visiting artist in the ethnomusicology department at University of Washington in the 1960s. In this paper, I look at some of the consequential musical practices that have spread throughout the United States since then. More specifically, I look the *mbira dzavadzimu*, a lamellophone from the Shona people of Zimbabwe, and the role its music has taken on within the North American Zimbabwean music community. I examine the ways the music also fits within movements of modern spirituality, defined by the borrowing of foreign practices as a means of accessing "spiritual experiences." I trace a history of the instrument through the United States, as well as the spread and attention to it within both the North American musicking community and scholarship. I then describe the "spiritual" felt by *mbira* players and how the sociality inherent to the performance of the instrument helps define said spiritual experiences. Finally, I describe the practices of American *mbira* players and the ways engaging with the music authentically allows them access to heightened affective states. This document serves the purpose of showing the ways *mbira dzavadzimu* is positioned within modern spirituality and the idiosyncrasies of *mbira* performance as a spiritual practice.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to many people who assisted me throughout this project. First and foremost, I thank Erica Azim for her *mbira* instruction thus far and being so open and welcoming to me before, during, and after her camp. The same goes to the other campers I communed with over the course of the week and the warmth and openness with which they spoke and shared with me. I hope to continue to foster relationships with them and run into each of them somewhere on the path ahead.

Special thanks go to Dr. Claire Jones, who spoke to me candidly and friendlily a few times over the course of the past year when we discussed the history, current moment, and future of Zimbabwean music in the United States.

A huge amount of gratitude is owed to my advisor, Dr. Ryan Skinner, who had great patience and grace as he guided and encouraged me through both this project and my graduate degree in ethnomusicology. No matter which direction my life goes, his instruction, wisdom, and knowledge will have affected it greatly.

I must also thank my other committee members, Drs. Michelle Wibbelsman and Isaac Weiner, for their patience as well as their guidance in things new to me. Their comments and suggestions greatly helped me shape the project and my ways of thinking about it.

The other musicology graduate students here at Ohio State also helped shape me in my time here and graciously put up with me and my silliness while also being fantastic sounding

boards and sympathizers. The same goes to the percussion studio here at OSU, where I started my graduate studies. Dr. Susan Powell and Prof. Joseph Krygier taught me much about percussion and music and their instruction will stick with me as I musically move through the world. The studio members themselves also deserve much credit as close friends and collaborators, even though my final year at OSU was spent in papers and books instead of playing next to them in ensembles.

Vita

2010……..South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities

2015……..B.M. Performance, University of South Carolina

2016 to present…….Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Musicology, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Music

Table of Contents

Introduction

I realized as I walked up to her door that it was possible Erica hadn't seen my face before. I had been taking lessons from her on Skype for a couple of months now, in preparation for this camp, but it only dawned on me as I knocked that she might have never seen me. Her camera faces her hands so that her students can see the instrument she has placed on her lap. Thinking on it as I stand on the porch, but looking around, up and down the street, nervously as I wait for her to answer the door, it would make sense if she were using her phone for the Skype calls. There's a high likelihood that I'm going to just appear as a random guy in an Ohio State hoodie holding an old corduroy suitcase on her doorstep. Of course, she's expecting people and I told her I would be there around that time, so she'll probably be able to figure it out, but what do I do when she answers? Will she know who I am, should I introduce myself?

As my mind race back and forth to try and answer this riddle, the door gleefully opened and Erica greeted me with a smile. It was an uncertain smile. She had been expecting me but it was obvious she didn't recognize my face. Regardless, she was able to guess who I was and she welcomed me into her home, offering me a seat on the couch, where I sat awkwardly and tried to make some small talk with the other camper, who had arrived a couple of hours before me. After a while, I turned my attention to Erica's set of mid-height bookshelves, bearing the weight of at least fifty *mbira*, musical instruments from Africa.

This instrument, organologically categorized as a lamellophone, is small and handheld. It is made from *mukwa* or *mubvamaropa* trees, brown heartwood, also known as African teak, native to Southern Africa. On each slab of wood are between 22-26 thin strips of metal, flattened, shaped and positioned carefully, yet firmly, between two cross-beams that traverse the wooden soundboard horizontally. The strips of metal are plucked with the thumb of the left hand on one side and the thumb and forefinger of the right hand on the other. The resultant sound can be hard to describe but it is reminiscent of a music box, albeit a hardy and lively music box. It has been vernacularly referred to as a "thumb piano."

This particular flavor of lamellophone, as there are many, is played by people from the Shona ethnic group of Zimbabwe. Called *mbira dzavadzimu*,[1] "mbira of the ancestors," the instrument serves a vital function in traditional religious ceremonies, called *mapira* (*bira*, singular), where the music produced induces trance and possession in spirit mediums, who are consumed by the spirit of an ancestor in order to give consultation to the living. In indigenous Shona beliefs, once passing away the deceased become, after the body undergoes ceremonies and rituals, spirits who have the ability to affect the world of the living. The *mbira* and its music, because of their position and role in ceremonies which induce spirit possession, are seen as a bridge between the spirit world and the world of the living.

Mbira are usually played in either duos or trios, where one musicians plays a foundational part, called the *kushaura* meaning "to lead," and the other one or two play an intertwining part, called *kutsinhira*, which either differs rhythmically or complicates the already

[1] This instrument is referred to throughout as simply *mbira*. Because "mbira" is also used as a generic term for Zimbabwean (and other) lamellophones, mbira will represent the lamellophone family while *mbira* represents the specific type *mbira dzavadzimu*.

complex rhythm by playing in close rhythmic canon. The playing of two or more parts together results in dense polyrhythm, polymeter, and polyphony. The players' patterns repeat for however long players are willing to keep them up; in traditional ceremonies they can last for hours at a time. The ever circling chord progressions, which can be split into four phrases, lend themselves to this kind of performance, keeping the melodies inherent to the polyphony going. Singing to *mbira* songs, especially at the *bira*, is done by anyone in attendance, as participants pick out melodic lines from the dense combination of notes in the air.

I was here, in Berkeley, California, on this couch, making small talk, to learn *mbira*. Every year, for one or two weeks in the summer, Erica Azim invites people into her home for an "mbira camp," where Americans (and occasionally people of other nationalities) learn the Shona musical form. Having studied and played the instrument for 45 or so years, Azim is well practiced in teaching the music to non-Shona people. She became invested in the music, eventually making a life out of playing and teaching it, while attending University of Washington where she joined the classes and ensembles offered by the late Zimbabwean musician Dumisani Maraire. Many musicians were similarly influenced by Maraire. From his years of residence in the US as a visiting musician, Maraire catalyzed what has become a network of Americans playing Zimbabwean music across the United States, focused especially on the West Coast in Oregon, Washington, and California, with other communities in Colorado and New Mexico. The North American Zimbabwean music community also has smatterings of musicians in Texas, Alaska, Hawaii, the Northwest, and parts of Canada. The camp I was attending is a small part in a larger Zimbabwean music dissemination project.

I was also here, in Erica's living room, playing with the various tunings of *mbira* lying on the book shelves, to conduct research. At the same time that I became interested in playing *mbira*, I learned about the Americans on the West Coast of the United States who perform its music. I knew there had to be some musicians interested in it, as I bought my first instrument from Erica's website, mbira.org, but I did not know it was such a widespread phenomenon. What intrigued me most about the spread of this instrument was the claim that playing the music could lead to spiritual experiences (Azim, 1999).

Musics such as the kind examined in this paper, i.e. "trance music" or music that, in its original cultural context, induces trance, have captured the Western world's imagination for some time now (Becker 2004). *Mbira* music is not the first or by any means only trance inducing music to come to this level of notoriety for its affective qualities. Deborah Kapchan, for example, has written in *Traveling Spirit Masters* (2007) about how music of Gnawa people has traveled from its origins in Morocco to being used in Breton folk music, American jazz, and music festivals focused on traditional trance music. Chartwell Dutiro, a well-known Zimbabwean *mbira* player, performed at such a festival, A World in Trance, in 2017.

Aside from the music traveling through the global marketplace and becoming an object of consumption for World Music aficionados, *mbira* music has also become a subject of modern spirituality. A portion of the mission statement for the festival Dutiro played in 2017 reads:

> Since earliest times music and dance have played a major role in uniting people through ritual, which often provides union with the divine through trance or ecstasy. This festival seeks to bring back some spiritual nourishment to our lives, to focus our physical and mental selves. While the music and rituals associated with each genre are very different from each other, they share a common thread in bringing people together in search of enlightenment. (aworldintrance.com)

Trance music, because of its close associations with "transcendence" and "spirits," lends itself to being taken up by Americans, and others global citizens, interested in modern spirituality[2] and the expression of music as a "spiritual practice" in order to achieve religious, or numinous (experience of a heightened affective state defined as coming from outside of the body), experiences. The practice of *mbira* music on the West Coast of the United States is such a practice of modern spirituality. In this paper, I aim to situate American *mbira* performance within this field of spirituality and spiritual practice. I wish to do so by examining the history and spread of Zimbabwean music in the US, the spiritual experiences found in *mbira* performance, and the opportunities, intentions, and negotiating practices of playing *mbira*.

There are limitations to my project and my research. First and foremost, I conducted my main fieldwork over the course of a single week in August 2017 when I attended the aforementioned camp.[3] My research pool is small; I have not been in contact with many other members of the North American Zimbabwean music community. However, the musicians at this camp have traveled throughout the North American community and their comments and anecdotes helped me gain insight into the broader world of Zimbabwean music in the United States. They relayed to me that many of the thoughts and ideas they have been occupied by are often substantiated by the people within their local communities with whom they play most

[2] Modern spirituality here refers to practices that have developed in the 19th and 20th century as a result of modernization that see an increase in the bridging of various traditions and practices in order to find expression that is described, vaguely, as "the opposite of materiality, as distinctive from the body, as distinctive from both the religious and the secular" (van der Veer 2009, 1097).

[3] I do concede that this is not "fieldwork" in the classic sense, where a researcher goes to live within a community for a long period of time, and that this might be considered more of an "exercise in fieldwork." It should also be noted that the nature of the North American Zimbabwean music community is more of a network with nodes of communal articulation, like the camp I attended, than a community outright and prolonged exposure to the community in a traditional sense would be a difficult task. My continued conversations with camp members and witnessing conversations on social media have allowed me continued access to the community throughout the course of this project.

frequently. Secondly, I have had little to no contact or conversation with Zimbabwean musicians. I briefly met Chartwell Dutiro and his son Shorai in Rock Hill, South Carolina when they held a week of workshops at Winthrop University in April 2017, but otherwise I have not learned from or spoken with *mbira* musicians from Zimbabwe. This suggests that my understanding of how Shona people relate to the instrument, the music, the spirits, and Americans could be considered lacking, although I have read as much as I could to try to develop my understandings of this relationship.[4] However, the narrow frame of my fieldwork also lets me focus on Americans and their thoughts on Zimbabwean music and their relationship to both the music and Zimbabwean musicians. Other studies on the North American Zimbabwean music community (Matiure 2008; Muparutsa 2013; Scharfenberger 2017) have focused on comparisons and examinations of the relationships between Americans and Zimbabweans, as well as the continuity and change of musical practices. This has situated their views on spirituality in the North American community in relation to Shona beliefs and expressions of spirituality. I attempt, instead, to tie the community's spirituality to larger traditions of religious borrowing found in modern spirituality.

In first chapter, I survey the history of the spread of Zimbabwean music in the United States with particular attention to *mbira*, in both its vernacular and scholarly iterations. Zimbabweans music as a means of expression has spread through the US in grassroots movements and personal interactions with the music and its musicians. These interactions have led to ethnomusicological canonization, as the instrument, country, and music have become a well-documented and exemplary case study of African music in academia. I attempt to establish the grassroots and academic traditions of Shona *mbira* music as separate yet somewhat symbiotic

[4] Berliner 1993; Perman 2008; Turino 2000; Eyre 2015; Jones 2008; Kyker 2009; Matiure, P. 2011.

fields. This chapter will also attempt to examine the usage of the word “spiritual” and its application and apparent definitions in vernacular and scholarly settings as a means of separating meanings in various understandings of Zimbabwe and “Shona spirituality.” The “spiritual” expressed in books and articles on Shona people and music, I assert, is not the same as the “spiritual” one encounters in the discursive, performative, and intersubjective practices of Americans performing Shona music.

In the second chapter I examine the numinous for those Americans who play *mbira*. As I separate Shona religious beliefs from the practices of Americans in the first chapter, I attempt to describe the experiences of American *mbira* players as related to me by them in this chapter. I take their words and experiences seriously, relating said experiences to broader notions and understandings of religious experience. In “taking these things seriously,” it can be difficult at times to see where my own position and view on these subjects lie, as I do my best to further relate the words of my interlocutors in scholarly setting. I think a healthy dose of ambivalence should be taken with this. At the same time, I also cannot feel what they feel and my understanding of how *mbira* relates to their lives can only go so far. I also look at the social implications of *mbira* music within the community, specifically through the course of events at an mbira party, and the way sociality at this event helps define, articulate, and legitimize these numinous experiences for the *mbira* players present.

In the third chapter, I focus on the ideological differences that the North American Zimbabwean music community perceives and emphasizes between themselves and Zimbabweans and the strategies Americans use to navigate the border between those differences.

Utilizing border theory, I explain how these differences and proposed contrasts allow for the creation of a "borderland," or an ideological middle ground where hybrid identities, or ideologies, can be formed in the space between the "West" and "Africa." The strategies for navigation of these borderlands are practice-based, as the players I met attempt to approach the performance of the music "authentically." Here, I use the term "authentic" to describe the genuineness of *mbira* practice as conceived through mindful consideration and devotion to a traditional Shona aesthetic. I posit that such genuineness is perceived by these North Americans as necessary for appropriately accessing the affects that are supposedly inherent to *mbira* music. I highlight the ways individual musicians wrestle with these devotional practices and their sources of justification and reasoning for playing and performing the way they do.

I close with a contemplation of place, spirituality, and the human in which I reflect on an experience of seeing the city of Las Vegas from above with questions of "What is authentic? What is real? What is human?" looming throughout the exposition. I then tie this into a discussion of where this project could go while also pondering what should be considered "the authentic Zimbabwe."

Chapter 1: Background

In this chapter, I will be examining the genealogy of *mbira dzavadzimu* in its life in the US in order to give background on how the instrument has spread, both on the ground through local musicking communities and in scholarship in books and academic conferences. These two avenues of engagement with the *mbira* are the main modes of dissemination through which the concepts and understanding about traditional Shona music, culture, and cosmology have spread. Although the two modes can be drastically different, as one tends to essentialize and romanticize Shona rural culture and the other is an attempt at documenting, analyzing, and representing said culture, they are not as separate as one might think, and we can see ways, especially in recent years, the two avenues intersect with one another.

Of special interest in this study are the ways the "spirituality" of the instrument and its music has been transmitted through these avenues and the ways the understanding of the word/concept/lifeway changes between the different contexts of the US and Zimbabwe. Therefore, before I discuss the "spirituality" present in the NA Zimbabwean music community in the following chapters, I will discuss the way I have come to understand the meaning of "spiritual" in scholarship on traditional Shona music.

Brief History of Dissemination

The exact moment when the *mbira dzavadzimu* was brought to the US can be tricky to pin down but it without a doubt rode to the US on the back of its, newer, music education-oriented, politically neutral relatives: the marimba, a name for an Africa xylophone, and the karimba, a "domesticated" version of Shona lamellophones. Therefore, its context in the US must be presented with that in mind and a brief history of Zimbabwean marimba and its migration to the United States should be discussed.

The marimba was brought to Zimbabwe through Kwanongoma College as an effort by Rhodesian elites to teach indigenous African music without engaging in the exact traditional instruments of the Shona people, in order to indigenize music education. These efforts were mostly made by Olof Axelsson and Robert Sibson, although other African music scholars, like Andrew Tracey, were consulted for the project of uniting tradition with colonial education. Zimbabwe has no long-standing marimba tradition, but ethnic groups in neighboring parts of Southern Africa, like the Venda, Tonga, Chopi, Tswa, Sena, and Lozi do. As such, introducing marimba to Zimbabwe would be to incorporate a music found throughout the area. The African continent is covered with marimbas, allowing a Pan-African tradition that is has no ethnic[5] or regional[6] Zimbabwe bias to be the founding instrument for incorporating African music into colonizing efforts of education (Jones 2006, 104-105; Matiure 2008, 72-85). It is the Lozi *silimba* which most influenced the design of the Zimbabwean marimba but was also influenced

[5] The two major ethnic groups in Zimbabwe are the Shona and the Ndebele. The intent at Kwanongoma was to install a program open to either group. The marimba, because it was not prominent in either group but prevalent throughout Africa and the surrounding areas, served as a good not-indigenous-to-Zimbabwe instrument to serve the college's non-bias intent.

[6] Different sub-ethnic groups of the Shona and Ndebele, occupying regions specific to them, have distinct and unique forms of musical expression. The *mbira dzavadzimu* was at one point specific to the Zezuru of the Shona, while the Manyika sub-ethnic group of the Shona, for example, has no type of mbira but instead sing in dense polyphony.

by the Chopi *timbila* in regard to its resonators and the "orchestra" setup, which incorporates differing pitch levels (SATB) into the ensemble (Jones 2006, 106-108; Matiure 2008, 75). The karimba is based off a lamellophone from Zimbabwe's neighbor Mozambique, which was introduced to Kwanongoma by Jege Tapera. In the United States, it has taken on the name *nyunganyunga*, a dialectic variation on *nyungwenyungwe*. The latter is the original name for the instrument, as it comes from the Nyungwe people, but the former was popularized by Dumisani Maraire (discussed below). The lack of religious purpose behind the instrument was enticing to Christian missionaries involved in the indigenization project (Jones, 104; Matiure, 85-86).

Robert Kauffman, an American ethnomusicologist and missionary was sent to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) to help indigenize church music - that is, translating hymns and liturgical songs into a traditional Shona idiom - and worked closely in the church and with villagers across Zimbabwe to do so. It was in the church that he found a young musician named Dumisani Maraire, whom he then helped send to Kwanongoma College to further his musical training. In the late 1960's, upon returning to the US and after taking a teaching position at University of Washington, Kauffman was asked to bring a musician from Zimbabwe as an artist-in-residence, a transnational exchange program that UW has continued to this day. After much consideration, Kauffman invited Maraire, a talented, charismatic, young musician who was fresh out of Kwanongoma. One of the requests for Kauffman was to bring an mbira player, and although he met many skilled, older mbira players, he decided on Maraire because of his talent as a composer and his charisma, as he believed it would help when relating to the young university students. Maraire was from the Manyika sub-ethnic group of the Shona, a group whose music is mostly vocal polyphony and grew up in a Christian household. When Maraire arrived in the US, his

music was mostly taught and played on the marimba and the karimba, instruments he learned at Kwanongoma, and his compositions were inspired by the vocal repertoire of the Manyika and the choral music he was composing for the church at the time.

Notoriety of Maraire's vibrancy and performative prowess spread quickly throughout the University and the city and he soon began a powerful career as University artist-in-residence and, eventually, community musician**.** It is this legacy, of community music and academic presence, which pervades the United States' tradition of *mbira dzavadzimu*.

After his tenure at UW came to an end, Maraire found residence at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington as a music teacher and founded several community marimba bands. From there, the figurative marimba dandelion was blown into the wind and seeds began to find fertile soil to grow into musical movements as his students left his community group and started ones of their own. As the seeds began to grow throughout the Pacific Northwest, community centers and Zimbabwean music centers around Washington, Oregon, California, and Colorado as well as spots of Texas, Alaska, Hawaii, and New Mexico, blossomed into hubs of African expressive culture. This dissemination project has been referred to by Claire Jones as *Kutambarara*, a Shona word meaning "spreading," but also the name of a song Maraire composed about his educational endeavors and accomplishments. The movement grew so large that in the early 1990s a Zimbabwean music festival, originally dubbed the Northwest Marimba Festival but now called simply Zimfest, was established and continues to meet every year. The festival is mostly centered on Zimbabwean marimba, as that is the most prevalent and popular instrument in the dissemination project, but other forms of traditional Zimbabwean expressive

culture – dance, mbira (*dzavadzimu* and karimba), *ngoma* drums, *ngororombe* pan pipes, *chipendani* mouth bow – are also taught and performed at the festival by both Americans and international artists. Other festivals, camps, and community events – for example, Camp Tumbuka in New Mexico, the Nhapitapi Mbira Intensive in Whidbey Island, Washington, and Nhemamusasa North in Vancouver Island, British Columbia – also meet regularly in order to share and spread Zimbabwean music.

During his residence in the United States, two important *mbira* players crossed Maraire's path that set in motion the two trajectories of *mbira dzavadzimu*: Paul Berliner and Erica Azim. There are many musicians inspired by Maraire and have worked to perform, teach, and spread Zimbabwean music, but it is these two players, students, and teachers that are at the epicenter of the two lives of the *mbira dzavadzimu*, the life of continual and consistent academic interest and the life of communal, spiritual inspiration.

Strand One: Community Connection

Erica Azim, either directly or indirectly, has spread the instrument throughout the United States and abroad to places like Argentina and Japan. Originally asked to teach the instrument at workshops during Zimfest, Erica's expertise on the instrument became an asset for those who wished to pursue the music and soon after becoming known in the community, her teaching career took off. After attending University of Washington at the age of 16 to specifically study ethnomusicology, Azim dropped out of school in order to save up money to travel to Zimbabwe to study. She cites the sound of the ancient type of mbira, as opposed to the more contemporary one Maraire played, as her inspiration to do so. After returning to the US when the political

situation in Zimbabwe became particularly precarious, Azim worked fulltime while raising three children by herself, only playing *mbira* and teaching in her free time.

Around the time her teaching career picked up, she was not the only one teaching *mbira* in the US, as the late Ephat Mujuru was also educating people on the ways of Shona music during the 1980s when he took an artist-in-residence position at UW. However, Mujuru did not actually teach many students *mbira* and his efforts were more akin to sowing seeds than providing support and sustenance for the Americans, selling instruments to various groups and individuals and teaching a version of *nhemamusasa*, a classic *mbira* song, here and there. Due to several concerns of his, like visa limitations on non-academic payments, fear of "selling out,"[7] and wishing to be a marimba star like Maraire, Mujuru kept his *mbira dzavadzimu* teaching to a minimum while in the US (Claire Jones, personal communication). As described to me, his efforts, while pioneering, were merely a scattering of attempts to share the *mbira*.[8]

This left a spot for Erica to place herself as a teacher for the few who were interested and once other organizations in the Pacific Northwest, like Kutisinhira Cultural Center, began to bring Zimbabwean musicians like Cosmas Magaya to their community centers, the American interest in *mbira dzavadzimu* began to boom (Claire Jones, personal communication). This, coupled with cosmopolitan Americans who found *mbira* via Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited, Paul Berliner's book, and percussionists who discovered Azim's first album at the

[7] Pressure was put on Mujuru for being willing to work with whites by other Zimbabweans. His grandfather, Muchatera Mujuru, was killed in 1977 for working with Michael Gelfand, a Rhodesian scholar. Guerillas during the liberation wars committed the act for various reasons outlined by Ranger (1982), Turino (2000), and Eyre (2015), but mainly for the reason that he was collaborating and commiserating with whites.

[8] This is in contrast to his claims in Capp 2008. I do not wish to delegitimize his claims, but wish to present the oral history of *mbira dzavadzimu* as presented to me by Erica Azim and Claire Jones.

Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC), catapulted the amount of people who knew about the instrument and were enraptured enough to want to learn its music (Claire Jones, p.c.; Erica Azim, p.c.; Turino 2000).

This kind of interest is what led Azim to first teach at Zimfest in 1991. However, Azim quickly realized she did not have many instruments to share and the ones that people had, which they acquired from Mujuru or they found as a novelty trinket, were either not in tune with each other or very poor quality, making the teaching, and learning, process very difficult. After a couple of years, Erica built up an arsenal of instruments to bring to her workshops at Zimfest so that people could all learn together. This grew into what is now Erica's non-profit organization MBIRA. Through this non-profit she now sells instruments, CDs, instrument accessories, language lessons, video tutorials, and Skype lessons, to name a few things. The money she makes off the products she sells goes back to the Zimbabweans who produced them; mbira makers get money from the instruments of theirs that were sold and recording artists receive funds from the CDs that were purchased. She also brings Zimbabwean *mbira* players to the US every year to teach workshops and masterclasses around the country at community centers and universities. This transnational relationship is actually something that many Zimbabwean music community centers incorporate into their regular practice and there is steady flow of Zimbabwean musicians back and forth between the two countries every year.[9] On top of all that, Azim also holds a benefit concert every year for those artists and artisans who did not make more than $100 from the products Erica sells throughout the year.

[9] The MBIRA camp that I attended was originally to have Samaita Botsa as a visiting artist, but the political situation in the United States and concern over potential travel restrictions prevented Botsa from attending.

It is this humanitarian effort that is commonly seen in the North American Zimbabwean music community. Many of the cultural centers in the US have aid programs attached to them. Kutsinhira in Eugene, Oregon is connected to Tariro, an organization benefitting young girls with HIV/AIDS, and the Chinhoyi High School Project providing school supplies to children in Zimbabwe. The Kutandara center in Boulder, Colorado has education programs for under privileged children around Boulder and also has a fund for their "African Village Relief Program." Not only are these Zimbabwean music organizations providing community service via community engagement and active musicking in their local cities and towns, they are also aiding musicians in Zimbabwe, a country that has been ravaged by modernization efforts and economic experiments, which has ultimately led to economic despair. Through the support of these organizations, musicians who live traditionalist lives are allowed to live with their families instead of needing to seek work in neighboring countries; young girls are allowed to attend school; rural development is occurring in parts of the country that do not have access to enough resources; money is raised by those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Strand Two: Academic Legacy

Although there are documents and articles written about Zimbabwean music during the 1960's, namely the work of Hugh Tracey and Gerhard Kubik, scholarship on the area and its cultural practices took off in the early 1970's by scholars like Robert Kauffman, Robert Garfias, and Andrew Tracey. This, it could be argued, led to a pivotal moment for Zimbabwean music, *mbira dzavadzimu*, and ethnomusicology more generally when Paul Berliner published his tome *Soul of Mbira*. Heralded as an instant classic and an epitome of humanist ethnomusicology,

Berliner made waves when his book hit the ethnomusicological world. Also, important, especially for the purpose of this paper, is that Berliner's scholarship on *mbira* is directly related to and influenced by his interactions with Dumisani Maraire. Inspired by a talk Maraire gave at Wesleyan University, Berliner became infatuated with the instrument's sound (that is, Maraire's karimba) and very soon thereafter traveled to Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, to pursue an education in traditional Shona music, after which he published his book *Soul of Mbira*.

From this point, the *mbira* has been a foundational instrument in the ethnomusicological canon – it has been included in the majority of textbooks on World Music.[10] Because of it religious meanings, its role in possession-trace ceremonies centered around ancestral worship, and its rhythmic complexity (most usually defined by the presence of polymeter, even though this is not the most complex aspect of the music by any means) the *mbira* is a perfect example of sub-Saharan Africa music, while also subverting the stereotype of African music only being drums (even though it is still an idiophone).[11]

Many of the current American scholars of Zimbabwean music have, like Berliner, been directly influenced to go into the field via interactions with the Zimbabwean music community. There are some, however, who remain active in academia while staying largely separate from the North American musicking community. But regardless, and importantly, the work of current academics has been productive in pushing the envelope of Zimbabwean music scholarship and bringing musics and issues to light that have been largely ignored, especially by the American

[10] Perman notes consulting nine general World Music textbooks for a project, six of which include *mbira dzavadzimu* (Perman 2017, 121).
[11] It should be noted that while I claim this is a "perfect example of sub-Saharan African music," the qualifications for this have been set up by ethnomusicology to highlight characteristics of African music that they deem significant, namely the associations with "African spirituality" (Ebron 2002, 36) and "African rhythm" (33).

ethnomusicological community because they haven't fallen within the canon. These works continually add to the complexity of understanding the culture of Zimbabwe and build upon one another to help explain the musical communities found in the country. It should also be mentioned that there are academics in at least Germany, Japan, and most importantly, Zimbabwe doing research on Zimbabwean music,[12] but their work is not of interest to this study in order to keep this in the realm of the American life of the *mbira*.

Community Connection

Amongst the Zimbabwean scholars that maintain a connection to the North American musicking community are Claire Jones, Jennifer Kyker, and Jocelyn Moon. Claire Jones, who happened upon Maraire and his band in the late 1970s, after which she lived in Zimbabwe for many years while working as a science teacher, have done a lot to become actively engaged in community. Jones, for example, teaches and plays in the Northwest and is the lead coordinator for Zimfest, organizing the schedule, musicians travel, site plan, and so forth. But Jones is also a scholar, having completed her PhD in ethnomusicology at University of Washington in 2006 with a dissertation on the history of Zimbabwean marimba, having worked as an independent scholar and through University of Washington. Her work has contributed to the scholarship via her book on traditional instruments of Zimbabwe (1999), explaining the space women *mbira* players make for themselves in traditional Zimbabwean music (2008), the history, tradition, and culture of marimba playing in Zimbabwe (2006; 2012), and presentations on Dumisani Maraire and his influence on the North American Zimbabwean music community (1999; 2006).

[12] Grupe 2004; Matsuhira 2013; Matiure, P. 2013 to name one from each.

Jennifer Kyker, current assistant professor of ethnomusicology at Eastman School of Music, grew up in the PNW community, playing in Kutsinhira from a young age, traveling to Zimbabwe at the age of 15. A marimba and *mbira* player, her research interests also include the *chipendani*, a Zimbabwean musical bow, for which she works to break stereotypes in the academic understanding of the instrument as a 'cattle boy's' instrument and instead explains some of its cultural and social significance (2017). Her work has also added to the pantheon of Zimbabwean, and African, popular music figures in her recent book on Oliver Mtukudzi, which details Mtukudzi's work, his translation of traditional music to global, cosmopolitan forms, his role in the diaspora and in the HIV/AIDS epidemic that ravaged Zimbabwe (2016). Her work has also spilled over into the public sector with her organization Tariro, for which she is the executive director, which funds the education of young Zimbabwean girls with HIV/AIDS's.

Jocelyn Moon, a graduate student at University of Washington and an active member of multiple marimba bands in the Northwest, has been working alongside her husband Zack Moon with Andrew Tracey in the International Library of African Music in South Africa. There, they have been, among other things, sorting and digitizing some of the archive that Andrew Tracey and his father Hugh have compiled over the many years of their fieldwork throughout Southern and Eastern Africa. More specifically, Moon has been paying attention to the *matepe* species of mbira, which used to be a very popular instrument in the area before nationalist movements and popular music placed *mbira dzavadzimu* on the top of the food chain. This work has included rediscovering and transcribing old recordings of the instrument and traveling around the country, seeking out rural Zimbabweans who still practice the *matepe*, but also repatriating these

recordings and bringing the archive to the sons and daughters of the musicians the Tracey's recorded.[13]

Academically Insular

These academics are, as reported to me (Claire Jones, p.c.), not actively engaged with the musicking communities found throughout North America. Their work is pioneering and important for understanding Zimbabwean music, but they have not shown interest in participating in the local communities in the US.

Berliner, while having first been introduced to Zimbabwean music by Dumisani Maraire, has since been disconnected from the musicking community (Claire Jones, p.c.) although he does continue to collaborate in scholarship and performance with Zimbabwean musicians. His work includes texts on *mbira* like *Soul of Mbira* and his articles derived from that same research that are foundational for understanding the context of *mbira* within Shona society. His current work on *mbira* includes a book, still in the making, detailing Shona *mbira* music more thoroughly with particular attention to Cosmas Magaya, his most informative and continued informant, and his style of playing.

Thomas Turino's work is less focused on the traditional music of Zimbabwe and more on the cosmopolitan music making practices of Zimbabweans in the 1990's. His book *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe,* examine these practices but also helps explain the difference between what could be considered traditional and rural life with a modern and

[13] Apparently, in these areas, indigenous religion ceremonies have stopped because of pressure from Christian Zimbabweans and, in some circumstances, *matepe* music has not been heard in a generation or two. (Claire Jones, p.c.)

urban lifestyle and in doing so, places the Zimbabweans we encounter in Berliner's book within a larger and more complex society, which is contemporary Zimbabwe (2000). He has also traced the spread and rise of *mbira dzavadzimu* in Zimbabwe through its utilization in Zimbabwean popular music, ethnomusicology, and nationalist demonstrations (1998).

And lastly, Tony Perman, professor of ethnomusicology at Grinnell College and a student of Thomas Turino, has been working in both traditional and popular music of Zimbabwe covering musics of the country that have been thus far left out of ethnomusicological conversations. Namely, Perman has worked with the Ndau, a linguistically unique sub-ethnic group of the Shona in the Southeast of Zimbabwe, writing a dissertation and articles on drumming and traditional dance forms, specifically the dance *muchongoyo* (2008; 2010; 2011). He has also written articles on the *mbira dzavaNdau*, a species of the instrument used exclusively for downtime and recreation and which is almost extinct due to modern technologies like the radio (2017). His work has also included *sungura*, a popular music form, in fact the most popular music in Zimbabwe, which had not reached American scholarship because it also happens to not engage with politics and cosmopolitanism like the music of Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi (2012).

All of these scholars and their work are important to the North American musicking community because they, either directly or indirectly, help inform the understandings of the Shona music to the non-Zimbabweans who engage with the music. As a single example, Erica Azim, on a new version of her website (yet unpublished), has a page for other types of mbira from Zimbabwe. She quotes and thanks Tony Perman for the information he has provided about

mbira dzavaNdau. American *mbira* players curious about information about the grander scheme of Zimbabwean music might come across this and inform themselves about this largely ignored instrument. These means of easy access to information lend themselves to amateur scholars who wish to better their understanding of their hobby. But in this free flow of information lies the danger in what I describe below. Terminology and phrases that appear in both scholarly and vernacular discourses surrounding foreign practices may oftentimes become conflated when in fact the practices are of separate and unique histories and cultural ideologies.

Position of Spirituality in Mbira Scholarship

The *mbira* is spiritual. I would argue this is a widely accepted statement, but the sense of "spiritual" and "spirituality" surrounding the instrument is not monolithic. Just as the *mbira* has found multiple avenues of dissemination in the United States, so too does the understanding of the instrument's "spirituality" have a proliferation of understandings. The terms "spiritual" and "spirituality," because of their many understandings, are frequently employed and defined differently in scholarly and vernacular discourses (Bender and McRoberts 2012) and while the two discourses can have an influence on one another (Bender 2010). It is because of this that I am interested in the employment of "spiritual" in scholarship on Zimbabwean music and its potential effect on the lay conversations surrounding the music and the experience of those who play it.

One of my main objects of interest in this study, and the ultimate reason why I chose to pursue this project, was a simple assertion (or maybe not so simple) on Erica's website. She states, under the "Teaching Mbira" section of her website, "Even beginning mbira students can have spiritual experiences." Having been familiar with the religious context of *mbira* music, I

was taken aback by such a claim. How can such a group of people claim to have a religious experience through the cultural expression of another group? What does this imply about the understanding of Shona religious belief in the United States? Furthermore, what does that kind of such experience look or, better yet, *feel* like? I was, and still am, interested in how spirituality was being navigated in this community and how the music has such an effect on the community members. To do so, I examine the ways in which scholars of Zimbabwean music have employed the word in order to give context to a traditional Shona religious cosmology.

Spirituality and the term's usage, and understanding, is treated differently between scholarly and vernacular discourses (Bender and McRoberts 2012). A term used so frequently and freely garners a lot of different meanings, too many to let it function with any kind of consistency. Can we really expect the "spirituality" of traditionalist Shona people to be the same "spirituality" as Americans who live on the West Coast of the United States? I do not think we can. I argue that the usage of "spiritual" in scholarship on traditional Shona music is quite literal in that it pertains to the religious belief in the existence of spirits of ancestors that are present amongst the living and the ability of said spirits to affect the lives of the living.[14]

Although Paul Berliner only used the word "spiritual" a few times in *Soul of Mbira*,[15] the position of *mbira* in traditional Shona religious cosmology is always tied to ancestor spirits and their direct influence on the matters of living people. The following passage exemplifies this relationship between the *mbira*, the ancestors, and the living.

[14] There are many more intricacies and regional variations in traditional Shona religious beliefs and practices but this is a foundational belief (Bourdillon 1987; Cox 2007, 119-141; Fry 1976; Gelfand 1962; Lan 1985).
[15] Three times, as far as I can tell – twice in his third chapter "An Overview of Shona Mbira" and once in an author's note from the 1993 edition of the book.

> In the past, as today, the mbira has been used in traditional Shona religious ceremonies to create the essential link between the world of the living and the world of the spirits. The mbira is believed to have the power of projecting its sound into the heavens and attracting the attention of the ancestors, who are the *spiritual* owners and keepers of the land and the benefactors of the people's welfare. In formal ceremonies mbira music culminates in the possession of mediums who then serve as counselors to the villagers. (Berliner 1993, 43, emphasis mine)

Other scholars reinforce Berliner's explanation of the spiritual significance of the *mbira*. For example, take this passage from Claire Jones on women and their place within *mbira* culture:

> Many players of the *mbira dzavadzimu* operate at the juncture between the material world of the living and the spiritual realm of the ancestors. (Jones 2008, 126)

Jones goes on to explain many of the "spiritual" practices surrounding the instrument, including spirit possession and also spiritual calling, where musicians are called to the instrument by their ancestors. The latter typically occurs when the "called" dreams about him/herself or an ancestor playing *mbira* or through spiritual sickness. When afflicted with a spiritual sickness, Shona people consult an *n'anga*, or traditional healer, who either tells the afflicted to play *mbira* or to hold a *bira* where an ancestor tells the afflicted to learn to play.[16] In one of the stories Jones tells, *mbira* player Beauler Dyoko experienced both dreams and spiritual sickness.

Another example of this is found in Thomas Turino's *Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Popular Music*, where Noah Mapfumo, a Zimbabwean who largely ignored indigenous life, fell unconscious and was told to live a more traditional lifestyle as opposed to the contemporary one he was living.

[16] This is not always the result of a *bira*. Not everyone who is afflicted with a sickness caused by spirits must play *mbira* as a result, but this can be one way of healing the afflicted. Sometimes the afflicted must learn a different form of expression (Turino 2000, 41) or village people must correct a wrong that has been committed (Berliner).

> Like Mhlanga, [Noah] points out that there are spiritual forces that may constrain or redirect an individual's way of living, tempering ideas about individual choice and control. Noah's experience is not uncommon. Even dedicated churchgoers may be chosen as medium by an ancestor, and consequently undergo radical changes in cultural orientation (see Maraire 1990). (Turino 2000, 41)

The spirits have the potential to affect the lives of people in more everyday ways that these as well. Turino goes on to explain his interlocutor Henry Chigamba, while meeting him in a neighborhood known for having "roughnecks and thieves," left his bag on the side of the street while looking for Turino. The bag had no supervision or protection other than an *mbira* that Chigamba had placed on top of it. Chigamba was certain the bag would not be touched because the *mbira* was a sign to anyone who might encounter the bag that the spirits were protecting it and that miscreants would be afraid of upsetting the ancestors. Turino uses this to describe the difference in world view between himself, a cosmopolitan individual, and a Zimbabwean of traditional inclinations.

> When I insist that distinctive indigenous lifeways remain vital among certain contemporary Zimbabweans, I am not romanticizing some imaginary cultural difference or "tribal fantasy." It is not that Henry doesn't take buses, but that he makes decisions en route by very different criteria from my own cosmopolitan mode of operating. Even now I would not leave my bag unattended in Mbare, mbira or no mbira, and neither, I am certain, would many of my black middle-class neighbors in Mabelreign suburb were [sic] I lived. Although I now know, intellectually, about the spiritual power of mbira for indigenous Zimbabweans, the full ramifications of this are not deeply ingrained in me, and hence I cannot share Henry's level of confidence and comfort in leaving a bag unattended. Underlying his decision is a very different sense of reality. (Turino 2000, 42)

But these articulations of "spiritual" are not the only ones in Zimbabwe and as the country has changed and radical Christian religious persuasions have tried to repress the

instrument, understanding of the *mbira* and its "spirituality" has become more general. Claire Jones emphasizes this when writing about Chiwoniso Maraire:

> Chi herself defends mbira music from Christian detractors who decry its links with spirit possession, emphasizing a personal spirituality with universal meaning: 'In the true sense of spirituality when they say that an instrument is spiritual, in my knowledge it basically means that this instrument has the ability to touch your spirit' (Chiwoniso Maraire, quoted in Jenje-Makwenda 2001). (ibid, 144)

It is this "universal meaning" attitude towards the "spirituality" of *mbira*, the one that, in the quote above, is inflected by cosmopolitan lifestyles and intersections of traditional and modern lifeways, that I think pervades both the North American Zimbabwean music community and the scholarship on the community.

Scholarship on North American Community

In preparation for this research, I read the dissertations of Sheasby Matiure, Tendai Muparutsa, and Angela Scharfenberger, all of whom completed work on the dissemination of Zimbabwean music throughout North America. In a lot of ways, my research is an extension of the work they have done and many of the things I say is also said, to varying degrees, by them. Each present unique, though not incompatible takes on "spirituality," but none of them, in my opinion, give the spiritual qualities of the music due attention. And perhaps this is because their work is done with attention split between Zimbabweans and Americans. Matiure focuses heavily on history and pedagogy. Muparutsa focuses on the ways in which Zimbabwean music has changed socially in its move to the US. Scharfenberger focuses on the transnational relationship between the US and Zimbabwe. This is troubling because the "spirituality" of Zimbabwean music changes depending on the location of the music and the differences are not articulated but

are instead frequently conflated. Based on my readings of the literature and my observations in the North American community, I have noticed that the understanding of spirituality expressed through Zimbabwean music is glossed over in scholarship thus far. Take, for example, these quotes from Matiure's paper (2006):

> I further argue that when a musical culture migrates from one country to the other, its practitioners and aficionados in the new environment use it as social institution to fulfill desired social values and emotional and spiritual satisfaction. (11)
>
> Mbira music in particular is a spiritual instrument in Zimbabwe, and it therefore attracts Americans in search of spiritual healing. Americans are becoming part of that spiritual culture, though only within the confines of their cultural environment…Whereas other musical styles are associated with drugs, those involved in [Zimbabwean] music find social and spiritual joy. (130)
>
> Equally, Americans participating in Zimbabwean music practice see spirituality resonating through their Zimbabwean counterparts. Thus, they see Zimbabweans coming to America as mediators of a spirituality that many are yearning to experience. (134)
>
> When they first hear Zimbabwean music, they feel they have reached a spiritual destination, one for which they have been long yearning. (136)
>
> It is in these mbira parties that most Americans feel healed by the music. Most of them say that they get a sense of the beginning of the world and the roots of mankind through the music. Some have revealed that they attended with some form of physical ailment and came out of the mbira party healed. No spirit possession takes place, but people get the sense of spiritual healing out of the performance process. Some say that though they started with marimba, they now are attached to the mbira because of the spiritual satisfaction. (168)

Turns of phrase like "spiritual satisfaction," "spiritual joy," "mediators of spirituality," "spiritual destination," and "spiritual healing" may be accurate for the experience of Americans playing Zimbabwean music, but they seem to be specific to the American side of the equation. "Spiritual healing" in a traditional Shona sense would be appeasing a spirit in order to cure oneself of an otherwise incurable illness (Turino; Berliner; Jones). A "spiritual destination" for a

rural Zimbabwean might be their *musha*, a "spiritual home" where their ancestors are buried, and therefore the land in which their ancestors continually reside (Turino 2000, 24-25).[17] Spiritual joy and satisfaction sound nice but, in my limited knowledge of Shona religion, don't quite seem to fit within a Shona religious cosmology.

Angela Scharfenberger (2017) follows suit with Matiure's ambiguous spirituality:

> I am further curious about how Zimbabwean music, paired with imagination, becomes a powerful conduit for basic human needs, such as family-like bods, an experience of spiritual connectedness, and a sense of belonging. (13)
>
> On a spiritual level, Americans' imagine the ways that the 'ancient' music of Zimbabwe can tap into something deep and meaningful, or a place of solace. (62)
>
> It is a way of being swallowed up into something bigger than the individual self, in an experience that is simultaneously nurturing and ecstatic. This discourse demonstrates that [Maggie Donahue] identifies the idea of a spiritual experience with both a sense of belonging, as well as with practices that are described as 'transcendental.' For her, being in a ceremony in Zimbabwe represented the physical surrender of a total spiritual experience, a kind of spiritual homecoming. (66-67)

Often times, in the North American community, discourse surrounding spirituality finds articulations within this sense of connectedness and transcendence and typically focuses on a kind of palpable "energy" that is felt in the room or playing area. The experience is largely subjective, but no less real, and is based on an "unarticulated more… something relatively inchoate or undefined, yet present and powerful in human life" (Bender and McRoberts 2012, 3). But in Scharfenberger's dissertation, we see the conflation of competing spiritualities, as the word is used liberally to explain both the experiences of Americans (above) and those of Zimbabweans (below):

[17] This is how Turino describes a *musha*. The concept is also more complicated and involves many kinship and extended family connections to an area (Cox 2007, 126).

> Even if mbira music dies, we will have a few places where people are still doing it. Mbira music is a spiritual music. When it dies, if the spirits still want this kind of music, they will find a way out…and you find that with this kind of music, when people like it, their love for it, it's not theirs, it's more of a spiritual thing. So I'm also happy with Americans teaching Zimbabweans, because it's been said by the spirits that it will happen. (Fradreck Mujuru, 212)

> Thus [Beauler Dyoko] became very sick, and because her sickness was a spiritual one, doctors and medicines would not cure her. Her body was fallen with an illness that could only be healed through her time with an ancient spirt and by playing the mbira. This "illness of affliction" is frequently described in ethnographic literature, outlining a trajectory when an illness is considered "spiritual" and which often involves a non-medical intervention of healing. (234)

> [Matthew] went on to explain that there is a difference between enjoying mbira music from a spiritual perspective or a cultural perspective. "If you are a Christian, then to enjoy mbira music it must just be cultural or there will be a conflict. You can't be a Christian and also believe in the spirits coming through the mbira." (93)

In the quotes above, we see the definition of "spiritual" reflecting the one we saw in the scholarship on traditional Shona belief systems, but no effort is made to differentiate this spirituality from that of Americans. Particular note should be made of the last of these three quotes as it offers a Christian Zimbabwean perspective on both *mbira* and traditional religious beliefs. I don't think that Scharfenberger has done anything wrong in presenting spirituality in this way, with no clear differentiation between the understanding by Americans and the understanding by Zimbabweans, because I believe that the North American community itself does not differentiate between the two. But I instead present the two spiritualities as separate.

Scharfenberger asserts that African religious beliefs are often flexible (38) and thus allows for the flow of understanding of the spirituality of the Shona between Zimbabweans and Americans. But flexibility and "universals" in the conceptions of the spiritual is indeed a tendency in Western spiritualism (Bender and McRoberts 2012) and such flexibility is often

strategic for the justification of said beliefs and important to the building of a spiritual community (Bender 2010). Instead, conforming to traditional views of non-Western people is a result of modernization, globalization, and transnational flow of religious ideologies (van der Veer 2012). And while Zimbabwean musicians frequently claim American practitioners are called and influenced by the spirits, thereby allowing Americans into their indigenous belief system, they are articulating their complex religious beliefs, not those of Americans. Because, as Erica Azim has told me when explaining some Shona rites and her understanding of them, "Zimbabweans also believe all kinds of things," implying that the belief system of traditionalist Shona people extends beyond that of American understanding of Shona spirituality and that not all of the ritual practices of the Shona apply to the Shona spirituality that Americans accept.

While the American community takes influence and direction from Zimbabwean beliefs in regard to spirituality, the American and Zimbabwean spiritualities are part of two separate traditions. In my research, no practitioners were new to spiritual ways of life and most were familiar with lifeways that may be considered synonymous with "American spirituality" – dabbling in mysticism and shamanism, practicing holistic forms of healing and medication, participating in various types of meditation, etc. That is why I do not believe that the flexibility of Shona religious practices is the only thing responsible for the phenomenon that is Westerners seeking spiritual transcendence through the practice of African music.

It is for this reason we must think to more accurately define spirituality and understand its connotations in its American contexts. We need to move past understanding "spirituality" as a universal and "given" topic as we see in the conflation of American and Shona spirituality.

Instead, we should seek to define the many different articulations of "spirituality" that reveal themselves depending on context. The "universality" of the word may lead us to treat it as a "fluff" word, but it can indeed greatly help us understand the lives of people who claim it.

There are some American *mbira* players that believe in spirits and their ability to affect the living, but these beliefs are, firstly, not ubiquitous in the community and are, secondly, catalyzed through musical experiences while playing *mbira*. Effects of the "spirituality" of *mbira* in the US can more adequately be described by a sense of connection – to the players' sense of self, to one another, to Zimbabwe, and to the world – the motivation of which is generally categorized by personal improvement and betterment. To quote Thomas Turino in another one of his books, *Music as Social Life*: "[participatory] music and dance are very much about love, friendship, and spirituality, or in a word, about *connecting*" (2008, 225 emphasis in original).[18] And so, the way I am defining and explaining "spiritual" in this paper is as a means of numinous experience – the active process of experiencing transcendence, something wholly and entirely outside oneself, while playing *mbira*, a kind of ecstatic yet meditative musicking.

[18] Participatory music, here, is defined as music in which every present person is contributing to the musicking process. It is in contrast to presentational music, or music in which there is a stark divide between the musician(s) and the audience (Turino 2008).

Chapter 2: Experiencing *Mbira*

My intentions with this chapter are to deal seriously with the beliefs and experiences of Americans who play the *mbira*. Religious, and spiritual, experience can be highly contentious and discourse surrounding authenticity of those experiences is fraught but religious experience can and should be dealt with seriously. To do so, I discuss understandings of religious experience by notable scholars of religion to establish what religious experience might be considered. I then ethnographically render the events of an evening in order to articulate the ways the community of mbira players explains those feelings. I also focus on the social context in which the "spiritual" is encountered to demonstrate how this particular form of spirituality relies on communal activity and the community shapes discourse and affirms beliefs. A collective voice is utilized throughout the rendering to demonstrate the connectedness felt by practitioners as well as their unique yet communal approaches to spirituality.

The Numinous in *Mbira*

Questions of appropriation can easily be brought up in this community, as American musicians are borrowing the religious expression of a globally marginalized people, but it is in this context that I explore the "really real"-ness of ecstatic *mbira* performance experiences. Most notoriously capturing the imagination of Western scholarship through Rudolf Otto in 1917, such

religious experiences are commonly referred to, or understood, as "the holy" (Orsi 2011, 92).[19] Otto's intention was to present the reality of divinity through describing the experience of divine encounters, categorized by "creeping flesh" and sheer awe and terror of said divine encounter, asserting that those who have not experienced the holy will not understand that which Otto describes (95). The objective reality of the numinous (Otto's preferred term) in the lives of these *mbira* practitioners should not be written off. The experience can be explained as "transcendental truth" (van der Veer 2009), "awe-inspiring mystery" (Eliade, 9), something "basically and totally different…like nothing human or cosmic; confronted with it, man senses his profound nothingness… [the holy] is *irrational*" (Eliade, 10-11; emphasis in original). It is a truly powerful thing and real and meaningful to those who encounter it.

But, as Orsi suggests, "the holy" should not be taken without its social context. Such a reminder is important, especially when one asserts that the experience is universal (Azim 1999). This is why, in the ethnographic bits I sew together below, I weave in between the spiritual and the social. "The holy" is experienced here because of its surroundings and because it is explained to be holy. It is holy because it works to be holy in its environment. Orsi explains:

> Otto located the reality of the holy – and by extension religion itself – outside of history and culture. But in modern ways of thinking about culture and psychology, there is no "out of" history and culture, no place antecedent to or outside of the social circumstances, relationships, and ways of thinking about and imagining the world and of understanding the self into which humans are born. Would someone not Hindu or not already a devotee of the goddess Yamuna-ji experience the Yamuna River as numinous? Would the cripples of the church cafeterias have been experienced as holy without the cultural surround of imagery and theology that gave a special and privileged meaning to the broken body? If the answer is a no, then we are drawn back across the epistemological

[19] While the Christian influence behind this term might be palpably felt, the meaning behind the word is intended to be transcultural and the same regardless of the religious inclination, which was one of Otto's intentions with the word (Orsi 2011, 95).

> divide, as in the translated title [wherein "the holy" was translated "the idea of the holy"]. The Yamuna River is a goddess for those who believe the Yamuna River is a goddess. This is not a matter of objective or subjective, real or imaginary; it is a matter of culture and history. The 'holy' is a construction; it is a made thing. (97-98)

To understand the holy, and the idiosyncrasies of its various iterations, we must look to its construction, to the social situations it inhabits, to the discourse surrounding it, to the practices essential to it. It is this that I attempt to do. First and foremost, before I begin my narrative, it should be mentioned that the beliefs and views of the *mbira* players in this community are not monolithic. There is no one particular understanding of how the "holy" articulates itself or how they articulate the "holy."[20] But the discourse in the community of things like "energy," "spirits," and all things ethereal and ephemeral is consistent enough that there is an understood "sense" of the holy. There is a general understanding of an indescribable, mystic experience surrounding *mbira* performance.

Social in Spiritual

When I first set out to do this research I was interested in how *mbira* influences and shapes the personal, everyday lives of the individuals who practice it. Immediately, I was at a disadvantage because of the location in which I chose to conduct research: Erica Azim's *mbira* camp. I was not immersing myself into a community of the everyday. I was not entering a homogenous group that meets daily to practice *mbira*. The fact is that Americans who play *mbira* do not have the time to allocate in their schedules the study under a master *mbira* player. Instead,

[20] Perhaps this is also because my time was spent in a temporary community, with representatives from many North American Zimbabwean music communities present. Further observations would have to be made at the different sites throughout the US to see if singular discourses occur within these individual communities.

they must practice, and learn, mostly on their own. As one of my interlocutors said “It would have been nice to have had a *gwenyambira* [master mbira player] to study with every day.”

Mbira is largely an individual practice. It requires time alone with oneself, working on parts and exploring the song. To be a participant-observer in the everyday life of an American *mbira* player, it would require shadowing them at work, school, the subway, to the grocery, etc. waiting for them to play *mbira*. There are of course exceptions, as I am sure those who run organizations promoting and advocating for Zimbabwean music have integrated *mbira* and marimba much more deeply into their everyday lives. But I do not believe the patterns of musical practice is 100% consistent in the daily life of American *mbira* players, and the people I met at the camp described themselves as intermittent players who usually stick to playing their top five favorite songs. There are, however, occasions organized within the local communities of *mbira* players, that act as a way for *mbira* players to commune, to play together, to musick, to experience. These community gatherings are usually dubbed “mbira parties.” Monthly, bi-monthly, weekly meetings for community music-making. It is these moments, these occasions of collective musicking, that are the most prone or open to spiritual experience.

Seth, one of the people with whom I spoke, had played *mbira* very intermittently during his undergraduate years, where his roommate introduce him to the instrument, without ever really being interested. One evening, while Seth was at a party, he ended up playing *mbira* with a couple of other initiates of the Shona art form. This was his first foray into *mbira* performance and his first time playing *mbira* with other people. The room in which they played stood still for 10 minutes. A complete energy shift brought all of the attention on the music and Seth opened

himself up to the spiritual possibilities of the instrument (Geddes, p.c.). American *mbira* journeys usually start with a transformative experience, or a chance encounter with the instrument, at a social gathering.

American *mbira* players are known to try to replicate the all-night musicking events that occur in Zimbabwe (Matiure 2008, 179). They, however, typically confuse a *bira*, ancestral possession ceremony, with a *dandaro*, an all-night hangout with music and dance. Although Sheasby Matiure has pointed this out and says that what occurs is a *dandaro* because a *bira* cannot happen in America. He also suggests that an *mbira* party "is a way of connoting something in between them" (179). To me, this means there is still some kind of experiential significance to the performance outside of pure musicianship. If an *mbira* party is in between a *bira* and a *dandaro*, then it is in between religious and secular space. Furthermore, even if the event is not a sacred in the eyes of a Zimbabwean, the imaginary of its American participants construct it as something where "spiritual experiences" may occur.

The camp experience was a special one; we were able to practice and play *mbira* more often than we might usually. We woke in the morning and, after breakfast and a daily expedition to find coffee, we had a practice session for the things we learned the day prior. This was followed by learning new parts and then a break for lunch. The afternoon was spent working on special topics, like *hosho* playing, the "culture talk,"[21] or playing one-on-one with Erica. The evening was reserved for singing sessions. Usually, after the singing sessions, a few campers would stay up relatively late and jam with one another, sharing parts and music and stories. But

[21] At this camp, and many like it, Erica holds a "culture talk" one of the days at the camp. It mostly consists of explaining the religious significance of the instrument and its place in the life of the Shona and their beliefs.

the culmination of the week was focused into a singular event: the mbira party. In what follows, I explore the flow of the evening and examine the experience of "the holy" and its social implications.

Preparations

The little Shumba roared loud for his pride.[22] The *hosho* player, shaking his gourd rattles with rhythmic intensity and consistency, joined him and lost the beat in the process. The rattler laughed it off and jumped back into the chorus of metallic tongues resonating through wooden soundboards and large calabash gourds that filled the room. Human voices added support to the *mbira* lines, while Erica's piercing Ambuya (grandmother) vocals cut through the contrapuntal foundation. The little lion runs back and forth, approaching the musicians, stating his presence with and then retreating to get a running start for his continuing presentations of vocal might, demonstrating the fierceness of his demeanor. Even throughout this demonstration of ferocity and lion-icity, the musicians are focusing on their sounds, their rhythms, their hypnotic pulses of sweet voices filling their senses. The *mbira* players, while playing their song for the Shumba, played for themselves as well.

The last day of camp was spent in preparation. We had guests arriving that evening and we needed to make sure everything was done before they arrived. We had been practicing new pieces since day one and we were confident in our expression, but the food needed attention. In concerted efforts to create an authentic gustatory experience for our soon-to-be guests, we

[22] Shumba is a Shona word for "lion." Erica's grandson referred to himself as a lion throughout the night and carried a stuffed animal companion with him. Shumba is also a name of a classic mbira song, which we eventually played for him during the unfolding of the evening, telling him it was the "lion's song." He was unimpressed.

cooked like Shona grandmothers, taking turns straining our shoulders stirring the thick cornmeal concoction that is *sadza*. The kale leaves had to be chopped up as small as possible to make almost a paste when combined with the peanut butter. A conveyor belt of edible foliage deconstruction eased the monotony that is traditional cooking but, by the end, our hands were green and tired. Our resident chef would stew the goat by herself, leaving the far more banal tasks to us, letting us finally help her after a week of rejected assistance. That night, we would place the *sadza* into our hands, pressing our thumbs into the thick, flavorless mush, shaping it into an edible utensil to scoop up the goat stew and peanut butter greens.

The meal composed the beginning of the evening. Served buffet style, we grabbed from the potluck and sat around the living room, getting to know our guests, family, and friends. Eventually we picked up our instruments and our *deze*s and moved to the couches, positioning ourselves in a block facing the rest of the room. Starting with a song we learned at camp that week, we initiated the evening's main event, causing a catalyst for a shift in the evening's energy. The room's atmosphere would from this point on continue to morph as our playing concentrated the spirits.

As the night progressed, the Shumba would have to leave, even though his complaints about having to be dismissed were easily heard by all in attendance. The crowd began to thin as well and the night was left for the musicians. We continued to play together and a meditative groove was established. Ancient melodies faded in, dwelled in Erica's home for a bit, and faded out again, making room for conversation and conviviality. This pattern continued late into the night. Introspective music making and rhythmic meditation would interrupt moments of

dialogue. Dialogic musicking would create space for internal reflection and the times in between would allow for relational interactions to learn about each other. Grooves came and went and we moved effortlessly between the social and the spiritual events of the night as conversations flowed into and out of *mbira* songs before trickling to a stop early the next morning.

Connections

As we sat and talked, I reflected on how this house had been my home for the past week. Aside from the morning walks to find coffee and the two field trips we took to connect our instrument with nature,[23] my life had been confined to this Bay Area residence. Our days consisted of *mbira*. Whether learning variations of our camp songs, practicing *hosho*, picking out singing lines from polyphony, or simply jamming with each other, our morning, afternoon, and night were predicated upon and dictated by *mbira*.

In fact, this house has been a home to many *mbira* players across the country, in material and in spirit. This house serves as very possibly the largest *mbira* music hub in the US, having accumulated the largest collection of Shona *mbira* music in the world and frequently serving as the top instrument distributor in the country. Through that alone, just about every *mbira* player in the United States has a connection to Erica. The headquarters for Erica's non-profit; the home acts as a warehouse and storage facility for instruments that have just arrived to the States. Erica orders them directly from *mbira* making masters in Zimbabwe and touches them up, polishing, sanding, and turning them before sending them to their new homes across the country. Most

[23] One trip was to a nearby botanical garden. The other was to Muir Woods, a space curated with the intention of cultivating spiritual experiences. This site and others are detailed in Kerry Mitchell's book on religious experience in state parks, *Spirituality and the State* (2016).

Shona lamellophones in the United States have passed through Berkeley, California, and most *mbira* players inherently have a material connection to Erica's home.

Beyond Erica's distributionary efforts, her annual *mbira* camps bring in players from across the country, and Erica's travels out to other *mbira* communities throughout the year connect her organization to more and more players. At this year's camp, there were *mbira* community representatives from California, Oregon, Colorado, and Ohio. In the past, camps have included players from as far as Argentina and Japan.[24] These camps act as momentary communities contributing to the larger, familial network of *mbira* players across the country and globe. Such events create a deeper sense of kinship between players and give opportunities to learn and play with people from communities unavailable otherwise. The quiet affirmation that there are others pursuing the same ends for similar reasons bonds *mbira* players whenever they come upon one another.

This sense deepened in me as I listened to the conversations unfolding before me. People and times and places were all referenced. Stories are shared about old camps, when this or that happened, when this or that person attended. Personal histories, relationship news, and gossip were all delivered to the group and gleefully received. I learned new things about people I have never met, developed opinions of players I have never heard of, and learned interesting details about the lives of names that have popped up elsewhere, whether in books, recordings, or Facebook.

[24] The players from these respective countries have gone on to establish and foster communities of their own. For several years in a row, Erica would travel to Argentina for an mbira camp.

All of this reminded me how new I am to this community, how the camp I was attending was as old as I was and how I had not even owned my instrument for a year. But it also reminded me that these different attendees will leave tomorrow morning and enter back into their local Zimbabwean music communities. I, being from Ohio, a state largely devoid of *mbira* activity, could not reciprocate this feeling. Whether returning home to play with their romantic partners, returning to and becoming reacquainted with a community after a long trip, jamming with their regular guitar-playing band mates, or continuing with the marimba school in their hometown, all of these new friends of mine have a musical home. They have their own musical communities centered on Zimbabwean forms of expression where they congregate, when they can, to experience the joy that is Shona music. Their place within the larger project of *mbira* dissemination was at home within these communities where they can grow musically and spiritually with one another.

The instrument brought us different places. Travels could take us – to Argentina, Germany, Japan, Great Britain, France, Bali, Australia, Zimbabwe – but *mbira* would act as our guiding beacon, leading us to new musical relationships with strangers similarly invested in Shona expressive culture. With the singing tongues of our lamellophones, we can congregate with anyone who has a similar Babel fish, opening lines of communication where it was previously impossible. We do not need to look, sound, or feel the same, but this common ground

between us, this walkable land that is our shared investment in the Shona culture, can serve as a space for discourse and possibility.[25]

And there are possibilities all around and open to us now. Through *mbira*, we can get lost in the magic of the universe. We can reconnect with our bodies in ways we thought were impossible. We can reach new understandings of what our minds can do and experiences we thought impossible. The instrument becomes our translator – to our bodies, our minds, our cosmos. It is our passport, our access point. Not only are we able to reach into ourselves and to connect new people but we are able to reach into a tradition and really examine its roots. We can get out of the material world of busy schedules and spreadsheets to immerse ourselves in a portal to an experience of the universe through the filter of another culture. In a world where progress and innovation mean everything, an escape to something greater than that, something greater than our minds, is more important than ever. And through *mbira* we can find something that is not material, is not a result of our economic culture.[26]

Through *mbira* we can find each other. When we play, we play with energy, the untouchable, the immaterial. And with energies surging and swirling around the room, we can feel one another. A deep enough groove and we can sensate one another, experience a mimetic form of being where we are entirely enshrouded in each other's spirit. Our Shona selves feel the

[25] Eugene Seah had just gone traveling across the world and had brought his *mbira* (plural) with him. He explained that even when he was unable to speak to people, if they were an *mbira* player, they could play together and an instant bond between the two of them was formed.

[26] Altered states of being have long been a fascination of Westerners (Becker 2004, 13-24).It is a common perception in the West that modern culture (culture shaped by modernity) is devoid of "emotionally galvanizing music" and excursions into such music are common as a means of experiencing transcendence (Kapchan 2007).

pulse, locate the beat.[27] We are locked in. Hooked behind each other. As we rush through the experience, we hold on for dear life. Performance never gets easier; we are latched on to one another, feeding symbiotically on the force dancing around the room. Energies rise in the performance, sweeping us up, moving us together. Truly great performances do this, and truly great players can do this for us.[28] This energy comes from somewhere else, and moves through all of us, creating a synchronicity between us, entraining our bodies. But this is more than a bodily energy; this energy is from the heart. Our playing becomes an opening of the heart. There is something deeper going on between us. As we get deeper into the music, we fall into one another.

This heart connection is why we're all here. *Mbira* found us. It caught us when we needed it. *Shave*s, spirits sent to us from our ancestors, guided us toward *mbira* because there was something lacking. It has helped us get to new parts of the world and ourselves. *Mbira* has pushed us outward and inward.

Narratives

The holy is relational and intersubjective; it happens "among people present in an immediate and direct way to each other…the experience intensifies this connectedness" (Orsi 2011, 103). Social relations justify and help articulate religious experience. It is after the holy has been felt that others help explain and affirm the sensation as holy. "It is among people so

[27] Seah, p.c.; A complicated assertion related to Rebecca Bryant's "empersonment" (2005, 223) in which a musician "consciously and consistently imprints a practice on the body." In doing so, one learns to become the type of person who could play a certain type of music.
[28] This "energy raising" was described to me as desirable quality of mbira players. One camp member used this characteristic of mbira as a way to qualify someone as a *gwenyambira* or master mbira player (Geddes).

peculiarly connected that the really realness of the phenomena is determined, known, and affirmed, and in which it takes on its life" (103). The social meaning behind the experience is just as important as the experience itself; it is what defines the experience.

The social understandings of spiritual experiences at the camp were rhetorically articulated by the campers during conversations and tangential comments, but within the community there are also authoritative figures that help define and shape the holy. The first is Zimbabweans, who are seen immediately as authority figures of the music (Matiure 2008, 251). The qualifications for Americans with authority on Zimbabwean music are:

> (1) time and experience, coupled with the level of virtuosity and the level of immersion in the music; (2) association with [Dumisani] Maraire and other Zimbabwean musicians; (3) the level of immersion and pioneering of the musical tradition in an area; (4) recognition and approval by Zimbabweans; (5) travel to Zimbabwe; (6) proficiency with the Shona language and knowledge of the culture at some level of depth; (7) musical qualifications; and (8) training as ethnographers, authors, and college professors, who have studied the music within the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology. (252)

When a Zimbabwean music begins to cry from playing *mbira* and informs the American comforting him or her that "It is ok; it is the spirits, that's what they're for," the Zimbabwean musician, because of their authority on all things Shona, shapes the American's perception of the holy by defining the experience for them. Similarly, when musicians like Azim, who matches a lot of the qualifications of authority listed above, have a lot of say in how the holy is defined. When Azim shares the role of a *shave mbira*[29] in a Shona musician's life and one of the campers

[29] Amongst the members of the North American community with whom I interacted, as well as some scholarship (Jones 2008, 133-134), a *shave* is explained as a talent spirit sent to the living by an ancestor, as a gift. The spirit imbues the living person with a particular talent, like *mbira* playing (*shave mbira*) or blacksmithing. The actual concept of *mashave* in Shona cosmology is more complicated than this, as they are foreign or alien spirits, i.e. non-ancestor spirits, given to a person by their ancestor (Berliner 1993; Matiure, P. 2011; Perman 2008). The *mashave* do usually bring riches and fortune to those who have them, but their position is also more involved than just "talent spirits."

asks if she could have a *shave*, because *mbira* music came to her when she truly needed it to comfort her, and Azim exclaims "Of course, you all probably have *shave*s" her word carries a lot of weight. It is especially the notion of a *shave*, that American *mbira* players are called to the instrument, which carries a lot of social currency in the community.

At the camp, we shared stories of how we came to know the *mbira*. Narratives of personal experience and spiritual discovery are typical of modern spiritual practices, as Courtney Bender (2010) has found in spiritual communities Cambridge, Massachusetts, and these are no different. However, these narratives continually reiterate community and sociality as catalysts for spiritual experience while Bender details narratives inflected by views defined by individual experience. The stories of American *mbira* players, while unique and backed by individual experiences, take on similar forms and rhetoric that are then affirmed by group. I witnessed such stories at the beginning of the camp. On the first day, we went around in a circle and shared how our "journey with *mbira*" began. More frequently than not, campers expressed how they had encountered the instrument in a public space: a party, a shop, a classroom. From there, a fascination, an itch, an obsession begins and the player thinks of very little else. It is a "calling" to *mbira*. Affirmation of these experiences by the group, in the form of these stories, strengthens the authenticity of these claims.

I, for example, could draw a clear pointing line of how my entire life has led me to *mbira*. When I was young, my parents owned an old, and broken, player piano that still sits in our living room, unused except when occasionally tickled by my visiting sister-in-law. At about the age of eight I asked my parents for piano lessons because I was tired of the piano lying dormant and

hoped I could put some life into it. I never progressed very far after my four years of lessons but my abilities did help me get noticed by my sixth grade music appreciation teacher, who asked me if I wanted to be a part of a percussion class he was putting together for the next school year. I accepted and followed the drums through my intermediate and secondary school education. It was during my early high school career that I first introduced to and obsessed with the idea of "African music" when a youth minister at my church showed me a djembe and how to produce its basic sounds. During my junior and senior years of high school, I attended a boarding school for artistically inclined high school students in South Carolina. Had I not attended this school, where we were all highly encouraged to attempt to chase after a career in the arts, I would have likely settled into something like engineering instead.

After taking a year off after graduation to be an exchange student in Sweden, where I continued to play and study percussion, I attended University of South Carolina to pursue a degree in percussion performance (well, a Bachelor of Arts in Music, I had to work very hard for a year to be accepted into the performance track; I was not a very good percussionist going into my undergraduate degree). It was here, at USC, where I met my good friend Nathan, who, after a year, transferred to Winthrop University where he studied with B. Michael Williams, an *mbira* performer and enthusiast. I was never really interested in the instrument until I left for graduate school, to again pursue percussion performance, where I began to become unsettled with the conventions and social (media) demands of contemporary percussion. I wanted to play music and do it on my porch, with songs that I could play ad infinitum, not spend four months learning a complicated piece of music that will last four minutes on a stage and that no one will enjoy, all on a seven-foot long behemoth of an instrument that I will never be able to afford or have the

square-footage to own and store. The *mbira* became very enticing. The more I thought about the possibilities of being able to play where I wanted (I could hike with it!) the more it excited me. I was obsessed and thought about owning and playing one constantly. I finally bit the bullet and bought one the Fall semester of my second year, after I had applied and been accepted to the ethnomusicology program at Ohio State where my advisor had advised me to write a term paper about Paul Berliner during the exact moments I had been obsessed with the idea of *mbira*.

By all means, my life path seems to have been steered towards *mbira*; my narrative is clear. From passing interest in learning music, to being asked to learn music, to being expected to pursue music, to pursuing music, to becoming dissatisfied with my pursuit of music, to finding *mbira*, I can show a genealogy of the things that eventually brought me to California. I can spin a narrative to show that it was no mistake or coincidence.[30] This, coupled with my percussive background which helps me learn parts and incorporate them with other players more quickly than most beginners, could be potentially be marked as the work of the spirits. I could have a *shave mbira*. The spirits, it could be said, got me moving.

Spirits

As we rode down the tracks the morning after the mbira party, one of my new friends would reflect on the night and explain the experiential ideal for which he and another attendee

[30] The same could potentially be said about the Irish bodhran, which I picked up my first year at Ohio State. I had seen Andy Kruspe, a musician out of Alabama, give a masterclass on the instrument the year prior. When I got to Ohio State, I met a trumpet who was interested in playing Irish music (where he would be playing guitar) and he (easily) convinced me to purchase and learn bodhran. I contacted Andy and asked where I could get a good quality drum. He told me he was getting a prototype for a beginner's drum from someone the next day and would tell me how it sounded; it sounded great. He gave me the maker's name, which I proceeded to look up. The maker lives in Columbus, Ohio, where Ohio State is, and he dropped off the drum personally. While doing so, he invited me to an Irish music session happening that very week and effectively introduced me to the Irish music scene in Columbus and Irish music more generally.

aimed. Sitting on the Bay Area Rapid Transit train, taking us to the planes which in turn would bring us to our respective homes, Seth tried to enunciate the feeling. I feared putting words in his mouth, or giving him terminology that would might skew his response to better fit my research, but his answer to my question was a simple "Yeah, I would consider it something spiritual." His explanation, his word, was "trancing" – an experience that takes oneself out of the world, out of oneself, and into the music or into the moment.[31] In fact, this explanation was greatly reflected with a lot of the people I met during the week. Some definitions of truly great *mbira* players were those who can really put themselves into the music.

Maybe my hesitations of putting words in Seth's mouth were appropriate. The words "spiritual" and "spirituality" have been contentious in religious studies as vernacular and scholarly definitions differ drastically from one another and amongst themselves. Definitions of these words tend to be vague can used for a general sense of religiosity, a non-dogmatic belief system, an individualized interpretation of the way the world works, etc. (Mitchell 2016, 6). Framing my question to Seth through "spirituality" does not mean much at all, as the term could mean any number of things. To that same end, "spiritual" was not used in ubiquity during camp, but the transcendental qualities of *mbira* music were common knowledge and anticipated by other camp participants. No musician in attendance would argue that the *mbira* does not provide a unique experience for its practitioners. In fact, just about every camp member started playing *mbira* because of a transcendental experience, one which, like a drug, made them want to keep repeating the experience. These experiences, however, take on different forms and enunciations.

[31] Trance states, also known as ecstasy or altered states of consciousness, are commonly tied to music and ethnomusicology has a long history engaging with the subject.

Definitions and expectations differ between practitioners. Some observe a closer connection to their body while they play. Some observe complete dissociation from their entire existence, an outside of the body experience. Some view intense emotional reaction as a sign of effective music, while some never seem to tear up. And most attribute some form of mental and spiritual expansion from having practiced the music, a growing within themselves since learning the instrument. The constant, though, is that each practitioner holds an experiential ideal and that experience is a given in their performance. In fact, this kind of "unified yet distinct" definition is also at work in Kerry Mitchell's work on spiritual experiences in National and State Parks, where spirituality "is characterized by individuality, fluidity, and incommunicability" (2016, 6). That is, spiritual experiences and their place in identity leave room for practitioners to formulate their own ideals without disrupting discourse within the larger community of similar practitioners. The "incommunicability," though, touches on the unfathomable nature of spiritual experience.

This is the "really real," the "objective reality of the numinous" (Orsi 2011, 92), the "reality of the unseen" (102), the undeniable truth that there is such a thing as "the holy" – understood through experiencing the great power of a force that is outside of the self that can influence the self. More often than not, the "holy," in the circumstance of the *mbira*, is the intense complexity caused by the rhythmic and melodic density of the music that force the players to hold onto as many threads as they can. This forces them outside of their mind, their consciousness, to a place where they can only rely on their muscle memory or else they would not be able to hold while they play. The music is a force. And the ability to access, harness, or project this energy is why and how *mbira* players wish to play the music.

The main room where we sat faced inward. The couches and supplemental chairs along the walls perfectly encircled the open space we have left for movement. CDs, instruments, Zimbabwean paraphernalia, historical texts, and sound systems line the bookshelves and tables around the room, spilling over into the rest of the home – a lifetime's material accumulation of a spiritual, emotional, and familial bond to the Shona. The couch underneath the big window, sitting on the reverse side of the porch, serves as our stage, facing the living room lengthwise. Stacked on the couch, sitting on cushions and the floor, flowing over onto the adjacent armchairs, we faced but didn't look at our audience. We sat, eyes closed, staring inward.

The aural kaleidoscope that is *mbira* music twisted and turned in the room, circling around, shifting our perspective as singing lines emphasized new portions of the song, showing us a different way to hear melodies with which we were so familiar. The overwhelming sound from four or five instruments loads our ears. Buzzing bottle caps lining the bottom of our soundboards and surrounding the rim of our gourd resonators crush all other sounds out of our world. Clapping and dancing accompanied our ringing melodies. Those experienced in the art did what they knew. Those inexperienced did what they could, adding in ways that mirrored the others' expression. The vocal lines seep out of us. We are aware of the translated meanings of our lyrics but the mystery behind the syllables adds to the ineffable experience. The words become less than their lexical value, growing evermore unfamiliar as anything definable while their meanings drip away. Their sounds remain as ancient utterance. All that matters is that the words mean something. What is the ineffable if not also unfathomable?

These songs, whether in this form or others, have been around for centuries. These same melodies, interweaving and interlocking, creating an impossible amount of threads upon which we can pull – just one way to comprehend the melodic blob that is Shona music – have been sung for as long as the Bantu moved through the African continent to what is now Zimbabwe. They were at one point vocal, at one point breath through hocketing reed pipes. We are a continuation of those ancient voices, voices which have spoken to us. They have revealed something within that we were not able to access before, they fill a gap we needed filled.

Something brought each of us here. Whether an itch, an intention, an adolescent's curiosity, or maybe a *shave*, something outside ourselves led us to this camp to meet together. And we shared. We shared stories and song and experience. We shared how we grew to know *mbira*. The gravitational quality of Shona music pulled us close and kept us in its orbit. We imparted tales, revealing the ways *mbira* swept us up, consumed our imagination. We each at one point became obsessed. Emotional revelations, accidental first performances, antique shop discoveries, and social gathering enticements number our entrances into this world. We were drawn here – to the keys, to the soundboard, to the gourd resonator, to an experience, to the body, to the spirits, outside of our minds, outside of ourselves. Into *mbira*.

Chapter 3: Practicing *Mbira*

In this chapter, I focus on the ideological differences emphasized by American *mbira* players between the "West" and the "Africa," as well as the ways the two worlds presented interact with one another to become spaces productive of new forms of experience. The Shona musical practice of *mbira* meets the "West" through globalization and the spiritual experiences inherent to said practice is made available for Westerners to consume. In doing so, the "Westerners" also reinforce the divisions they make; subsequently bolstering the border they attempt to move between. I also suggest that American *mbira* players attempt to approach this musical practice "authentically" because the practice is essential to the transcendental experience inherent to the music, just as the experience is essential to the practice.

Authenticity

I intend to focus on the authentic practice of playing *mbira*, not an assessment of whether or not these *mbira* players are playing accurately, but in the ways in which the practices and intentions of American *mbira* players may be considered genuine, characterized by constant and careful thought and consideration regarding how they approach the music and respect its tradition. It is in this way that I think these players attempt to be "authentic," in their motivation and devotion to studying and performing a traditional Shona musical aesthetic.

The group I was with in California was led by Erica Azim, an *mbira* music traditionalist in every way, who adheres strictly to traditional Shona aesthetics. She is a part of what a friend

of mine called the “Shona loyalist faction” (Seah, p.c.) of Zimbabwean music educators. She believes you must learn parts strictly and listen intently for many years to learn the Shona musical sensibility in order to become proficient at the instrument and improvise in the style (Azim 1999, 175). This pedagogical method is, to some degree, used in Zimbabwe as well (Berliner, 146). Many American players report that the music takes a very long time to develop a sensibility for, some even say that after seven years of study they are only just starting to understand it (Seah, p.c.). Nevertheless, these students persevere in order to adhere to the traditional rules of the music, allowing the spiritual qualities of the music to “hold their interest during the lengthy period required to learn to hear and improvise in a Shona way” (Azim 1999, 175).

Polyphony and polyrhythm characterize the music, as the compound meter is carefully dissected by the instruments’ players, dividing the four infinitely repeating phrases, each made up of three chords, into four more beats. Typically performed in duo or trios, the two parts of an *mbira* song are the *kushaura*, meaning “to lead” (i.e. whoever starts playing first), and the *kutsinhira*, or the interlocking part (i.e. anyone who begins playing after the *kushaura*) and is accompanied by *hosho*, a pair of gourd rattles used to define the pulse. The two *mbira* parts generally differ in rhythmic material – for example: *kushaura* playing duple meter, *kutsinhira* playing triple – or play very similar rhythms in close canon – *kushaura* playing in triple meter with the bass on the beat and *kutsinhira* playing the same or a similar pattern an eighth-note behind – but the right hands always end up creating a perfectly hocketed stream of alternating notes. The effect can be discombobulating and the resultant music is melodically dense. One of

my interlocutors described it as "a complete overload…like trying to hold on to an infinite number of threads."

In Zimbabwe, the instrument is used for sacred rituals and secular musicking. The name of the instrument, *mbira dzavadzimu*, translates directly to *mbira of the ancestors*.[32] The significance of this name is related to the use of this music in a ceremony called a *bira*. The ceremony is an all-night gathering with music, dancing, singing, and ceremonial beer. During a *bira*, *mbira* music induces trance and spirit mediums become possessed by ancestor spirits in order to give advice to and guide the living through their hardships. Not all sub-ethnic groups of the Shona use this type of mbira or any type of mbira. Some groups use vocal polyphony to induce trance. Others use drums. However, for those that use *mbira*, the instrument is inherently connected to the spirits and whenever it is played it is for them.[33] The practice of the instrument is directly linked to the affect the music produces.

There is a potential similarity found in affect that occurs in Shona musicians and the spirit mediums that undergo trance and possession and the affect experienced by American *mbira* players, as Judith Becker (2004) describes the similarities between those who experience trance and "deep listeners." Both are "predictably emotional and prone to numinous experiences" (45). Deep listeners are "persons who are profoundly moved, perhaps even to tears, by simply listening to a piece of music…[they experience] a kind of secular trancing, divorced from

[32] The attributing of this term to this specific type of *mbira* is sometimes contested by Zimbabweans as all types of mbira (e.g. Njari, dzavaNdau, Matepe, etc) are from the ancestors and play the ancestors' music. The instrument is sometimes referred to colloquially as *mbira huru* ("the big mbira") and *nhare* ("iron" or "telephone") to differentiate it from the other types.

[33] The instrument has also reached significant status as a symbol of the nation through traditional art rallies supporting Nationalism, internationally recognized World Music acts (Thomas Mapfumo), and introduction into the ethnomusicological canon. The instrument has become popular throughout Zimbabwe and not just its area of origin and so this perception of the instrument has traveled as well.

religious practice but often carrying religious sentiments such as feelings of transcendence or a sense of communion with a power beyond oneself" (2). I am therefore proposing that this affect is essential to mbira music. It should be noted that I am not proposing that there is a universal truth to the effects of *mbira* music; the interpretation of its effects is very heavily inflected by the social aspects of the experience and the way the narratives that surround the experience are constructed and circulated by their cultural and social contexts (Bender 2010). "The 'holy' is a construction; it is a made thing" (Orsi 2011, 98). But, as Deborah Kapchan has pointed out, it is impossible to pull apart affective and aesthetic strands from trance music (2007, 1). The aesthetics of traditional *mbira* music, the overloading of the ear drums and the mind but also the musical processes and techniques that make up these sounds, are directly related to the effect the music has on its performers. To pursue an authentic practice, in which one performs the appropriate aesthetic, means to pursue an authentic affect, and vice versa. With this in mind, I investigate the pursuit of a spiritual ideal by means of performing *mbira* music with a sense of genuineness, remaining loyal to a Shona musical ideal.

Reasoning for Genuineness

The desire to practice *mbira* is largely based on the "changes in 'state of being' induced by Shona mbira music" (Azim 1999, 175), part of a larger obsession with a search for "transcendental truth" found in the West (van der Veer 2009). Such truth has been enunciated by various scholars of religion via the experience of the Holy (Otto; Orsi 2011, 92), the objective reality of the numinous (Orsi, 92), and the "awe-inspiring mystery" of the Sacred (Eliade 1957, 9). In the presence of the Holy/numinous/Sacred, humans experience something "basically and

totally different…like nothing human or cosmic; confronted with it, man senses his profound nothingness… [the experience of the Sacred] is *irrational*" (Eliade, 10-11; emphasis in original). Spirituality, as opposed to institutionalized religion, acts on the West's desire for such an experiential ideal, one that cannot be provided by the West because of its focus on materiality (van der Veer 2009, 1109). Exploration of oriental forms of religious expression, among other things, offers an access point to a tradition centered on transcendental experiences. Such spiritual practices are characterized by "individuality, fluidity, and incommunicability" (Mitchell, 6), meaning that positions of spirituality are defined differently by practitioners, the differing definitions allow for open interpretation within the movement, and feelings of the sacred experience are largely viewed as ineffable.

Through global capitalism and globalization, proliferations of ideological options for cosmopolitan members of society are common when identities of choice are made available (Behague 2003). In mid-1980's Brazil, after democratic rule was reestablished and authoritarian control of the country was relinquished, trends in popular music, including Brazilian versions of reggae, funk, rock, and soul, resulted in a "diversity of ideologies and through them a plurality of social and ethnic identities" (89). The allowance of new forms of expression that spread globally led to the advent of new identities. "Consuming the other," or the act of appropriating from the globally marginalized, is enabled by a "construction of diversity and difference" which is "the democratization of consumption and not representation" (Naficy 1991, i). The power imbalances inherent to difference-making create opportunities for those fortunate enough to choose how they might express themselves to also choose how they would like to identify. Modern spirituality is such. Effectively, modernity is responsible for transnational flows that globalization has allowed

in order to provide Americans with choices in spiritual expression. “Spiritualty emerged as a sign of Western modernity” (van der Veer 2009, 1102). For some, this spiritual expression comes through the examination of the roots of an intensely traditional music. Westerners crave such “emotionally-galvanizing music” because of a lack of such experiences in their own culture (Kapchan 2007, 130) and their “distrust of material civilization” (van der Veer 2009, 1115). This sentiment is succinctly enunciated by the Zimbabwean *mbira* player Stella Chiweshe in the title track off her album *Through Mbira*:

> The materiality, of not only the Shona, in the 21st century has become a force that breaks away from the spirituality that has been the cornerstone for society. The last hundred years has been a rise in materiality to such an extent it has caused the individual to be more egotistical and ambitious for personal gain and immediate gratification. Casting aside the spirituality that has been handed down by parents to children. I have seen that this disintegration has been the downfall of communal spirituality… I've seen people lost without their traditions. Mental and physical diseases and disharmony I see in the society around me. People drinking perhaps too much. People watching TV perhaps too much. Diseases running through and obliterating mind and soul. This I don't exempt myself from. I've seen these things in my brothers and sisters; all their families swept up in this typhoon of change.

As Chiweshe continues in her speech, she names the *mbira* as an answer to this rampant materialism, an example of one such “emotionally-galvanizing music” that Kapchan claims Westerners desire.

Discourse of Differing Worlds

Distinctions between the ideals of the “West” and of the “non-West” were articulated constantly during my time in California. Indeed, the differing worlds discussed at the camp were referred to as Zimbabwe, or sometimes Africa more generally, and the West, or sometimes the US more specifically. Conversations were peppered with phrases like “Well, Africans are far too

complex for that kind of behavior," "That was as close to Zimbabwe as we've gotten this week," "In America there's no assumed community," "People in Zimbabwe are into the 'Western thing' or the 'traditional thing.'" Cultural difference was pointed out throughout the week, comparisons were frequently made between the two parts of the world, and attractive Zimbabwean cultural viewpoints were particularly emphasized. For example, there were several conversations surrounding female body image and differences between how Zimbabweans think women should have a rounder body type and how the Western ideal of skinny women in yoga pants is impractical and unrealistic.[34] The American *mbira* players whom I interacted with at the camp were quick to mark the cultural differences they understood to separate Zimbabwe from the West. They were cognizant of their position as Westerners and were self-critical about what that implies on a global, societal, and spiritual scale.

Such differences were even seen in the understanding of *mbira* music and its pedagogic possibilities. Speaking with Eugene, an *mbira* player from Colorado and a proxy for information in the larger *mbira* community network, he told me that he found that *mbira* players in the US would frequently draw a line between how Zimbabweans learn and how Americans learn. He explained that students at a learning session taught by Chartwell Dutiro complained about how Dutiro would not take things slowly and break down the different parts of the song he was teaching. Dutiro expected them to start playing, or at least attempting to, immediately. The students frustratingly commented to each other about how they learned differently than

[34] A story was told of a young, skinny female Zimbabwean mbira player who came to tour the US with Erica. The mbira player very much enjoyed a certain type of ice cream and when she returned to Zimbabwe her brother called Erica on the phone and asked "What did you do to my sister? She's beautiful!"

Zimbabweans and that Dutiro was not conforming to how they need to learn because that he was teaching them like Zimbabweans and not Americans.

I also noticed that drawing dividing lines was particularly prevalent in discussions of perceptions of music, specifically between African and Western understanding of music. During my first interaction with Eugene, after telling him I'm a classically trained percussionist, his first question was "What's it like to learn non-Western rhythms?" This struck me as odd because, as a contemporary percussionist, my understanding of rhythms, being able to interpret and analyze them on the fly, has never seemed to be impeded when learning non-Western musics, unless it is a particularly complex passage based on classical Indian rhythm. Syncopated rhythms in a 6/8 time signature, as is commonly found in *mbira* music, have never tripped me up. But *mbira* music, in its American context, is played up as something totally different from Western music, something particularly complex in its origins and musical processes, a common Western perception of African music (Agawu 1992). I am not arguing that *mbira* music is simple in any way; the sheer amount of ingenuity that goes into *mbira* songs is incredibly complex. The forever unfolding harmonic structures found in the traditional styles and the ways the dense polyphony works with intricate polyrhythms and non-obvious beat placement (to non-Shona) is truly intense. My point is that the complexity of *mbira* music is heavily emphasized in the American *mbira* community.

But this difference making also gives meaning to the people in the Western United States who choose to practice this music. Being able to access a complex music, with deep roots in a transcendental medium allows a lot of opportunity to explore a form of expression not found in

the West and all of its benefits. Seth Geddes, when commenting on creating new parts to *mbira* songs, said

> I think Western, or American, culture has a really anti-traditional sentiment, and very much like praise of innovation and "I'm better than people were and I can do better." And there's undoubtedly a truth to that. And people can really, really benefit from attempting to go into the roots of something, to really understand what it is before you change it.

One of the reasons Zimbabwean music is powerful to Seth is because it allows him an opportunity to step outside of the innovative necessity of the West, and allows him to step into the experiential world of *mbira* music.

For Eugene, Zimbabwean music has allowed him to experience something different than what he has found in the Westerns:

> To me, this music and all aspects of it are very kinesthetic…a lot of Westerners come to it and we start by learning the notes…there so much of playing it the point you can get past that mental part, past that judgement part, and just be in the music…To get better at this music, you have to connect to your body. I'm 100% sure that my brain has changed radically since I started playing. I feel more rhythmically connected in my body. And then as I got deeper in the music it would just be like a sensation of the pulse, like the Shona in my body, less mental. Studying this music has felt like recovering how to connect to my body.

Mbira music has the ability, for Eugene, to connect him to his body, an aspect of his life that has been foreign to him and it is only through *mbira* that he has been able to make this connection. There is something outside of Eugene's mode of being in the world that he must learn in order to engage with *mbira* music and the result of the practice is gaining this ability.

The Sacred and the Profane

To continue this experiential, spiritual approach to difference making, it is important to think about these worlds in relation to the Sacred or, as I have defined it as "the holy" earlier, the transcendental experiences that accompany *mbira* performance.[35] And thus, in the frame of difference making presented in the North American *mbira* community, "the first possible definition of the *sacred* is that it is *the opposite of the profane*" (Eliade 1957, 10; emphasis in original). Under these circumstances, the Sacred is Shona expressive culture and its affective influence on performers and the Profane (that is: the opposite of the Sacred) would be the rampant materialism and lack of experiential ecstasy mediated through music found in the West. I am defining these words based on the ideological differences expressed in the North American community, where Shona music is indicative of something sensual, ethereal, and ancient while the "West" is indicative of materialism, innovation, and modernity. American *mbira* players are aware of this schism and frequently compare themselves, their practices, and their experiences to that of Zimbabweans. And since this music is a spiritual *practice* one can surmise that there are certain behaviors and actions that must be followed in order to appropriately, and authentically, access these experiences.

The original, sacred purpose of the music and the power behind the ancient songs lies in their connection to the ancestors (Azim, personal communication) and deviations from traditional Shona music should be noted strictly as deviations, not carried on as perpetuations of the tradition. For example, as relayed to me by Eugene Seah, Musekiwa Chingodza has been critical about naming new marimba compositions after the traditional *mbira* songs they are inspired by. He says naming a song "Bangidza" when it is not actually *bangidza* is not respecting

[35] Defined as such, "Sacred" is equated with "the holy" and differentiates itself from "sacred," or those things which are tied to religion.

the sacred qualities of the original composition. This does not mean that you cannot improvise within the style and create arrangements, but "you've got to learn the rules to break the rules," otherwise you're "diluting the sacred" (Seah, personal communication). This is one example of how this "loyalist faction" of *mbira* players operates. They wish to respect the tradition as it has been presented to them, as the affect of *mbira* music is tied to the genuine, authentic practice (Geddes; Seah, personal communication).

Border and Bridge

How, then, may one traverse the distance between the Sacred and the Profane, the sensual and the industrious? With such discourse of difference and stark contrast between cultural ideologies, American *mbira* players rhetorically establish a border between themselves and Zimbabweans, an epistemological divide "set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*…a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge" (Anzaldua 1987, 3). In other words, American *mbira* players separate that which is safe being the Sacred and unsafe being the Profane.[36]

Originating in literature on cultural formations in the area between the United States and Mexico, especially in the work of Chicana, lesbian scholar Gloria Anzaldua, border theory explores the ways that marginalized people on the US-Mexico border find new, creative identities in the liminality of the divided landscape. In the border, hegemony defines what is valid and invalid, "safe and unsafe." Within the border live "the prohibited and forbidden…the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the

[36] This view of the border is in contrast to the one typically presented in border theory, as the hegemonic West in this case is seen as that which is the unsafe. Traditional Zimbabwean beliefs, however, may be seen as spiritually hegemonic.

half dead…the only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power" (Anzaldua, 3). The border is "the last street in Latin America/the line that marks us from outside/the limit between stone and village…a site of conquest and imperialism saturated with the historical residue of both the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Persian Gulf War" (Kun 2000, 1-2). My border is not the same as this border. It is not as politically charged nor nearly as dangerous as the physical and ideological separation at the border between the US and Mexico, but some of these dynamics of the border persist.

There is clearly no physical, geographical border between the Zimbabwe and US, or the Sacred and the Profane, and the worlds being accessed and explored are largely ideological. The materiality of the West is confronted with the spirituality of the Shona. It is important to look to a physical object, a reification of spiritual experience with which people can interact, which works to clear an ideological boundary. The *mbira*, as a foreign object, acts as a reminder that these players are not Zimbabwean and in the knowledge that the spiritual ideal Americans must live up to is that of Zimbabweans. It naturally denotes division. Continual articulations of difference are made as "Westerners" are separated from "Zimbabweans." The conceptual threshold over which Americans can cross also keeps them aware of their distance and difference from Zimbabwe.

In this space, where the two worlds meet, exists a borderland, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (Anzaldua, 3), a site of "cultural collision" (78). Because of the contestation of the boundary between the US and Mexico, identities are in constant flux, one "constantly has to shift out of habitual formation; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use

rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (79). The border is "where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture" (3).[37] In this new landscape, a cultural text which "challenges division and separation provides a glimpse of a region infused with new understandings of nationality (or nonnationality), gender, and identity in which subjects are not forced to choose between sexualities, languages, or political geographies in order to live in the world" (Castronovo 1997, 196). This third country is a "hybrid land… [to] carve out spaces laden with possibilities of liberation…[where] it may be possible to 'explod[e]…dominant culture'" (198-199).

In the way that the border reinforces difference established by a hegemonic power (Castronovo 1997), so too does it offer opportunities in overcoming a dominant culture. Performing *mbira* is a way to overcome dominant culture. The practice of *mbira* is in many ways the antithesis to conceptions of Western thought and experience. The opportunities to dive "into the roots of something" instead of praising innovation, the ability to access kinesthetic forms of experience, and transcendental feelings of peace and comfort are all qualities of *mbira* music that resonate with perceptions of African cultural expression; expression which is commonly and emphatically shown as unapologetically non-Western by Western scholars (Agawu 1992; Ebron

[37] Giving direct examples of this process in Anzaldua's work can be difficult because of the floridity of her auto-ethnography. In it she poetically details the way she, a homosexual immigrant woman of color, has faced stark, oppressive binaries in the US that make her question and struggle with her identity. The ambiguity in the "unnatural boundaries" established by Western hegemony, however, actually allows for empowerment and fluid identity creation because of the illegitimacy of those boundaries.

2002). Practitioners note that *mbira* has helped them reconnect with their bodies (Seah), have spiritual and mental experiences they never thought possible (Geddes), heal (Sharf), and connect with their inner-selves (Drucker).

The *mbira* is not a hard instrument to learn to play, as it requires very little technical prowess and, as Erica Azim states, "even beginning mbira students are often able to experience spiritual states" (1997). Americans can very easily access the productive qualities of the Sacred by playing the correct musical parts together and adhering to the rules of the aesthetic, until one can "learn to hear and improvise in a Shona way" (1997). *Mbira*, the instrument, is at the site which separates Americans from Zimbabweans but also serves as a space for these negotiations of ideological and spiritual identity. By existing as a cultural, spiritual artifact from a foreign land, the *mbira* gives US players an opportunity to cross the border, but acknowledgement of Zimbabwean authority keeps Americans from controlling the border. Especially when the weight of Western society is overbearing, American *mbira* players turn to the instrument for solace. When the news on the car radio is too stressful, one can change to the *mbira* CD in their stereo, an instantly calming the listener (Sharf). After a day of spreadsheets and numbers and marketing and finance, the *mbira* can offer a step away from the capitalist slog that is intrinsic to American culture (Geddes). In the bleeding wound where the two sides of the border meet, lies the opportunity to find transcendence and escape the West. But if not for the exchange of goods and ideas through transnational relationships found in global capitalism, this form of expression, and resistance to materialism would have no existence in the United States.

Participation in these spiritual forms of expression act as "a discursive strategy capable of deconstructing ossified structures like patriarchy or the nation" (Castronovo 1997, 196) to

establish the “apparently universal effect of Shona mbira music” (Azim 1999, 175) as a “transcendental truth” (van der Veer 2009). But this discursive act also allows us to “suggest that the border involves more than tactics that undermine the inviolate sovereignty of the nation, for negotiations along the border also have the unintended counterpurpose of solidifying and extending racial and national boundaries” (Castronovo 1997, 196) or, in our case, ideological boundaries. In claiming these new forms of identity and practicing these new modes of expression deemed transcendental (of both the border and the “spirit”), American *mbira* players are continuing to reinforce the binaries established in the Western imagination of “European knowledge and African wisdom” (Agawu 1992, 261). That is, the vernacularly held belief that Africa is a place of sensuousness and exotic and erotic pleasure while the modality of Western experience is based on reasoning, logic, and Enlightenment thinking is reinforced in *mbira* practice. The newfound connection to the body (Seah), the connection to an ancient, timeless source (Olson), and the extreme emotions reactions (Drucker) while hearing and playing the music function as escapes from Western materialistic and capitalistic imperialism.

Simultaneously, rhetorical difference making backed by socially articulated subjective, but no less real, experience works as “cultural texts” that circulate the *mbira* community which continue to play into “the insistence on an African epistemology [which is] distinct from European epistemology” (Agawu 1992, 260). This is especially true when it is explained as regrettable that most Zimbabweans have lost their traditions and instead incorporate “Western” cultural and commercial practices into their everyday lives (Azim; Drucker), favoring a kind of “one way mirror” of cultural practices.

Genuine Guidance

The divide, sometimes explained as "visiting" the culture (Geddes; Seah), is still viewed as crossable by the *mbira* community. In order to safely navigate the *mbira* bridge and cross from the Profane to the Sacred, American *mbira* players require a guide. The road to spiritual experience is fickle and playing inappropriately can force an *mbira* player off the road. Not only can inappropriate playing take someone out of the experience and out of the "trance" (Geddes), but changing traditional material does not yield the same experiential result (Geddes, Seah), and can indeed alter the sacredness of the music (Seah; Azim). The appropriate guide for an American navigating the space between the Profane and the Sacred through *mbira* is authenticity. Authentic practice requires that *mbira* players stay close to the Zimbabwean source, interpreting the teachings of Zimbabweans characterized by constant and careful thought and consideration regarding how they approach the music and respect its tradition for the sake of mirroring the experience of Zimbabweans. But spirituality is characterized by fluidity (Mitchell), and so interpretations differ between *mbira* players, allowing for variation within authenticity. I wish to explore how and what *mbira* players in the US consider being authentic and the choices they make, like material resources and adherence to Zimbabwean, style in order to appropriately navigate the border between the Sacred and the Profane. What are the musical values that American *mbira* players feel are important when approaching the instrument and how do they stay close to source?

Materiality of Genuine *Mbira*

The first aspect of authenticity I would like to examine is commerce and materiality. Erica Azim's organization, MBIRA, sells all things mbira – instruments, recordings, instructional DVDs, lessons, instrumental accessories, etc. The money from these products goes

back to Zimbabwe – money from the CDs to the musicians, the money from the instruments to the makers. By supporting MBIRA (and *mbira* more generally), US players are actively supporting their favorite Zimbabwean teachers, instrument makers, and performers, supporting the institution of *mbira*. Azim is persistent about pushing her brand, encouraging people to buy new CDs, or an educational DVD, or even a new instrument, and persistent about keeping a consistent brand – authentic Zimbabwe. All of Azim's instruments and recordings come directly from Zimbabwe and she discourages anything that comes from elsewhere. Ginny, one of the other campers, mentioned an *mbira* she had purchased recently that had a guitar pick-up built into it for amplified playing. Azim made the comment "Hey, as long as it's made by a Zimbabwean," to which a few uncomfortable eye movements were made back and forth between Ginny and Azim. Ginny did not buy the instrument from a Zimbabwean. A "non-traditional" construction of an instrument is fine with Azim, as long as the money goes back to the people from whom the tradition came. There is a certain amount of validity and authenticity that comes from an instrument that is made by a professional from the country of origin.

Certain players also demonstrate authenticity by showing commitment and devotion to the cause of MBIRA by continually supporting the organization. Azim informed me of a monthly recording subscription that sends out new CDs, rare recordings, and unreleased material from the archive every month. Supporters who have been on the mailing list for years have more recordings than they could ever need but still keep the subscription in order to support the organization, to support Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean music, almost as a tithe. This shows a small amount of the major devotion to the MBIRA organization (and again by proxy, the instrument itself) by US *mbira* players. One person I met only has *mbira* music on his mp3 player and does

not listen to any other music (Geddes). Another told me that once he started *mbira*, he stopped playing all other instruments (Seah). US *mbira* players willingly and readily devote themselves to the art of *mbira*. This is a genuine act, defined by its careful consideration and the clear demonstration of respect for the original culture. This is a music, and a way of life, that is enough for these musicians. It fulfills them in all the ways they need.

Genuine Precision

I want to also look at the rules which US *mbira* players have to maintain to be authentic. A lot of this is set up by Azim, as she is the teacher and main disseminator of knowledge, the patroller of the border. Azim is an authoritarian traditionalist, part of a "loyalist faction" of *mbira* players in the American community. Some Zimbabweans have expressed that respecting the songs is important for respecting the sacredness of the music (Seah, p.c.). To this end, after each teaching session Azim examines the notes she taught to quickly iron out any pitches or rhythms which may have been misunderstood or misconstrued. In fact, during one of my first lessons with her where she was re-teaching me something I learned on my own, I kept reverting back to a melody I had previously learned. While the melody I was playing was not necessarily "wrong," Azim very adamantly corrected me saying "you really need to play the notes I taught you." Similarly, Seth Geddes, since learning *mbira*, has been an avid improviser. In the beginning of his education Azim would frequently and adamantly tell him when he played something wrong or inappropriate. As he has grown in his knowledge of the style, Seth now "passes the smell test," improvising effectively in the way that a Zimbabwe would (Geddes).

Similarly, when Azim teaches vocal melodies to sing along with *mbira* music, she first goes over the pronunciation and meaning of every Shona word to make sure we know how it

should sound and what it means. In the middle of singing together, Azim will turn to someone with incorrect pronunciation and say, for example, "you're not enunciating all three R's in this word," keeping us close to source on the language we use when we play the music, even if we do end up mumbling the text or turning the words into vocables.

By ensuring that no wrong notes or melodies are learned or played, Azim is controlling the output of traditional Zimbabwean music in the United States and making sure the music stays sacred. As we students go out into the world to play the traditional music of Zimbabwe, we are playing the same songs, in similar styles, to the way they have been played for a century.[38] Precision is also an important part of *mbira* playing and players in Zimbabwe are frequently judged by their accuracy in playing (Berliner, 120). And not only is it important for the sake of interpersonal dynamics, playing consistently and correctly is important in Shona religious ceremonies and is essential for bring about possession (Berliner, 235; Chartwell Dutiro, p.c.).

This understanding of authenticity in knowing the correct parts, melodies, and pronunciations also comes with caveats. In the learning process, especially when a beginning student, Azim allows no variation from the things she has taught. However, she has openly admitted that she will make up parts to play with Zimbabwean *mbira* players, something it would be unheard of for us to attempt. Azim recorded a version of a song we learned at camp with a Zimbabwean named Samaita Botsa. Azim changed her part, by leaving out one of her hands, to clear up the accompaniment for the more interesting part being played by Botsa. Similarly, in

[38] This is the understanding of the songs as explained to me while I was interacting with campers in California. The "ancientness" of the songs is enduring and connects generations. It should also be noted, though, that some songs go out of style and repertoire changes. Famed mbira player and spirit medium Forward Kwenda sometimes becomes possessed while he plays and beginnings performing ancient songs, ones that have, as reported by elders, not been heard for generations.

another recording with Fradreck Mujuru, Mujuru played a fantastically intricate part and Azim, to accompany it, made up a part that would highlight the intricacies of Mujuru's instrumental vigor. Azim takes creative liberty to construct and make changes to *mbira* parts. However, just like Azim supports only instruments made by Zimbabweans, so too does she only support parts played and taught by Zimbabweans.

Genuine Changes

Azim would not view such attempts by her students to create new parts as appropriate, especially by beginning players. Depending on the level, talent, and skill of other US players, concessions can be made. Two veteran *mbira* players, Seth and Ian, came to the "Mbira Party" at the end of our camp. These two veterans, although not attendants of the camp, were well steeped in *mbira* repertoire and had many years of playing under their belts. The two musicians enjoy taking liberties in their playing. They are much more musically "loose" when they play and rely relatively heavily on an improvisational style of playing and singing. Sometimes it seems like they are forcefully emoting while playing. While this might seem taboo in the US *mbira* community, Seth and Ian's motives are validated by the words of Zimbabwean musicians. As Seth related to me, a Zimbabwean *mbira* player his bandmates were talking to them and discussing *mbira* music at Zimfest a few years ago. Their Zimbabwean compatriots told them that they should allow themselves to be more experimental with their playing. The Shona musicians encouraged Seth and Ian to "let loose" and allow themselves to really get into the music. Although this exploratory nature of playing and might be scarce in the US, it is justified to these two Americans because a Zimbabwean, a bearer of the original culture, a representative from the other side of the border, relayed to them that they were allowed to do so.

Carmen, the resident chef at our camp, was able to operate similarly to Seth and Ian's experimentation in *mbira* playing, but found justification differently. Carmen is a person well-versed in many things – she works as a sign language interpreter, is the coordinator of a monthly pun competition, has a drawing and illustration career, and is an active musician, playing *mbira* but also dabbling in other folk instruments (mostly of the American variety). Being such a diversely influenced person with many connections, Carmen has friends who have wanted to experiment musically with her *mbira*. Specifically, they want to experiment with electronics and sound processing. The ancient status of the instrument and her music make her hesitant. She does not want to disrespect the music and its centuries old tradition. One of the connections Carmen feels to the *mbira* and one of the reasons she finds it special is because the songs that we are playing now are understood to be the same songs that Zimbabweans have been playing since before there were *mbiras,* back when the songs were played on pan pipes or sung in choirs (a practice still found in certain sub-ethnic groups of the Shona). The sacred and religious quality of the music is a very serious hurdle for Carmen. Playing *mbira* and amplifying and distorting the sound, looping it through programs and guitar pedals, is not an authentic use of the instrument and does not show deep respect and admiration for the traditional songs that have been passed down for generations. However, *mbira* songs are also played secularly; they are not all religious all the time. With the realization and understanding that Zimbabweans play the music secularly, Carmen validates a desire and a means to experiment with the *mbira* and make new sounds from it. But it should be noted that this validation comes from original practices and the fact that Zimbabweans did it first. Americans must field their questions of authenticity through Zimbabwean practice to assure themselves that they do not stray too far off the path.

Relative newcomer to *mbira* (and music more general), Lucas, a fourteen year old aspiring physicist who attended the camp, also questioned using loop pedals in his practice. His reasoning came from a slightly different direction. Lucas did not want to use a loop pedal because it would keep his tempo consistent instead of allowing him to speed up, as would happen in live performance. At the time of the camp, Lucas had very poor tempo control and would accelerate to a break neck speed in a very short amount of time. On the last day of camp we praised him for starting and keeping the tempo of a song too slow.

Just as traditionalist Zimbabweans consult the ancestor spirits when approaching new situations and ask their permission to use *mbira* in non-traditional ways (Turino 2000, 38-41), so too do American *mbira* players look to Zimbabweans for affirmation of their musical practices.

Some players even readjust their approach to the music when they realize they are going too far from the source. Seth has described himself as an analytical thinker and this aspect of his personality comes through in his playing of the *mbira*. Having a consistent jam session with a guitar player, Seth has acquainted himself with the chord structures and progressions of all the major *mbira* songs. It has helped him make sense of new songs that he learns and helps break them down to learn them more quickly. However, Seth also resists this type of thought, as it is not a traditional way of thinking about the music. He actively admits that he tries to not think about *mbira* music in terms of chord structure and analytically breaking down the music because that is not how it is done in Zimbabwe and he thinks it takes something away from the music and the experience of it all.

Seth even finds a means to operate inside of a highly contested topic in Zimbabwean music – notation. Erica is famously against it, but others, especially academics, have made

particular use of notation as a tool for analysis (Agawu 2016). However, even outside the academic need for ethnomusicologists to analyze music, *mbira* players have made a habit of creating and using tablature as a means of learning *mbira*. Famous *mbira* performer and pedagogue Chartwell Dutiro uses notation and frequently encourages his students to do so as well (Williams 2001, 3). English *mbira* advocate Andy Fowler wrote a book (2015) recently that not only provides informative tablature of *mbira* songs, but also teaches students the chord progressions that Seth has also explored. B. Michael Williams created a tab book called *Mbira: A Beginning…* (2001) that tackles beginning songs and concepts. There have even been Zimbabwean mbirists who have attempted to create a written method for teaching *mbira* (Nembire 2000). For however contested tablature is, it is also highly used and useful. Leonard Chiyanike, as reported by Seth, has a dense collection of tablature of the different songs, styles, and variations that he knows. This is how Seth justifies learning from tabs, because Chiyanike, a highly respected musician and instrument maker from Zimbabwe, and personal favorite player of Seth's, also uses tabs.

US *mbira* players have thoughts on authenticity and playing authentically to which they choose to adhere. *Mbira* offers a special opportunity to find new means of expression, communication, community, and identity for Americans. These new discoveries, however, depend upon them playing the part. The rules have been set for them by Zimbabweans and new rules are allowed into play only when they have been set by Zimbabweans. And, as Americans concede that it is not they who set the rules but others, they also differentiate themselves from the authorities on *mbira*. While they find new, operative means of creative expression in the borderlands, allowing themselves to acquire access to the Sacred.

In Conclusion

American *mbira* players are a social movement centered on spirituality. Such movements are reflective of the West's rampant focus on materialism and consumption and members of the Western population who yearn for something more than they are given by society. As a result, they look to the Africa to fulfill those desires. A gap must be cleared for Westerners to be able to access the Sacred, that which can fill their spiritual void. For some Americans on the West Coast, *mbira dzavadzimu* acts as a bridge from the Profane to the Sacred. By utilizing the rural practices of a Southern African people, US *mbira* players are granted access by close study and careful examination of musical expression of the Shona. Their actions are guided by authenticity, defined and interpreted in multiple ways, to assure themselves that the result of their playing will be as Sacred as possible.

Outroduction

I flew through Las Vegas on my way to Berkeley for the *mbira* camp. It was my first time seeing the city in any capacity, and it confused me. Maybe it was just my overworking mind, nervous as I moved hundreds of miles an hour through the air on my way to insert myself in a community to which I was still new. I was baffled by the existence of the city but I welcomed the distraction as my mind wandered and wondered. Why is it there? The nation's capital party city, its preeminent kingdom of debauchery, is surrounded by nothing but dirt and dust and dry. At least San Francisco has a bay. The coastline there is beautiful but going inland fifteen miles will put you back with the dirt. Las Vegas has no bay. It is flat earth surrounded by nothing. Why, how, did it grow here? It had to have been made. It must be unnatural.

But the streets aren't grids. They wind and pivot and turn and curve to create cul-de-sacs and suburbs, neighborhoods in the desert. With the all-encompassing nothing surrounding it, one would assume straight lines, a more efficient use of empty space, as if the neighborhoods were designed by Piet Mondrian. But does gridding imply thoughtfulness, intention? Does it imply organicism; does it imply home, humanity? What are our perceptions of what should be authentic? Is the desert, the city, or the suburban the real Las Vegas? Outside of the strip, neighborhoods cut through the landscape like cars through cornfields. Residential appendages emerge from the city blocks, jabbing the desert. Curved streets turn into webs of suburban life. Life is imprinted onto the dead earth. Is this design or divine?

We fly out of the airport and the cityscape is gone, trickling to a stop in a matter of minutes. We've hit the mountains; the landscape is sparse, filled with arid earth and plateauing peaks. Sleeping river beds lay still, like lanky sunbathing men. The harsh terrain contrasts the verdant development in Las Vegas, where trees, bushes, and lawns of grass litter the desert: another sign that the city doesn't belong. But passing over the precipices, the mountains look fake too. The muted beauties don't seem real, gazing at them as I fly through the air, an unbelievable reality unfolding in these moments. This sight is impossible. This isn't how we are supposed to view the land; we, humans, were never intended to see the world from this angle but we push, we cross, we do things we're not meant to. Even the way of perceiving this peculiar positionality is problemed. What does it mean to be human, to have access to these views; which are we allowed to claim? Is there any one reality that belongs to us individually? As I pass over the world, I realize that this sight, this reality, is not real, is unnatural. The city has just as much claim over being there as the mountains, just as I have every right to claim this view from above. People are real, we move, we put things places.

The ground below is sweltering and unending. Miles above, I am comfortable and cool, sipping my complimentary soda, crunching my provided peanuts. The Indian man next to me sits sleeping with his head on the oversized chest that provides a natural pillow. What's allowed to be here? What is possible or impossible? The ground has every right to push itself up to create the unnatural view I experience here. What does it mean if the city, that which is human, flawed, pushed itself up too?

Lingering Authenticity

> "Which of my so-called lived experiences deserve the status of authenticity?...Better put, Which of these do you *desire* to stand in for this thing we call 'South Arica'?" (McCutcheon 2001, 237-238)

Throughout this paper, sometimes more intentionally than others, I use the word "authentic." More specifically, I employ the term to describe the practices of American *mbira* players as "genuine" as a means of accessing and embracing a particular affect, but I also use "authentic" in relation to spiritual experiences and the legitimization of such experiences. It is on this word that I would like to close, contemplating some of its implications.

The negotiations of the "West" and "non-West" in the North American Zimbabwean music community reflect a desire to articulate what they want "authentic Zimbabwe" to be: the "natural" or "traditional" Zimbabwe, one unaffected by Western influence. This "authentic" Zimbabwe is full of spirits and transcendence and community. It is separated from the city; the urban and rural dichotomy is stark (a view substantiated by some Zimbabweans themselves; see Turino 2000). But as a friend of mine who traveled to Zimbabwe to study *mbira* a few years before we met told me, the village and the city in Africa are not as separate as Americans think it is (Seah, p.c.). After he returned to Boulder, Colorado where he was living and working at the time, he gave a presentation to his local Zimbabwean marimba school in the area. He told me the first thing he put on his PowerPoint was a picture of the Harare cityscape. He wanted to make sure his local community knew that the divisions they believe to be true might not be, at least not in grandiose ways. He also told me stories about how Fradreck Mujuru, a very well-known *mbira* maker and player, plays genres other than traditional *mbira* music (specifically "mbira

blues") and showed me videos of young Zimbabweans singing R&B songs that they play on *mbira*. Would one of these be considered "inauthentic" forms of Shona expression?[39]

Furthermore, the *nyunganyunga* type of mbira is becoming more and more popular in Zimbabwe and it might soon spread to the United States. In a conversation I had with Claire Jones about the history of *mbira dzavadzimu* in the US and how it started becoming popular in marimba communities, she explained the instrument's notoriety really took off when visiting Zimbabweans started bringing and teaching *mbira dzavadzimu*. The way she sees it, Americans in the community are heavily influenced by the actions and practices of visiting musicians and trends in the North American community follow the flow of practices brought to the US by Zimbabweans.[40] As such, Jones relayed to me that for this upcoming Zimfest, she had an unprecedented number of Zimbabwean applicants who wanted to play and teach the *nyunganyunga* mbira. She is fairly certain that this will greatly increase the number of people interested in playing this particular species of instrument. But, as this is the instrument that was brought to Zimbabwe through Kwanongoma College, the *nyunganyunga* is unassociated with spirit possession. What will this do to assumptions about Shona music's inherent spirituality among members of the North American Zimbabwean music community? Will this instrument be seen as spiritual *because* it is an mbira, on which traditional songs can be played, with the perceived extra-musical ties to religious experience that resound with them? (Claire Jones does

[39] It should be noted that while Mujuru does play more than just traditional music, Eugene made sure I knew that Mujuru greatly prefers traditional music.

[40] Assumptions about Zimbabwean music and spirituality have always been closely linked in the US, since Dumisani Maraire began teaching at University of Washington in the 1960s. There, while mostly teaching marimba, Maraire always pointed to the *mbira* as the source of Shona spirituality (Epps and Epps 2012; Vradenburgh 2008). The spread of the instrument in the US and increased transnational flow of musicians has only meant this more so.

not think so.) Will the instrument, because of its close ties to contemporary music in Zimbabwe, change Americans' perspective on Zimbabwe? Will the ideal of an "authentic" Zimbabwe shift?

It will be interesting to see how the perceptions of "Shona spirituality" change over time. But it is also important to keep an eye on trends within modern spirituality, as the *mbira* project is a part of this larger movement. This study has examined the place, experience, and understanding of *mbira* performance within the frame of Western spiritual movements. It could greatly benefit from more attention to how American *mbira* players situate themselves within more general spiritual practices and not just with *mbira* specifically. In what ways does *mbira* inspire spirituality? In what ways is *mbira* pivotal and central in North American spiritual beliefs and in what ways is *mbira* supplemental?

While these are the ways Zimbabweans have influences Americans, it would also be important to see the ways that these American practices have influenced the musicianship of Zimbabweans. I know, in particular, that Erica Azim has directly influenced the musicianship of Zimbabweans like Leonard Chiyanike and Patience Munjeri. Chiyanike did not sing until Azim encouraged him to start. In doing so, he was able market himself more, allowing him to teach Americans in ways they wanted and expected. Singing is an integral part of Zimbabwean music performance in the US and something Americans actively seek out in instruction. Munjeri did not play *kutsinhira* until Azim encouraged her to do so, for similar reasons to Chiyanike.

The flux and flow of music and musicians between Southern Africa and the Western United States has created a complex phenomenon. The influence between the two areas has created a continually shifting and musical landscape. It remains to be seen how these changes

will ultimately influence the cultural worlds of Zimbabwe and the communities on the West Coast. For the time being, however, the two move forward together, mixing and interweaving, responding to each other as the parts progress, repeating ad infinitum, just like an *mbira* song.

References

"A World in Trance 2017." A World in Trance 2017. http://aworldintrance.com/2017/index.html.

Agawu, Kofi. 1992. "Representing African Music." *Critical Inquiry* 18(2): 245-266.

_____. 2016. *The African Imagination in Music*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Anzaldua, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Azim, Erica. 1999. "On Teaching Americans to Play Mbira like Zimbabweans." *Journal of International Library of African Music* 7(4): 175-180.

Becker, Judith. 2004. *Deep Listening: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Behague, Gerard. 2006. "Rap, Reggae, Rock, or Samba: The Local and the Global in Brazilian Popular Music (1985-95)." *Latin American Music Review* 27(1): 79-90.

Bender, Courtney. 2010. *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bender, Courtney and Omar McRoberts. 2012. "Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality." *SSRC Working Papers*. Online: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Why-and-How-to-Study-Spirtuality.pdf.

Berliner, Paul. 1993. *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourdillon, Michael. 1987. *The Shona Peoples*. Gweru: The Mambo Press.

Bryant, Rebecca. 2005. "The Soul Danced into the Body: Nation and Improvisation in Istanbul." *American Ethnologist* 32(2): 222-238.

Capp, Myrna. 2008. *Keeping the Embers Alive: Musicians of Zimbabwe*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.

Castronovo, Russ. 1997. "Compromised Narratives along the Border: The Mason-Dixon Line, Resistance and Hegemony." In *Border Theory*, edited by Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson, 195-220. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Chiweshe, Stella. 2009. *Through Mbira*. Anhrefn Records.

Cox. 2007. “The Adaptive Nature of Indigenous Religions in Zimbabwe.” in *From Primitive to Indigenous*: 119-141.

Ebron, Paulla. 2002. *Performing Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Epps, Doug, and Laurel Epps. 2012. *Soul Resonance: A Cross-Cultural Celebration of Zimbabwean Music.* DVD. Sacred Path Explorations LCC.

Eyre, Banning. 2015. *Lion Songs: Thomas Mapfumo and the Music that Made Zimbabwe*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Fowler, Andy. 2015. *Unlocking Mbira: Chord Progression Workbook.* http://www.mbiramagic.com/news/unlocking-mbira-book.

Fry, Peter. 1976. *Spirits of Protest: Spirit-mediums and the Articulation of Consensus among the Zezuru of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gelfand, Michael. 1962. *Shona Religion: With Special Reference to the Makorekore*. Cape Town: Juta & Company.

Grupe, Gerd. 2004. *Die Kunst des mbira-Spiels*. Tutzing: Hans Schneider.

Jones, Claire. 2008. “Shona Women *Mbira* Players: Gender, Tradition and Nation in Zimbabwe.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17(1): 125-149.

_____. 2006. “From Schoolboy Stuff to Professional Musicianship: The Modern Tradition of the Zimbabwean Marimbas.” PhD diss., University of Washington.

_____. 1992. *Making Music: Musical Instruments of Zimbabwe Past and Present*. Oxford: Baobab Books.

_____. “If You Can Walk, You Can Dance; If You Can Talk, You Can Sing”: The North American Tradition of Zimbabwean Music.” Paper presented at the NW Regional Chapter Meeting of the Society of Ethnomusicology, Olympia, WA, February 1999.

_____. "*Kutambarara* (Shona: 'Spreading'): Dumisani Maraire, His Music and Legacy." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Honolulu, HI, November 2006.

Kapchan, Deborah. 2007. *Traveling Spirit Masters*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Kun, Josh. 2000. "The Aural Border." *Theater Journal* 52(1): 1-21.

Kyker, Jennifer. 2016a. *Oliver Mtukudzi*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.

_____. 2016b. "Reassessing the Zimbabwean *Chipendani*." *Journal of International Library of African Music* 10(2): 140-166.

_____. 2009. "Carrying Spirit in Song: Music and the Making of Ancestors at *Zezuru Kurova Guva* Ceremonies." *African Music* 8(3): 65-84.

Lan, David. 1985. *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe.* London: James Currey.

Matiure, Perminus. 2009. "The Relationship Between *Mbira Dzavadzimu* Modes and Zezuru Ancestral Spirit Possession." MA thesis, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

_____. 2013. "Archiving the Cultural Legacy of *Mbira Dzavadzimu* in the Context of Kuriva Guva and Dandaro Practices." PhD diss, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

_____. 2011. "*Mbira Dzavadzimu* and its space within the Shona Cosmology: Tracing *Mbira* from *Bira* to the Spiritual World." *Muziki* 8(2): 29-49.

Matiure, Sheasby. 2008. "Performing Zimbabwean Music in North America: An Ethnography of Mbira and Marimba Performance in the United State." PhD diss. Indiana University.

Matsuhira, Yuji. 2013. "Rain Making Ceremony in the Nyandoro Region, Zimbabwe." *African Religious Dynamics* 1:165-182.

"Mbira.org – Shona Mbira Music of Zimbabwe." MBIRA. http://mbira.org/.

McCutcheon, Russell. 2001. "The Jargon of Authenticity and the Study of Religion." *Religion & Theology* 8(3-4): 229-252.

Mitchell, Kerry. 2016. *Spirituality and the State*. New York: NYU Press.

Moon, Jocelyn. 2016. "Uploading Matepe: Online Learning, Sustainability and Repatriation in Northeastern Zimbabwe." *Collegium* 21: 190-209

Moon, Jocelyn. Yelloweaver. https://yelloweaver.com/.

Muparutsa, Tendai. 2013. “Transformations in Zimbabwean Traditional Music of North America.” PhD diss., University of Alberta.

Naficy, Hamid and Teshome Gabriel. 1993. “Introduction – Consuming the Other.” in *Otherness and the Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*. Edited by Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel, pp. ix-xi

Nembire, Katonje Judah. 2000. *How to Play Zimbabwe’s Mbira Huru Using a Very Simple Number Method and a Companion Record*. Harare: Zimbabwe Mbira Music Distance Education Project.

Orsi, Robert. 2011. “The Problem of the Holy.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, edited by Robert A. Orsi, 84–106. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perman, Anthony. 2008. “History, Ethics, and Emotion in Ndau Performance in Zimbabwe: Local Theoretical Knowledge and Ethnomusicological Perspectives.” PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

_____. 2015. “A Tale of Two Mbiras.” *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 10(1): 102-125.

_____. 2012. “Sungura in Zimbabwe and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 21(3): 374-401.

Ranger, Terrence. 1982. “The Death of Chaminuka: Spirit Mediums, Nationalism, and the War in Zimbabwe.” *African Affairs* 81(324): 349-69

Scharfenberger, Angela. 2017. “‘The Power of the Fish in in the Water’: The Flow of Relationships in a Transnational Zimbabwean Music Community.” PhD diss., Indiana University.

Turino, Thomas. 2010. “The Mbira, Worldbeat, and the International Imagination.” *World of Music* 52(1-3): 171-192.

_____. 2000. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Van der Veer, Peter. 2009. “Spirituality in Modern Society.” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 76(4): 1097-1120.\

Vradenburgh, Elaine. 2008. *Making Music, Building Bridges.* DVD.

Williams, B. Michael. 2001. *Mbira: A Beginning.*…Everett: HoneyRock.