



Building Interdisciplinary Bridges Across Cultures

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A Unique Musician- Singer- Songwriter- Composer- Teacher the founder/Director of the Mhararano Mbira Academy. The mbira academy is built upon the values of connection, learning and change."Mhararano" which means "the cross roads" in Shona language of Zimbabwe , is an educational movement responding to and connecting with nature and the individual needs of people.

He is regarded as a World-Class Mbira player and uses the instrument as an education tool, to encompass both traditional and contemporary perspectives, challenge stereotypes and encourage creative engagement. For centuries Shona people of Zimbabwe have always believed in connecting with the spirits of the ancestors. Mystic mbira music is sometimes played in all night ritual ceremonies called "Bira" to call the ancestral spirits to come and give daily guidance. Chartwell draws on his experience of growing up in rural, segregated then Rhodesia now Zimbabwe to build bridges between cultures and make links between contemporary Zimbabwe and life in Britain today. He also explores the colonial history of the British Empire in connection with Zimbabwe as well as the history of the Ancestors. His interactive workshops incorporate music, song and dance. Chartwell can pitch the complexity of the song to the ability of his participants. Sessions may include the understanding of poly rhythms/cross rhythms, hand clapping, singing and dance. Dutiro is a now Visiting Research Fellow at Bath Spa University and his main interest is looking at "Developing Dialogues in Cross-Cultural Music Making.

Musicking and learning in Cross - Cultural contexts

Abstract: For me music is everything about my life, who I am, where I come from, my culture and there is a purpose for being a mbira player and why I play the music. It connects me with my ancestors, my village people who brought me up and it is my DNA.

Music can and has the power to be universal language between people and across different cultures in their communal settings. Racism is a subtle creepy thing. What role can musicians, educators and communities across cultures play in crashing down boundaries and build bridges that can allow us to disseminate knowledge and information to each other without prejudice, segregation or fear? This inter-cultural question touches on colonialism, education structures, methods, social, ethos, ideologies and values.

My talk will address this question through the story of my life, born and raised in the then apartheid Rhodesia now Zimbabwe. First of all the governing structure which was brought in by missionaries in the form of apartheid system and displacing people. This changed the whole indigenous social structure therefore I was born in a small rural village known then as Tribal Trust Lands (Reserves) specially reserved for African people. This means that my ancestors had been moved away from the fertile land into the poor gravelled land where

nothing can grow very well. The introduction of social structure divide and rule allowed the Rhodesians to bring in the colour bar where by people where segregated because of the colour of their skin. Then there was the education structure which was designed and named African education system and they exploited the Christianity ethos. I grew up and educated by Salvation Army, they built schools, boarding schools, churches and hospitals. They didn't have empathy towards Shona belief of connecting with the spirits of ancestors through mystic mbira music being played in all night ritual ceremonies called Bira. Therefore Bira ritual ceremonies and Mbira music were banned. Some of the spirit mediums were hanged and some were arrested and detained because them missionaries thought Shona people of Zimbabwe's belief in connecting with the spirits of ancestors was a cult, where we worship the devil. Bruno Nettles a professor of Musicology and Anthropology wrote a book titled "Music from Primitive Cultures" therefore Shona music in culture and belief system of connecting with ancestors would come under this banner. There is also an academic method problem of emic etic approach of writing about other cultures, there is definitely a condescending attitude towards indigenous minority cultures e.g them and us.

I aim to juxtapose educational structures from growing up in apartheid Rhodesia, Independent Zimbabwe, SOAS University of London looking at this and also my teaching in schools, universities in UK, Europe and USA for the last 22 years living in UK. This will help me shape my research as a Visiting Research Fellow at Bath Spa University for the next 2 years.

Mhararano Mbira Academy is a project happening now a unique organisation based in the grounds of the beautiful Dartington Hall in Totnes Devon. We deliver projects centred around the mbira music of Zimbabwe and provide opportunities to learn mbira playing, to sing, dance and engage with the arts, and to learn about Shona language and culture. I am the founder of the Academy and the principal artist who delivers projects. I use a method of teaching called "Chinyakare" in shona language this means an indigenous ancestral way of distributing knowledge and information. Knowledge is shared between people of all abilities. I believe that the master and the beginner have something to learn from each other. In developing the Mbira Academy we want to acknowledge and support the ancestors, the elders and younger people, with wisdom and understanding of the life challenges that they face.

The Aims and Objectives of the Mbira Academy is to bring people together and provide a learning environment where they can share philosophical beliefs and experience ritual, through the language of music, literature, poetry, storytelling, visual arts, dance, drama and film.