

On a spring Manhattan morning, Thomas Mapfumo's tour bus idles in front of the Omni Park Plaza Hotel, all but blocking the street. While his American manager rounds up the last few bandmembers, the king of Zimbabwean music sits at a table on the bus playing rummy with his brothers William and Lancelot, and his boyhood friend and keyboardist Charles Mayana. Three-foot dreadlocks coiled into a bulging felt hat, close-fitting suede trench coat flowing around a gold, buttoned crewneck shirt, Thomas, 46, eyes his cards with calculating severity. As the bus lurches into traffic, he wins a hand, laughs, and croaks out a few throaty phrases of high-spirited Shona bravado.

PHOTO BY DIRK VANDERBEEK

Barely six hours earlier, Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited were winding up a long performance of their hypnotic, traditionally based *chimurenga* music at S.O.B.'s, New York's premier world music club. So it's no surprise that bandmembers have crashed on the bus' foldout bunks or have plugged into Walkmans, gazing out the window and occasionally dozing while, for Thomas and the other band elders, another day of play has begun.

When I first met Thomas in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1988, I knew him as a legend—the modern popularizer of his people's ancient *mbira* (thumb-piano) music, the songwriter whose militant lyrics and spiritual melodies had inspired African Rhodesians to overthrow their British colonial oppressors and build the nation of Zimbabwe. Without a doubt, Thomas is one of the great figures of African pop. But on meeting him, I quickly learned that he is also a merry, modest fellow who thrives on simple, if at times bizarre, pleasures.

As the bus rumbles into Connecticut, Thomas calls for a showing of a Mexican video called *Intrepid Punks*, his prize find during the previous day's shopping on 14th Street. From the opening credits, lo-fi punk rock and snarling Spanish roar from the bus' loudspeakers. Miraculously, the Blacks Unlimited's two female singer/dancers remain asleep in the back bunks, and Shepherd Munyama the bassman and Ephraim Karimaura the guitarist stay tuned to their Walkmans despite the raunchy din. Ephraim, on the rebound from a bout with shingles, is particularly absorbed in a cassette of Zairean guitar master Dibo Dibala, who he has never heard before. But for everyone else, it's ladies in studded leather, mounting Harleys and beating up on hunky guys. The Zimbabweans don't understand the language they're hearing, but the kinkiness of Mexican butch ninja bikers hits home with these connoisseurs of HBO horror and professional wrestling.

Everyone is in fine spirits as the bus pulls onto the football field at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. The campus is approaching exam week, and Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited are the featured act at the annual spring blowout. Many of the partying students who will dance barefoot on the grass to *chimurenga* have no appreciation of its roots. But here at Wesleyan, home of one of the nation's best ethnomusicology

programs, there are also many who do, including masters of Indian and Indonesian music, and *The Beat's* own Haitian correspondent, Gage Averill. Graduate students and professors, including Professor Abraham Adzenyah, master drummer of Ghana, are waiting to greet Thomas, who emerges from the bus as his bandmembers take to the playing field with a soccer ball.

Thomas knows that Wesleyan graduates have done a lot for him in recent years, so he's pleased to look the place over. "Sean Barlow was my student," Adzenyah boasts to Thomas in a reference to the producer of National Public Radio's "Afropop Worldwide," which regularly features *chimurenga*. Barlow, along with Wesleyan graduate Andy Warsaw of the Dance Theater Workshop, initiated the Blacks Unlimited's first U.S. tour in 1989.

Years earlier, in 1978, when we were students at Wesleyan, Barlow introduced me to Shona *mbira* music recorded by ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner, author of *The Soul of Mbira*. The gentle, plinking polyrhythms of the *mbira* (pronounced mm-bee-ra) were a revelation. Where other African music offered exhilara-

tion, *mbira* evoked a deeper mysticism, a sense of serene ecstasy. It was easy to believe that *mbiras* summoned ancestor spirits in Shona possession ceremonies. It also made sense a few years later when I learned that a singer named Thomas Mapfumo had transposed *mbira* music onto guitars, bass and trap-set to create a new pop style—*chimurenga*, or struggle music—heralded as the soundtrack to Zimbabwe's war of liberation.

At dusk, the bush-camouflage-clad Blacks Unlimited take the playing-field stage and deliver a bright, horn-driven instrumental. Saxman Chartwell Dutiro's horn needs new pads and lets out a few oinks here and there, but the band's warm weave suffers little for it. Elliptical *mbira* lines ring out, backed only by drummer Sebastian Farado's four-on-the-floor bass drum and sputtering hi-hat triplets. Mapfumo strides on stage, hunches forward in his trademark prowling stance, and almost whispers the first low, resonant lines of the night, from "Muchadura" (You Will Confess): "Don't take me lightly, as if I am an outcast/For I am a fighter who would die for his country."

Continued on page 50



PHOTO BY BANNING EYRE

Thomas Mapfumo performing in Harare in 1988. His *chimurenga*, or struggle music, was heralded as the soundtrack to Zimbabwe's war of liberation.



Mapfumo means "spears" in Shona, suggesting that rebellion is in the man's blood. As Thomas tells it, both the traditional and revolutionary elements of his music came very naturally, with no promise of local, let alone international, success.

"I grew up in the communal lands, which used to be called reserves, for the African people." Thomas told a workshop audience in New Orleans last spring. "I grew up with my grandparents who were very much into traditional music. Each time there was an mbira gathering, there were elder people singing, some drumming, some clapping. I used to join them. In the country, there were no radios, no TVs."

When Thomas went to live with his own parents in Salisbury, as Harare was then known, his ears were soon opened to music from the outside world: South Africa, the Congo (now Zaire), Britain and America. Thomas remembers a long list of heroes—Franco and Jean Bokelo from Zaire; the Swingsters, Miriam Makeba and Winston Mankunku from South Africa; and Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Otis Redding and Chicago Transit Authority. "I was into a lot of things," he told the New Orleans crowd, "even heavy metal."

Describing his musical upbringing in early interviews, Thomas used to joke that his mother sang and danced very well, "especially after a few drinks." But in fact, his family did not encourage him in the beginning. His father disapproved angrily when he took up the banjo, an instrument of "beggars and vagabonds."

Still, there was no dissuading Thomas from the musician's life. He soon became a "copyright" singer, covering material by Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Nat King Cole. To this day, Thomas is still apt to break into a spontaneous rendition of "All My Loving" or "Paperback Writer." But at the time, copyright work led him to a tough realization.

"There were rock band contests held in Salisbury," recalled the singer in New Orleans. "Some South African bands would cross the Limpopo [River] into Rhodesia to compete. There were a lot of black bands playing rock 'n' roll music, and we were one of them. But not even one black band ever won a contest. And I asked myself: 'What are we supposed to be if this isn't our music? If they [the whites] claim it to be their music, then we have to look for our own music.' As a people who had actually lost our cul-

ture, it was very difficult to get it back."

One local group, the Capital City Dixies, used to sing a tune in Shona, as a novelty. The song told the story of a rich man who suddenly loses his wealth. Despite the Dixies' joking presentation, Thomas thought the song was serious and good, so he recorded it in a radio studio, with no idea that anyone would release it.

"One day," he remembers, "I was taking a walk and I heard my voice in a record bar. I didn't know what was going on. I went in and there was my name on this record. Until today, I don't know who got the money."

The song became a minor hit and encouraged Thomas to continue. During the early '70s, he traveled around Rhodesian towns and mining communities, moving in and out of various hotel bands: Hallelujah Chicken Run, named because the bandmembers worked in a chicken run, the Cosmic Four Dots, the Black Spirits, the Acid Band, the Pied Pipers and eventually, the original Blacks Unlimited.

"There was me, Jonah Sithole, who is the famous lead guitarist. There was Leonard Chiyangwa and Marshall Munhumuwe, who is one of the Four Brothers and also my uncle. We stayed for a couple of years playing at a nightclub in Mutare, and the group became quite famous there."

When the band moved back to Salisbury, however, Sithole left them, concluding the first of his three stints with the Blacks Unlimited. The group made a failed record and soon split up, leaving Thomas once again a roving soloist. He talked his way back into the Acid Band, where Charles Mayana was then employed, and convinced them to do some of his songs. Determined to be something more than a free-wheeling rock 'n' roll bad boy, Thomas began to write serious lyrics.

"One afternoon, we came up with a

nice tune opposing Mr. Ian Smith [the final prime minister of white-minority-ruled Rhodesia]," Thomas says. "This tune was called 'Pamro Mochete,' which means, 'It's Just Mere Talk.' Mr. Smith had said he would not want to see a black government in his lifetime, even in a

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PHOTO BY BANNING EYRE

Thomas and mbira player Chartwell Dutiwo at S.O.B.'s, New York City, 1989.

thousand years. So we said it was just talk. We were going to fight for our freedom. This record sold like hot cakes because the people had got the message.

"Straight away, I composed another instant hit called 'Pfumvu Pa Ruzheva,' which means 'Trouble in the Communal Lands.' People were being killed by soldiers. They were running away from their homes, going to Mozambique and coming to live in town like squatters. Some people used to cry when they listened to the lyrics of this record. The message was very strong."

These songs were among the now-legendary chimurenga singles. Their success led Thomas to reassemble the Blacks Unlimited and record his first album, *Hokoyo*. The album has never been released internationally but music from this era is available on *The Chimurenga Singles* (Shanachie) and *Shumba* (Earthworks/Cardiac).

Many of these compositions used only guitars, bass, drums and vocal, but their adherence to the four-phrase cycles of

mbira music gave them a deep, traditional resonance. Like Bob Marley, Bob Dylan and Chile's Violetta Para, Mapfumo was a folk artist following his own instincts. But because his music and his lyrics captured the mood of his time like no one else's, he quickly took on heroic stature.

Soon the band had a big sound, with percussion, backup vocals, and a horn section for which Thomas wrote what he considered African horn parts—lines as idiosyncratic as those composed by Nigeria's great revolutionary bandleader, Fela Kuti. "The papers were writing about us," Thomas said in New Orleans. "Everyone wanted to talk to us about our music, and the government was very surprised, because they had never heard of a black band being so popular among their own people. They started asking questions."

In 1979, as Rhodesia was about to crumble, government authorities arrested Thomas and detained him for three months. This hardship was made easier because the prison warders were his friends and admirers and brought him care packages and offered moral support. During interrogations, the singer expounded on his art, which he insisted was "the traditional music of the people of Zimbabwe." Rather than build a case against a popular musician, the officials chose a wiliier course, one that would enormously complicate Thomas' life. They released him, but with a troublesome condition.

"After my release, I was to go to Bulawayo where Bishop Muzorewa was going to address a rally on the following Sunday. I was to play at this rally. They wanted to make it look like we were supporting Bishop Muzorewa."

The timing couldn't have been worse. Seeing that change was inevitable, Smith had picked the conservative, collaborationist Abel Muzorewa to lead the new country of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. But this "internal settlement" had been roundly rejected by black nationalist guerrilla leaders Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe of the Patriotic Front. To play this rally

would cost Thomas dearly.

On the evening of his release from prison, he met with his band. "I told them that we were going to Bulawayo to play. They didn't like that. I had to convince them that we were just a group of musicians. We were not armed. We had to go to Bulawayo to safeguard our lives. So we agreed that we would go, provided we play our revolutionary music."

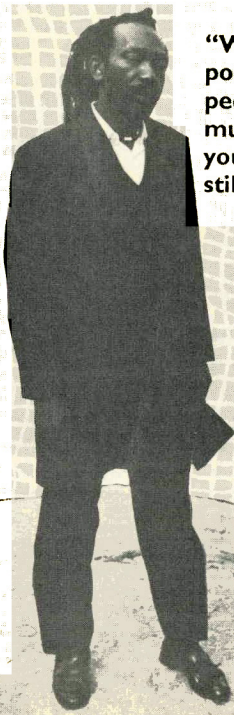
The authorities bristled when they heard the band's song selection at the rally. Thomas explained that since he had been in detention, he had not had time to compose "music to suit their situation," an excuse they were forced to accept. Just the same, when the newspapers ran a front-page photo of Thomas side by side with Muzorewa, the result was devastating.

By this time, Thomas had become big enough to have enemies among his people, "jealous so-and-sos" who worked to besmirch his reputation. In April 1980, Zimbabweans gathered in Harare's

Rufaro stadium to celebrate their country's real independence. Thomas was invited to share the stage with Bob Marley before international heads of state and one of the largest crowds ever assembled in the country. But there was treachery among the organizers.

"We were treated like a group of kids who wouldn't fight for the struggle," Thomas noted bitterly in New Orleans. "We had to wait for a long time. Everyone played. Bob Marley played first, and other bands—useless bands—played for important people like Prince Charles, Robert Mugabe, [then Zambian president] Kenneth Kaunda. We were made to wait until 5:30 in the morning when there were only kids and the guerrillas.

"Well, we were not above it," says Thomas, finding personal triumph in a tale of humiliation. "We played for the guerrillas, the real people who fought for our freedom and the youth who gave the moral support to the freedom fighters. To us, that was victory."



"We were not for any particular political party. We were for the people. And we still do that in our music. If you are a president and you mistreat your people, we will still sing bad about you."

Strangely, during this time of national celebration, Thomas' popularity reached an all-time low. In the early '80s, he worked to shore up his reputation and produced what was some of his best work to that point. Reunited with mbira guitarist Jonah Sihole, Thomas recorded *Gwindingwi Rine Shumba* (Lion in the Jungle), an album that brought chimurenga's polyrhythmic guitar conversation to new heights. With its warnings of a deadly lion hiding in the bush, the song "Shumba" also established Thomas' identity as the vigilant truth-teller of the postindependence period.

As Zimbabwe has struggled with intertribal conflict, government corruption, economic isolation

*Continued on
page 52*

and wars in neighboring countries, especially Mozambique, Thomas has offered continuous commentary. "We were not for any particular political party," he explains, looking back. "We were for the people. And we still do that in our music. If you are a president and you mistreat your people, we will still sing bad about you. Never mind if you are black or white or yellow."

Thomas made his next three albums—*Ndangariro* (Remember, 1983, available on Shanachie), *Mabasa* (Work, 1984) and *Mr. Music* (1985)—without Sithole, who was once again trying to break out and start a band on his own. Lead guitarist Lucky Mupawaenda plays on these classic chimurenga recordings, which combine the damped mbira technique Sithole pioneered with Mupawaenda's rock-inspired phrasing.

On *Mabasa* and *Mr. Music*, a real mbira is used among the electric instruments for the first time. The mbira songs suffer from imperfect mixes but they represent an impulse that he would later return to with far greater success. Thomas' experiments with such borrowed genres as Zairean rhumba generally don't hold up well. There's a clunker on each of the early '80s albums. But as a set, these albums mark the heyday of the Blacks Unlimited's exuberant dual-guitar sound.

By 1984, when Thomas released *Mabasa*, he was not only back on top in Zimbabwe but getting attention in London, where an audience hungry for new African pop sensations was discovering his uncompromising music and dramatic story. Jumbo Vanrenen, then of London's Earthworks label, had been releasing chimurenga music in England and decided to risk a tour. The venture was a financial disaster but the band's sensational live shows helped establish a small but loyal chimurenga following in Europe.

In London, with Sithole back in the band, Thomas recorded his next album, *Chimurenga for Justice*, the beginning of the Blacks Unlimited's reggae-influenced phase. Thomas' subtle cross between reggae and chimurenga draws on the meditative slow groove the two styles share. With reggae-schooled Shepherd Munyama taking up the bass, Thomas moved Charles Mayana from bass to keyboard, creating a new twist in the band's sound.

Like many other African performers, Thomas assumed that European exposure would quickly lead him to international celebrity. He dreamed of an Ameri-

can tour, but after the European fiasco, U.S. dates didn't materialize. When Sean Barlow and I went to Harare in 1988 to do research for "Afropop," Thomas was facing a moment of truth. His next album, *Zimbabwe/Mozambique*, was not being released outside Zimbabwe. He was playing four nights a week in Harare clubs, with patrons paying just two to four dollars at the door. Working hard and content in his way, the lion of Zimbabwe clearly believed that better things must be in store.



In Harare, the world of Thomas Mapfumo, his musicians, friends and fans, had the feel of an enlightened subculture. Zimbabwe's capital is modern,

back room of the Red Lantern Hotel where Thomas was rehearsing his band for up to six hours a day, there was no mistaking Africa. Onstage, the players were weaving their deep mbira groove while Thomas swayed and sang at the center.

We met a young mbira player named Chartwell Dutiuro who had recently joined the band. We soon learned that he was among those encouraging Thomas to leave the reggae behind and reinvigorate his exploration of Shona traditional music. A percussionist and tenor saxophonist as well, Chartwell had studied music by correspondence course with the London Academy of Music. These skills and his fast friendship with Thomas have since made Chartwell a major force in the Blacks Unlimited, an arranger and coordinator intent on helping



PHOTO BY BANNING EYRE

Ephat Mujuru demonstrates the *mbira*, a traditional instrument of the Shona people, seen here inside a gourd resonator with bottle caps attached for a percussive buzz.

convenient, clean and orderly compared with most other African cities. Its British sensibilities survive in the steeples, gables, gardens and verandas of its architecture, and in borrowed customs like cricket, soccer and a strong cup of black tea each morning and afternoon. But when we stepped into the cavernous

his mentor craft an ever-deeper sound for the band.

Chartwell encouraged Sean and I to hear real mbira music, which we did with the help of mbira master Ephat Mujuru. Ephat took us to his Uncle Mude's house for an evening of *dandaro*, or entertainment. Mude and his family

live in one of many worn, wooden houses in a crowded, dirt-road, suburban cluster—the Highfields district of Harare. They received us in the front room, which they had cleared for the occasion, removing all furniture save an old refrigerator and a few wooden stools. The musicians sat on the floor and leaned against the fridge. They used sticks to secure their mbiras tightly within large, halved, resonating gourds.

The *dzavadzimu* mbira is one of the most elaborate thumb-pianos in Africa. It is a hard slab of wood with 22 iron prongs tightly clamped to it in three banks. Ephat explained to us that the registers provide the mbira's three voices—voice of the children, voice of the adults and voice of the elders. At an mbira gathering, three mbiras play together, taking bass, rhythm and lead roles in the music. When the players strike the keys, bottle caps fastened around the edges of their gourds buzz loudly, adding roughage to the mbiras' clear tones. Maracalike rattles called *hoshos* keep the distinctive triplet rhythm that pervades the traditional music and is the basis for the hi-hat drum patterns in *chimurenga*.

Over this intricate, pulsating bed of sound, a singer tells a woeful tale of war and hard times that ends in a poignant affirmation of life. There is no style of singing quite like it. Rich, mesmerizing melodies erupt from the depths of the singer's throat as if from beyond, from the spirit world or, in this case, the ancestors.

People gathered, babies nursing, children playing and adults and elders drinking African beer, singing and dancing on the hard dirt floor. Sometime after midnight, there were two possessions. Mude's glorious, guttural singing lapsed into monotone and a woman from the gathering came forward, eyes glazed and shaking all over. With spirits' voices, Mude and the woman conversed in Shona for a long time. They discussed, among other things, Sean's and my presence, which luckily Mude's spirit sanctioned with the phrase "we are all working together now." The meanings were lost on the two of us until Ephat translated later. But we were elated to hear the direct origins of *chimurenga* and to sense that its marriage of raucous celebration and spirituality was completely true to those origins.



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PHOTO BY DANNE EYRE

At the *dandaro*, or entertainment, in Harare, mbira master Mujuru (center) and companions play their ancestral music. The three instruments play bass, rhythm and lead parts.

Although Mapfumo and Mujuru have been long-time acquaintances and share a deep mutual admiration, they had never performed together when we visited Zimbabwe. Nearly two years later, however, audiences in Knoxville, TN, and Atlanta, GA, got a treat when Thomas' and Ephat's tour schedules coincided and they played double bills in the two cities. It was Thomas' first U.S. tour, and he was using two female singer/dancers on loan from Ephat's traditional ensemble. The result was an unlikely Zimbabwean cultural reunion in the American South. Leading up to the Atlanta show, there was a screening of Andrew Tracy's 1979 film on Ephat's grandfather, the spirit medium Muchatera Mujuru. After the film Ephat gave a drumming and dance workshop, and Tennessee-based electric mbira builder, Richard Selman, displayed his latest innovations on the *dzavadzimu*.

Many of the region's mbira cognescenti, including Ephat's former students, ex-Peace Corps volunteers and Zimbabwean expatriates, turned out en masse. Many assumed that a Mapfumo/

Mujuru double bill was a common occurrence in Zimbabwe. But for reasons known only to them, Thomas, the pop singer who embraced mbira music, and Ephat, the mbira master who plays pop music with his band Spirit of the People, preserve a cautious, respectful distance at home.



Sean and I left Zimbabwe in February 1988. Later that year, Thomas riveted the nation with his English language hit "Corruption," an assault on the "something for something, nothing for nothing" ethic in government. The song was inspired by a scandal involving President Mugabe's ministers lining their pockets off the sale of imported Toyotas. The affair ended in a rat poison suicide and a lot of sensationalist press.

Destined to become the title track on Thomas' first Mango release and the beginning of the new phase he had hoped for, "Corruption" also marked the Blacks

Continued on page 78

THOMAS MAPFUMO *Continued from page 53*
 Unlimited's farewell to reggae. On subsequent albums, *Chamunorwa* (Mango) and *Chimurenga Masterpiece* (released in Zimbabwe only), the sound is rich in tradition as guitar and keyboard yield increasingly to mbira.

The Blacks Unlimited now features three mbira players. The youngest, Basil Mukombe, is only 19 and so did not come on the band's 1991 tour, although by all accounts he's the best player of the three. Also among the changes, guitarist Ephraim Karimaura has replaced Jonah Sithole, who was still in the band when we visited Zimbabwe in 1988. Karimaura's lines stand apart in the new sound. As such, they don't generate the same heat as in the guitar-intensive Blacks Unlimited recordings of the early '80s, but the new picker has taken the style to an elegant, almost philosophical level.

Speaking with Sean in New Orleans, Thomas explained why he continually changes his sound. "I am not a satisfied man," he said. "After every work that I do, I always think I must do better. I am very anxious to discover something new within my music. But it makes my music improve daily."

When an African artist gets the kind of attention Thomas has, the music often be-

comes increasingly Westernized and electronic. Having tried many things, he knows that is not the way for him. "We have to bring real African music to our counterparts. Let's not cheat them by saying we are playing Afrock or we are playing a fusion of Western and African music. Nothing new is going to come out if we keep making a fusion of what is already there. We must keep progressing, going forward, bringing in new styles in our music. But those new styles must be African, not foreign influences."

Thomas would rather talk about his lyrics than the style of his music. His new *Chimurenga Masterpiece* includes an upbeat jit number called "Jojo," a potent warning to uneducated people who become enamored of politics. "Politics is dirty," insists Thomas. "For those who did not go to school and who are just ordinary people, I think the right thing for them is to just keep away from politics. Because they are being used for evil deeds. If a political opponent needs to be killed, they are the people who are sent to kill."

Thomas makes a point of explaining that the message of "Jojo" applies to every nation. He still draws his material from home, but his outlook is increasingly global. "Today, Zimbabwe is free," he says. "So we're focusing

our music worldwide. The situation in South Africa is getting worse because black brothers and sisters are fighting against each other. We have been in a lot of world cities. We have seen people sleeping in the streets and governments don't look after these people. That is what our music is there for today. We will never stop singing about the struggle."



Back on the playing fields of Wesleyan, night has fallen and the Blacks Unlimited have built their set to heart-stopping intensity. After two encores, Thomas flashes a final grin to the screaming students and leaves the dark stage to return to the sanctuary of the tour bus. Later that night, Chartwell leads a few Middletown African music enthusiasts in an informal round-the-kitchen-table mbira jam.

The next day, it's on to Boston, my home base, for two sold-out shows at Nightstage in Cambridge. In a city that's had a hard time mustering a loyal audience for African music, the turnout bodes well for all concerned—promoters, artists and music fans. After the show, the band and friends gather to lift and move a parked car so the tour bus can leave on its night run to Washington, DC. By then, Thomas is back on board, receiving guests, smoking, exuding triumph. I leave the Blacks Unlimited with the sense that their time in the United States has indeed come.

The Blacks Unlimited went on to the U.K., France and Scandinavia, and then made two sold-out appearances in Tokyo before heading home to Harare. Along the way, Thomas received an invitation to compose and possibly record with the Kronos String Quartet, an unlikely but promising collaboration. Amid all this good fortune, the band was recently dropped by their American record label, so the search is on for a new deal. Just the same, they'll be back in the States next summer for a series of festival appearances.

Regardless of how the business proceeds, Thomas Mapfumo's chimurenga music will go on. If Zairean soukous evokes the joy of love, and Mandingo music angst and suffering, chimurenga is the voice of redemption and reconciliation—the joy that comes after suffering. That expression, which Thomas traces back to the murder of the prophet Chaminuka in precolonial Zimbabwe, is indomitable.

Thomas is fond of quoting a rebellious spirit medium who, before she was hanged by the British, proclaimed, "We are dying for our country, but our bones will rise and fight the chimurenga war."

"And that is what happened," says Thomas pointedly. "We were the bones."

Banning Eyre is a freelance journalist and musician living in Boston.

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