

Paul Berliner with Kudu. *The Sun Rises Late Here*. (Chicago: Flying Fish Records, Inc., 1979).

In a search for means of communication to open new doors of understanding between our neighbors and ourselves on this planet earth, we occasionally encounter a person or a method which seems to fling those doors open. It is with great enthusiasm that I share one such experience with my colleagues in the NAIES. Last fall I attended a concert by Paul Berliner and Kudu. Paul, a musicologist at the School of Music and Program of African Studies at Northwestern University, revealed in a two-hour program of lecture and performance the heart and suffering, hopes and spirit of Zimbabwe in a manner that no other lecturer or text I have encountered has been able to do.

His interest in African music led Paul to Zimbabwe where he studied with master Shona musicians. There he was given a *kudu*, an instrument made from the horn of the kudu--an African antelope, and he mastered the mbira, an old and classical instrument used for sacred and traditional occasions as well as entertainment. The mbira which he plays, *mbira dzavadzimu* (mbira of the ancestors), consists of twenty-four metal strips mounted on a sound board and wedged into a large gourd resonator. It has bottle caps and shells mounted on it to produce a buzzing sound as the snares do on a snare drum. The steel keys are plucked with the thumbs and index finger.

During his lecture/performance, the audience was caught up not only in the music but in the spiritual experience of a man (a white man) sharing the soul of the oppressed and suffering people of Zimbabwe. While studying their music, he was invited to attend the sacred ceremonies where he was asked to participate in the ritual, playing his mbira. At one ceremony he was given an amulet by a possessed medium to protect him from the Europeans who might resent his involvement in African culture.

While the experience of hearing Paul talk of his life in Zimbabwe, and sharing the soul of the people of Zimbabwe as expressed in their music, is an event which no one who has the opportunity should miss, those not fortunate enough to do so can have a taste of it. Flying Fish Records, Inc. (103 West Shubert, Chicago, IL 60614) has released a recording of Paul Berliner with Kudu (the group which he has assembled) playing his compositions based on the music of Zimbabwe. Using the kudu and mbira along with western instruments, he has successfully made African music

accessible to western audiences. The lyrics are in English. Structurally the compositions conform to the traditional mbira pieces and include some of the expressive African vocal styles such as yodelling and melodic riffing. Instruments include the flute, saxophone, harmonica and flugelhorn as well as the mbira, kudu, foot bells, African marimba and a variety of percussion instruments. It is without reservation that I recommend this recording.

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