



Legendary Thomas Mapfumo and mbira player Edward Muchineripi (photo by Xiaoshi Wei)

SANCTUARY RHYTHMS

BY K.D. SELF

WATCHING THE BEATS

Pea-sized hail suddenly pounds my deck. I am just in from a beautiful Thursday evening spent listening to Chinese, Zimbabwean, and Cuban music. As I check the news, I discover serious disturbance. President Trump has dropped bombs in Syria. While worries about war rumble my heart, I decide all I can do in this present moment is reflect sanctuary voicings of peace and kindness shared through song.

In our tiny town of Bloomington, I feel blessed to have recently attended various events representing multiple historical periods and great music from three continents. Within a few days, I was transported to ancient China (via Wu Man), then to modern China (via IU students playing pop), just before legendary Thomas Mapfumo (the "Lion of Zimbabwe") brought his African rhythms home. In the same building, on the same day, I was privileged to catch lively Cuban dance tunes (courtesy of the IU Latin American Ensemble). Most audience members did not understand the text sung by any of these performers, but emotionally expressive vocals--and the music itself--compassionately connected all.

As part of the "China Remixed" Global Arts & Humanities Festival, and in conjunction with the School of Music and Lotus Foundation, on Friday, March 31, pipa virtuoso Wu

of Spring 2017 was held. Threat of bad weather drove food tents, craft tables, and numerous performances indoors. The First Thursday series is supported by various organizations, including the IU Arts and Humanities Council and the Office of the Vice Provost. This one continued the "China Remixed" theme with a Chinese market in the Auditorium lobby. Inside the warmth of the Wells-Metz Theatre, a fledgling Chinese band, Elements, played pop (using standard rock instruments and mostly western but also Asian riffs). Intriguingly, this IU-student group performed a tune that had been dedicated, years ago and by its Hong Kong composer, to Nelson Mandela.

Next up at the Wells-Metz, originally from Zimbabwe, 70-plus year old political refugee Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited performed (sponsored by IU's African Studies). Freedom fighter Mapfumo is famous for seeking social justice through music. The Chimurenga [liberation] style of music, which Mapfumo originally developed in the 1970s, has hypnotic grooves. The sound of the African thumb piano (mbira) provides complex underlayment. The "Lion of Zimbabwe's" music entices listeners to dance but also to "rise up" (name of his 2005 album). This and other of Mapfumo's recordings have been banned in Zimbabwe. In Bloomington, the lion was heartily welcomed.

A few steps from Africa, still in the Neal-Marshall Cultural Center, I next transposed to early twentieth-century Cuba. There, two groups from IU's Latin American Music Ensemble danced engaging Cuban "son" and "danzón" songs. Director Joe Galvin explained that "son" originated in the Cuban countryside, and "danzón" is a developmental source for the cha-cha-chá. Although these differently instrumented styles *are* both dance forms, until the last tune, the audience mostly just listened. Yet, both sets included songs that exuberantly and sensually connected: Even those of us who did not dance wanted to.

In the now, as I ponder war drums beating, I am deeply grateful to live in a community that embraces diversity and provides sanctuary, where multicultural voices can dance and sing our unique truths together, in peace.

MAPFUMO'S CHIMURENGA STYLE HAS HYPNOTIC GROOVES, ENTICING DANCERS TO RISE UP.

Man played the Buskirk Chumley. A pipa is a lute-like instrument introduced to China from the Kazakhstan area around 2,000 years ago. Wu Man performed pieces ranging from ancient ("Ambush Laid on Ten Sides") to modern and folk. Reverberating widely varying tempos, the sound of the plucked (and strummed) solo pipa resonated beautifully in the BCT. The Vera Quartet joined Wu Man, adding delicious humor. IU's New Music Ensemble (led by David Dzubay) closed the evening as Wu Man wove her pipa's beautiful flying spirit into the grounding tones of the larger band.

On campus on Thursday, April 6, the last First Thursday

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