

The Adaptation and Development of Jiti for Popular Music Performance in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This article outlines an analysis that sought to examine how “early” jiti music has shaped contemporary jiti in Zimbabwe to not only identify aspects that define jiti but also to demonstrate how the style is a historical reality, rooted in the past and generated by the present. To do this, the authors focused on the music of the Bhundu Boys, one of the earliest groups to popularise and influence contemporary jiti music suggesting that their music, in particular the songs that were analysed, serve as examples of songs that are influenced by issues explored in jiti music. The authors also selected songs by Baba Harare, a contemporary jiti popular musician, and analysed how his music either relates to and/or departs from that of the Bhundu Boys. Using British historian Eric Hobsbawm's theory of invented traditions, which states that traditions can be revived or reinvented, the authors identified various adaptation strategies used by both the Bhundu Boys and Baba Harare to reconstitute jiti for popular music performance. The analysis of jiti popular music performance by both early performers of the style and contemporary ones showed that there is an expected “framework of performance and interpretation” for this style for it to continue representing certain traditional values and identities in Zimbabwe.