

Sungura Music's Development in Zimbabwe: The Emergence of Trendsetters, Emulators and Copycats

Richard Muranda and Wonder Maguraushe, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Violation of copyright law has caused quite a stir in Zimbabwe's Sungura¹ music performance. Some prominent musicians accuse upcoming artistes of illegally copying their music, although the popular musicians themselves developed it by modeling on foreign popular musicians' songs, which were on the local market and shows in Zimbabwe. By tracing the development of sungura from the 1960s to contemporary times using a diffusionist paradigm, this paper exposes how sungura artists have developed a genre that owes its popularity to record companies' policies, the media as well as the sungura artists' virtuosity in fusing foreign musical genres (especially Congolese, Kenyan, Tanzanian and South African) and local indigenous traditional styles (mhande, mbende, jiti, shangara). We interviewed sungura artists, recording company personnel and music promoters to elicit their views on the major influences on the development of museve.² Based on insights drawn from musical ethnography, the paper goes on to propose a revised framework of analysis and terminology to account for sungura musicians' relationships. We examine the characteristics of a couple of sungura musicians with a view to justifying how each falls into a particular category. Using critical African cultural studies, we proffer the terms trendsetters³, emulators⁴ and copycats⁵ as categories into which sungura musicians in Zimbabwe fit. One way or the other there is mimicry which might account for lack of lawsuits against perceived violators of copyright law. The conclusion suggests collaboration to reform sungura musicians' connections which we think holds potential to propel them to greater success.

¹ A name used to refer to a genre of music which started as a subgenre of rhumba music resulting from a fusion of *benga*, *rhumba*, *soukous* and some Zimbabwean indigenous genres.

² Another name which Zimbabweans give to fast paced *sungura* music.

³ *Sungura* musicians who create original styles of playing *sungura* that become popular musicians.

⁴ A group of *sungura* musicians whose musical style emulates that of the trendsetters.

⁵ Musicians who plagiarize other musicians' intellectual property.

1. Introduction

Our focus in this article is to discuss copyright infringement in the growth of *sungura* music in Zimbabwe. It is important to critically examine the factors that gave birth to *sungura* as it is popularly referred to. The role of major recording studios, television stations and radio broadcasters also comes under the spotlight in order to appreciate the rise of *sungura* music in Zimbabwe. We posit that *sungura* music's development reveals three categories of musicians: trendsetters, emulators and copycats. Another important aspect is to review the impact of legislation in Zimbabwe and how it has affected the growth and development of *sungura* music from 1980 to date. Public live show performances by *sungura* musicians are chances for artists to go out to the people showcasing their music. In this presentation we explore the various forces involved in promoting music in Zimbabwe. We also focus on how the media and technology have affected *sungura* music in and outside Zimbabwe. We suggest that *sungura* musicians should refocus themselves on symbiotic projects and stop viewing each other antagonistically if their financial plight is to improve.

2. Theory and Method

In grappling with issues of *sungura* music's development, we adopted a qualitative research design in this study. According to Creswell (2008: 46) in qualitative research "...the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions and collects data consisting largely of words from participants..." Qualitative research methods were chosen because they are sensitive to the many mutually shaping influences that were encountered during this study (Lincoln & Guba: 1985). We collected data through open ended interviews and participant observation in live music shows coupled with thick descriptions and interpretation (Geertz: 1995). Bresler (1995) asserts that qualitative research methods such as participant observation and open ended interviews are adaptable to dealing with multiple realities. We immersed ourselves in *sungura* music performances and sought to incorporate emic perspectives from the *sungura* musicians themselves.

Relations amongst artists in *sungura* music generate an intriguing discourse in music plagiarism. We use a combination of anthropological, ethnomusicological theory and critical African cultural studies to trace the origin of *sungura* music as well as

mount an ontology that proposes new lenses through which to view and refer to diverse characters plying their trades in Zimbabwe's sungura music. The crux of the theoretical lenses that we used for purposes of analysing sungura music's development were borrowed from diffusionism, which asserts that "cultural traits move over time and space out from the point of origin" (Stone 2008: 27). In a quest to trace the development of *sungura* from East and Central Africa through a close study of *sungura* artists, seminal perspectives were borrowed from anthropological keen interest in cultural traits and how they diffuse over time from one place to another. The theory which undergirded this research proposes that music performance, including *sungura*, originates from a particular location and spreads to other places over long distances and the passage of time. Thus in this study which sought to trace the development of *sungura* music in Zimbabwe, the tenet of diffusionism purports that societies are built of many traits which exhibit various origins and histories (Stone, 2008:29) provided the basis for analysing the historiography of *sungura* music. In depth investigations into *sungura* artists and their various pathways were done in a bid to establish the degree to which they exhibited competencies to create within *sungura* music. It is through that analysis that we hoped to establish the best way to explain the emergence of *sungura* music in Zimbabwe.

After exploring factors affecting the plight of sungura artists based on insights drawn from musical ethnography, the paper identifies trendsetters, emulators and copycats as the existing identities in which sungura players find themselves as they occupy different poshtos in *sungura* music. Trendsetters tower as iconic figures. Upcoming artists end up emulating the sungura trendsetters because they do not have control over the means of music production, impoverished as they are by neo-colonial machinations. They are left with no option but to create around what is perceived as lucrative by record producing companies, not mere intent to plagiarize others' intellectual property. We use critical African cultural studies, which represent marginalized groups with a transformative agenda and propose that sungura artists should value their connectedness and mutual intelligibility, which we think is a priori to their future success. We argue that record labels propel the upsurge in emulators since they offer recording contracts to artists who play *sungura* music because of the financial benefit it brings to their stables.

3. The Etymology of *Sungura*

Sungura is a Swahili name for a rabbit (Digolo & Njooora 2009). *Sungura* music seems to logically resemble the character of the rabbit in folktales that were told to us as we grew up. Notably in the folktales, the rabbit is largely depicted as a wise and cunning little animal. According to N. Zackaria (personal communication, 12 August 2012) taking the character of the rabbit to symbolize *sungura* music is because it is played fast with immense creative imagination and artistry in the style of the guitars, drums and vocals. The majority of *sungura* songs on the local music market are a portrayal of some highly complex performance skills on instruments hence we can visualize the craftiness and antics of the rabbit as the music plays on. A couple of writers (Kwaramba 1997, Eyre 2001 and Mhiripiri 2010) have based their definition of *sungura* music on its distinctively fast rhythm and supposed East African origin and this resonates in tune with our linking it to genres from there.

Sungura music evolved from a combination of musical genres from the East and Central African region (Murombo 2005). Respondents revealed that *sungura* was born as Zimbabweans emulated *soukous*⁶ and *benga*⁷ from Central Africa. The main features of *sungura* typify *soukous* and *benga* music. According to N. Zachariah (personal communication, 2012) the term *sungura* was derived from a record label from East and Central Africa, particularly Kenya and Tanzania. The music distributed on the *sungura* label was *benga*, *rhumba* and *soukous* which Zimbabwean musicians emulated. Some record companies distributed music from the late 1960s to the early 1970s on *kanindo* and *sungura* labels. N. Zachariah is a music artist and he said in the interview that he the music he plays is *sungura*. After independence in 1980 radio and television broadcasts became open to indigenous music hence the shift towards *sungura*. The impetus to play the indigenous music is also linked to the local record companies' deliberate promotion of *sungura*.

After 1980 some of the prominent record companies like Gramma Records, Record and Tape Promotions (RTP) and Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC)

⁷ The term *soukous* comes from a French word *secouer* which means to shake. The genre originated in the Belgian and French Congo in 1930s to the 1940s. It is the predecessor of *kwasa kwasa* and *ndombolo*. It is also called African rumba.

⁸ The genre that emerged in the 1970s and has similarities with the rumba played on guitar in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

encouraged new and old musicians who were contracted them to play *sungura* music. In corroborating with the role of record companies, an experienced producer and engineer with ZMC, Mabaleka (2010) said that “As engineers we used to give our old and new musicians records and audio cassettes with music from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tanzania.” He went on to say that the musicians would practice the style of music on the polyvinyl records and audiocassettes from the *sungura* label. One of the reasons why recording engineers encouraged artists to emulate music on the *sungura* label was that it was popular among clients and they stood to benefit from sales if more artists played it.

With time record companies found that the *sungura* label had high sales so it made sense to promote it. Whilst it was rational to assert that *sungura* music appealed to the people, the underlying lyrics in Swahili or other foreign languages did not convey meaning to the majority of Zimbabweans. Singing in local languages would be appreciated by more people. In this scenario the record companies in Zimbabwe took advantage of musicians singing in local languages to proliferate recording and distribution of *sungura* music. In the process they forced the local Zimbabwean musicians to adapt a new style with lyrics in Shona and or Ndebele languages. This actually marked the birth of emulators. Our main target are the record companies such as Gallo, Teal and Trutone records, which were subsidiaries of South African record labels. They played a big role in the rise and development of *sungura* music out of sheer pursuit of the resultant financial gains they stood to gain since *sungura* has recorded high weekly sales in Zimbabwe (Mhiripiri 2011). Since local Zimbabwean musicians had a task to emulate the *sungura* music, it implied producing a fusion of the genres of rumba, *benga*, *kanindo* and *soukous* with their indigenous genres such as *masiganda*, *mhande*, *shangara*, *jiti* and *tsavatsava* that they had been playing for a long time. The resultant genre that emerged is *sungura* music which at the present moment is unique to Zimbabwe, even though one can sense a feel of rumba, *benga*, *kanindo* and *soukous* in it.

According to Mr. Murombo, the then financial director at Gramma, (personal communication, 2005) more than 70% of the musicians contracted to Gramma Records specialized in *sungura* music and most of them were Shona speaking. Even though the majority was Shona, *sungura* has also grown immensely among the Ndebele and

Kalanga communities in western Zimbabwe. The late Beatah Mangete, Nduna Malaba, the late Solomon Skuza, Chase Skuza, Tukuye and Ndolwane Sounds are some of the Ndebele/Kalanga musicians who play *sungura* music.

In Zimbabwe, *sungura* music depends on the musician's background. It can have dominance of any of the following: *kwasa kwasa*⁸, *rumba*, *benga*, *soukous* or Zimbabwean traditional musical genres. It is common for Zezuru musicians to play *shangara* and *jiti*. The *Karanga* people usually play *mhande*. *Mbende* is a common genre amongst people of Murewa and Mutoko areas. *Jiti* is a contemporary genre among the generality of the Shona ethnic groups. *Tsavatsava* is practiced among the *Korekore* people of northwestern Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding the geographical locations of the local styles and genres, it is important to note that to date people from different cultural backgrounds come together for a myriad of reasons, resulting in increased diffusion of musical styles. In essence the knowledge concerning traditional music and practice has become accessible to many through information technology (IT) via the radio, television, DVD, CD and internet. Therefore the IT has enabled Zimbabwe to be one big constituency with a variety of genres due to various music genres coming in contact with each other.

OK Success is one of the earliest Congolese bands to settle in Harare in the 1960s (<http://www.embargo.ca/zim/artists/bios/oksucc/index.htm>⁹). The late James Chimombe was once a member of Ok Success Band. From the 1970s some Zimbabwean musicians began to emulate musical styles of musicians from the then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. The likes of Zexie Manatsa, Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi, whose music featured on radio in the early 1970s, had songs with a strong resemblance of *sungura* music. The term *sungura* came into prominent use after independence and most bands specialized in music by musicians from East and Central Africa. The visiting bands that found a new home in Harare included Limpopo Jazz Band, Orchestra Mangelepa and Real Sounds of Africa. In addition to the above bands, Sam Mangwana, Pepe Kale, Alouis Mabele, Kanda Bongoman, Alan Koukou, Yondo Sister, Koffi Olomide, Lubumbashi Stars and Extra Musica visited Zimbabwe after

⁹ A fast pace kind of soukous that evolved in the Congo region in the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

⁹ [Editor's note: This and the other weblinks in this article are no longer active, as of February 17, 2014. Please see the end of the reference list for information of the latest retrieval dates of these links.]

1980 (Zindi 2003). An indigenous Zimbabwean guitar style, *masiganda*, also borrowed certain techniques from the East and Central African influence (Pfukwa, 2010:172). The Zimbabwean indigenous guitar style utilized a technique combining rhythm and bass lines on an acoustic guitar. In Zimbabwe *masiganda* music emerged in the 1940s. In the late 1970s there emerged a strong influence of rhumba thereby influencing music in Zimbabwe. *Sungura* music thus results from influences of rhumba, kanindo, soukous, indigenous styles and *masiganda* which came in contact as people migrated through time and space. Most *sungura* bands' rhythm guitarists play the *masiganda* technique.

4. The Growth of *Sungura* Music in Zimbabwe

We attribute the rise of *sungura* music to the freedom from colonialism and the increased opportunity to play Zimbabwean indigenous music on national radio and television stations. It can be seen as a symbol of rising self-consciousness amongst local music artists with a newly found freedom to express their experiences. Before independence most popular musicians did not specialize in specific genres since they played a variety of music when recording was a nightmare due to segregative colonial attitudes. Notably, Zexie Manatsa, a very prolific bass guitarist and lead vocalist who rose to fame in the mid 1970s, played music with *nyanja* and *chewa* lyrics. Zexie Manatsa also played *mbaqanga*, a genre from South Africa, fused with Zimbabwean *tsavatsava*, *shangara*, *mbende*, *jiti* beats as well as the styles from East and Central Africa. In the 1970s musicians who played fusions of musical genres included Doctor Footswitch, Okavango Boys, Search Brothers, Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi. After 1980 there was a general shift towards specialized performance of musical genres with many bands focusing on playing indigenous music genres of Zimbabwe. Specialization in *sungura* music was a gradual process as many musicians came into the popular music industry (Pfukwa, 2011).

In the 1980s the late musicians Ephraim Joe, John Chibadura, Simon and Naison Chimbetu formed a band called Sungura Boys. Many other musicians including the late Cephas Mashakada, the late Leonard Dembo, Nicholas Zachariah, Jonah Moyo, Mashura, the late Tongai Moyo, Hosiah Chipanga, Aaron Chinamira, Alick Macheso, Mitchell Jambo, Cosmus Chuma, Solo Moyo, the late System Phaniel Tazvida, Ketai Muchawayaya and Admire Kasenga began to specialize in *sungura* music after

independence. It is now a common trend for Zimbabwean popular musicians to specialize in and record music of one specific genre thus avoiding a mixed bag of songs (<http://www.embargo.ca/zim/artists>).

The large number of *sungura* artists in Zimbabwe is attributed to the fact that the major recording studios in the recording industry promote this genre more than any other, albeit for making profits. In essence *sungura* music, as a product of signification, is largely driven by Gramma Records (GR), Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC) and Record and Tape Promotion (RTP) who record the majority of the big name *sungura* artistes in Zimbabwe, resulting in the playing of *sungura* music by upcoming emulators. However it is important to note that Gramma leads the recording industry in terms of the most prominent *sungura* artistes as well as the highest gross earnings per musician. At the time of writing this paper, Gramma Records and Zimbabwe Music Corporation were entities belonging to Elias Musakwa, a Zimbabwean businessman who is also a gospel musician and an engineer/producer in the recording industry. The obvious reason for pro-studios to encourage new musicians to emulate the trendsetters the fact that the sales of their type of music are very high hence they boost their business. Macheso is a superbly gifted musician, an intelligent composer, arranger, performer choreographer and dancer. He plays with skill during his live shows and on the dance floor he leads by example as a gifted entertainer. A year after Macheso broke away from Gramma Records his album which was recorded in the Republic of South Africa shot to the top in sales and popularity. His 2007 album, *Ndezvashe*, was awarded a prize for the best album of the year. The same project also won the best track and video for the year 2007. Macheso proved that it is possible to record successfully outside the country without involving a major local recording company.

Somandla Ndebele is another musician who also left Gramma Records and did a recording project in South Africa in 2007. The idea of breaking away from the local recording companies can be good for established musicians as it may eventually lead them to establish their own recording studios. Going by the success of most big musicians like Macheso, Tongai Moyo and Charles Charamba, chances are that musicians can do better financially if they take the same route. Mapfumo and Mtukudzi are both legendary musicians not in the *sungura* fraternity who have achieved great success after breaking away from the local major recording labels. The experience that

the above-mentioned artistes gained while contracted to the local recording companies helped them to forge ahead with their recording business successfully. It can be conceived as having set a remarkable trend of breaking away from the big record companies a fit that Tongayi Moyo and Nicholas Zachariah have not done.

According to an unpublished research that we conducted in 2006, the total number of *sungura* musicians outnumbered all other musicians in the Zimbabwe music industry. The list of names of musicians who play *sungura* is inexhaustible because new musicians come onto the scene on a regular basis. Some *sungura* artistes with a lot of influence over other musicians set trends in the music industry and are also responsible for the growth of *sungura* music in terms of creativity.

5. Trendsetters and Emulators in *Sungura* Music

In this article we view trendsetters as *sungura* artistes who begin unique brands that become popular and exert influence on other musicians. The emergence of musicians who fall under the trendsetters is a combination inborn prowess, timing and luck. Trendsetters possess the ability to popularize some playing styles, vocal techniques and performance motifs, which other *sungura* artistes then emulate, and use in different ways. This popularity is gauged through high record sales and then propelled by record companies which encourage emulators to follow the creative ground breakers. From independence in 1980 the Zimbabwean popular music industry has grown from a small entity to a big force to reckon with. Despite the exponential growth in the number of artistes playing *sungura* music, not all *sungura* musicians fall under the category of trendsetters.

Trendsetting musicians consistently become icons because of their outstanding lyrics, playing style, dance and live show performances. In the category of trendsetters certain musicians have more impact on the popular music industry than others.

Ephraim Joe is one of the earliest *sungura* music players and he worked with many aspiring musicians in his band *Sungura Boys* such as Franco Hodobo, the late System Tazvida, Nicholas Zachariah, Alick Macheso, and the late John Chibadura who all emulated him. The bands that rose to fame during the time of Ephraim Joe were the Tembo brothers, *Sungura boys*, *Mawonera Stars*, *Mverechena Band* and the *Muddy Face* in the early 1980s. The likes of Nicholas Zachariah, Alick Macheso, Simon

Chimbetu, Leonard Dembo, Solomon Skhuza and System Tazvida are typical examples. These musicians have influenced *sungura* musicians in different ways. Nicholas Zachariah's lead guitar playing style has inspired so many young aspiring artists to play like him. Alick Macheso's bass guitar skills, socially relevant lyrics, vocal technique and arrangement of music have set the whole music industry alight and many upcoming artists admire him and try to play like him. Simon Chimbetu's vocal rendition, ululation and chants have lead to other artists emulating him. Leonard Dembo's lead guitar and lyrical comments on social issues influenced musicians to emulate him. The late Peter Tazvida, LeeRoy Kamusena and Cosmus Chuma are emulators of the late System Tazvida's blend of *sungura* music. Solomon Skuza is responsible for taking *sungura* to the Kalanga people in Zimbabwe. The likes of Kwejani Band, Ndolwane Sounds, Tukuye stars and Nduna Malaba are emulators of Solomon Skuza, a legend of *sungura* music in the 1980s. Today there are numerous *sungura* artistes and bands in Bulawayo, a place of the Ndebele people. Most of these artistes sing the songs in either Ndebele or Kalanga languages.

Alick Macheso set a new trend where a *sungura* band plays four guitars namely main rhythm, sub-rhythm, lead and bass, as did Nicholas Zachariah and Simon Chimbetu. Such an approach to the performance of *sungura* music brings out highly polyrhythmic music. Macheso and Zachariah can be labeled trendsetters in that there are so many young and upcoming artistes that follow their style of play among them are Joseph Garakara, Somandla Ndebele, Norman Tapambwa, Lenie Maketa and Solo Moyo just to name a few. Furthermore, Macheso, being a bass maestro, has revolutionized *sungura* as he commonly showcases his artistry on the bass guitar while the other instruments are quiet or subdued to give him space. Other selected instruments in his band are also afforded an opportunity to display proficiency in playing with the rest of the accompanying instruments remaining in the background. Such a scenario of showcasing skill in a band is now very common among *sungura* artists of today but its owed to Alick Macheso. Although Macheso was a highly skilled bassist and a singer under the leadership of Zachariah with Khiama Boys, he did not have much impact over his peers until he began to lead his own band.

There have been cries by *sungura* musicians about copycats. Macheso recorded and published a song, 'Murondatsimba' (copycat) to ridicule musicians from stealing

his intellectual property. What is amazing about this cry is that it only ended in the newspapers, magazines, the radio and television without a lawsuit against any artist. In many instances evidence to substantiate these claims has not been that easy hence the musicians have now resorted to mudslinging and engaging in a war of words through music. Alick Macheso and Tongai Moyo for example, traded insults “*usavhundutsirwe nezizi kuti rinenyanya, hadzisi nyanga inzeve*” (do not be intimidated by an owl thinking that it has horns, they are not horns but ears), and “*ini ndinoziva kuti zizi harina nyanga, asi kuti rakagara pamusoro penyanga*” (I know that an owl has no horns, but it is sitting on the horns). For some time they were the top two *sungura* artists and their song arrangements followed similar patterns and it is not clear who emulated who. We think Macheso (and any other *sungura* trendsetter) should focus on his intimacy and connectedness with emulators, rather than concentrating on divisiveness.

In 2005 Macheso accused Gramma Records for the proliferation of a legion of musicians whom he alleges to have been persuaded to emulate the big names such as Macheso, Dembo, Zachariah and Moyo. Macheso’s claim looks as if it has substance as the majority of the emulators are contracted to the recording companies where the trendsetters are contracted. Notably, Macheso has never sued any copycat. It is quite complicated to settle a dispute in *sungura* music seeing as that it is difficult to draw fundamental differences in the style of playing of instruments. The focus on theft of intellectual property should therefore be clearly understood to make sure artistes have convincing evidence to take up legal action. *Sungura* is an intricate genre of music with polyphonic rhythms and sounds which are cumbersome to discriminate specific motifs as having been stolen from a musician. This is the reason why there has never been any lawsuit to settle copyright infringement in the *sungura* music fraternity. It is quite amazing that some musicians do not worry about other musicians emulating or imitating their *sungura* style. Macheso needs to be reminded that *sungura* is a product of fusion of styles that came before he started playing it. He also emulated the great artistry of his predecessors and should not selfishly deny his youngsters the chance to emulate him.

Ketayi Muchawaya, Knowledge Kunenyati and Marko Sibanda are *sungura* artistes who featured in the music industry soon after 1980. They had spent considerable time in Tanzania during the war of liberation for Zimbabwe and they were responsible for popularizing the dance style that was later developed into Borrowdale. Borrowdale

is contemporary dance where dancers imitate the galloping horses at the Borrowdale race course in Harare. Ketayi Muchawaya and his members were a marvel to watch as they danced on stage as Kasongo band. The current musicians of today choreographed it into what we have as Borrowdale and all its related dancing styles. Ketayi Muchawaya and Kasongo Band were also responsible for the growth and rise of *sungura* with some of the hits, *Kana uchida kuguta*, *Chitepo*, *Kudai uriwe* and *Mandivengereiko*. Indeed the original Kasongo Band was one of the forerunners of the *sungura* genre in Zimbabwe.

Leonard Dembo as a trendsetter of *sungura* influenced Tongai Moyo, First Farai, King Pharaoh and Innocent Mijuntu. The above-mentioned musicians have become great names in their own right though one can trace the musical style of play and motifs to the late Dembo. Although Dembo never used to include some talking along his music it has become a trademark for Tongai Moyo to joke, tease, mock, warn and show off during his performance. In most of his recording projects including the latest release of 2008 there is a common trend of showing his virtuosity on the guitar in a solo segment of a song. Such a trend has become very popular among many *sungura* artistes who include Macheso. Although a good number of the current *sungura* artistes use the style of show off through talking, the musician who popularized it is the late Paul Matavire.

Nicholas Zachariah is known as ‘Senior Lecturer’ because he is an instructor who has taught several other musicians how to play *sungura* music. He earned the nickname ‘Senior Lecturer’ for his invaluable help to many musicians to achieve an admirable style of playing the guitar. He began his career in 1967 and has never looked back. Macheso and all his emulators owe their success to Nicholas Zachariah. Zachariah’s emulators include Paradzai Mesi, Joseph Garakara, Gift Amuli and Norman Tapambwa who are among many *sungura* musicians who use the bass guitar and other selected instruments to demonstrate their fine skills in their songs. Listening to the music of Zachariah, Macheso, Garakara, Amuli, Ndebele and Tapambwa shows that there are a lot of identifiable similarities in terms of arrangement and style. With 24 albums to his discography Zachariah addresses a variety of socio-economic and religious themes in his music. Likewise his emulators also compose and perform songs that address matters in social and economic spheres.

Nicholas Zachariah has however not been accorded many accolades for all the achievements he has realized. He does not complain about lack of recognition even

though he has done well. Furthermore Zachariah has often more often allowed his own band members including his brother Zachariah to leave him (Nicholas) to join other rival bands. Many musicians have budded from Nicholas Zachariah and as such he never complains against any one of them for being emulators or copycats. Nicholas Zachariah and the late System Tazvida never complained of theft of their musical works yet they have many who play *sungura* music like them.

Paul Matavire was uniquely gifted at cracking jokes in all his performances. His lyrics showed knowledge of social issues, current affairs and the ability to articulate Shona proverbial expressions very well. He was blind and gifted in both singing and comedy on stage. His popularity was not commensurate with what he earned through his musical career. Research is needed to find out whether it was his personal failure or a result of exploitation through piracy or exploitation by his recording company. However, towards the end of his life he lived a miserable life. He fell sick with tuberculosis and did not have enough money to pay for the medical bills. He is not the only popular musician who died in abject poverty. The likes of John Chibadura, Leonard Dembo and Paul Mpofo also went through similar experience before they passed on. His style was emulated by David Mabvuramiti.

Simon Chimbetu was one of the trendsetters in *sungura* music in Zimbabwe. Playing music in the townships and public places was misconstrued as a profession for scruffy rogues and drunkards. The late Simon Chimbetu proved that popular musicians could be smart and progressive people. He is known for his strict insistence on elegance to all his band members. Besides smartness, Chimbetu became famous for his music that resembled the African bird *Dendera* and a strong presence of the east African *kanindo* style with vocals executed in Shona and Swahili. Today a number of *sungura* bands such as Dindingwe Stars, Kapfupi, Tryson Chimbetu and the Marxist Brothers, Briam, Allan and Sulumani Chimbetu all follow after Simon Chimbetu's style of *sungura* music. Simon Chimbetu inducted his brothers and children to play *sungura* music, a trait that is not so common among most musicians (Pfukwa 2010:175). It was rumored in Harare in the 1990s that Simon's brother Naison had plagiarized his song and recorded it but there was no lawsuit to that effect as the rumor eventually dissipated. Simon Chimbetu set the art of showing off through his ululating, vocables, chants, clothing, gestures and body movements. Today many of Chimbetu's emulators

do everything that Simon did while performing on stage. According to Simon Chimbetu (personal communication, 2005) “*Kana vamwe vaimbi vachitevedzera maridziro angu zvinoratidza kuti vanoafarira uye musambo weDendera uri kukura*” (If other artists follow the way I play sungura music, it shows that the style is being appreciated by others and growing). The legacy that we can see through his emulators shows that Simon Chimbetu was a liberal trendsetter who enjoyed the success of other musicians especially his own brothers.

System Tazvida formed his band the Chazezesa Challengers in 1993 in Chitungwiza. System Tazvida’s musical themes were drawn largely from the hot social issues and he can be regarded as a trendsetter. His *sungura* music was based on three guitars bass, lead and rhythm. The uniqueness of his voice placed him in a class of his own coupled with a rare compositional proficiency that took his fans to real life situations. Such compositions warned, rebuked, encouraged, answered questions and encouraged those in love and consoled the bereaved and solace to the divorced and dejected. His approach to life was particularly surprising as he was never threatened by the potential skill among his band members. According to LeeRoy Kamusena (2006) a guitarist and band member with System Tazvida, all members in their band were afforded opportunities to learn and play all instruments and sing without restriction. Perhaps this is the reason why he never complained if the music from upcoming artistes sounded like his (System Tazvida) own.

LeeRoy Kamusena and **Cosmus Chuma** are among some of the musicians whose music emulates that of System Tazvida. It is the hope of many that those following the footsteps of the great artistes do not plagiarize their music. Though the above referred musicians sound like System Tazvida, they have done well to find their own peculiar traits that one would never find in someone else. In this regard it can be observed that System Tazvida is a trendsetter rather than an emulator. System, a Khiama Boys alumnus, grew sick of not receiving his fair share of royalties and decided to form his own band. Both his stints in Khiama Boys and the Sungura Boys had ended without any financial compensation (<http://www.zimmusic.org>).

Tongai Moyo, despite taking off as an emulator of Leonard Dembo and even mentioning in one of his early releases that he personally admired him, has finally branded his own type of sungura music. Since coming onto the music scene in 1988, he

has endeared himself to the sungura loving fans through his popular sungura sound and his group Utakataka Express commands a large following in Zimbabwe. His release of albums has been quite prolific indeed and some of them actually topped the local music charts. He has successfully held joint shows with other artists like Oliver Mutukudzi to give some top drawer performance acts, apart from his own concerts and national music galas. At one stage he has actually competed with Alick Macheso to hog the limelight in Zimbabwe's *sungura* music.

6. *Sungura* Music on Radio and Television

Since 1980 there have been a number of programs on radio and television to promote *sungura* music. The majority of the programs were sponsored by the recording companies, such as the program *Dzimbo neGramma* (songs with Gramma), *Dzichangoburwa neZMC*, (new releases at ZMC), and *Dzimbo itsva neRTP* (new releases from RTP). The above-mentioned approach was removed in 2000 after the government enacted the law that authorized the 75% of local music on radio and television. The legislation was meant to allow other small and upcoming recording companies to participate in the recording industry.

The demands of the Broadcast Services Act of April 2000 implied that the radio and television were flooded with locally recorded music. While this legislation was good, it did not give advantage to small recording studios as they could not record quality *sungura* like the professional studios. The majority of the new recording studios engaged in recording hip hop and other loop based genres. In essence *sungura* has not been the domain of computer-based musicians because the use of live musical instruments is the main tenet of *sungura* music especially the guitar and the drums. As the bulk of musicians played *sungura* music, the radio stations played this genre without stiff competition from other genres. In addition the point alluded to in the previous sentence, the setting up of National FM (NFM), Spot (SFM), Power FM (PFM) and Radio Zimbabwe (RZ), all subsidiaries of Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), still gave a positive thrust to the promotion of *sungura*. Currently *sungura* music takes up more than 50% airplay on NFM and RZ, radio stations which are the widely listened to by the majority of the Zimbabweans. Other radio stations cater for other genres other than *sungura* even though occasionally they indulge in some *sungura* shots on air.

7. *Sungura* Music Live Show Performance

The approach to live shows in the early 1980s was largely confined to enclosed environments and seldom in open air settings. Not until after 2000, at the initiative of the then Minister of Information Prof Jonathan Moyo, a new wave of open live shows by the name of “galas” gained momentum. Initially they were meant to enhance political influence and propaganda of the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). The galas were normally held all night long with numerous bands and ensembles taking turns to strut their frenzy musicals on stage and drive the audience wild ecstatic with enjoyment. Most of the galas were held on national holidays such as the Heroes, Independence, Unity Day or the commemoration of the principal national heroes like the late Vice Presidents Joshua Nkomo and Simon Muzenda. As the galas started to gain momentum, all the national events got attached to the concept. Notwithstanding the fact that entrance was free, it is vital also to note that the presence of *sungura* musicians at the gala guarantees the success of the event.

While some people attend the live shows, others benefit from the live broadcast that is done through the national television and radio stations and in the end the galas are watched by many people. Although they try to bring a variety of musical genres to the galas, the people of Zimbabwe will be quick to agree that it is the *sungura* musicians who provide the best form of entertainment because they play live instruments. The computer-based performers play second fiddle to those performing on live instruments. At some galas people refuse to be addressed by the politicians as they feel they are deprived of their right to music. In 2006 at a gala held in Gweru at Ascot Stadium, the audience kept cheering and chanting the name of Alick Macheso thus refusing to be addressed by the political stalwart Emmerson Mnangagwa. It was only after Mr. Mnangagwa chanted a slogan, “*Pamberi naMacheso!*” (Forward with Macheso) that the crowd allowed him to deliver his speech. Tongai Moyo, Nicholas Zachariah, Paradzai Mesi, Somandla Ndebele, Cephaz Mashakada, Hosiah Chipanga can stage and manage all night long live shows on their own since they are capable of taking the entertainment to the people with sufficient variety of music. *Sungura* live shows are entertaining as female and male dancers with highly rigorous foot and body movement hog the limelight. However it is sometimes heart-wrecking to see some of the female dancers’ dressing close to nudity. Some *sungura* bands detest the use of female dancers in their

rank and file. Nicholas Zachariah is one of the musicians who use an all-male group of dancers and singers.

8. Conclusion

Sungura music is the most widely played music on Zimbabwean radio and television especially during prime time. The trendsetters have placed a lot of influence over the young and upcoming *sungura* musicians. There is no tangible evidence that the big *sungura* musicians are being bootlegged as they have not been able to prove a case in point in a court of law. Musicians who can prove infringement of their works should seek legal advice and sue the perpetrators instead of going to the press to engage in war of words with the accused. The trendsetting musicians should mentor young and aspiring musicians rather than accuse them of stealing their intellectual property. We are not naïve to copyright law but think that clear cases of plagiarism of song material would warrant prosecution, but it must be separated from emulation. Musicians should team up and set up professional recording studios to reduce costs of recording their albums. It is important that musicians seek legal counsel before they sign recording contracts. There is need to expose musicians to investment opportunities that are available for them to engage in so that their future is secure. The Musicians Union of Zimbabwe should be revived and a robust program set up to create awareness among members of their rights in the music industry, as well as cooperation. After all, *sungura* music is not about emphasizing cultural difference and separation but rather a deep connectedness of what has become a uniquely Zimbabwean popular music genre.

We suggest that *sungura* artists should start seeing each other as trendsetters and emulators, and forge ways of assisting each other to improve their art and plight. It is futile for trendsetters to bemoan their otherwise positive influence on the emulators by crying foul, when they started their own careers they were inspired by more experienced musicians also. What lacks is the economic resource to evade exploitation by record companies and if a formula is created to muscle them out, *sungura* musicians will exercise their creative rights without conditions. Upcoming artists who intend to ply their trade in *sungura* music should be accommodated so that it continues to grow as a genre. Synergies between trendsetters and emulators in joint shows and song production are examples of ways to engage in fruitful relationships. It is imperative that *sungura*

artists start recording their own music if they are to recognize financial gains from show business. Critical African Cultural Studies provides a self-conscious forum to inform *sungura* artists and other key players in the music industry to work towards changing attitudes, transforming institutions and appealing to performers to aim at development networking.

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