

Perceptions on the Change of Mbira dzavadzimu music, Context and Performance Practice: Traditionalists versus Post-modernists

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Abstract

The field of African musicology and ethnomusicology is currently grappling with the changes taking place in music performances as a result of global influence. This has led to conflicting views between traditionalists and postmodernists. This paper explores the reactions and responses of some members of the Zimbabwean community towards the alterations in mbira dzavadzimu music, its context, and performance practice as a result of global influence. The study employed a qualitative survey, using individual and focus group interviews to collect data from purposively sampled cultural music owners and modern trained cultural bearers. The findings of this study reveal two contrasting perspectives on the transformations occurring in mbira dzavadzimu music and performance practice. On one hand, postmodernists, who embrace innovations and new technologies, welcome the changes and believe that adjusting mbira dzavadzimu music and performance practice to fit the modern world is a step in the right direction. They also emphasize the importance of upholding Zimbabwe's cultural heritage while understanding that the world is changing and Zimbabwe cannot be left behind. On the other hand, traditionalists argue that these transformations will undermine the authenticity of traditional mbira dzavadzimu music and performance practice. They contend that mbira dzavadzimu music should be performed in its original form and that modifying the instrument will distort the Shona cultural heritage.

Keywords: Traditionalists, modernists, commodified, authenticity, heritage