



Pursuance of academic music studies by popular Zimbabwe musicians

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Abstract

Some popular musicians in Zimbabwe have taken up professional development seriously and enrolled in academic music studies, yet no research has been done to explore this recent phenomenon. Whenever the subject of Zimbabwean music is discussed, the focus tends to centre on popular artists, their lifestyles, achievements and scandals. The emerging trend in which Zimbabwean artists are enrolling for academic programs has received little scholarly interrogation. This is the scenario despite the fact that education is the backbone for the development of the music industry, which is part of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The main aim of this article is to consider how music studies impact and broaden the scope of the artists and contribute to the betterment of the Zimbabwe music industry. In this qualitative study, we purposively sampled and interviewed 7 popular Zimbabwean musicians who embarked on academic music studies. Data were collected through key informant interviews to solicit their views on the value that music education adds to their professional careers in terms of transforming their performances, compositions and application of music theory to analyses musical issues, as well as observations and document analysis. The study was guided and informed by the theory of stereotype and Dweck's theory of mind-set. The findings steer an interesting discussion in which the musicians indicate how their capabilities and conduct of business are polished by their interaction with academia. We argue that the acquisition of professional academic qualifications by popular musicians adds value to their acts and encourage untrained musicians to seriously consider trudging the academic route for the development of the Zimbabwe music industry to realise its full potential.

Introduction

The Zimbabwe music industry is a place where popular musicians have often suffered from musical illiteracy instead of enlightenment. Musical literacy has remained a preserve of a few despite Zimbabwe being a signatory to the United Nations SDGs, one of which is to develop literate



populations worldwide, including musical literacy development. We notice that some Zimbabwean popular artists have recently developed an appetite to enrol for academic music degree programs¹, but these musicians are very few. The performing artists possessing academic qualifications that relate to their areas of work are very scarce despite the country's long history of music education and the presence of music curricula in several provinces.

The ability to read and write using music symbols is an important element of music performance, the international lingua franca for musicians from different nations. Popular musicians have never considered music education a necessity despite its potential to improve their professionalism and the music industry. Community-based music teaching and learning hinged on the oral tradition has consistently provided competent performing artists. Many Zimbabwean popular artists who showcase outstanding performance skills have no traceable music academic qualifications. The recent gradual heightened interest in academic music programs is a reversal from the initial position and perception of performing artists who did not recognize the value of acquiring academic music qualifications.

Theory

Negative stereotyping is damaging and based on incorrect and inaccurate information and is used to defend a position in society, disaffiliation, or propaganda. This article shows that negative perceptions towards music performers and the academic study of music are crafted to downplay them in society. Prejudice and stereotypes are embedded in social discernment, which involves the development of an attitude towards phenomena. For example, people may covertly attribute character properties to music studies and musical artists. In Zimbabwe, urombe (vagrancy) has become an identity code for some musicians. Prejudicial behaviour can progress through malice, verbal putdowns, nasty jokes (Allport, 1988), and negative views about phenomena.

Also noticeable among some Zimbabwe's popular musicians is the motivation and inspiration to improve their intellectual growth and artistic achievements. Based on such a trend, this study is also guided by Dweck's mindset theory. Dweck (2000) situates beliefs and approaches to intelligence in two categories: fixed and growth mindsets. Those that harbour a fixed mindset view intelligence as innate and fixed from birth, and normally these people are reluctant to change their intellectual level. Those with a growth mindset believe intelligence is flexible. We can learn and improve through determination and perseverance. This study views a stereotype as incorrect, inaccurate and unverified information from societal misperception. It is mainly the influence based on generalisation, how society views the musicians. However, Dweck's theory of mindset is regarded as an individual's effort that manifests either in changing or not changing the musician's intellectual level.

Methodology

This qualitative study examines the benefits of academic music studies to popular musicians, in view of an increased uptake of degree programs by a number of them in recent years. This examination is done by making particular reference to 7 artists who have enrolled for degree programs (those with a growth mindset (Dweck 2000)) who are established and famous in Zimbabwe's music industry. Key informant interviews were conducted with these purposively sampled Zimbabwean popular musicians to solicit their views on embarking on music education programs. The interviews solicited

¹ Music degree programs is used interchangeably with music studies in this paper



their reasons for studying music and how that has improved their lot. We position their move in a continuum of developing tertiary music education programs in the country. We situated the analysis within specific research questions to develop a reasonable interpretation because the research questions guide the analysis of texts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; McKee, 2003).

This paper provides insights into the wider policy implications of including popular artists in the musical literacy development agenda, in line with the SDGs on education development. The study can influence changes congruent with all stakeholders' (music educators, popular musicians and Zimbabwe music industry players) perceived needs. The research questions we set out to answer are: What motivates popular musicians to embark on the academic study of music? Why is it important to enrol for tertiary music studies? How is it beneficial to the professional career of a popular musician to learn music theory? And what advice can you give to other musical artists who have not started music studies?

Popular musicians' alma mater

Exploring the world's accomplished popular musicians' alma maters reveals intriguing details. Many popular musicians went to school pondering about their future careers and wondering if they could make their dreams come true, just like everyone else. Very few popular musicians did academic music and composition studies. For example, Sherly Crow is one notable Music Composition, Performance and Education Degree graduate from the University of Missouri's School of Music. A good number dropped out to pursue music careers before graduating, such as Madonna (University of Michigan Dance Scholarship), Rivers Cuomo (Harvard Classical Composition), Lady Gaga (NYU Tisch School of Arts and Songwriting), and Ludacris (Georgia State University Music Management). Under such a background, society tends to label popular musicians as people with low or fixed intelligence, hence having a stereotype perception. The majority of the industry's best artists pursued other careers before they made it in the music industry, such as Ice Cube (Architecture), John Legend (English Literature), Enrique Iglesias (Business), Jim Morrison (Film), Michelle Williams (Criminal Justice), Carrie Underwood (Mass Communication), Common (Business Administration), Art Garfunkel (Mathematics), Sara Bareilles (Communication) and many others. Many others grew up in the music industry and never got a chance to attend post-secondary education (Gemtracks Resources, 2023).

African musicians with degrees/degree holders include Congolese rumba artist Koffi Olomide who has a bachelor's degree in business economics from Bordeaux and a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Paris. Several Nigerian musicians who also hold degrees in various fields, including; Naeto C (Bachelor's degree in Biology from The George Washington University, and a Master's degree in Energy Studies from the University of Dundee; L.A.X (Bachelor's degree in Science from Salford University as well as masters; 2 Face (National diploma in Business Administration from Enugu and a Master's degree in Musical Arts from Igbinedion University in Nigeria; Dr Sid pursued a degree in Dental Surgery at the University of Ibadan; DJ Cuppy pursued a degree in Business and Economics and proceeded to do Master's degree in Music Business at New York University; Jidenna pursued a Bachelor's degree in Arts at Stanford University. Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine graduated with a bachelor's degree in the Arts from Makerere University. He also enrolled for a leadership course at Harvard Kennedy School of Government (Orimbatyson, 2022).

In Zimbabwe the scenario is the same. Mushaweto (2019) explores whether education is necessary for artists and argues that "while one does not necessarily need to be educated to be successful, it remains a fact that literacy is important for any trade." The theory of stereotype is also proving to be



inconsistent and inaccurate. The author/scholar discusses a sizeable number of Zimbabwean artistes who are holders of academic and professional qualifications: Tererai Mugwadi (Psychology), Decibel (Biochemistry), Plaxedes Wenyika (Economics and MBA), Cindy Munyavi (Marketing and Public Relations), Roy and Royce (Computers and Medical Laboratory respectively), Alexio Kawara (Engineering), David Chifunyise (Systems Engineering), Diana Samkange (Journalism and Communication) and Sanii Makhalima (Human Resources and MBA). He juxtaposes these against several Zimdancehall artists whom he says are mostly school dropouts and very secretive about their levels of education. However, the focus in his article is on non-music academic and professional qualifications. There is a glaring need to explore whether music education is necessary for musical artists, and therein lies the lacuna for this study. Recently, one of the 10 pillars of “The National Music Strategy of Zimbabwe 2022-2027”, pillar number 4, is “Education, capacity building and training”. The main objective of this pillar is to provide adequate training in music business skills.

Within the last decade, learning institutions in Zimbabwe have enrolled several famous artists such as Charles Charamba, Hope Masike, Edith ‘Weutonga’ Katiji, Clive ‘Mono’ Mukundu, Sandra Ndebele, Respina Patai and Albert Nyathi for music studies. If these artists have gained adequate skills necessary to entertain and satisfy their fans without musical literacy, what could be the motivation for pursuing academic qualifications now? If the same programs have been there before, what attracts the attention of these popular artists now? Where is the push for academic knowledge coming from? Is the source of this inspiration motivated by the needs of the Zimbabwe music industry? Is the push coming from intrinsic or extrinsic motivation? Against this background, this article sought to establish the value of academic music qualifications and knowledge to one who is already an established and famous artist.

Antonio (2022) says that in the past, music was only taught in former Group A Schools, while venturing into music studies was shunned and scoffed at by indigenous communities. Consequently, most of the country’s early music artists, such as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi, Ephraim Joe, Leonard Dembo, and Simon Chimbetu were not exposed to music education. Tertiary institutions offering music qualifications were the Zimbabwe College of Music in Harare and the Zimbabwe Music Academy in Bulawayo until the turn of the millennium when four universities started offering music studies. The artists rode on their passion and talent, despite the glaring need to back that up with professional qualifications. Antonio (2022) says “No doubt, when an artist acquires education it sharpens their talent, widens their horizons and takes their calling to a higher level.”

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development in Zimbabwe faces unemployment challenges for graduates. Jobs at the end of the academic journey are increasingly proving difficult to find/secure. The presence of popular music in university music degree programs entails inclining toward a vocational approach by emulating and re-creating the music industry itself on the college campus. Universities such as MSU have rebranded and added modules in the music business, music marketing and management, entrepreneurial skills, work-related learning internships, and portfolio development to their traditional musicology components as a natural reaction to the imbalance between available employment positions in the music industry. Department graduates have filled quite a number of lectureship positions, and those finishing their courses now face unemployment. To worsen their plight, popular musicians who are practically better than them in the trade because of their vast experience are enrolling as visiting or weekend school students. This threatens to reduce the younger graduates’ chances to land posts, hence the need to shift them from



employment seekers to entrepreneurs. The ministry has had to embrace Education 5.0, which adds a new emphasis on innovation and industrialisation to the usual focus on teaching, research and community engagement.

Bennett (2017) advises university curriculum designers to value versatility and societal relevance in making curricular decisions, even as it goes against the values instilled in those trained to be experts, as they debate the education of popular musicians in today's music schools. Bennett says, "Employable music graduates of the future may find themselves in different, unpredictable musical (and extra-musical) situations in their professional lives. The broader their skill sets and the wider their personal listening canons, the better placed they will be to respond to whatever creative gigs might come their way." Larson (2019: 08) says, "Music specialists must also receive training as recording engineers, songwriters, small business owners, producers, and performers." This approach can lead to a broadly skilled individual who stands a chance in the music industry as a business person, engineer or artist. The entrepreneurial and creative popular musician/artist's spirit of informal music-making is worth emulating. They do not produce music which will not sell on the market.

One challenge that could hinder popular musicians from coming to the music academy is the approach. These informally educated musicians arrive on campus facing the problem of adapting to a new learning mode. Bennett (2017) notes that popular musicians come from an informal, aural-based background in the music industry. Popular musicians' learning is an aural-based activity in the industry, performed in small group settings, encompassing a vast array of styles. It is best created democratically and collaboratively without a central leader/conductor (Bennett, 2017). College music programs focus on the literacy tradition and classical and jazz music. Green (2002) urges music lecturers to "put themselves into the position of young popular musicians and try some informal learning practices for themselves". Harrison (2017) notes that "After an extended period of informal learning practices...students enrol in the hope of expanding, enhancing or fine-tuning their knowledge acquisition through more formal learning methods...they want to be taught materials relevant to contemporary popular music, not how to write retrograde inversions of twelve-tone rows or how to improvise over Giant Steps at 160 bpm." This model does a disservice to these students, who may be talented, intelligent, intuitive, and ambitious.

History of music studies in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe College of Music (ZCM) is the first institution to offer formal music theory and practical aspects in Harare, then known as Rhodesia College of Music. This private institution was established by Professor Eileen Reynolds in 1947. The college offered The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and Trinity. The college offers courses in performance studies, disc jockeying and sound engineering to practising musicians. It introduced the Bandmasters Diploma in 1985. The bandmaster course was mainly designed to improve the level of musicality and orchestration skills. In 2013 the college affiliated to Africa University and introduced the Bachelor of Music Degree, majoring in ethnomusicology, jazz or bandmasters.

To date, a number of renowned artists have studied for the National and Advanced Certificate in music programs, as well as Bachelor of Music degree course with ZCM. These include but not limited to Charles Charamba, Dudu Manhenga, Clive Mukundu, Dumi Ngulube, James Chimombe, Chioniso Maraire, Hope Masike and Victor Kunonga. As part of its major objective to empower and improve the musicality of local artists, the college offers one on one or group lessons on instruments/ areas that include the nyunganyunga, nhare mbira, marimba, ngoma, hosho, and dance (indigenous and



contemporary). Also, western instruments such as keyboard, piano, recorder, vocal, brass (horn, trumpet, trombone, euphonium & tuba) and woodwind (flute, clarinets, saxophone) are taught.

The Zimbabwe Academy of Music was established in 1949 in Bulawayo. The institution started offering an individual theory of music courses drawn from ABRSM and Trinity syllabuses. The academy taught Western musical instruments like guitar, violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, brass and woodwinds. The institution assisted individuals, groups, music teachers, bandsmen from uniformed forces, and other aspiring musicians and artists to sit for ABRSM and Trinity-graded theory and international practice examinations.

Kwanongoma College of African Music (where drums are played/the place of singing) was founded in 1960 as a branch of the ZAM by Robert Sibson, who appreciated the sweet, rich musical traditions of both the Shona and Ndebele people. The major thrust of the college was to teach indigenous music and dance traditions (Zindi, 2014, Jones, 2012). Marimba and nyunganyunga mbira were manufactured there at a large scale. Music teachers produced by Kwanongoma include Alport Mhlanga, Abraham Dumisani Maraire, and the late Sheasby Matiure. Marimba and mbira manufacturers produced there include Wilson Tendai Machinga, Christopher Timbe, Michael Sibanda, and Almon Moyo.

The Midlands Academy of Music also assisted artists and aspiring musicians mainly with individualised music courses incorporating music theory and instrument playing. Music Crossroads Zimbabwe was mooted in 1995 but not until 2014 that the institution was registered as a trust. It then offered proper music teaching to mostly the disadvantaged and excluded youths. The institution assisted countless artists in launching their music careers. These artists and music bands include Progress Chipfumo, Mokoomba, First Farai, Munyaradzi Munodawafa, Willom Tight, and Bongo Love (Zambuko, 2014; Zindi, 2012).

In 1994 the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) was the first university to introduce a Bachelor of Education (Music) Degree in the Faculty of Education's Department of Teacher Education through an initiative by Natalie Kreutzer (Maguraushe and Matiure, 2015). It was an in-service program for lecturers from teachers' colleges who had graduated from Kwanongoma College of Music with certificates. Graduates from this program are mainly music educators. United Methodist Church-affiliated Africa University (AU) also offered a Bachelor of Education Degree with music as a specialisation from 1993. AU also trained teachers, later absorbed as lecturers in teachers' colleges and universities. Midlands State University (2004), and Great Zimbabwe University (2013) also started offering pure music degree programs (Maguraushe and Matiure, 2015). Maguraushe and Matiure, (2015: 34) say. However, all these institutions have played an important role in developing music literacy, a lot still needs to be done to make the nation aware of the benefits of studying music, especially popular musicians.

Zimbabwean popular artists who embarked on academic music studies

Charles Charamba

In September 2011, Charles Charamba graduated with a National Certificate in Music from ZCM. Charles is quoted in The Herald of 30 September 2011 saying, "I am very happy because I can now read and write music, and my main aim is to become an accomplished musician." Charamba studied for and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Jazz Degree at Africa University's affiliate, the Zimbabwe College of Music, in 2013. Marwizi (2013) quotes Charamba saying he was happy to be getting the



degree, which will help him minister the word of God through music. Charamba initially studied for a Bachelor of Theology at Living Waters Bible College in Tynwald.

Regarding leadership, Charles is a former Pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission Church of Zimbabwe (AFM), and now he is the founding Pastor of his Rooted in Christ Ministry church. He is the band leader for his outfit, Fishers of Men. Charles Charamba produced 17 albums in his illustrious music career between 1997 and 2007. "Charles Charamba is one of Zimbabwe's most famous gospel artists" (Kinuthia, 2021). Charamba's awards include Most Popular Gospel Artiste, Best Gospel Artiste - Zimbabwe Music Awards (ZIMA), Best Gospel Artiste, Song and Video of the Year -National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA), and Lifetime Achievement award. In 2020 he also received a Zimbabwe Agricultural Merit Awards (ZIMA) accolade for the impact that his 2010 song Nyika yeZimbabwe continues to have in the Farming Community in the Nation. Charamba lives in Gunhill, one of Harare's posh suburbs.

Regarding the motivation to enrol for formal music teaching, a growth mindset (Dweck 2000,) Pastor Charles Charamba (Personal communication, 15 February 2023) has this to say:

"To start with, my motivation to enrol was very personal. I needed a breather that would interrupt my roller coaster schedule since 1999; our band launched serious music concert annual schedules. Therefore, I took a sabbatical from full-time pastoral duty and scaled down on musical activities without disregarding prioritised events. Another thing is also that I was disappointed around 1992 when President Mugabe tasked composers in the country to come up with a new national anthem. I wrote my version of an anthem but was hindered by a lack of transcribing skills. That limitation caused my contribution to suffering a stillbirth, so from that point, I disdained ignorance and music illiteracy. Also, during my tours in the United States of America, I received a couple of requests for some transcribed music after the performance. My fans loved the African flavour, and even after we sold some CDs to them, they continued insisting they needed the 'music', i.e., the score. My reasons for enrolling for formal music learning is that I had failed to understand some professionals who had proposed to adopt one of my songs among an array of Afro fused reggae Summer Plash in 2001. They had requested that the particular song be transcribed to facilitate smooth flow of performance and I had reservations about the proposal owing to my musical illiteracy" (Charamba, C. Personal Communication, 15 February 2023).

Reiterating the necessity of music literacy, Charles Charamba further says:

"I lacked nothing on the side of musical practice as I had already broken records on multiple areas of the industry. It is the theory of music which included transcription that I needed to cover though lack of it had no bearing with my normal musical life. The insights attained during studies were more of informing me on who I am, and not what I needed to gather to be an accomplished musician. To put this into perspective, studying would tell me that one of the chords on my song Mhinduro Iripo is called a diminished or minor one. I do not need to learn how a hit; classical and effective song can be constructed. It is an area I had naturally been endowed with and mastered before enrolment." (Charamba, C. Personal Communication, 15 February 2023)

In stating that he has no regrets about his decision to join the Zimbabwe College of Music, Charamba notes:



"I have no regret because I acquired the necessary knowledge and insights. I enjoyed the fun while I endured the pressure of being a practising musician and a student at the same. My academic achievements went beyond attaining a certificate issued by the Zimbabwe College of Music to graduating with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Jazz by Africa University. Now I am not limited. I can transcribe and represent musical ideas into staff and tonic solfa notations." (Charamba, C. Personal Communication, 15 February 2023)

In connection with the advice to be given to upcoming and other experienced artists, Pastor Charamba (Personal communication, 15 February 2023) says:

"Studying music helps one to have a clearer understanding of their calling, industry or trade. Some benefits come from academic insights, yet others are related to grooming. An artist may be gifted in composition and performance, yet they may lack on the ethics side of their practice. Schooling can shape them such that they become complete entities. Topical among the older generation of artists has been the issue of unilaterally designed contracts, serving one between the parties concerned. Exploitative contracts can be avoided or eliminated through the knowledge gained in studying arts-related disciplines. Studying enlightens the musicians' understanding of basic articles that constitute official agreements and memoranda of understanding. This understanding saves the artist from manipulation and acting out of ignorance, avoiding regrets." (Charamba, C. Personal Communication, 15 February 2023)

Edith 'Weutonga' Katiji

Edith 'WeUtonga' Katiji is a Zimbabwean-born musician and songwriter who graduated with Master of Arts in Music in Development, Area, Ethnic, Cultural, Gender and Group Studies Degree from SOAS University of London in 2020. She attained a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Music Business, Musicology and Technology from Midlands State University in Gweru, Zimbabwe. After her studies, Edith was elected the Vice President of the International Federation of Musicians, headquartered in the United Kingdom, in May 2021. She is the Director of Family Affair Production, a post she has held since 2009. She has been the President of the Zimbabwe Union of Musicians since 2014. Her awards include Outstanding Actress by NAMA in 2012, Outstanding Alternative Album in from the Bulawayo Arts Awards (BAA) in 2018, and Woman Achiever in the Arts from Women Achievers in 2018.

She is the lead singer of the band Utonga hence the name Edith WeUtonga (Edith of Utonga). She formed her band in 2010 when she released a 10-track album titled UTONGA. She released KWACHA in 2013, MADALITSO in 2018, and several singles. Edith is one of the few women locally playing the bass guitar. She has often been referred to as a jazz artist while others have characterised her genre as contemporary traditional music. She is the band leader, singer and songwriter. Utonga plays an authentically Zimbabwean sound laced with Shona folk rhythms from genres such as Jiti, Chimurenga, as well as some intriguing experiments with rhumba, reggae and calypso to produce a jazz feeling. The band has performed locally at INTWASA Festival in Bulawayo, the HIFA in Harare, and on the international stage. Edith (Personal communication, 13 January 2023) said:

"Enrolling for academic music studies is essential because it has vastly improved me as a leader amongst my peers. My motivation was to learn to be versatile on different musical instruments, and now I realise that that empowers me as a female band leader. I have greater control of the situation because I know what the other players in the band have to do, so they cannot abuse



me, abscond at critical times, and play hard to get when I have performances lined up. Knowledge is a strong powerbase, so popular musicians must embark on the academic study of music. I advise fellow musicians to enrol for music studies to improve their professional conduct in the music industry.” (Katiji, E., Personal Communication, 13 January 2023)

Hope Masike

Hope Masike is a Mbira artist who, after her music education now wants to venture into dancehall, Mozambican vibes, and Afro-jazz. After studying for three years, she graduated with a Diploma in Ethnomusicology from ZCM. Masike also holds a fine art qualification in textile design and painting. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Jazz Degree in July 2016 after successfully completing the programme with ZCM, an affiliated college of Africa University. Masike sees herself earning a doctorate degree in music with Harvard Institute in the future. Masike is a musician, author and teacher who has produced about 6 albums, some singles, and collaborations with other artists such as Salif Keita, the late Oliver Mtukudzi, Steve Dyer and Louis Mhlanga.

She has several local and international awards and nominations, including the Best Traditional Female Artist for Africa in the 2016 Kora All-Africa Music Awards, and ZNCC Women in Enterprise Awards and The Zimbabwe Achievers Awards. She won the 2012 NAMA Outstanding Female Musician. Hope Masike is a board member of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe and a member of the Zimbabwe Music Rights Association and Zimbabwe Writers' Association. She says studying for the degree enabled her to express herself better than before as a musician. When artiste acquires education to sharpen their talent, it helps to widen their horizons and take their calling for music to a higher level. She is quoted by Antonio (2016) thus:

“My motivation was to grow professionally, and I am happy that I have finally graduated; school work is beneficial because it has equipped me with professional skills in performance and management. I am grateful for the professional guidance from my lecturers. It is important to enrol for music studies because one perfects musical instrument playing skills. I have learnt about other mbira types, their histories and the general Zimbabwean music landscape now and before. So besides being able to play mbira, I can play, perform and even teach Zimbabwean traditional rhythms on many ngoma types, marimba and their dances.”

She says she learned to read and transcribe music as well as appreciate other kinds of music. Learning non-Zimbabwean music histories such as Western classical music, Mozambican traditional dances and rhythms like Marabenta, other world music cultures and African traditional music make one a fuller musician who is conversant with a wider range of music genres and styles and other music-related matters. To her, this is the essence of embarking on music studies.

Clive ‘Mono’ Mukundu

Music producer and lead guitarist with Oliver Mtukudzi’s Black Spirits for 20 years, Clive “Mono” Mukundu says it is important for musicians to equip themselves and enhance their professional profiles by upgrading their educational qualifications. He has recorded about 10 songs of his own. In 2001 he decided to pursue formal education in music and enrolled at the ZCM. There he learnt to play the mbira and marimba, graduating with a National Certificate in Music. Mono graduated with a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Music Business, Musicology and Technology from the Midlands State University in December 2022. He said “The music industry is a gamble. It is wise to have a back-up plan to cushion yourself and education can provide that back-up plan, since you can use the qualifications in academia, too,” he said.



Mono is a master of various guitar styles, including sungura, mbira/chimurenga, Afro-jazz, gospel, blues, and rock. He is also an author. Mukundu has featured on over 1000 albums and over 200 singles from 1988 to date. Mono won the ZIMA 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award. The music producer was last year invited to lecture on jiti music at the University of Michigan and was able to acquaint himself well because of his educational background. Mono said the lack of requisite academic qualifications among artistes has seen much of the country's music history being documented by foreigners. He said the lack of education has also made many artistes ignorant about crucial legislation governing their industry (Mugunyeke, 2019).

About what motivated him to undertake the academic study of music, Clive Mukundu (Personal communication, 22 January 2023) said:

"I have always been interested in the academic side of music, especially to learn writing skills because I love to write and document events. I have noticed that many of our music has been documented by foreigners, and many facts are distorted because people from outside our culture write them. I want to document our own history and set the record straight about our music performance experiences." (Mukundu, C., Personal Communication, 22 January 2023)

Mukundu said that it is important for musicians to enrol on music studies to sharpen their critical thinking skills. Music performers and sound engineers are going to school for enlightenment, not to acquire qualifications for employment as most people think, and they say that there are no jobs. "We must be educated to create employment opportunities for ourselves and others. I have been in the music industry for 35 years, and I do not have problems on the practical side of music; I believe one needs to be well-versed with both theory and practice, so I enrolled on music programs".

On the benefits of musical literacy, Mono had this to say:

"Knowledge of music theory enables one to communicate with fellow musicians on the international platform. I travelled worldwide with Oliver Mtshali as part of the Black Spirits, as well as with Chiwoniso Maraire. My experience was that some of the terms we use differ from those used internationally. For example, in some local recording studios, bars are erroneously referred to as phrases. This shows why it is important for a musician to know music theory so that we can be at par with worldwide music terminology usage and meanings. My advice to musically illiterate musicians is that it is helpful to be knowledgeable not only in music but in general history, which informs an artist."

Albert Nyathi

Nyathi has released four albums to date with his band Imbongi, whose impact saw it being chosen by the United Nations in 1999 to represent African music at the Youth Congress in Hawaii. He is a poet, playwright, musician, actor, writer and philanthropist whose performances are unique and timeless. He has performed at grand state occasions, including the burial of Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo, and in a role as Nelson 'Madiba' Mandela. He has collaborated with local and international artists, including Prudence Katomeni, Derek Mpofu, Zvirimudeze, Mono Mukundu, and Radebe of Shabalala Rhythm in South Africa. He studied for a Bachelor of Arts Special Honours Degree in Literature in English at the University of Zimbabwe, graduating in 1991. Albert is a Master of



Philosophy student in the Department of Music Business, Musicology and Technology at Midlands State University.

Albert is an achiever who has toured extensively both locally and internationally. In 1995 he won the Zimbabwe National Poetry Award. In 1999 together with the band, he was invited by the UN to represent the African Continent during the Millennium Young People's Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was awarded the Women's University in Africa Award in 2016 for championing gender parity in Zimbabwe. Albert won the National Arts Merit Awards (Nama) Living Legends @40 trophy in 2021, held to mark Zimbabwe's 40th Independence anniversary. Chelsea Football Club invited him in collaboration with Kick it Out Magazine to work with children in London's Paddington and Westminster towns creating poetry against racism in football. He performed poetry with children at Stamford Bridge before a match between Chelsea and Bolton Wanderers in September 2005 to mark Black History Month.

Albert Nyathi (Personal communication, 31 January 2023) says:

"I embarked on music studies because I wanted to study why musicians are popular but poor. I worked with the NACZ part-time while doing honours, then full-time after 1997. My experience in art showed me poverty amongst artists, even those that I had thought were okay, poor as a church mouse, sick without food and living on donations."

He added that "enrolling for tertiary music studies is important because it helps one when performing, especially outside the country, to have academic backing because you are sometimes asked to conduct workshops, present a paper, or give a talk that requires some level of skills which one gets from education. Some places have theatres in the communities where they expect you to spend up to a whole week teaching music, which requires depth to explain; a study helps you focus."

Nyathi says music studies are necessary even though some musicians think otherwise. In 2004 at the Hale Jazz Festival, we met a group performing very well. They had met the previous day, and their understanding of music theory helped them to interpret quickly. Reading notes is necessary to interpret the music when performing in international collaborations. His advice to musicians who lack music theory is that times are changing, and cultural change requires that we also change with the times. The way we approach music should now also embrace the musical literacy tradition. No one will ever exhaust learning because every day brings new challenges that need to be tackled, and skills from music education can prepare popular musicians for those new tasks.

Respina Patai

Respina Patai is currently a second-year music student at Midlands State University. She is quoted as saying that enrolling for the BSc in Music Business, Musicology and Technology Honours Degree has already improved her performance on her 2022 album Watch and Pray, compared to her previous projects. Before her enrolment Respina Patai received the Coca-Cola certificate award, Radio Zimbabwe Top 50 in 2018, National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA) for outstanding Achievements in People's Choice Award in 2019. Respina rose to fame in the early 2000s through her leading vocals to her husband Baba Ephraim Patai. Resina Patai is quoted as saying, "When my husband realised that I had a good voice, he allowed me to sing, and in 2002, on the album Rumbidzwai, I sang three songs, including the hit song Mazambara that rocked the local music scene in the early 2000s (Muzari, 2018).



The song Mazambara sustained Mai Patai's career for some years. Another hit, Munamoto, from the album Mabviravira left Baba Ephraim Patai with no option but to let her go it alone (Mhara, 2018). To top up her achievements for 2018, Mai Patai received an award for the best Woman in Business (in arts) for Midlands Province (Muzari, 2019). She now has a better understanding of world music, her composition has improved, and she arranges music professionally (Antonio, 2022).

Regarding the benefits of learning music formally, Patai (Personal communication, 23 January 2023) says:

"Music talent that lacks the support of proper formal learning decreases one's impact in the arts industry. I personally believe that education is the key to success, and the combination of talent and education is powerful. I managed to build a name and create a brand. I scooped some awards before I enrolled for a music degree at Midlands State University. The decision to enroll was deliberate after I noted that it is not only talent that matters most in the music industry. Many aspects emerge, starting with the arrangement, making sense and meaning in compositions, stage presentation, marketing, leadership qualities, and welfare skills that assist in working with others."

Respina Patai did not mince her words in accepting the benefits of enrolling for the music degree program at Midlands State University as she (Personal communication, 23 January 2023) says:

"With the knowledge and skills, I gain through music studies, I am taking my music brand to another level. Music is a calling to which I have the mandate to improve and run as a professional company. Zimbabwe hosts many talented artists, but what is missing is knowledge of making music suitable for the global market. Music-making needs both theory and practical skills, knowledge, and understanding. This makes music learning a critical component for one to enterprise sustainably."

In advising to upcoming as well as established artists, Respina Patai (Personal communication, 23 January 2023) says:

"Being a musician is a profession where one must be active till death, or any other physical incapacitation disrupts them. There is no retirement. The drawback is a lack of understanding of how to turn one's skill into a business, making it an enterprising brand, protecting one's intellectual property, and marketing the music needs proper schooling. I advise artists to study music, their speciality area, very seriously. The learning of arts in a formal way is a real necessity to improve both the artist and the industry. So far, the skills that I have gained cannot be picked outside a school system. Also, the music industry community has since changed their attitude whenever doing business with me. I am now very aware of my value in signing contracts and all other tricky issues and deals in the music industry."

Sandra Ndebele Sibindi

In 2021, the talented dancer-cum singer, choreographer and director Sandra Ndebele Sibindi enrolled for the Music Business Musicology and Technology degree at Midlands State University. Despite her



fame and exposure that saw the artist perform in destinations such as Canada, Russia, India, the United Kingdom, Dubai, China and America, Sandra still believes formal music programs are necessary for an artist. Sandra Ndebele's artistic works though still at the formative stage, were adequate to attract the attention of the National Association of Secondary School Heads (NASH) as she won first prize in the public speaking competition after presenting the speech *Black and Proud* by renowned Zimbabwean poet Albert Nyathi. Sandra's musicking skills were also critical in founding IYASA before she went to work on her solo acts in 2003, in which she released a 10-track debut album, *Tshaya Tshaya*.

Her entrance into the music industry arrested the attention of nominators in three categories of the inaugural Zimbabwe Music Awards (ZIMA) held at the Harare International Conference Centre (HICC) in December 2003. Sandra was nominated in the same category as Alick Macheso and the late Dr Oliver Mtukudzi for the Best Live Act award. Sandra Ndebele was nominated in the following ZIMA categories; the Most Promising Artiste, Best Female and Best Urban Grooves (Female) Award. Other awards that Sandra also won include the National Arts Merit Awards, the Best Female Dancer Award and Best Female Artist Award 2003, Director, and Executive Producer for Intombi Zomqangala, Best Harare International Carnival Award, and Bulawayo Arts Award winners. In the international arts arena, Sandra Ndebele scooped Best International Act (UMFAZI) at the National Student Drama Festival in England in 2012 and the Best Jury Production award at the Atlantic Fringe Festival. Despite such a decorated national and international music career after almost two decades, Sandra Ndebele boldly urges other artists to turn to formal performing arts learning programs. She says, "I have been here and there, but still feel I could have done better. Let us educate ourselves as artists to improve the creative sector of the arts industry. You can do it, and I am a living testimony. Education is very important" (Muringi, 2021).

With regards to renowned artists turning to formal academic studies, Sandra Ndebele (Personal communication, 8 February 2023) says:

"My motivation to go back to school to pursue music studies with MSU stemmed from the intention to demystify the wrong perception where musicians are viewed as people of low IQ. Few artists have gone through arts education, and I want to clear the stigma and correct the misconception about performing artists."

Asked if she is not regretting the decision to enrol for the MSU music program, Sandra Ndebele, (Personal communication, 8 February 2023) says:

"I have no regret! It is an honour for me to be part of the MSU community. From the first day when I enrolled for the music degree, people started to treat and view me differently from how they used to. The value and respect from my colleagues and music industry stakeholders improved significantly. I am getting serious positions in high-profile national and international boards. For example, I was invited to work as a National Music Team member and was involved in drafting the Zimbabwe National Music Strategy document 2022-2027. Such recognition is coming because I decided to enrol for music studies. Even though I am yet to finish the program, many people are already coming to seek technical advice, which I could not provide before. Public, private and Non-Governmental Organisations and individual



players in the music industry treat me as a performer and an expert. From my personal evaluation, I hugely credit the opportunities emerging to the decision to enrol for music studies. My own performance and output have significantly changed, for I am now putting into practice all that I am learning as a music student. “

Asked if there is any ready piece of advice that can be given to established and upcoming artists, Sandra Ndebele (Personal communication, 8 February 2023) says:

“The advice I can give to the young ones is that they must avoid getting into the industry first without professional knowledge. They need to collaborate and merge their talents and technical understanding of music. The current vision in the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) can only be achieved if the players are knowledgeable. I strongly advise everyone to seriously consider furthering their studies related to our industries to be decision-makers. If they continue to shy away from professional music knowledge, they will continue to be followers in the industry.”

Conclusion

Academic music studies play a crucial role in the operations of particular musicians’ understandings of their profession. It has been noted that some popular Zimbabwe musicians are taking some interventions and studies measures proven to change an artist’s mindset from a fixed to a growth one (Dweck's theory of mindset). This includes artists' understanding of professional conduct, international collaborations and band training that improve performance practices. To this extent, academic music studies can be conceptualised as an alternative space for professional growth in Zimbabwe’s music industry. It can go a long way in configuring relations in international encounters. Academic music studies can either polish or perpetuate existing popular musicians’ operations.

What motivates popular musicians to embark on the academic study of music includes the frustration of missing out on some major national and international events and collaborations due to musical illiteracy and lack of qualifications. Qualifications enhance the artists’ profiles. The urge to enrol for music studies is driven by the musicians’ desire to complement and sharpen their talent with an appropriate understanding of running the affairs of music as an industry. None of the artists interviewed regrets enrolling on formal music studies. Musicians and artists realise that even though they gained some popularity before enrolling for formal music learning, society, other local artists and the global music industry now view them with a better eye. The study revealed that artists graduating from tertiary music-related institutions/ departments are bringing some relevant and updated music business knowledge largely necessary in the day-to-day management of their work.

Musicians need to enrol for tertiary music studies. The artists believe that if they are not equipped with music knowledge and other aspects that concern their industry and work, they risk more chances of being short changed or duped with unscrupulous people who take advantage of their ignorance in the music industry. The study showed that an educated artist is treated differently and better than one who is not educated. The interviewed artists echoed similar views that they are already implementing knowledge gained from the different academic music programs which they have embarked on. The study concludes that the talent which is supported and augmented by appropriate knowledge and skills adds value to the work of the artist. The study also concluded that enrolling for music academic programs capacitates them to be able to teach their band members, to professionalise their artistic works. It has been also realised that the interviewees are now trudging on professional



career paths. They see the need to rebrand and approach music and artistic business as company, and to market their music products at international level.

Learning music theory is beneficial to a popular musician's professional career. The study uncovered that while the artists have been performing and travelled to different destinations before enrolling for music and arts academic programs, they have now gained critical insights, appropriate theory and practical skills to strengthen their work. The need to read, analyse, interpret and transcribe music was also mentioned as a push factor for embarking on formal music learning. Artists need to speak the same language as their counterparts on international fora.

Based on the information gathered from the interviewees with artists who are either still tertiary music students or have graduated, musicians who have not embarked on music studies are strongly advised to consider furthering their intellectual and practical understanding through academic programs. The more the artists get educated, the better the individual artist and the music industry improve. The study concludes that the artists who have enrolled on academic music programs are calling on other artists to pursue professional studies, which they perceive as one possible way to change their mindsets and update their approach to doing things at an international level.

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