



## Patience Munjeri

Patience Chaitezvi Munjeri is one of the very few Zimbabwean women who grew up playing the *mbira* regularly in traditional ceremonies, a role more commonly held by men in Shona culture. She is also an accomplished traditional dancer and a university-educated Shona culture expert. Patience toured the US in 2008 with the all-women *mbira* group *Vakaranga Venharetare* (Women of the Spirits) and again in 2009 with American *mbira* virtuoso Erica Azim. She now typically does solo US tours every two years.

Patience feels that the ancient repertoire is the most important aspect of *mbira* music, in that, “Our elders associated it with their way of life, a way of communicating with departed ancestors residing in the nether world.” This old music invokes the spirits’ powers by asking for rain as well as protection from famine and other calamities. Though women *mbira* players are rare in Zimbabwe, According to Patience, “Women’s empowerment is key in this music. I saw that when I played as a young girl at spirit possession ceremonies because the spirits liked the way I played. For me that was a stepping stone to empowering women through *mbira*.”