



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

AND RELATED ARTS



Ephant Mujuru

Ephant Mujuru taught and performed Shona mbira music for the Center for World Music in 1994. Raised in a small village near the Mozambican border, he was taught to play the mbira by his grandfather, a medium for Chaminuka, one of the most important ancestor spirits in Shona cosmology. Showing a clear talent for the rigors of mbira training, Ephant advanced quickly, playing his first possession ceremony when he was just ten years old.

Ephant played all five types of Zimbabwean mbiras, but his specialty was the popular *mbira dzavadzimu*. Like any serious mbira player, Mujuru mastered a large repertoire of traditional pieces. But he was also a prolific composer, with many original titles and unique interpretations of traditional songs to his credit. Apart from his musical prowess, Ephant was an inspirational storyteller. Over the years, he transformed the venerable art of telling allegorical tales for children into a personalized narrative-musical form that conveyed both philosophical wisdom and delightful humor for adults and children alike.

Commercial success brought multiple possibilities for Ephant. He helped to found the National Dance Company and became the first African music teacher to teach ethnomusicology at the Zimbabwe College of Music. In 1982 he came to the United States to study, lecture, and teach mbira at the University of Washington in Seattle. Throughout the 1980s, he traveled widely, returning to Zimbabwe to record two albums of traditional mbira music. In the United States, he released an album of traditional hand drumming, *Rhythms of Life*, recorded for Lyrichord Discs in 1989.

During the 1990s, Ephant continued to travel and perform and, in the United States, recorded two albums for Music of the World: a solo recording (*Ancient Wisdom*) and a collaboration with another album with Dumisani Maraire (*Shona Spirit*). In addition, he recorded an ambitious, multi-track album (*Journey of the Spirit*). Back in Zimbabwe, he released several successful popular music albums.