



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

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Tute Chigamba

Tute Chigamba taught and performed Shona mbira music for the Center for World Music in 1998. Born into a family of musicians in rural Guruve, Zimbabwe, he is renowned worldwide as an outstanding virtuoso mbira performer, an innovative composer, and a master mbira maker. He has taught and performed throughout Zimbabwe, South Africa, Europe, Canada, and the United States.

As a traditional musician, Chigamba is considered exceptional in Zimbabwe because he is a composer of new pieces for the mbira dzavadzimu. He and his family include many of these pieces in their repertoire, as well as the standard Shona mbira pieces. Most Shona mbira players believe that all mbira music comes from departed ancestors and that anything “new” also comes from them, in the form of dreams or during spirit possession ceremonies (*mapira*), rather than from the musician himself. Thus, Chigamba’s “new” compositions are considered “variants” of traditional pieces. Chigamba’s well-known compositions include “Bembero,” “Ngozi Yemuroora,” “Mutenda Mambo,” “Masongano,” “Pasi Mupindu,” and more. It is reported that they have been accepted by the ancestors to be played in ceremonies. Chigamba has also adapted pieces for the mbira dzavadzimu from other mbira types (e.g., “Nyatwa” and “Zvenshanje”).

As a master blacksmith, Chigamba specializes in making spears, knives, axes, hoes, and excellent mbiras. He uses the best-quality wood and steel for his highly sought-after mbiras. He makes mbiras of different types and different tunings. The keys are cold forged, as the soft steel used does not require heating. The tone of his instruments is considered to be “very sweet.”

As an mbira teacher, Chigamba taught his brothers, his children, and his grandchildren. Recently, some of them have performed all around the world, including those who reside in countries far from Zimbabwe. Chigamba has also taught countless other mbira students, both in Zimbabwe and in countries all around the globe. He has taught at special mbira workshops, both in the United States and in Zimbabwe.