

COMPOSER'S NOTE

A composer can find inspiration in the unlikeliest of settings, and the genesis of *Zimbe!* is as extraordinary as any. The seeds of my affinity with African music and the gospel tradition were sown in the early nineties through a chance encounter on a train en route to London. Sitting opposite me was a woman with a small book of manuscript paper on her lap. I asked politely whether she was a musician and she replied that she was on her way to lead a music group at a prison. She was working on 'African and gospel' music, but, although she knew many excellent songs, she was really an artist, not a musician, and was rather lacking in confidence when it came to leading a singing workshop. 'I could help,' I offered gamely, and it all took off from there.

We struck up a working relationship, and she introduced me to songs, tapes, books, and friends with a plethora of songs to share. I immediately fell in love with the music. Together we ran singing groups, in Oxford, London and beyond, and I quickly became immersed in arranging, teaching, sharing and performing African songs.

I later produced a collection of choral arrangements for Faber Music entitled *Songs of a Rainbow Nation*, and it was in response to performing these arrangements that Justin Doyle, conductor of the Dorking Choral Society, approached me with a view to commissioning a more substantial piece based on African and gospel themes. Justin happened to call the morning after *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* had been shown on TV; we had both watched it, and both had been moved by the use of music in the production (filmed on location in Botswana). One particularly moving moment, depicting a funeral scene, involved a huge number of local 'extras' breaking into an apparently spontaneous performance of a traditional funeral song.

It was decided that my piece would aim to reflect some of the manifold ways in which music plays a part in everyday life in Africa – from the rising of the sun to its setting, both literally and figuratively. I wanted to capture the essence of the African spirit through glimpses into the human experience – simple children's playground songs from Ghana and Zimbabwe; a Xhosa lullaby for mothers of the victims of Apartheid; a raucous drinking song; sensuous wedding songs; and some beautiful funeral and worship music – all imbued with the spirit, energy and simplicity that is so typical of the African song tradition.

Zimbe is an Anglicised version of the Swahili word 'Ziimbe', meaning 'Sing them': just as others have shared these wonderful songs with me, I wish to pass them on now. Scored for SATB choir, unison children's choir and jazz quintet, with copious percussion, the settings reflect my own musical make-up: within the piece we find references to jazz, pop, the Western choral tradition and, of course, 'world music'. African songs are easy to learn and impossible to forget; that is the very nature of the communal song tradition. The songs I have chosen to arrange are fun, moving and infectiously tuneful – and through them we find ourselves in a wonderfully simple, joyous realm where music imitates life, and life inspires music.

Alexander L'Estrange

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A Note on the Score

The semi-chorus should be positioned within the choir, except in movement 10, as marked. Full chorus and semi-chorus may sing together throughout, except where it is explicitly stated that the semi-chorus should not sing, in preparation for a specific entry. Full chorus only means chorus excluding the semi-chorus, and Tutti indicates all singers – full chorus, semi-chorus and children's choir.

A Note on Pronunciation

Italics under the lyrics are intended to provide a guide to pronunciation — Xhosa "th", for example, is pronounced with a hard "t". To achieve an authentic sound, it is worth noting that all "a" vowels (whether in Xhosa, Swahili, Akan, Shona or Zulu) should be pronounced with a short, bright sound as in "cat"; this has the added advantage of encouraging good projection and intonation, brightening your choir's tone.

Not sure where to find a jazz quintet for your performance? The composer will be happy to advise on, or arrange, the services of professional musicians. For information, email choral@fabermusic.com

8. Hamba Lulu

Wedding song from South Africa

TEXT: ZULU

385 Contemplative, unhurried groove ♩ = 92

Play 3 times

Piano accompaniment for measures 385-388. The music is in 5/4 time and features a contemplative, unhurried groove. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. The piece is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

389 FULL CHORUS & SEMI-CHORUS
BASSES

Musical score for Basses and Piano accompaniment, measures 389-392. The basses part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes dynamic markings of *Mm* and *mm*. The piano accompaniment continues with the same accompaniment as in the previous section. The phrase "et sim." is written above the basses part.

393 + TENORS

Musical score for Tenors and Piano accompaniment, measures 393-396. The tenors part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes dynamic markings of *Mm* and *mm*. The piano accompaniment continues with the same accompaniment. The phrase "et sim." is written above the tenors part.

397 ALTOS

Musical score for Altos and Piano accompaniment, measures 397-400. The altos part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes dynamic markings of *Mm* and *mm*. The piano accompaniment continues with the same accompaniment. The phrase "et sim." is written above the altos part.

14. Njoooni! Zimbe!

TEXT: SWAHILI

Come, sing the songs of Africa!

Celebratory! ♩ = c.100

796 SEMI-CHORUS

f Zim - be!

FULL CHORUS
mf cresc.

Njoo - ni! Zim - be! Nyim - bo za Af - ri - ka.
(N)joh - nee Zim - beh!

mf cresc.
Celebratory! ♩ = c.100

(roll/spread *ad lib.*)

800

f cresc. Zim - be!

f cresc.

f cresc.

Njoo - ni! Zim - be! Nyim - bo za Af - ri - ka.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The score is divided into two systems, starting at measures 796 and 800. The first system includes a 'SEMI-CHORUS' section with a vocal line and piano accompaniment, followed by a 'FULL CHORUS' section with three parts: vocal, piano, and grand piano. The vocal lines are in a celebratory mood, marked with 'mf cresc.' and 'f'. The piano accompaniment features a steady rhythmic pattern with triplets. The grand piano part includes a 'roll/spread ad lib.' instruction. The second system continues the chorus with a 'f cresc.' dynamic marking. The lyrics are in Swahili, with a translation provided in parentheses.