

# Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko

Video by Michael Pilz  
Austria 2002, 210'

*For meditation*

In the summer of 1997, three austrian artists – composer Klaus Hollinetz, filmmaker Michael Pilz and photographer Werner Puntigam – visited the African musician Simon Mashoko (Gwenyambira). A virtuoso mbira player and a catechist of the Roman Catholic Church, he lived in seclusion in the south of Zimbabwe. The travellers found themselves unprepared in the house of a forgotten legend and the old man started to play. Five years later, the unforgettable experience transformed into a multimedia installation of the artistic trio that tried in Harare and Linz to get over geographic borders as well as across the borders between the individual arts. A filmed essay, sound recordings and photographs depict the life of the charismatic musician, who became famous for the art of playing mbira, an instrument the sound of which is the rhythm of black Africa. For certain African tribes, the mbira instrument is a ritual object with a profound symbolism. However, Mashoko, having been influenced by two dreams in which he met Jesus, played the instrument in catholic churches and mbira has become an instrument for sacred music. Pilz's film, a variation on a video used in gallery, captures the mystery of an ordinary day, the interior of music, the creation of play, faith and imperceptible dance. With the exception of some footage from the first meeting, the film consists mainly of long contemplative shots, which the director made during his third visit of Africa.

For Pilz the camera is an instrument that allows him to expose the inside of the seen. His radical personal films represent a captivating audiovisual journal, whose seemingly private observations (private eye) are in fact deep social and aesthetic probes and focused answers to impulses from the outside; the melody of static images in this more than three hours long film is an extraordinary challenge for the audience.

*Petr Kubica,  
Catalogue of the 7th International Documentary Film Festival Jihlava,  
Czech Republik, October 2003*

Hours beyond time, more like a blank interval, which we no longer sense as time; cessation, surrendering to a strange individual rhythm – A song about a journey, the destination of which is another journey, a song about light that does not belong to the dry landscape; a song that erases its own

traces and achieves calm – Without understanding the language of the song, we do not perceive it as some kind of indefiniteness, on the contrary, there is an order we can understand (a familiar house) – An intensive circular stillness of the film: we feel as though we are sharing the space with the film, as though we entered and there is no way out – beauty as instant truth of the film; the film's own aesthetics recedes to the verge of immanence of the man's presence, for which the language of the film would be too limited – (the film contains fragments of a 1976 documentary Mbira: Njari, Karanga songs in Christian ceremonies by the music ethnologist Andrew Tracey)

*Petr Kubica,  
Catalogue of the 7th International Documentary Film Festival Jihlava,  
Czech Republik, October 2003*

Duisburg's documentary film festival doesn't force choices on its visitors, there is only one film that is always played. And it offers space to cinematographic experience; after each film, the audience is given an opportunity to discuss at length with the producers what they have seen. Thus, the position of the viewer changes from one of mere reception to active participation. From here, it is only one step to film heaven: One would have to lock the movie theater from inside, loose the key, and also continue through the rest of the year in this manner.

Michael Pilz' film on African musician Simon Mashoko is nearly four hours long. At his house, the camera enjoys the right of hospitality, it is present when he picks up self-built instruments over and over, when family members and neighbors join in the music, when the latter is simply and suddenly cut short or becomes the medium of collective intensity. According to conventional wisdom, Mr. Pilz' film is amateurish. For several minutes, there is no cut; there are no captions that translate lyrics or spoken words. We thus realize what it is that dubbed or subtitled versions spare us: The true experience of being a stranger; that getting to know people takes time and understanding takes work; that communication, especially across continents, will never come about without misunderstandings, friction, and patience. The demand for technical standards or subtitles, which was voiced during the subsequent discussion of the film, is impudent, implies the use of force that has no awareness of itself because it comes as the most natural thing. Without a hitch, everything human is to be translated into the realm of the known, to fit into familiar forms of filming and language. It is precisely because the film **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** moves freely outside the laws of the market, which commonly govern our lives, that it is able to convey the emotional and acoustic impressions its director has gained in meeting an African musician; including what is not understood, not grasped. Getting to know a single African family, is that not likely



to take more than four hours? The experiences viewers can gain through Pilz' imagery brings back a feeling of the brutality of commercial quality fictions and generalizations by which the media machinery teaches our perception tricks. (...)

*Translated from: Michael Gierke, Kategoriengläubigkeit —  
Momentaufnahmen von den 27. Dokumentarfilmtagen in Duisburg,  
November 2003  
("Believing in Categories –  
Snapshots from the 27th Documentary Film Festival at Duisburg,  
November 2003")*

The magic of the musician and instrument maker Simon Mashoko transposes itself inevitably and naturally. Therefore it is not as important to understand the text of his songs. Most of them are about banal everyday stories and ironic animal ballads with clear reference to the human condition. To better the audiences understanding of a story he sometimes improvises the translation of a story out of his native tongue Shona into English during his presentation. Traditionally the Mbira is played at festivals to build a connection with the deceased and ancestors. Sometimes the musician falls into a trance and a simple story can then stretch out over the entire night. It is also tradition to continue to the next song without a pause so that many hours go by almost unnoticed. It is therefore no wonder that Simon Mashoko sometimes seems to go on unendingly. Just then one becomes a part of his virtuous Mbira playing and his unconscious songs and he thereby demonstrates his truly creative power and to some extent his primordial belief in the here and now. Simon Mashoko is a practitioner, hand worker and as such understands not only much about things and tools; rather also the meaning behind the issue and the setting. In the way he incorporates the music and how he speaks and listens and plays and sings – every well conceived movement and every human and artistic autonomy are palpable and have been a model for many since his youth.

The video **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** is constituted of my own films from the years 1997 and 2002 and complimented with video film of the musician Franz Fellner. He filmed in February 1996 during a visit of the Vienna Tschuschen Capella. Clips from the film „Mbira, Njari, Ka-ranga Songs in Christian Ceremonies“ (1976) from the South African music ethnologist Andrew Tracy are also included.

*Michael Pilz,  
27th Duisburger Filmwoche, Duisburg/Germany, November 2003,  
catalogue*

Although relatively unknown to the younger generations of Zimbabweans, Simon Mashoko is recognised by many musicians as one of the finest exponents of the type of mbira known as njari, an instrument which is played around Masvingo.

Mashoko was born into a musical family of njari players. He was taught by his uncles and he played with them at bira ceremonies for the ancestral spirits. Mashoko was devoted to music and his njari travelled with him everywhere he went.

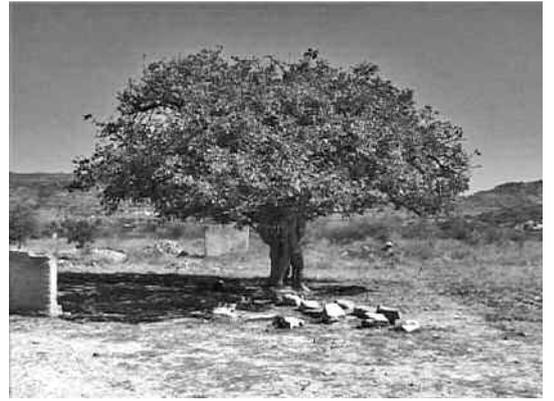
Unlike many other mbira players, Mashoko did not learn through dreams but dreams did play an important part in shaping his career. Around 1938, he had two wonderful dreams. In the first, he heard a voice in the middle of the night calling him. He went to the door and saw a man in a long white robe with two lions on the ground next to him. In a second dream, three men with wings appeared outside the house. Both dreams were surrounded by beautiful music which Mashoko heard as mbira music. Later, Mashoko met some Christian teachers in a beer hall. He tasked one of them about the dream and he was told that the figure was that of Jesus Christ. The explanation had a strong affect on Mashoko and he soon joined the Catholic Church in Gweru. He was baptised but continued to play for the ancestral spirits.

Mbira was not acceptable in the church at this time but Mashoko argued that the people in his dreams were playing mbira. One priest told Mashoko that he was doing the devil's work and said he should give up mbira. Mashoko refused. He has always said „I play for my family ancestors. Am I going to say that my dead mother and dead father are evil?“

Mashoko composed many Shona settings to gospel music and as the restrictions on the use of African music were loosened, people started encouraging him to play mbira in church. He produced several records and his reputation spread far and wide especially through the then African radio service.

Despite his virtual superstar status, Mashoko dedicated himself to serving the church for many decades. Now retired, he lives at Beardmore mine, about 60 Km east of Great Zimbabwe with his wife and children. Although in his mid-eighties, Mashoko still plays mbira every morning and the magic of his performance has never diminished.

*Keith Goddard,  
Harare, October 2001*



Simon Mashoko is daring and forthright in his thinking but first and foremost a traditional African man believing in the existence of ancestral spirits and witchcraft. He is also a devoted catholic and his lyrics reflect the way in which the Catholic church preserved the old that was, to its mind, holy whilst outlawing evil.

Track one (CD ATS 0547 Gwentyambira, A tribute to Simon Mashoko, 2002 — <http://www.servus.at/pntgm/mashoko.htm>) is about witchcraft, a menace in Shona culture and satanic in the church. Combining traditional and Christian contexts, Mashoko warns those who practise witchcraft and alienate themselves because everyone learns to shun them. It is difficult to survive alone: Family and acceptance are vital to survival. Practisers of witchcraft expect poverty because of their alienation. Mashoko talks of evil in purely Christian terms but uses symbols familiar to people in Africa.

In track two, evil doers end up regretting their ways: They realize that they will roast in hell. Mashoko is a fair man but, by today's standards, not exactly politically correct when it comes to women. His daughter, Martha, may lead the Sunday service in the nearby church but Mashoko believes there are no grounds for divorce even if a woman is being abused. In the third track he admits that most women are abused by drunk men but still says that women must have food ready for husbands returning from drinking. Yet, in the same song, he disapproves of smoking saying that he, an old man, can say nothing to youngsters. The song ends with reference to the ancestral spirits.

Mashoko had a long battle with the Catholic church over this issue. The church held the belief that worshipping ancestors was equivalent to false idols and devil worship. Mashoko maintained that family members did not turn evil simply through death and there was no reason to stop honouring them. Today, ancestral spirits are seen as equivalent to the Roman Catholic saints.

In „Bhiza Rashe“ („Horse of the Chief“), he prefaces a story about problems facing black Zimbabweans in the colonial era by mentioning problems with his legs. He describes how the settlers rode horses, a strange sight to local people. White men wore trousers and rumours abounded that whites were legless! He refers to chilapalapa, a mixture of English, Afrikaans and Zulu developed between people in Zimbabwe who knew little of each other's language and recalls problems facing those finding themselves arrested for crimes they did not know existed and which they saw no reason for.

Keith Goddard,  
Harare, spring 2002

The soul of Mbira: An ethnography of the Mbira among the Shona people of Rhodesia by Paul Franklin Berliner.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Music, Middletown, Connecticut, 1974.

„To the many mbira players who have inspired and guided my interest in Shona mbira music, I gratefully dedicate this work.“

The mbira is an idiophone consisting of a number of keys fastened over a bridge to a hardwood soundboard. The soundboard is held with both hands by the musician and the keys are plucked with the thumbs and sometimes the index fingers. Mbira music is one of the most ancient and popular forms of music found throughout black Africa and constitutes a contribution of unique richness to the world's music.

While mbira players have been accorded much prestige in Africa, their art has rarely received the attention and the appreciation that it deserves in the West. Too often the mbira has been viewed in ethnocentric terms as a miniature version of a Western instrument (i.e., finger piano), and regarded as far less significant than, in fact, it is. In contrast to the existent stereotypes, mbira music with its varied styles of vocal accompaniment represents a highly developed musical system with an integrity of its own.

In some African cultures, the mbira is a ritual object with deep symbolic meaning and plays a vital role in the society. Among the Shona people of Rhodesia, for instance, the mbira is used for ancestral worship and bridges the world of the living with that of departed relatives. Because of their great importance in Shona culture, and because of the deep traditions associated with them as early as the sixteenth century, Shona mbira have been chosen as the subject of this study.

Although transcriptions of Shona mbira music and its accompanying vocal styles are provided in this work, and the structure of the music is discussed briefly, its main object is to place the mbira in its broad cultural context. In order to give the reader a feeling for the music itself, references are made in the text to an accompanying record produced by the author from field recordings of Shona mbira music (*The Soul of Mbira*, Nonesuch H-72054).

The first chapter deals with the phenomenon of mbira mbira-like instruments in other parts of the world. It is followed by a chapter that describes the major types of Shona mbiras. In the third chapter, the history of Shona mbiras is explored in relation to written and oral literary sources. The fourth chapter describes the personal and unique relationship that exists between mbira players and their instru-



ments. The next two chapters are devoted to the various aspects of traditional Shona religion, including the important relationship that exists between mbira players and spirit mediums. The following chapters include discussions of mbira music in the larger musical context of spirit possession ceremonies, the poetry of the mbira, the biographical sketches of five mbira players, the process of learning the mbira, its repertory, and the social interaction and musicianship among mbira players. A concluding chapter discusses the Law of Mbira and the status of mbira players in Rhodesia, past and present. (...)

#### 9. Biographical sketches of five mbira players. E.

Mr. Simon Mashoko (Gwenyambira) (S.M. may be heard on accompany record, Side II, band 1), born 1918, age 56, Fort Victoria, mbira player, composer, mbira maker, recording artist, catechist for the Roman Catholic Church.

Gwenyambira (Plate 84) was born in a musical family: both his mother's brother and his father's brother played the njari. His interest surfaced when he was fourteen years old and both of his uncles were his tutors. When he was in his teens, after his interest and talent had been proven, his father's brother built an mbira for him. From that day on, Gwenyambira was allowed to play with his uncles and they performed together at biras being three. They were not usually paid in cash for their performances but were given gifts in beer and meat from the animals sacrificed at the biras. Gwenyambira was a devoted student and practiced whenever he had the chance. His mbira went everywhere with him; he carried it with him when he worked in the fields and played it during work breaks. Like a best friend, the mbira was always in reach, even nearby when he slept at night. „If a student wants to learn seriously,” says Gwenyambira, he must practice all the time.“ Gwenyambira went to a community school for secondary school education but the most significant part of his youth, as he remembers, was devoted to studying the mbira with his uncles.

When I asked Mashoko if he had ever learned mbira music from dreams, he replied that he had been told by older musicians (and assumed it to be true) that the forefathers of the Shona people had dreamed mbira compositions, but that he had never dreamed that way himself. Dreams did play an important part in shaping his career, however. After the age of twenty, he had a series of strange and wondrous dreams. At the time he was working as an office boy in Mashava. In the first dream, he woke in the middle of the night, hearing a voice calling for him, „Simon Mashoko, come here.“ He put on his short trousers and left his bed to go to the door of his home. He opened the door to look out and stood still as if frozen. There was a

man in a long white robe standing in the air a short distance away, and two lions stood on the ground between them. The men beckoned Gwenyambira to come to him, but he refused, fearing he would be attacked by the lions. The man said many things to him, much of which he could not understand clearly – partly because in the background there was a loud and strangely beautiful music that sounded like mbira music. „Now will you please come here?“, asked the figure in the air, Mashoko replied, „No, I am afraid to come out of my house for these two animals will eat me.“ The man did not laugh but continued to speak in his somewhat cryptic language as the music sounded in the background. Suddenly he finished and disappeared together with the lions. Simon shook his head to wake and went back to sleep. Later he put the dream out of his head.

It was not long afterward, however, that he had another comparable dream. This time three winged men appeared outside of his home calling to him in the same way. One was holding a sword which was engulfed with flames. „But I can't come to you,” Simon protested in the dream, „You want to cut my head off.“ As in the first dream, the beautiful and strange mbira-like music sounded throughout. One of the men made reference to his earlier dream: „Well, if you won't come here, remember another man who came to you and called you. You were afraid because you saw wild animals.“ „Yes“ Simon replied, „but who was that man?“ „You shall know him,” they answered and with that the angels disappeared.

Gwenyambira again dismissed the dream and put it out of his mind. Three months later, however, he came upon several Christian teachers discussing their religious experiences in a beer hall. They spoke of the Bible and Jesus. After the discussion broke up, Simon spoke with one of the teachers, a Roman Catholic. „Tell me, Father, can you interpret dreams?“ he asked. After a long discussion the teacher advised Mashoko that the figure in the first dream, the one standing in air in robes, was Jesus Christ calling him to his side. Gwenyambira thought also of the words of the angel in the second dream, „You shall know him.“ Suddenly the teacher's interpretation rang true. Mashoko and the Christian became good friends from that point on.

At the same time, Gwenyambira continued to play the traditional pieces for the vadzimu on his njari. He moved to Gwelo and joined the congregation of a Catholic Church there. Having completed his training, he was baptized. While active in the Church, he often returned home to visit his mother's brother and continued playing mbira with him. At twenty-one, he also began to work on singing with the mbira. Previously he had devoted his time to playing the instrument itself. When he felt he had mastered the mbira sufficiently to add the singing parts, he began imitating his uncles. He

learned the poetry of the mbira which they sang and worked at developing a yodelling technique. At the same time he thought deeply about his dream again, particularly about the strange music which accompanied them. He decided that they explained that his special calling was to both the Church and to the mbira. He said, „Perhaps it was Jesus or the angels who were playing the mbira in the dream.“ He decided that it was his calling to play the mbira in the Church and compose church music for the mbira.

It was some time before this ambition was realized because he faced a great deal of resistance. Other African members of the Church in Gwelo had told the European priest that he was an mbira player. The priest told him that he should leave the mbira if he wanted to be a Christian. He had heard from others that it was the instrument of the bad and evil spirits; the devil. Gwentyambira refused. „I cannot leave the mbira,“ he told him. „If I want God, I must keep my mbira and play songs for Him.“ „But the mbira belongs to bad spirits,“ argued the Father. „No,“ retorted Mashoko, „I have been playing the mbira for many years and I have never seen any bad spirits. I must go forward with my mbira.“ While others accused Gwentyambira of not being a real Christian man, he continued to play his mbira. Basically, he found no contradiction in believing in both a Christian God and the ancestral spirits. He prayed to God in church and played his mbira for his vadzimu, so that he could remember „what my ancestors were doing.“ He felt secure in the knowledge that God would want him to play the mbira for his people and show others the „good ways of our forefathers.“

While in the Gwelo area, Gwentyambira had an opportunity to play mbira commercially outside of religious events. He was hired along with other African musicians to perform traditional music during the breaks at African sports events. This was arranged by a European who was working for the municipality. Musicians each received about nine dollars for a day’s participation. At the age of thirty-six he competed and won first prize in a municipal contest that was held for musicians performing traditional music of many different tribes. He performed in the animal skins of (his) forefathers on that occasion and was awarded a trophy cup for his talents.

It was after this event that Gwentyambira began devoting more of his energies to the Church. He had learned the gospel stories and now experimented with setting the gospel texts in Shona translation to mbira music. As the church began to loosen its restrictions regarding traditional African music, Gwentyambira was encouraged to compose liturgical music. He recorded several record albums of his liturgical compositions. Simon Mashoko had been supporting himself by working as a meter reader in Gwelo

when a number of Church officials took an interest in his work. From the age of forty-five, his affiliation with the Church grew stronger. He was asked to work at Catholic missions. He spent time teaching his own religious music and studying to become a catechist. After carrying partial duties as a catechist for thirteen years, he was officially given a diploma and full credentials for his work in 1966. He was then forty-eight years old. Since receiving his diploma, Mashoko had been working full-time for the Catholic Church, preaching his belief that God is the Father of all the spirits of the ancestors and that both must be honored. He carries out his duties as a lay priest and his responsibilities as an mbira player. For his work, Gwentyambira is provided with a subsistence income by the Church. He has become widely known throughout Rhodesia not only for his excellence as a performer of traditional mbira music, but also as the first composer of Church music for the njari.

## Chapter V

### Bira and Ndandaró: The mbira and spirit possession

Flaming wicks flickered in kerosene lanterns and cockroaches dashed wildly through the lights’ reflections on the walls of the brick round-house kitchen of the Shona village. During the day a fire had burned in the center of the largest of the Shona houses and its smoke filtered through the thatched roof. On this evening, however, the fire pit had been filled with dirt to make it level with the rest of the floor space and the large clay cooking pots had been cleared away from their shelf on the raised cement bench opposite the kitchen’s entrance. In their places were large gourd resonators lined with shells, mbiras, and hosho (gourd rattles).

After a short break for beer, the musicians carefully made their way through the large crowd that had gathered for the bira (the music of the bira may be heard on the accompanying record, Side I, band 1), the ceremony for the ancestral spirits (Plates 67–77). Of the fifty or sixty people present, the members of the immediate village accounted for the largest number. Guests from nearby villages had begun to arrive after sundown, and finally, several hours after the music had begun, the kitchen was packed with people of all ages – from suckling infants to the oldest men and women. The air was filled with the din of simultaneous conversation and occasional bursts of laughter from various quarters of the kitchen. Ladles of beer were passed around from huge clay pots designated for different groups: villagers, guests, and, especially, the ancestors. Good will abounded.

Stepping over extended legs and maneuvering around moving bodies in the dim light, the mbira players made

their way back to their instruments. At ten in the evening, having been hired to play for the entire bira, the musicians had only made a small dent in the evening's performance. They took their places on the raised cement bench and positioned their mbiras in the large gourd resonators. All the women and children were seated on the right side and the men on their left.

An old woman shouted out, „Nhemamusasa!“, calling for her favorite of the traditional compositions for the mbira. Moyo, the distinguished singer with the mbira ensemble, nodded his head in return. His well-known group, „Mhuni Ye Kwa Matamba“ (fictitious name) had taken its name from the chief of their home in the tribal trust lands. „Nhemamusasa,“ repeated Moyo to one of the young mbira players of his group. The music arose slowly from the gourd resonator of the first player, outlining the basic pattern of the piece. After a number of repetitions of the melody, a second mbira player joined in, carefully fitting his following part one beat behind that of the first player. As the two mbira parts meshed together, a third musician picked up two gourd rattles and joined in. Reinforcing the basic underlying pulse of the piece, the hosho player slowly increased the tempo of the music. „Kurumidza hosho!“ („Be quick, hosho player!“) the singer shouted, supplying further encouragement. The singer shut his eyes and threw back his head. He sang out a long high melodic phrase punctuated with yodelling and the music soared ahead.

Caught up in the excitement of the piece, men and women stood up after another to dance. There was space for about ten dancers directly in front of the musicians. Women comprised the first row of dancers and a row of men formed behind them. Dancing independently, as if each in his own world, they faced the musicians, leaving their backs to the entrance of the house. Others rose and danced in place where they had been sitting.

As the house filled with the sound of the mbira ensemble interspersed with the poetic exclamations and improvised melodies of the featured singer, no one was without a means of participating. When the hosho player tired, another man rose to take over the gourd rattle parts, later passing them to someone else. Response to the mbira came from all directions: some people clapped interlocking drumming accompaniment to the music, others sang soft background melodies to the harmony of the mbira. One old man shouted out lines of poetry to the mbira in the spaces left by the main singer. One of the many styles of dance to the mbira included *stepping with the voice* which was itself a form of rhythmic accompaniment. At high points throughout the piece, women ululated in approval. The music was the sum total of the contributions of all the members present.

The piece continued for over thirty minutes. The style of the hosho player, Chikomo (fictitious name) increase in intensity. While the rhythmic framework for the hosho's pulse was a continuous „and-a-one-and-a-one-and-a-one ...“ its overall articulation became sharp like the crack of a whip. The hosho player's mood changed. As his arms rose and fell, snapping the gourd rattles, his face became an expressionless mask. He stared out before him through glazed eyes. Suddenly, with loud exclamation, the hosho flew out of his hands into the air and his body shot off of the cement bench. A man ducked to avoid being hit by the gourd rattles and several dancers jumped out of the way of his body hit the ground. The hosho player, who earlier had been laughing and drinking with the others, rolled over and over on the ground, his entire body in a spasm. His teeth chattered loudly and his voice repeated a chilling cry in a falling melodic line: „Ahhhhh..da..da..da..dada-dada.“ As he tossed and turned, the music continued without him. Another man picked up the hosho to take his place and the dancers danced around him – careful to stay out of the way of his kicking feet. After twenty minutes his cries ceased and his body became still. Eventually he rose and left the house. He returned shortly wearing black cloth in place of his European clothes. He took his place among the dancers but stared off in the distance as if in another world. A spirit had taken over his body.

The musicians played piece after piece. The hosho player kept a steady pulse and the harmonic cycles of the mbira pieces were repeated over and over. As people danced, drank beer, and sang through the night, all sense of time was lost. It was two in the morning when a second spirit arrived and took the body of the ensemble's singer, Moyo. This possession was not as violent as the first. With a long groan, Moyo fell forward and dropped to his knees. He has first become possessed several years before and since then his spirit's reputation had grown. It was for Moyo's spirit as well as the music that his group had been hired by the village that evening. (...)

#### Chapter VII

The music and character of the bira: A journey through the night.

In its many aspects, the mbira is a communal affair; its music is the sum of the contributions of all the members of the village who choose to participate. The nucleus of the music is provided by the mbiras, although, in some areas, drums may be played with or in place of the mbiras. The latter instance depends on the customs in particular areas of Rhodesia, the needs of the particular spirits for whom the bira is held, and finally, the availability of musicians. Mbira players hired for the evening are expected to play from after

sundown, perhaps eight o'clock, to sunrise the next morning. After the ceremony, the villagers may ask them to stay on and continue to play for entertainment, although the players are not obligated to do so, or they may look for other mbira players in the area to replace them.

In ancient times, Shona chiefs kept large bands of mbira players in their courts and, today, on special religious occasions, as many as fifteen or twenty mbira players perform together. For the most part, however, an mbira ensemble consists of two to five mbira players, a hoshu (gourd rattle) player, and one or more singers – often from among the players themselves. It is around the nucleus of the mbiras and the basic supporting rhythm of the hoshu that the singing, clapping, are dancing parts revolve.

Shona mbira compositions frequently consist of a fourty-eight beat pattern divided evenly into four harmonic sections of twelve beats each that are repeated in a continual cycle throughout the performance of the piece.

(...) Since the large Shona mbiras are designed to be played in duets or in small ensembles (as well as in solo performance), mbira composition patterns contain the essential structure and mood of the piece.

(...) Mashoko's and Mude's performances demonstrate the fact that yodelling is not used in Shona singing merely as an effect but as a vehicle for melodic and rhythmic improvisation and variation.

## Chapter VIII

### Kudeketera: The poetry of the mbira.

A dignified old man sat back against the wall of the kitchen in the darkness and watched the going's-on of the bira. His tattered overcoat kept the winter air from chilling him as he clapped energetically to the accompaniment of the mbira ensemble. The kitchen was filled with many villagers singing and clapping. Dancers passed before him. His face remained expressionless as he watched the proceedings. Just about every thirty seconds, however, he burst forth with a seemingly effortless line of poetry that came across as a mixture of singing, talking, and sighing. His participation was subtle and it was not clear from the reactions of many others present whether they had heard him at all. Those present were involved in their own thoughts and their own roles as participants. Periodically, however, several of the younger villagers covered themselves of the old man. „You have killed the elephant, but the head is mine,” he sang, „You have brought me butter, but I have no bread,” etc.

A young man with fancy European clothes danced over in front of the singer and shortly thereafter, the old man sang, „It is those young man with their tight pants who have brought the white man's way upon us.” The embarrassed youth danced away from the vocalist. The next day

a villager smiled, thinking back on the bira, and commented to me: „That clever old man; he really kept things going last night.” (...)

(...) Literal meaning (11):

I next came upon people sitting, milking a frog. I asked, „Why are you milking a frog?” They replied, „We have no cow.” I said, „This is a cow; you can get milk from this cow.” But I found now they took the cow and cut off one of its teats. They said, „Sorry but don't worry, people always repay you. We'll give you a wife.”

Intended Meaning:

(Mr. Mashoko delights in surprising his listeners with such an absurd image, an unexpected turn in the story. „When I sing,” he says, „you never know where I am going next.”)

Literal Meaning (12):

So they gave me a wife with a long neck. That was nice to me for she had the same neck as mine. I said, „Thank you very much; you have given me a wife to brew beer for me.” I said, „Let us go” and my wife began to walk ahead of me. I said, „You're walking so nicely for me, someone will try to kill me (jealous of such a beautiful wife). She didn't reply. After walking like that, we found a big tree and sat and thought together. I told her, „You can cook beer for a few days while we're here!”

Literal Meaning (13):

She cooked sour beer and I asked, „Why did you cook sour beer?” She said, „Oh, my husband, you're being stupid, now. My father told me, if you marry, cook sour beer and you'll know that place is yours.” Those were good words. I said, „Give me my ax (ceremonial ax); I want to dance. You must go from me.” As he dances, he finally slips and almost falls, but his wife catches him. „Why did you catch me?” he asks. „You almost fell down!” she replied. „No, you must go away or I may step on you and scratch you” the husband ordered. As the pleased husband dances by himself, the story ends.

As Mashoko sings „Mbiri Viri” his face becomes alive with the portrayal of the characters in his story. His command of many vocal styles heightens the feeling and imagery in his story. In the version of „Mbiri viri” mentioned above, Mashoko imitates the sound of the main character walking by himself, „De...de...de,” the character walking with his cow, „Dey..deya..deya,” the beautiful walk of his wife before him, „Tiya..tiya..tiya..” and finally the sound of the husband's leg rattles as he dances by himself, „tsa..tsa..tsa..tsa..tsa..tsa.” Throughout the story, Mashoko freely interjects passages in huro and mahonyera style. A similar version of this song by Simon Mashoko may be heard on the record accompanying this thesis, Side II, band 1. (...)

A ride in a motorized rickshaw, the heads of pedestrians flying by, teeming crowds on the side of the road, the honking of horns, throttling back, stepping on the gas. This could be India. Then all is silent. A door in a pitch-dark room, light behind it; another room, the chairs and tables are covered with white cloths; this place was abandoned a long time ago. A thunderstorm comes up, but in a different place, flashes of lightning x-ray the branches of a tree and plunge it back into darkness. Sometime later a studio, technical equipment all around. A man puts a cassette into the player and adjusts the speaker, we hear smacking sounds as if someone was treading a fine gravel path, the murmur of a spring. A cup comes into view, extensive lingering, accompanied by flowing water as if by music.

Sequences from Michael Pilz' latest film *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES* (2005). It stands as probably the most enigmatic montage of visual and audio fragments among the oeuvre of over 50 films this Viennese documentary film-maker has created so far. And it most likely forms the most radical apex of his aesthetic program, which renounces narrative linearity and conventional association of meaning with audio and visual content and composes his material according to fundamental parameters of perception such as loud and quiet, bright and dark, far and near. Almost in a spirit of abandon, a strictly personal arrangement already takes shape during the process of filming. According to his own statements, Pilz films his object not from the head, as it were, but acts on a gut feeling and instinctively keeps an eye on image detail and content, on graphic proportions, light, color, contrasts, and sound; often, he already cuts entire film passages in the camera. His intense listening and looking is borne by what Freud called free-floating attention: Floating free and being attentive and waiting to see what will happen. In a conversation with Christoph Hübner shown in the 3sat TV series „Dokumentarisch Arbeiten“ (“Making Documentaries”, 2000), Pilz gave a good description of this immersion that is oblivious to the world, his complete devotion to his object. Hübner had asked how he, who has never used a tripod, managed to keep the camera so steady: „I don't know how to say it, one moves in so close to these things, physically and emotionally, and reenacts the movement of objects in one's mind, and that way one doesn't shake the camera or blur the images. This can get intense to the point where I don't think about anything. All I do is look, or hear, or I simply am. And I don't even know it. I don't know anything then (...). It's wonderful to come into this freedom. No more thinking. I'm not even doing anything anymore, just letting things be done; It's simply: not doing.“

With *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES*, Michael Pilz not only pushes on with the open and poetic form of his

documentary method, he also brings together material from different times and locations in a single cinematic space. It comprises film and sound footage of various events and encounters between 1994 and 2003. Fortunate discoveries he made on the many journeys he took in recent years – to India, Africa, Cuba, Italy, Turkey, or different Austrian regions. The aforementioned studio, for example, belongs to graphic artist and painter Andreas Orttag from Karlstein, Lower Austria. Footage from these trips sometimes resulted in separate films; this one, however, appears as the associative sum of disparate cinematographic diary notes, a mosaic of experiences, a place from which a star-shaped set of vanishing lines leads to different layers and phases of Pilz' work. In spite of all craft professionalism, knowledge, and acquired urbanity, there is a constant theme running through his work to this day: ever-evolving wonderment.

Just as in Africa. In 1997, Pilz made his first visit to Zimbabwe. Participating in a cultural exchange program, he accompanied musicians and composers Peter Androsch, Keith Goddard, Klaus Hollinetz, Lukas Ligeti, and photographer Werner Puntigam on a visit to Siachilaba, a small settlement of the Bantu people of the Tonga. In the previous year, the „Five Reflections on Tonga Music“ had taken shape in Linz, Austria: Electroacoustic variations on the musical tradition of the Tonga. Both European and African musicians now presented their repertoire to each other, and Michael Pilz documented this confrontation of two different cultures. Not as an ethnographer who learns about a foreign world and breaks it down into discursive patterns, but rather as a body of seeing and hearing that joins in this symphony of the familiar and unfamiliar as an additional audiovisual voice. In creating his imagery, he mostly sets out by listening, as he said once: For his technique of „looking out from the inside“, tones and sounds were as reliable as images as they penetrate deeper into our sensory system. This „looking out from the inside“ creates a reality of its own, one that emerges from Pilz' perception of the outside world and which reaches far beyond a mere documentary style of recording facts. Thus, the footage from Africa that Pilz first included in *EXIT ONLY* (1997/1998) and later in *ACROSS THE RIVER* (1997/2004), focuses on seemingly meaningless details which occasionally turn out to serve as the initial, hardly perceptible trigger points of an entire chain of states of excitement: A man slightly bobs his head and softly hums a tune for himself, almost lethargically; a little later, the entire village is dancing and singing.

In the course of this first stay in Africa, Pilz got to meet musician and instrument maker Simon Mashoko, a virtuoso on the Mbira, to which magic powers are attributed in Africa and whose sounds often lead the way to a long collective state of trance. In 2002, Pilz visited Masho-

ko once more. From the resulting footage, he assembled his film **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** (2002). A nearly four-hour marathon work of music and singing, of ecstasy and exhaustion. Static shots, occasionally continuing for several minutes without cuts, show Mashoko and his melodic spinning of yarns; no subtitles allow us to escape to secure hermeneutic realms. At the moment of shooting, even Pilz doesn't understand what the individual texts talk about. In 1992, together with choreographer and dancer Sebastian Prantl, he had staged a symposium on dance, music, and film, beautifully titled „entering the bird-cage without making the birds sing“. This goes back to a wise saying by Tao teacher Chuang-Tzu, according to which the respective meanings of language prove to be ineffective when an elemental and primeval state of consciousness is reached. In **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko**, Pilz translates this valuable proposition into action and uses his film equipment as a coproducer, as it were, of an energetic awareness that is opposed to discursive understanding. As with so many other Pilz films, at first sight, the foreign remains unfamiliar, one has to trust the unknown in order to feel familiar with it. That's what Pilz does.

And one has to trust him. When he embarks on his expeditions, never taking the straight road and stopping here and there to make a discovery. Even the most inconspicuous things are marveled at from all sides, sometimes by taking a turn into a side street out of sheer curiosity — this can be wonderful and irritating at the same time and requires advance commitment and attention. The effort pays off, which every one of his films goes to show. Because as he walks, Pilz doesn't drag his feet. He is a vigilant flaneur who really does open up new spaces of seeing, both for himself and the viewer. And he doesn't claim to be smarter than his audience, something that sets him apart from many in his trade. A large number of his videos are works in progress. Not only as projects but also in their inner structure. They are marked by his cautious approach, his drawing near, trying to get his bearings as if, at the outset, the filmmaker knew nothing and had to slowly make things accessible for himself. Like in **INDIAN DIARY** (2000), his chronicle of a stay at a health resort in the small South Indian town of Changanacherry. The views from a room are followed by first attempts at exploring the gardens of the Sree Sankara Hospital. Subsequently, the radius of action is expanded by trips into town. A very busy traffic circle, a procession of people with hats resembling colorful Christmas trees on their heads. Pilz' wonderment is, at the same time, our own amazement. The nurses enter the scene and are established as a fixed ensemble of characters that runs through the entire film. Everyday rituals are rendered visible, massages, ablutions, meditations; step by step, a system of coordinates emerges that contains ever more fixed

points. Occasionally, things that seem puzzling at first make sense in the course of events. As, for instance, the two men on the flat roof of a hospital, where the washing is hanging out to dry. At first, both are seen lying on mats, apparently basking in the sun; they are nonplussed by the camera. Later, Pilz climbs the roof once more and sees that this is the place where they gather for prayer.

A similar process unfolds in Pilz' other great travelogue, **SIBERIAN DIARY — DAYS AT APANAS** (1994/2003), even though here, reflections on the different ways of perceiving and looking at reality lead up to the actual beginning of the film. Not, however, as an elaborate theorem but in anecdotal form, through the personal notes of Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen, who accompanied Pilz to Siberia. With a certain degree of surprise, she relates how she and her Russian photographer colleague used to frequently call Pilz and tell him to take a look at this or that while he was still or already entirely somewhere else, following his very own tracks. She first begins her narration in English but eventually slips more and more into Dutch, and here, too, one is left with the phonetic body of words, merely listening and giving up on the decoding of meanings. In *Apanas*, a small Siberian village that lies buried under a thick blanket of snow for six months every year and where the film-maker and his two companions spend a few days, we encounter the same (acoustic) image: Pilz hardly understands a word of Russian, nevertheless, he strikes up a conversation — a dialog that does not attempt to fraternize and concedes to alienness. And again, the camera enters into an almost meditative relationship to things it finds and wasn't looking for, and in doing so, it is always specific. A conventional travel report would have probably shown the locals telling us about their hostile natural environment and the tribulations of their lives, far away from and forgotten by Moscow, coupled with images that illustrate the snowed-in scenery and dilapidation. Pilz makes us feel the hardships, the painfully slow passing of time when one is condemned nearly to inactivity, the steamy air in overheated and smoke-filled rooms, which mists up the lens, or simply how it is to walk through deep snow, how every step requires considerable effort and the body — just as the camera — is thrown off balance. Already in 1994, Pilz brought this material together for the first time in the ten-hour version **PRISJÄDIM NA DOROZKU**. Even the significantly shorter 2003 version is still two and a half hours long, and it is easy to picture the TV producers' dismissive gesture, especially when faced with an aesthetics, which opts out of any kind of linear dramatization and, from the viewpoint of documentary mainstream, pursues an almost subversive information policy.

Since 1978 at the latest, Michael Pilz stopped worrying about making his films comply with the format guide-

lines and rules that competitors on the market adhered to. Before that, Pilz had mainly worked for Austrian Broadcaster ORF. As a co-founder of the „Syndikat der Filmschaffenden“ („Syndicate of Austrian Film Artists“), however, he was, at the same time battling for an Austrian Film Funding Act („Filmförderungsgesetz“), which actually came into effect in 1981 and became an important pillar of Pilz' own projects. In the course of working on FRANZ GRIMUS (1977), the portrait of a farmer, he eventually broke with TV altogether: The producers had scheduled merely four shooting days and four editing days – for Pilz a shockingly short stint for dealing with a person that needed a much longer period of study and involvement. His answer was to follow in 1982: HIMMEL UND ERDE (HEAVEN AND EARTH), a five-hour opus about life on a mountain farm in Styria – filming had extended over one year and editing had taken him another two years. The film starts with a quote from Lao Tse: „Take what is before you as it is, don't wish for anything else, just carry on.“ This can be taken as a programmatic motto for his open documentary concept, which he unfolded to its full extent for the first time here and has consistently pursued to this day.

Just be there. This also applies for the viewer. In the said interview with Christoph Hübner, Pilz maintained that he, who by now was almost exclusively working with video footage, had come to regard the setting of a monitor and a viewer as his favorite form of presentation. Such an intimate space would best enable him to focus on a film and enter into a dialogue on what he has seen with his own self. And if the audience does not go along with his work in the desired manner? „Even if art is not really free, despite this being laid down in constitutions or basic laws, as an artist one is at least free in a certain sense. In the end, someone will listen now and then. And if no one is there at all, then you just listen to yourself.“

Mark Stöhr,  
Musik des Sehens, Der Filmemacher Michael Pilz im Portrait,  
kolik.film, special issue 5/2006, Vienna, March 2006

## Mbira Guru, Mashoko Dies

Friday, 24 August 2007

THE first Zimbabwean to play mbira in church and feature in a movie, Chikakarara Simon Mashoko died two months ago in his home area Masvingo.

Details of his death are still sketch because Mashoko who was good at the Njari spent his last days living a near destitute life in Chivi district where he was born.

Even his exact date of birth is not known with some saying he was born in 1912 while others say his date of birth was 1918.

The deputy director of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, Elvas Mari who comes from the same area with Mashoko confirmed that the mbira legend died two months ago.

Mashoko joined the Catholic Church in 1938 after experiencing two dreams in which he saw angelic figures and heard haunting mbira sounds.

After the dreams, Mashoko mastered the mbira instrument and composed a number of Shona gospel songs which he later played in church.

He featured in documentaries explaining and playing mbira so that the world would know about Shona culture and tradition.

One such documentary was Mbira: Njari-Karanga Songs in Christian Ceremonies and in 1954, he featured in the film Mbiri Yababa Ndiyo Mbiri Yemwana.

Mashoko was not only a great mbira player but was also a gifted mbira maker who even in his old age would welcome dawn cracking mbira sounds.

In a typical case of a prophet who was not respected in his own home area, Mashoko was well known abroad where his music is studied and the mbira pieces he made considered rare art.

Two filmmakers – Andrew Tracy from South Africa and Michael Pilz from Austria – made documentaries on Mashoko while the American Paul Berliner wrote a biography of the mbira player titled The Soul of Mbira.

In his last interview with arts writer Henry Makiwa in 2004, Mashoko said that the freedom today's mbira players are enjoying was because of the agony he and others had gone through.

„We blazed the trail for today's generation and the mbira players would not be enjoying themselves if we had not agonised so much,“ he said.

Wonder Guchu – The Herald  
www.allafrica.com

source: [http://www.zimbabwearts.co.zw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=162&Itemid=36](http://www.zimbabwearts.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=162&Itemid=36)

Drei Österreicher – Komponist Klaus Hollinetz, Filmemacher Michael Pilz und Fotograf Werner Puntigam – besuchten im Sommer 1997 den afrikanischen Musiker Simon Mashoko (Gwenyambira). Als virtuoser Mbira-Spieler und Römisch-Katholischer Katechet lebte dieser zurückgezogen im südlichen Simbabwe. Unvorbereitet fanden sich die Reisenden im Haus einer vergessenen Legende, und der alte Mann begann zu spielen. Fünf Jahre später wurde diese Erfahrung in eine Multimedia-Installation umgesetzt. Das Künstler-Trio hatte in Harare und Linz den Versuch unternommen, geographische Grenzen wie auch jene zwischen den Künstlern zu überschreiten. Ein filmischer Essay, Audio-Aufnahmen und Fotografien schilderten das Leben des charismatischen Musikers. Die Kunst des Mbira-Spielens, deren Sound der Rhythmus Schwarzafrikas ist, hat ihn berühmt gemacht. Für bestimmte afrikanische Stämme ist dieses Instrument ein rituelles Objekt mit umfassender Symbolkraft. Der Einfluss von zwei Träumen, in denen ihm Jesus begegnete, hat Mashoko jedoch dazu gebracht, die Mbira in katholischen Kirchen zu spielen und sie auch hier als sakrales Instrument einzusetzen. Der Film von Pilz, eine Variation eines Videos, das in der Galerie gezeigt wurde, fängt das Mysterium eines normalen Tages ein, den Innenraum der Musik, die Kreativität des Spiels, den Glauben und einen unmerklichen Tanz. Mit Ausnahme einiger Sequenzen der ersten Begegnung, besteht der Film in der Hauptsache aus langen, kontemplativen Aufnahmen, die der Regisseur während seiner dritten Afrikareise gemacht hat. Für Pilz ist die Kamera ein Instrument, das es ihm erlaubt, die Innenansicht des Gesehenen freizulegen. Seine radikal persönlichen Filme sind bezaubernde und fesselnde audiovisuelle Tagebücher. Ihre scheinbar privaten Beobachtungen („Private Eye“) sind in Wirklichkeit tief greifende gesellschaftliche und ästhetische Untersuchungen, in deren Brennpunkt Antworten auf Impulse von außen stehen; die Melodie statischer Bildern in diesem mehr als dreistündigen Film ist eine außerordentliche Herausforderung an das Publikum.

*Petr Kubica,  
Katalog des 7. Internationalen Dokumentarfilm-Festivals Jihlava,  
Tschechien, Oktober 2003*

— Stunden jenseits der Zeit, mehr wie ein leeres Intervall, das wir nicht mehr als Zeit wahrnehmen; Stillstand, einem seltsamen individuellen Rhythmus hingegeben — ein Lied über eine Reise, deren Ziel eine weitere Reise ist, ein Lied über ein Licht, das nicht zu der trockenen Landschaft gehört; ein Lied, das seine eigenen Spuren verwischt und Ruhe einkehren lässt — ohne die Sprache des Liedes zu verstehen, nehmen wir es nicht als etwas Unbestimmtes wahr, im Gegenteil, es gibt eine Ebene, die wir verstehen (ein vertrautes Haus) — eine intensive, kreisförmige Stille des Films: wir fühlen uns, als ob wir mit dem Film einen Raum teilen würden, als ob wir eingetreten wären wo es

keinen Ausweg gibt — Schönheit als unmittelbare Wahrheit des Films; die dem Film eigene Ästhetik zieht sich zurück, überschreitet fast die Grenze zur Immanenz der Gegenwart dieses Menschen, für die die Sprache des Films zu begrenzt wäre — (der Film enthält Fragmente einer Dokumentation von 1976: Mbira: Njari, Karanga songs in Christian ceremonies des Musikethnologen Andrew Tracey) —

*Petr Kubica,  
Katalog des 7. Internationalen Dokumentarfilm-Festivals Jihlava,  
Tschechien, Oktober 2003*

Die Magie des Musikers Simon Mashoko überträgt sich unweigerlich und wie von selbst. Dabei ist es nicht so wichtig, die Texte seiner Lieder zu verstehen. Meist handelt es sich um banale Alltagsgeschichten und um ironische Tierballaden mit deutlichen Verweisen auf menschliche Situationen. Zum besseren Verständnis seiner Zuhörer improvisiert er manchmal während seines Vortrags die Übersetzung einer Story aus seiner Muttersprache Shona in die englische Sprache. Traditionell wird die Mbira bei Festen gespielt, um in Kontakt mit Verstorbenen, mit Ahnen zu treten. Dabei können die Spieler auch in Trance verfallen und eine einfache Geschichte kann sich eine nachtlang hinziehen. Es ist auch gebräuchlich, aus einem Lied ohne Unterbrechung ins nächste überzugehen und so fast unmerklich mehrere Stunden durchzumachen. Deshalb braucht es auch nicht zu verwundern, wenn Simon Mashoko manchmal kein Ende zu finden scheint. Aber gerade dann wird man Teil seines virtuosens Mbira-Spiels und seines selbstvergessenen Gesangs und gerade darin zeigt sich seine wahre Schöpferkraft und gewissermaßen auch sein Urvertrauen in das Hier-so-Sein. Simon Mashoko ist Praktiker, Handwerker (Instrumentenbauer) und als solcher versteht er nicht nur viel von den Dingen und den Werkzeugen, sondern auch vom Sinn der Sachen und der Handlungen. In der Art und Weise wie er physisch anwesend ist und wie er spricht und zuhört und spielt und singt werden jene reife Haltung und jene menschliche und künstlerische Autonomie spürbar, die ihn seit seinen Jugendjahren zum Vorbild für viele werden ließ.

Das Video **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** besteht aus meinen eigenen Aufnahmen der Jahre 1997 und 2002, ergänzt durch Videoaufnahmen des Musikers Franz Fellner, die dieser während eines Besuches mit der Wiener Tschuschenkapelle im Februar 1996 gefilmt hatte, sowie durch Ausschnitte aus dem Film MBIRA: NJARI, KARANGA SONGS IN CHRISTIAN CEREMONIES (1976) des südafrikanischen Musikethnologen Andrew Tracey.

*Michael Pilz,  
27. Duisburger Filmwoche, Duisburg/Deutschland,  
November 2003, Katalog*

Die Dokumentarfilmtage in Duisburg zwingen Besuchern keine Wahl auf, es läuft stets nur ein Film. Und sie verschaffen Kinoerfahrungen Raum; nach jedem Film kann das Publikum das Gesehene mit den Machern ausgiebig diskutieren. So verändert sich die Position des Zuschauers, er wird vom bloßen Empfänger zum Akteur. Von hier zum Filmparadies ist nur ein Schritt: Man müsste das Kino von innen abschließen, den Schlüssel verlieren und auch den Rest des Jahres so verbringen.

Michael Pilz' Film über den afrikanischen Musiker Simon Mashoko ist beinahe vier Stunden lang. Die Kamera genießt Gastrecht in dessen Haus, ist dabei, wenn er immer wieder zu selbst gebauten Instrumenten greift, wenn Familienmitglieder und Nachbarn einsteigen in die Musik, wenn diese einfach abbricht oder zum Medium kollektiver Intensität wird.

Nach gängigen Vorstellungen von Professionalität ist Pilz' Film dilettantisch. Es gibt minutenlang keinen Schnitt, kein Untertitel übersetzt Lied- und Sprechtexte. Dadurch sieht man, was synchronisierte, untertitelte Profifilme uns immer ersparen: Die Erfahrung wirklicher Fremdheit; dass Kennenlernen Zeit kostet und Verstehen Arbeit macht; dass Verständigung, zumal über Kontinente hinweg, ohne Missverständnisse, Reibungen und Geduld gar nicht zustande kommt. Hier technische Standards oder Untertitel einzufordern, wie das im anschließenden Filmgespräch geschah, ist unverschämt, ist Gewalt, die sich als solche nicht wahrnehmen kann, weil sie ganz selbstverständlich ist. Reibungslos soll alles Menschliche ins Bekannte übersetzt, in vertraute Filmformen und Sprachen eingepasst werden. Gerade weil der Film **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** sich frei außerhalb der Marktgesetze bewegt, die sonst das Leben regeln, kann er fühlbar machen, wie sein Regisseur einen afrikanischen Musiker empfindet und hört; auch das Nicht-Begriffene, Nicht-Erfasste.

Eine einzige afrikanische Familie in ihrem Haus ein wenig kennen zu lernen, braucht das nicht noch mehr als 4 Stunden? Die Erfahrungen, die man mit Pilz' Bildern machen kann, geben einem das Gefühl zurück für die Brutalität von handelsüblichen Fiktionen und Generalisierungen, mit denen die Medienmaschinerie unsere Erwartung abbrichtet.

*Michael Girke  
Kategoriengläubigkeit — Momentaufnahmen von den  
27. Dokumentarfilmtagen in Duisburg, November 2003*

Der jüngeren Generation Zimbabwes weitgehend unbekannt wird Simon Mashoko weltweit von vielen Musikern als einer der bedeutendsten Exponenten der Njari anerkannt, einer Mbira-Stilrichtung, die im Raum von Masvingo, im Süden Zimbabwes, praktiziert wird.

Simon Mashoko wurde um 1918 in Masvingo geboren. Er wuchs in einer Njari-Musikerfamilie auf und wurde vom Vater und vom Onkel unterrichtet. Bald spielte er mit diesen

bei traditionellen Bira Zeremonien. Dabei wird der Mbira-Spieler zum Medium, das den Geistern der Vorfahren die Möglichkeit gibt, mit den Anwesenden zu kommunizieren. Im Unterschied zu anderen Mbira Spielern bezieht Simon Mashoko seine Anregungen nicht aus Träumen, wohl aber spielen Träume eine wesentliche Rolle in seiner Entwicklung. Um 1938, erzählt er, hatte er zwei Träume. Im ersten hörte er um Mitternacht eine Stimme, die ihn rief. Er verließ das Haus und begegnete einem Mann in langer, weißer Robe, der von zwei Löwen begleitet wurde. Im zweiten Traum erschienen drei Männer mit Flügeln vor seinem Haus. Beide Träume waren eingebettet in wunderbare Musik, die Simon Mashoko als Mbira-Musik wahrnahm.

Später traf er in einer Bierhalle einige katholische Missionare. Er erzählte von seinen Träumen und die Missionare deuteten die Erscheinung als Jesus Christus. Das beeindruckte Simon und er entschloß sich für die katholische Kirche in Gweru zu arbeiten. Er wurde zwar getauft, spielte aber trotzdem weiter seine Mbira für die Geister der Vorfahren.

In dieser Zeit war die Mbira in der Kirche verboten, sie wurde als des Teufels Werk verdammt und deshalb wurde Simon Mashoko bedrängt, das Spiel mit seiner Mbira aufzugeben. Doch da die Erscheinungen in seinen Träumen Mbira gespielt hatten, bestand er darauf, auch weiterhin im Sinne seiner Vorfahren zu musizieren. Würde er nicht für sie spielen, würde er damit ausdrücken, dass seine toten Eltern mit dem Teufel im Bunde stünden.

Mit den ersten Lockerungen, die die Schwarzen dem weißen Minderheitsregime abringen konnten gab auch die kirchliche Obrigkeit nach und Simon Mashoko durfte seine Mbira nun auch in der Kirche spielen. Er übertrug zahlreiche Shona-Melodien in Kirchenmusik, produzierte mehrere Schallplatten und als er regelmäßig in den Programmen des African Radio Service musizierte, wurde er weit über Zimbabwes Grenzen hinaus bekannt.

Er fühlte sich weiterhin der Kirche verpflichtet und arbeitete für sie über viele Jahrzehnte. Heute lebt er, ohne Unterstützung der Kirche, mit seiner Frau und einer Schar Verwandter (die es aufgrund der Not des Landes nachhause drängt) in sehr bescheidenen Verhältnissen in Beardmore Mine, etwa 60 km östlich von Great Zimbabwe (jenen jahrhundertealten Zeugnissen einer vergangenen afrikanischen Hochkultur, deren Existenz die ehemalige weiße Regierung mit Unterstützung einiger Wissenschaftler immer wieder zu widerlegen versuchte). Heute, knapp 90 Jahre alt, spielt Simon Mashoko nach wie vor jeden Morgen sowie jeden Sonntag beim Gottesdienst seine Mbira mit unverminderter Kraft und Ausdrucksstärke.

*Keith Goddard,  
Harare, Oktober 2001,  
in einer freien Übertragung nach Paul Berliner*

Eine Fahrt in einer motorisierten Rikscha, Köpfe von Passanten fliegen vorüber, wildes Gewusel am Strassenrand, Hupenlärm, Gas wegnehmen, Gas geben. Das könnte Indien sein. Dann Stille. Eine Tür in einem nachtschwarzen Raum, dahinter Licht. Ein anderer Raum, die Stühle und Tische sind mit weißen Tüchern bedeckt, hier war schon lange keiner mehr. Ein Gewitter erhebt sich, aber an einem anderen Ort, Blitze röntgen das Geäst eines Baumes und reißen es wieder ins Dunkel. Später dann ein Atelier, ringsum technische Apparaturen. Ein Mann legt eine Kassette ein und richtet den Lautsprecher aus, man hört schmatzende Geräusche, als gehe jemand über Kies, das Plätschern einer Quelle. Eine Tasse kommt in den Blick, ein langes Verweilen, das Wasser fließt dazu wie Musik.

Sequenzen aus Michael Pilz' neuestem Film *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES* (2005). Es ist die bislang vielleicht rätselhafteste Montage aus Bild- und Tonfragmenten im über 50 Filme umfassenden Œuvre des Wiener Dokumentarfilmers. Und die vielleicht radikalste Zuspitzung seines ästhetischen Programms, das auf erzählerische Linearität und konventionelle Bedeutungszuschreibungen des Gehörten und Gesehenen verzichtet und sein Material nach fundamentalen Wahrnehmungsparametern wie laut und leise, hell und dunkel, nah und fern komponiert. Ein fast gedankenverlorenes und streng persönliches Arrangement, das schon im Prozeß des Drehens stattfindet. Pilz filmt seinen Gegenstand nach eigenem Bekunden nicht aus dem Kopf, sondern, wenn man so will, aus dem Bauch heraus und achtet unbewusst auf Bildausschnitt und -inhalt, auf grafische Proportionen, Licht, Farbe, Kontraste und Ton; oft schneidet er ganze Passagen schon in der Kamera. Ein intensives Horchen und Schauen, getragen von einer, wie es Freud nannte, frei schwebenden Aufmerksamkeit: frei schwebend und aufmerksam sein und warten, was passiert. Pilz beschrieb dieses selbstvergessene Eintauchen, diese totale Hingabe an das Sujet einmal schön in einem Gespräch mit Christoph Hübner in der 3sat-Reihe „Dokumentarisch Arbeiten“ (2000) — auf die Frage, wie er, der nie ein Stativ benutze, es schaffe, die Kamera so ruhig zu halten: „Ich weiß nicht, wie ich es sagen soll, man kommt den Dingen so nahe, äußerlich und innerlich, und vollzieht die Bewegung der Objekte nach, und dadurch verwackelt man die Bilder nicht. Das kann so intensiv sein, da denke ich an nichts. Da schaue ich nur, oder ich höre nur, oder ich bin nur. Und nicht einmal das weiß ich. Da weiß ich gar nichts (...). In diese Freiheit zu kommen ist schön. Nicht mehr denken. Und nicht einmal mehr tun, sondern tun lassen, eben: nicht tun.“

In *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES* forciert Michael Pilz nicht nur die offene und poetische Form seiner dokumentarischen Methode, sondern führt zeitlich und örtlich auseinander liegendes Material in einem einzigen filmischen Raum zusammen. Es sind Bild- und Tondokumente

verschiedener Ereignisse und Begegnungen zwischen 1994 und 2003. Trouvaillen seiner vielen Reisen in den letzten Jahren, nach Indien, Afrika, Kuba, Italien oder in die Türkei, von denen teilweise eigene Filme existieren, auch Aufnahmen, die er in unterschiedlichen Regionen Österreichs machte — das eingangs erwähnte Atelier z.B. gehört dem Grafiker und Maler Andreas Orttag aus dem niederösterreichischen Karlstein. Der Film wirkt wie die assoziative Summe disparater kinematographischer Tagebuchnotizen, ein Erfahrungsmosaik, ein Platz, von dem aus sternförmig eine Reihe von Fluchtlinien in die verschiedenen Schichten und Phasen von Pilz' Arbeit wegführen. Einer Arbeit, durch die sich bei aller handwerklicher Professionalität, bei allem Wissen und bei aller erworbenen Weltgewandtheit bis heute eine Konstante zieht: ein immer neues Staunen.

Wie in Afrika. 1997 fuhr Pilz erstmals nach Zimbabwe. Er begleitete im Rahmen eines Kulturaustauschs die Musiker und Komponisten Peter Androsch, Keith Goddard, Klaus Hollinetz, Lukas Ligeti und den Fotografen Werner Puntigam nach Siachilaba, einer kleinen Siedlung des Bantu-Volks der Tonga. Im Jahr zuvor waren in Linz „Five Reflections on Tonga Music“ entstanden, elektroakustische Variationen auf die Tonga-Musiktradition. Die Musiker, die europäischen wie die afrikanischen, präsentierten einander nun ihr Repertoire, und Michael Pilz dokumentierte diese Konfrontation zweier unterschiedlicher Kulturen. Nicht als Ethnograph, der sich das Andere aneignet und in diskursive Muster zerlegt, sondern als Seh- und Hörkörper, der sich wie eine zusätzliche audiovisuelle Stimme in diese Symphonie des Vertrauten und Fremden einfügt. Er gehe beim Bildermachen meist zunächst vom Hören aus, sagte er einmal, Töne und Geräusche seien für seine Technik des „Von–innen–Herausschauens“ verlässlicher als Bilder, da sie tiefer nach innen drängen. Dieses „Von–innen–Herausschauen“ erzeugt eine eigene Realität, jene von Pilz bei der Wahrnehmung der äußeren, die über eine bloße dokumentarische Aufzeichnung des Faktischen weit hinausgeht. So kommen in dem Afrika-Material, das Pilz zunächst für *EXIT ONLY* (1997/1998), später dann für *ACROSS THE RIVER* (1997/2004) verwendete, scheinbar bedeutungslose Details in den Blick, die sich bisweilen jedoch als erste, kaum wahrnehmbare Reizpunkte einer ganzen Erregungskette entpuppen: Ein Mann wippt leicht mit dem Kopf und summt leise vor sich hin, fast lethargisch, wenig später tanzt und singt das ganze Dorf.

Im Verlauf dieses ersten Afrika-Aufenthalts macht Pilz die Bekanntschaft des Musikers und Instrumentenbauers Simon Mashoko, eines Virtuosen auf der Mbira, der in Afrika magische Wirkungen zugeschrieben werden und deren Spiel oft in lange kollektive Trancezustände mündet. 2002 kehrt Pilz noch einmal zu Mashoko zurück und montiert aus den Aufnahmen den Film **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** (2002). Ein fast vierstündiges Mammutwerk aus

Musik und Gesang, aus Ekstase und Erschöpfung. Statische Einstellungen, mitunter viele Minuten ohne Schnitt, sind auf Mashoko und sein melodisches Fabulieren gerichtet, keine Untertitel erlauben Ausflüchte in sichere hermeneutische Gefilde, selbst Pilz versteht im Moment der Aufnahme nicht, worum es in den Texten im Einzelnen geht. 1992 hatte er zusammen mit dem Choreographen und Tänzer Sebastian Prantl ein Symposium für Tanz, Musik und Film veranstaltet, das den schönen Titel „Den Käfig der Vögel betreten, ohne sie zum Singen zu bringen“ trug. Dieser geht auf eine Weisheit des Tao-Lehrers Chuang-Tzu zurück, wonach sich die jeweiligen Bedeutungen der Sprache beim Erreichen einer elementaren und ursprünglichen Art von Bewusstsein als unwirksam erweisen. In **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** setzt Pilz diesen ihm wertvollen Lehrsatz um und benutzt die Filmapparatur gleichsam als Koproduzenten eines eher energetischen Bewußtseins, das dem diskursiven Verstehen entgegengesetzt ist. So bleibt das Fremde hier wie in vielen anderen Filmen von Pilz auf den ersten Blick fremd, man muss dem Fremden vertrauen, um es als vertraut zu empfinden. So wie Pilz es tut.

Und man muss Pilz vertrauen. Wenn er zu seinen Expeditionen aufbricht und nie den geraden Weg nimmt, mal hier stehen bleibt und eine Entdeckung, und sei sie noch so unscheinbar, von allen Seiten bestaunt, mal dort in eine Seitengasse einbiegt, weil sie seine Neugier erregt — das kann wunderbar und irritierend zugleich sein und erfordert einen Vorschuß an Hinwendung und Aufmerksamkeit. Die Investition lohnt sich, das beweist jeder seiner Filme. Denn Pilz schlurft nicht beim Gehen, sondern er ist ein wachsamer Flaneur, der tatsächlich neue Blickräume eröffnet, sich selbst und dem Betrachter. Und er behauptet nicht — das unterscheidet ihn von vielen seiner Zunft —, schlauer zu sein als seine Zuschauer. Viele der Videoarbeiten sind Works in Progress. Nicht nur als Projekte, auch in ihrer inneren Struktur. Ein behutsames Sich-Nähern und -Orientieren prägt sie, als wüsste der Filmemacher zu Beginn nichts und müsste sich sein Wissen erst langsam erschließen. Wie in **INDIAN DIARY** (2000), seiner Chronik eines Kuraufenthalts in der südindischen Kleinstadt Changanacherry. Den Blicken aus dem Zimmer folgen erste Erkundungen im Garten des Hospitals Sree Sankara. Dann erweitert sich der Aktionsradius um Ausflüge in die Stadt. Ein viel befahrener Kreisverkehr, eine Prozession von Menschen mit Hüten gleich bunten Christbäumen auf dem Kopf. Pilz' Staunen ist gleichzeitig unser eigenes Staunen. Die Krankenschwestern betreten die Szenerie und werden als festes Figurenensemble etabliert, das sich durch den ganzen Film zieht. Alltagsrituale werden sichtbar, Massagen, Waschungen, Meditationen, Schritt für Schritt entsteht ein Koordinatensystem, das immer mehr Fixpunkte enthält. Bisweilen löst sich zuerst

Rätselhaftes im weiteren Verlauf auf. Wie jene zwei Männer auf dem Dachplateau des Hospitals, auf dem die Wäsche zum Trocknen aufgehängt wird. Die beiden liegen eingangs auf Matten, als sonnten sie sich, und schauen verdutzt in die Kamera. Später kommt Pilz noch einmal herauf und sieht: Das ist ihr Platz, den sie zum Gebet aufsuchen.

Ein ähnlicher Prozeß vollzieht sich auch in Pilz' anderem großen Reisefilm **SIBERIAN DIARY — DAYS AT APANAS** (1994/2003), wenngleich hier vor den eigentlichen Beginn Reflexionen über die unterschiedlichen Seh- und Wahrnehmungsweisen voll Wirklichkeit gestellt sind. Jedoch nicht als elaborierte Theoreme, sondern in anekdotischer Form, persönliche Notizen der niederländischen Fotografin Bertien van Manen, die Pilz nach Sibirien begleitet hat. Mit einer gewissen Verwunderung erzählt sie davon, wie sie und ihr russischer Fotografenkollege Pilz häufig gerufen hätten, um sich dies oder jenes anzuschauen, er aber noch oder schon ganz woanders war und seinen ganz eigenen Fahrten folgte. Sie beginnt ihre Erzählungen erst auf Englisch, fällt dann mehr und mehr ins Niederländische, und auch hier ist man auf den phonetischen Körper der Worte zurückgeworfen, ein bloßes Hin-hören, das auf die Entschlüsselung von Bedeutungen verzichtet. In Apanas, einem kleinen sibirischen Dorf, das sechs Monate im Jahr unter einer tiefen Schneedecke begraben ist und in dem der Filmemacher mit seinen beiden Begleitern einige Tage verbringt, bietet sich das gleiche (Hör-)Bild: Pilz versteht so gut wie kein Russisch und unterhält sich trotzdem — in einer Zwiesprache, die nicht fraternisiert und das Fremdsein zulässt. Und wieder tritt die Kamera in eine fast meditative Beziehung zu den Dingen, die sie findet und nicht sucht, und sie bleibt dabei immer konkret. In einer herkömmlichen Reisereportage hätten die Bewohner wahrscheinlich von der Feindseligkeit der Natur und der Beschwerlichkeit ihres Lebens erzählt, weit weg und vergessen von Moskau, gepaart mit illustrierenden Aufnahmen von Verschneidungen und Verwahrlosung. Bei Pilz wird die Härte fühlbar, das zähe Verstreichen der Zeit, wenn man fast zur Untätigkeit verdammt ist, die dampfige Luft in den überheizten und verrauchten Räumen, die das Objektiv beschlägt, oder allein das Gehen durch den tiefen Schnee, wo jeder Schritt Anstrengung bedeutet und der Körper — wie die Kamera — aus dem Gleichgewicht gerät. 1994 schon führte Pilz das Material erstmals zusammen, in der zehnstündigen Fassung **PRISJÄDIM NA DOROZKU**. Selbst die deutlich gekürzte Version von 2003 dauert noch fast zweieinhalb Stunden, und man sieht die abwehrende Handbewegung der Fernsehredaktoren geradezu vor sich, zumal angesichts einer Ästhetik, die sich jeder linearen Dramaturgie verweigert und aus Sicht des dokumentarischen Mainstreams eine fast subversive Informationspolitik betreibt.

Spätestens seit 1978 hat sich Michael Pilz in seinen Filmen nicht mehr um die Formatvorgaben und Wettbewerbsbedingungen des Marktes geschert. Davor arbeitete Pilz vornehmlich für den ORF, kämpfte aber zur gleichen Zeit als Mitbegründer des „Syndikats der Filmschaffenden“ für ein österreichisches Filmförderungsgesetz, das 1981 dann tatsächlich in Kraft trat und zu einem wichtigen Stützpfeiler von Pilz' eigenen Projekten wurde. Zum Bruch mit dem Fernsehen kam es im Verlauf der Arbeiten zu *FRANZ GRIMUS* (1977), dem Portrait eines Bauern, für das ihm die Redaktion gerade einmal vier Tage Dreh- und vier Schnitttage einräumen wollte — für Pilz ein skandalös geringes Pensum für eine Person, die einer viel längeren Beschäftigung bedurfte. Seine Antwort folgte 1982: *HIMMEL UND ERDE*, ein fünfstündiges Opus über das Leben in einem Bergbauerdorf in der Steiermark, an dem er fast ein Jahr drehte und zwei weitere Jahre schnitt. Als programmatisches Motto für sein offenes dokumentarisches Konzept, das er hier erstmals in vollem Umfang umsetzte und bis heute konsequent verfolgt, hat er dem Film einen Spruch von Laotse vorangestellt: „Nimm das, was vor dir ist, so, wie es ist, wünsch es nicht anders, sei einfach da.“

Sei einfach da. Das gilt auch für den Zuschauer. In besagtem Interview mit Christoph Hübner sagte Pilz, dass ihm, der fast nur noch auf Video dreht, inzwischen als Präsentationsform die Situation eines Monitors und eines Zuschauers die liebste sei. In einem solchen intimen Raum könne er sich am besten auf den Film konzentrieren und über das Gesehene in ein Zwiegespräch mit sich selbst treten. Und wenn das Publikum sich nicht in gewünschter Weiser auf seine Arbeiten einlässt? „Wenn schon die Kunst nicht wirklich frei ist, obwohl das in den Verfassungen oder Grundgesetzen immer wieder steht, so ist man zumindest als Kunstschaffender in gewissem Sinne frei. Irgendwer hört schon immer wieder zu. Und wenn es niemand ist, dann hört man sich selber zu.“

Mark Stöhr,  
*Musik des Sehens, Der Filmemacher Michael Pilz im Portrait,*  
*kolik.film, Sonderheft 5/2006, Wien, März 2006*

Love — Work — Cinema.

This motto seemed to me something real and grounded and I was looking forward to discovering the richness and breadth of contemporary Austrian filmmaking as it was my first time attending the Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film, held every year in Graz, Austria. And stepping into the festival office gave me an impression of what that meant this year. It was the last festival for Festival Director Birgit Flos, practically torn apart by the Austrian press for her way of leading the festival over the last four years. As she said later at the press conference, she felt she was highly „underrated“. By whom? The press? The filmma-

kers? Or the audience? Many Austrian citizens never tire of stating that Austria is a small country and its film industry is considered a bit of a sandpit where one can watch suspiciously who is playing in it and what they're up to. Some even whispered that the spectacle in the Austrian pit is more scrutinised if the player is a woman — and German, too.

After this, also discussed was the topic of film subsidy, but I wouldn't really call it a „discussion“. It was non-stop wailing if you ever found yourself seated down for a chat with a filmmaker, male or female. Yes, they see themselves as artists, of course. Wild artists, with bothersome opinions which they feel the need to transmit to the rest of the world, for whatever reason. And they want film subsidy? It didn't sound very logical to me. As the charismatic Austrian director Peter Kern said: „If you need to make a film, just do it, sell your house and family, sell yourself. If you really want to make a film nothing will stop you!“ So at the Diagonale I encountered these two camps just as at any other film festival: those who consider themselves artists with the expectation to make films and be subsidised for it, and those who treat the business as an everyday job. To be a filmmaker it seems you have to make your choice.

As a festival-goer, I had to make my choice from the program. I will start with the program on film artist Michael Pilz called „The erotic of emptiness“. As he wrote: „Making films is a silver-tongued action, there is nothing to say.“ Pilz is extraordinary in his manner of being a stranger, always in dialogue with his camera, and having his camera always in constant dialogue with everything it is surrounded by. Reality is nothing. Your own reality is everything. Pilz seems constantly connected to his expanding universe inside. He forgoes any decoding of signs. If this sounds easy to watch, it is not. It is a strange way to follow someone: have you ever tried to step into a cinematographic poem? When even the director himself leaves no footsteps it is difficult to follow.

And sometimes the reason for that is simple. In **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** (2002) Pilz implicitly questions our all-wrong expectations concerning documentaries. A portrait of the late Zimbabwean musician Simon Mashoko is promised but, more than this, Pilz creates an excellent feeling of disenchantment with off-the-shelf TV productions. He takes his time — nearly four hours — there are no subtitles, no cosmetic time-abridging editing. How much time do you need to get closer to a person, closer to a culture, to a language you don't speak? It is Pilz's musical knowledge of rhythm — he himself is a piano player and composer — that lends him his masterly way of editing. Every film is always guided by the filmmaker's will but Pilz gives the impression that his films have a will of their own and he is just the one who takes the camera

and makes them happen. But this perhaps sounds too romantic when talking of Pilz, for he is a very hard-working ascetic. **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko** doesn't reveal anything that Pilz learned about the musician or his music. The filmmaker clearly indicates that he didn't understand his words, but does this without any question mark. And it is all about the viewers' expectations, so Pilz turns ours on its head. Of course we are not able to understand someone speaking in a foreign language after four hours without subtitles, but what exactly makes us think we could anyway? In **Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko**, Pilz intermixes real and highly sensual images and sounds. Usual portraits provide the essence of a given person's work, life, family and business. This cinematic representation has even snuck into real life and often into human behavioural expectations: we expect a clear trajectory or structure in any person's behaviour, we expect certain results. But nothing in life will ever be straight to the point. Pilz knows this.  
 (...)

Claudia Siefen works as a film critic and essayist, focusing on interviews and cinema history. She has also spent eight years working as a film editor for documentaries. Born in Cologne, Germany, she has lived and worked in Vienna since 2007.

<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/festivals/08/47/diagonale-austrian-film-2008.html>

*Claudia Siefen,  
 „This is a small country, you know“,  
 The Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film,  
 1–6 April, 2008*



|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Original title .....                  | <b>Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko</b>   |
| Country of production .....           | Austria  |
| Years of production .....             | 1976/February 1996/July 1997/January 2002  |
| Location .....                        | Nyika/Masvingo/Zimbabwe  |
| Date of completion .....              | February 2002  |
| Producer .....                        | Michael Pilz   |
| Production .....                      | Michael Pilz Film  |
| Concept & realization .....           | Michael Pilz   |
| Cinematography 1997, 2002 .....       | Michael Pilz   |
| Original sound 1997, 2002 .....       | Michael Pilz   |
| Additional sound 1997/2002/DAT .....  | Klaus Hollinetz, Gabriele Hochleitner  |
| Editing .....                         | Michael Pilz   |
| Featuring .....                       | Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko and family, Martha Muchibwa, Bartholomä Mashoko, William Rusere, Keith Goddard, Gabriele Hochleitner, Werner Puntigam, Klaus Hollinetz, a.o. Shona, English  |
| Language .....                        | Intentionally no subtitles   |
| Subtitles .....                       | 210'   |
| Length .....                          |  |
| Additional material, February 1996    |  |
| Cinematography & sound (Video8) ..... | Franz Fellner (Wiener Tschuschenkapelle)   |
| Additional material, 1976             |  |
| Title of film .....                   | Mbira: Njari — Karanga Songs in Christian Ceremonies   |
| Cinematography 16mm .....             | Les Blank  |
| Sound .....                           | Gei Zantzinger   |
| Field Research .....                  | Rosemary Logic   |
| Editor .....                          | Conley Benfield  |
| Producer .....                        | Gei Zantzinger, University of Pennsylvania Museum  |
| Realization .....                     | Andrew Tracey, International Library of African Music, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa  |
| Original format .....                 | DV video, PAL, colour, 4:3   |
| Tape format .....                     | Beta, DV, PAL, colour, 4:3   |
| Sound system .....                    | mono (ch1+ch2)   |
| Special thanks to .....               | Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko (1917?–2007), Nyika/ZW, Martha Muchibwa, Nyika/ZW, Keith Goddard, Harare/ZW, William Rusere, Harare/ZW, Peter Kuthan, Linz/A, Peter Leitenberger, Austrian Ambassador Harare, Derek and Helen Huggins, Harare/ZW, Andrew Tracey, Grahamstown/SA, Franz Fellner, Vienna/Austria   |
| Support .....                         | Austrian Chancellery — Department for the Arts<br>NÖ-Kultur, Abteilung für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Landes NÖ   |
| First screening .....                 | Rotterdam, International Filmfestival, <i>True stories</i> , January 2003  |
| Festivals .....                       | Rotterdam, International Filmfestival, <i>True stories</i> , January 2003<br>Jihlava, Czech Republic, 7th International Documentary Filmfestival, October 2003<br>Duisburg, Germany, Duisburger Filmwoche, November 2003   |
| Installations .....                   | Delta Gallery, Harare, Zimbabwe, 11–19 January, 2002,<br>multimedia-installation <i>Gwenyambira — A Tribute to Simon Mashoko</i> (sound Klaus Hollinetz, photographs Werner Puntigam, video MP)<br>Vienna, Galerie HABARI — Best of Africa, 26 February–8 April, 2002 (part of installation)<br>Radkersburg, Styria, Kulturhof Johannes Aquila, 26 June–28 July, 2002 (part of installation)<br>Linz, HHM–Galerie Gerald Hanisch, 28 August–29 September, 2002 (part of installation)<br>Vienna, Künstlerhaus, <i>Salonausstellung</i> , 21 August–22 September, 2002 (participation)<br>Munich, Pasinger Fabrik, Africa in Motion, 11 November 2004–9 January 2005<br>Maputo / Fortaleza (Biennale "Photo Festa Maputo 2006"), 14 October–15 November, 2006<br>Belgrade / Museum of African Arts, 30 November–9 December, 2006<br>Graz, <i>Diagonale</i> , Festival of Austrian Film, April, 2008 |
| World rights & distribution .....     | MICHAEL PILZ FILM, Teschnergasse 37, A–1180 Vienna<br>T +43 (0)1 4023392, film@michaelpilz.at, www.michaelpilz.at  |