

CHIWONISO MARAIRE



"As vocalist, percussionist and mbira player, Chi's musical gift developed and matured over the years. Chiwoniso Maraire is a bright new star in Africa – young, gifted, and full of promise. Her traditional Shona mbira style, which emerges naturally from within her, is overlaid with something that is entirely and uniquely her own, a mellow and sensuous style, which fuses together the past, present and future."
(Penny Yon)

Chiwoniso Maraire was honored with the Decouverte Afrique by radio france international and released her first album "Ancient voices" in 1998. That album entered the World Music Charts Europe three times (place 5) and brought her a nomination in the category "Best Female Vocals of Africa" for the KORA Award in '99. In that same year she was part of the WOMEX showcase in Berlin and performed on the main stage at Afrika Festival Würzburg. In 2000 she was invited by the EXPO in Hannover and came for a two month tour in Europe. During the last five years she concentrated on her musical career in Zimbabwe and South Africa. She has done a huge amount of recording and session work through the years, working with artists from around the world in greatly diverse styles (e.g. Kris Kristoffersen and Sinead O'Connor). Chiwoniso last year released her second solo cd, "Timeless", with her group Vibe Culture and is currently at work with Keith Farquharson on her third solo album.

BIO

Chiwoniso Maraire was born in Olympia, Washington (USA) in 1976. Her father, ethnomusicologist Dumisani Maraire, taught marimba and mbira in America between 1972 and 1990, and was a renowned stage performer along with her mother, Linda Nemarundwe Maraire. "Musical instruments were a core element of my childhood. By the age of four I was playing mbira; "Tichazomuona", my first recording with my parents, was released when I was nine" remembers Chiwoniso. By the age of 11 she was performing with Dumi & Minanzi 3, her father's marimba band based in Seattle, and by 14 she was performing mbira and singing in the family quartet Mhuri yaMaraire along with her sister Tawona, brother Ziyantai and their father. Mhuri yaMaraire released a cassette/album, "Imwi Baba", in 1990.

Later in the same year Chiwoniso's family relocated to Zimbabwe. She went on to enroll as a student at Mutare Girls High School where she sang in and sometimes conducted her house choir. In 1991 Chiwoniso met Herbert Schwamborne and Tony

Chihota whilst on school holiday in Harare. The two young boys had formed a powerful duo rapping and making hip-hop music; they called themselves "A Peace of Ebony". After hearing her sing, beat-box and freestyle some rap during a freestyle clash one afternoon they asked her to join "A Peace of Ebony" (P.O.E) as its first girl member, and she agreed.

P.O.E, whose members were a mixture of Zimbabwean, German, American, Russian and Malawian ethnic back-grounds, were a group which redefined the essence of international African rap. Composing their lyrics in English and Shona, they used both synthesized and natural sounds of the mbira and marimba at the core of most of their recordings. Chiwoniso, Herbert and Tony recorded the cd "From The Native Tongue" in 1992 in Keith Farquharson's studio, with Keith lending his honed production skills to the recording. In the same year the four of them worked on a song for the Zimbabwean teenage hit movie "More Time" produced by Media For Development Trust. In 1994 the director of the Alliance Francaise in Harare suggested to P.O.E that they enter the Radio France International contest, "Les Découvertes". P.O.E.'s entry "Vadzimu", a song they composed specifically for the competition, was a potent mixture of the Shona, English and French languages riding over a heavy mbira-laced hip-hop rhythm.

There were now two additional members in the group, Tendai Vicki and George Phiri, with Karen Stally joining in as an additional singer whenever she was free to. "Vadzimu" won P.O.E. the 'Best New Group out of Southern Africa' award, which led to the group traveling to Madagascar where they performed in Antananarive at the finals of "Les Decouvertes in 1995." P.O.E came third out of the many groups that showcased their art that year; a great achievement as they were also the youngest. A Peace of Ebony parted ways after returning from Madagascar, but have remained devoted friends.

The following year Chiwoniso was contacted by the Paris-based recording company LusAfrica Sarl. Impressed by the performance A Peace of Ebony had staged in Antananarive, LusAfrica offered Chiwoniso a contract to record her first solo CD after learning that P.O.E. were no longer together. By this time Chiwoniso was a fulltime member of the then powerful Zimbabwean group Andy Brown & The Storm and had been composing serious music with them. She signed a contract with LusAfrica and the recording work for her cd "Ancient Voices" began with members of The Storm in 1995. Chiwoniso and Keith Farquharson had continued working together after the split of A Peace of Ebony, recording and producing jingles together occasionally for radio and television. Keith had introduced Chiwoniso to Andy Brown and was playing keyboard in the band. After the recording work of Ancient Voices was complete, Keith flew with the cd to France to do the final mix with Francois Post. In the same year Chiwoniso was invited to be part of a multi-national youth artists' group called Talent '95. Talent '95 was made up of young musicians from Norway, Zimbabwe, Egypt, India and South Africa. Together they traveled Norway, Egypt and Zimbabwe. "Ancient Voices" was a tremendous success and brought critical acclaim to Zimbabwean mbira music. Of note was Chiwoniso's ability to flawlessly interweave

English and Shona, an ability that has become a strong signature in her work. “Ancient Voices” was released in 1998 and won the RFI ‘Best New Artist’ award. In 1999 Chiwoniso fronted the members of The Storm at the MASA festival in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, where the band’s performance won them the U.N.E.S.C.O. Price for Arts. In the same year, she was a nominee in the “Best Female Vocals of Africa” category of the KORA Awards.

In 2000 Chiwoniso performed with great success at a number of festivals like The Afrika Festival in Würzburg, Roskilde Festival in Denmark, Bielefelder Weltnächte, Bardentreffen in Nuernberg etc. She opened the Africa Pavillion at the Expo 2000 in Hannover and performed for the German television channel ZDF. In Germany she went to some of the most renomated music clubs like the Brotfabrik in Frankfurt, Bahnhof Langendreer in Bochum or the Pavillon Hannover and some others. In 2001 Chiwoniso left Andy Brown & The Storm to concentrate on her solo career.

CHIWONISO & VIBE CULTURE – COLLABORATIONS – NEWS

Chiwoniso has been fronting her acoustic group Chiwoniso & Vibe Culture for the past six years. With Vibe Culture she recorded her first acoustic album entitled “Timeless” and toured very intense in Southern Africa. Chiwoniso is also a member of the newly formed Zimbabwean group ATOM, and they have recently completed recording their first cd, “Hupenyu Kumusha”. From 2001 to 2004, she was also a core member of the multinational all-women’s band Women’s Voice, whose original members hailed from Norway, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, America, Israel and Algeria. Chiwoniso has also been busy in film, having worked on the soundtracks for movies and documentaries by an array of Zimbabwean writers and film producers in the last ten years.

Her musical collaborations have included recording with Marie Boine, Brilliant, Kris Kristoffersen and Sinead O’Connor on the cd celebrating the 100th commemoration of the Nobel Peace Prize Awards, composing and performing for the UNDP Africa 2015 song project “Les Tams-Tams de l’Afrique” alongside Salif Keita, Habib Koite (Mali), Ishmael Lo, Youssou Ndour, Manu Dibango, Baaba Maal (Senegal), Achieng Abura (Kenya), Saintrick and Koffi Olomide(Congo). She contributed to the “Women Care” cd recorded two years ago along with women artists from other African countries and from Norway. She has done a huge amount of session work through the years, working with artists from around the world in greatly diverse styles.

While she presented her own music in Europe after a long break when she first came back with her own band – actually with a trio formed by members of Vibe Culture – in 2006. She then did a tour of 21 concerts during the wholemonth of November throughout Germany and Switzerland which was a major success. In 2006 Chiwoniso also won second place in the World Music category of the International Songwriting Competition. The ISC received around 15000 entries from 82 countries throughout the world. The panel of judges consisted of top recording artists and songwriters like

Tom Waits, Joss Stone, Macy Gray, Sonny Rollins etc. and according to the New York Times, the ISC is 'the songwriting competition to take note of'.

In 2007 Chiwoniso became a jury member of the Creole Worldmusic Competition. In the same year she returned to Europe with her new big band to perform in Berlin open air, at the Music Meeting in Nijmegen (Netherlands), Africa Festival Wuerzburg (main stage) and Afro Pfingsten (Switzerland) – all concerts were simply great highlights of the festivals.

She will come back to Europe twice in 2007: first to do a musical collaboration with the Irish songwriter Declan de Barra and second to continue her acoustic tour that she started in 2006 – this time she will begin in Sweden.

Chiwoniso is currently at work with Keith Farquharson on her third solo album. The project is nearing completion and features several top Zimbabwean musicians like Louie Mhlanga, Sam Mataure, Ian Hillman, Adam Chisvo and Steve Dyer. In 2008 Chiwoniso will return to Europe to promote her new cd that will be released by Cumbancha (for distribution and catalogue please visit www.cumbancha.com).

"Music...It's an expression of God. All pain, joy, rage, love..wisdom, can be found in music. I am in awe when in the presence of its power. There's a place from where the music comes. The life essence..."

(C. Maraire)

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