

BOOK REVIEW

John Lwanda. *Making Music in Malawi*. Lilongwe: Logos Open Culture, 2021. viii +451pp. Notes. Index. £25/MWK 20,000. Paper. ISBN 978-99960-979-2-8.

Making Music in Malawi by John Lwanda represents a thorough and extensive investigation, demonstrating the deep exploration conducted into the historical musical complexities specific to Malawi. This study seamlessly incorporates neighboring nations such as Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, drawing upon the relevant resources to support its objectives. It enlightens the reader with the notion that music not only serves as a refuge during trying times but also resonates deeply within the essence of every Malawian. Dr. Lwanda makes the point that music in Malawi finds its inspiration in every facet of Malawians' lives, encompassing pivotal moments such as birth, death, labor, slumber, matrimony, military endeavors, resistance against colonizers, love, desolation, the induction ceremonies of chiefs and dignitaries, sacred masses, indigenous festivals, divine worship, and initiation rituals. Moreover, to highlight the progression of music, his study covers the origins of orally transmitted melodies sung by the ancestors from ancient times until the present. His research indicates that in their migration from South Africa to Malawi, people brought not only themselves but also their distinct musical cultures.

Making Music in Malawi provides exceptionally well-supported arguments accompanied by relevant documentation regarding the transformation of traditional musical connections. Dr. Lwanda's comprehensive analysis of musical genres reveals that only marginal modifications have occurred since these genres were first adopted. The study also delves into musical experiences during the First and Second World Wars, as well as the introduction of African lyrics to Malawi sung to Western melodies by returning soldiers. According to the study, Africans invariably commemorate and honor every aspect of life with music and dance. The colonial influence on music infiltrated traditional melodies, as Malawians embraced the music of the colonizers within their churches.


Dr. Lwanda posits that the majority of Malawian musicians can trace their origins back to the bands established by missionaries. His intricate exploration of traditional songs serves as a testament to the unique societal perspective ingrained with elements of destitution, dearth of affection, anguish, and conflicts within marital and familial relationships. This study also acknowledges the limited presence of feminist composers in Malawi. Female music, primarily employed during times of lamentation or grievance, seems to have been associated solely with unfavorable occurrences. Dr. Lwanda contends that the marketing of music was contingent upon understanding the target audience and aligning it with the appropriate musical components. Furthermore, he

advises musicians to acclimate themselves to the digital age in order to better promote their productions.

The nomenclature of musical instruments intricately encapsulates the arduous labor behind their creation, as it is an endeavor that demands great effort and skill. The evolution of music intertwined with dance has undergone meticulous examination, serving as a means to unravel the rich tapestry of Africa's cultural heritage. This study also endeavors to convey the notion that Malawians should wholeheartedly embrace the registration of music in more delicate forms akin to their colonizers' counterparts, which highlights the necessity for innovative practices among Malawian musicians. According to Dr. Lwanda, it is imperative for Malawi to foster a culture of ingenuity within its musical community. Despite the establishment of numerous music schools, the educators have regrettably neglected to underscore the significance of indigenous music, resulting in a missed opportunity to preserve and celebrate its cultural value. The concluding section offers insightful recommendations to overcome the obstacles encountered by musicians in Malawi.

The case studies meticulously chronicle the life journeys of specific individuals, substantiating the evolution of music. Dr. Lwanda's volume illuminates the politicians who championed the fusion of African cultural nuances into the fabric of musical expression, thereby fortifying resistance against the encroaching influence of the colonizers. While unraveling the tapestry of Africa's past is a relatively straightforward task, navigating the intricate corridors of musical history poses a formidable challenge. An abundance of indigenous terminology has been employed, which may impede the readers' understanding, given that non-African readers are unfamiliar with most of these terms.

Making Music in Malawi showcases the high quality of research due to its extensive data coverage, positioning it fittingly as a comprehensive collection documenting the progression and development of music in Malawi. I ardently endorse *Making Music in Malawi* as a testament to Dr. Lwanda's relentless diligence and unwavering dedication.

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