Refreshing Our Spaces with New Artwork: Mbira Photographs of Paul Berliner

Jamie Keesecker (Duke University)
SEMLA 2022 Annual Meeting
Saturday, October 22, 2022
History and Background

Paul F. Berliner

Arts and Sciences
Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Music

Professor of Music in
Duke Music Department
2005 - 2016

≈50 years devoted to researching traditional music of Zimbabwe

The Art of Mbira
Musical Inheritance and Legacy
PAUL F. BERLINER

Mbira's Restless Dance
An Archive of Improvisation
PAUL F. BERLINER AND COSMAS MAGAYA

History and Background

The Soul of Mbira


Coordinated with two recordings published by Nonesuch Records:

- *The Soul of Mbira* (Nonesuch H-72054, 1973)
- *Shona Mbira Music* (Nonesuch H-72077, 1977)

(re-released on CD in 2002)


Includes Appendix: *Building and Playing a Shona Karima*
History and Background

Paul Berliner’s Undergraduate Mbira Class

• Students learn to play Shona Mbira while studying its history
• Mbira-building workshop
• Mbira instruments on course reserve in Music Library
The Gift

13 Pictures in all
Paul Berliner’s photographs

- Taken during field work between 1971 – 1975
- Rhodesia (British colony)
- Zimbabwe independence - 1980

49” x 35”
The Gift

11 Pictures
Glossy photographs mounted on ½” foam board

20” x 30”

20” x 30”

30” x 20”
The Gift

30” x 20”  

30” x 20”  

30” x 30”
The Gift

40” x 60”

60” x 30”

48” x 48”
The Gift

28” x 20”

Stella Chiweshe

Photographer: Harry Metcalfe

Images from Discogs.com
The Plan

Meeting with Head Conservator & Head of Exhibition Services

Considerations:

- Officially accession as items in collection?
- Preservation vs. Display
- Damage or Vandalism
- Method of Installation for Display
The Plan

Replace some of our existing artwork

Hanging Cleats (French Cleats)
- ½” Birch Plywood
- Double-cleat system for extra support
  - One pair of cleats attaches to wall
  - One pair of cleats attaches to back of foamboard
- Consistent measurements = pieces of similar size & orientation can be interchanged
The Plan – 3D Renderings

← wall

piece →
The Plan – 3D Renderings
The Plan – 3D Renderings

Gravity

Pull
The Plan - Materials

Total material requirements:
• 44 Cleats - 1,176” (98 linear feet)
  • Range 16” to 56”
• Tapcon (masonry) screws for attaching cleats to brick walls
• Drywall anchors and screws
• Glue and brass screws for attaching cleats to foamboard
• Wood screws for attaching cleats to stacks section
Impact of Aesthetic Change

Duke Music Library located in the Mary Duke Biddle Music Building
Mary Duke Biddle portrait in building lobby
Previous Decor

G. Norman Eddy paintings

G. Norman and Ruth G. Eddy
Collection of Musical Instruments

Flagship collection of the Duke University
Musical Instruments Collections (DUMIC)
Previous Decor
Previous Decor
The Plan – Specific Locations

Forensic scaling device

Blown-up and printed on 11”x 17” paper
The Plan – Specific Locations
The Plan – Specific Locations
The Plan – Specific Locations
The Plan – Specific Locations
Sample Images
Sample Images
Sample Images
Sample Images
Execution

Plywood sheets
2’ x 4’

Cut into 2.5”-3” strips
Execution

Clamped for routing
A Coat of Clear Acrylic Paint
A Completed Set of Cleats!
Installation
Installation
Installation
Installation
Installation
Installation
Drilling into Brick
Drilling into Brick
Dust-catching Bag
Results
Questions?