



[Tambanavo \(Dance With Them\) - Zhambai Trio](#)

[Current Reviews - Pot Pourri](#)

Written by Andrew Timar

Wednesday, 31 October 2012 13:50



Tambanavo (Dance With Them)

Zhambai Trio

Independent n/a

www.zhambai.com

The exhilarating debut CD by the Vancouver group Zhambai Trio showcases both the traditional music of the Shona culture of Zimbabwe and that of its transplanted son, Kurai Blessing Mubaiwa, the group's leader. Mubaiwa is not only an outstanding mbira dza vadzimu (“thumb piano”), marimba, ngoma (hand drum) and hosho (maraca) player; he is an eloquent and powerful

singer as well.

Joined by Canadians, world drummer extraordinaire Curtis Andrews and dancer-percussionist Navaro Franco, the Zhambai Trio's music is deeply steeped in the traditional mbira music of Zimbabwe. The musical form is typically cyclic, while also marked throughout by evolving, interlocking, dual instrument variations. Characteristic vocal solos and choral responses are usually sung over the continuous instrumental patterns, which in the case of *Chinzvenga Mutsvairo*, builds into a very satisfying, densely woven, polyphonic texture. That and other tracks remind us how closely identified with the essence of music-making the voice is in much of West Africa. The expressive voices, so prominent on this CD, make a compelling case as the real stars here, despite the evident “rightness” and even virtuosity of much of the instrumental playing.

The online notes refer to the “trance-y” nature of the performance in its homeland. Traditionally sought after in Shona ceremonies, trance states are used to communicate with ancestor spirits and to offer insights to problems of community members. The lyrics on this CD however offer less dramatic, reassuring advice to youth, “you can also do what your elders can” (*Chipundura*). Another song urges people to get along with their grandmothers, who they rely on for comfort and warmth (*Dangurangu*).

While the Zhambai Trio was formed as recently as 2010, this CD is clear evidence of an infectious brand of contemporary Zimbabwean-inflected music emerging fully formed from our west coast.

[< Prev](#)

[Next >](#)