

# **BEMBÉ**

**A musical journey.  
Starting in Tokyo,  
taking me to Havana.  
Searching for music  
in CD shops in Vienna.**

**A journey well traveled  
by HANS FLEISCHNER**

## *Foreword.*

*A few words I may add here. The musical journey really started summer 1968 in New York. Flushing, Queens, to be precise. I stayed in the home of the sister of Gene, my uncle Ernst's wife. She was away on holidays, so I had the place to myself. Upstairs her grandson had a fine LP collection. So the journey started here.*

*Big jump in time and geography.*

*Tokyo and the release of  
Bembé by Milton Cordona.*

*Now the focus became  
Santería and the sacred  
music and rituals practiced  
across the Americas.*

*I wrote this text sometimes  
after 2005. I remember  
buying a book related to the  
music in 2007.*

*All soon 20 years ago.*

*Will I, would I change the  
text? No, unless I come  
across a big error.*

*Read on and enjoy with me  
the journey I took and at  
least mentally always take.*

*You may know some or all  
of the music I am talking  
about here and I trust you  
will hear some of it, as you  
read this text.*

*Hans Fleischner  
Vienna 2023, June.*

***Bembé.***

***It started with Cream.***

***Thanks to Ginger Baker I started to really listen to drummers. Then I came across an album by Kip Hanrahan and Jack Bruce was one of the participating musicians, so I just bought it.***

***By doing so, I discovered Milton Cordona and one day there was the album called Bembé by him.***

*He went into the studio in N.Y. with drummers and singers and recorded the music known as Santeria.*

*I was hooked and a journey began, musically at first.*

*Santeria has a very long history, but right now and here, just a few words.*

*It starts in West Africa among the Yoruba people, was carried by many Africans to the Americas*

*and meant their spiritual survival and strength.*

*This music, a way of communicating with their Gods and if you look around everyones Gods, was adapted to the new environment, which saw the people not free, but as slaves.*

*This new reality, gave name to an ancient tradition and is called Santeria and the people calling and*

*praising their Gods do so in the language of the Yoruba.*

*If Gods have a home, they have found one in Havana.*

*We are not going there right away, wait, let me continue with my story.*

*But one thing I must say, before I go on, this spiritual music and the worship that goes along with it, can be found all across the Americas, under different names and played with different*

*drums and sung in different languages.*

*Bembé.*

*I continued looking.*

*My journey by now took me through music stores on several continents and I got deeper and closer to the Source.*

*Actually I was once before passing by the Source, so to speak, when I listened to an album called **WE INSIST!***

## ***MAX ROACH'S- FREEDOM NOW SUITE.***

***One of the musicians on it was, Babatunde Olatunji, a drummer from Nigeria.***

***The album as a whole was an ear opener and also influenced my visual thinking, as music always does.***

***But back to the journey looking for the Source of Santeria.***

***Being in no hurry, having no master plan and doing it***

*for the love of it, my next discovery was, Spirit Rhythms (Sacred Drumming & Chants from Cuba) by Orlando “Puntilla” Rios & Nueva Generacion.*

*Another step, another turn on the road to the Source.*

*The Way of the Orishas:*

*The Yoruba-Drums of Trinidad, Part 1: Drums of Worship, Part 2: Drums of Pleasure.*

*If I was a Music Ethnologist, at the latest here, I would start quoting from the liner notes, putting them into perspective to my own findings.*

*I'm not, I am a Photographer and a Lover of Music.*

*So I travel through the fields full of music, the way I walk through the streets full of people.*

*And who do I come across,*

***MATANZAS, CUBA: Afro-Cuban Sacred Music, FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE***

***and HAVANA, CUBA: Rhythms and Songs for the ORISHAS.***

***Field recordings by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa.***

***Exquisite, plenty of music and lots of informations.***

***You are getting impatient, wait, I know, but don't worry, there will be plenty***

*of reference information  
here and there, let me just  
travel on.*

*Yoruba Drums from Benin,  
West Africa.*

*Unlike in Nigeria, the mu-  
sic here, remained largely  
untouched by the changes  
of modernization that  
swept across West Africa.*

*Changes that created new  
forms of music, which al-  
ways had and still do draw  
strength, from the way the*

*knowledge of playing the drums, has been passed on from generation to generation of drummers.*

*VUDU. Yes.*

**VOODOO DRUMS**

*from Haiti.*

**CANDOMBLE** *from Brasil.*

**PONTOS DE MACUMBA**

*Chants religieux afro-brésiliens.*

***Santeria, Lucumi, Candomble, Macumba, Nago, Xango, Shango.***

***Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomble,***

***Cuban Santeria and Trinidadian Shango.***

***Orishas Across the Ocean.***

***From The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection***

***An Endangered Music Project.***

***Black Music in Praise of Oxala and Other Gods,***

*from Colombia, Ecuador &  
Brazil.*

*Diablos Songs and Drums  
from Venezuela.*

*I know, as long as I can see  
and hear, I will look and  
listen and on this journey  
with, through and because  
of Santeria, you will find a  
few good reasons why.*

*Havana was calling and my  
friend Emilio knew I was  
coming to town.*

*By pure coincidence, if there is such a thing, I found a place to stay on Consulado and Emilio was living on Prado, just a block away, so very easy for me, to see him and say hello.*

*This was my first visit to Havana and I felt at home right away.*

*Hans, there is a group of musicians, that sing Son in German. Do you want to meet them. Sure.*

*Rodriguez was a writer, teacher and the organizer of the band. I went to meet them at the Humboldt Institute.*

*On that very day, take note please, a new member joined the group, playing the bongos.*

*I am Lazaro, my friends call me Pipo.*

*Okay bongos, you can play the hell out of them and Cubans are masters at that,*

*but I came to Havana, because of Santeria.*

*Lazaro, his dad and his brother play The Bata Drums, Congas, Chekere, they are a Percussion Family and practice Santeria, play all over the place and of course have many friends, who do the same.*

*Now I was in Havana.*

*I went to Cerro to visit Pipo. Everybody was there, I had met at Humboldt and*

*of course all his family members, coming and going and some friends from the neighborhood, too.*

*The party was on and with my little palm sized video camera and an external microphone I recorded the group singing Son in German, so I could show it to some people back in Europe.*

*Plus we did a little extra. Pipo on the Conga drum and his friend playing the*

*guitar and then Pipo  
singing and his brother  
playing all three Bata  
Drums bundled together,  
giving me a taste of things  
to come.*

*Welcome to Santeria.*

*Back downtown, I saw two  
women in white, a sure sign  
they are followers of Sante-  
ria and they were.*

*Followed them with the  
video camera, started talk-*

*ing and arranged a meeting to photograph them.*

*One said she is a model and tonight she would show some new fashion at a well known restaurant near the bay. I'm not really a fan of restaurant fashion shows, so I waited for them to come to my place, where The Red Bag was waiting for them and I could take interesting pictures, that showed also something of Havana.*

*They came, one dressed in white and the other somebody else, dressed casually.*

*They were a mixture of arrogant and bored.*

*With The Red Bag and the stairs, the balcony and the room as background, there was something different.*

*Since this wasn't a fashion shooting, I could let things happen and come my way.*

*The pictures turned out just fine and I was happy with them.*

*Looking around I could always see women in white, wearing also very colorful necklaces and wristbands, made of beads.*

*I liked that and thought I might get some for myself.*

*So I checked with Pipo and he told me the meaning of them. In short, the colors were not a fashion state-*

*ment, but were chosen for you and showed to others your position in the world of Santeria.*

*I was still tempted to get some though, but then, since the minimum could be a misunderstanding and the maximum an insult to people practicing Santeria, I simply decided to enjoy the colors and the way the people wore them.*

*Ernst came to town and got a room at the Sevilla, right*

*next to where Josephine Baker once stayed.*

*Her room had the better view of the city, so when he invited me for breakfast, we went up one more floor to enjoy the best view ever.*

*The sun bathing the city in warm morning light, many hands waking up their drums, to guide the gentle souls through the city.*

*Santeria, Rumba, Salsa, Son, whichever way you*

*start the day, when the  
many hands go to sleep, the  
drums gently send their  
city to sleep.*

*Havana, city of drums.*

*Take away the drums and  
the city is gone, the people  
will stop and the hands will  
go looking for their drums.*

*The feet will tell the hands,  
if you don't find your  
drums soon, we stop walk-  
ing and the bodies, so many  
stories to tell.*

*Pipo told us about a Sante-  
ria party near his home, so  
Ernst and I went there.*

*The place was packed, so  
we stayed in the front  
room.*

*The Batas were going and  
my legs were going and I  
almost forgot to take out  
my little disk recorder, no  
cameras please and then  
there is this voice.*

*The voice has a name, Yer-  
ilu and she got the place*

*steaming. Suddenly she spotted me, my microphone smiling catching her wonderful voice.*

*She looked at me, like what are you doing here, did you ask, if no, eat your microphone and buy me some rum.*

*Well, of course she didn't stop singing, being in the middle of getting everybody, the drummers, the people up, up, up.*

*But during the break, she got a hold of Pipo. There is this guy with a microphone. He explained and everything was okay.*

*We were told of another party, outdoors, on the weekend, kind of a showcase for music and dance from Cuba.*

*Conjunto Folklorico Nacional de Cuba and Yerilu Lugo Valdespino was there.*

*Maybe she will never talk to me again, maybe I am just thin air for her, from now till forever, because now, first of all, I will tell you the story of a young man, maybe boy still.*

*The dancers and singers and drummers took a break, but there was still music and an elderly lady, everyone's grandma started to dance, she was sexy, she was elegant and she was funny and she invited*

*this young guy, maybe everyone's grandson to dance with her.*

*He was good, very, very good, very elegant, you just know one day he will be everyone's very elegant granddad and the two danced like only lovers can and everybody loved it.*

*The tease was on and the air was smiling sexy and here comes this woman.*

*This woman, I had noticed her before, was very attractive and you may argue, that the woman next to her had the higher cheekbones, but this woman came slowly down the steps, made her way through the audience and asked our man to dance.*

*How much you can bend your knees, she did it, how much you can show your butt, she did it and how*

*much you can tease with your shoulders, she did it.*

*And whatever else she did, go and see it.*

*And our man, our every man, hot damn, was so elegant dancing with this woman, whatever she did, he knew the answer and wasn't shy to ask her some questions, too, which she answered just fine.*

*This elegance, this sensuality, this joy is the fabric of life in Havana.*

*It has helped the people to weather a lot of storms and they have been around for a good while doing that.*

*Most important though, through their music, their elegance and sensuality, they have given joy to a lot of people around the world. Did I forget dignity.*

*You may find it, right where you are standing, but because it is a rare currency at times and at some places, I want to point it out and say, among the many names dignity may have, one you find among the people of Santeria.*

*This is not about name dropping, this is not about raising one person above another. We are talking about life, of many, many people over hundreds and*

*thousands of years and their spirituality and it is only right, if one person comes along, who has learned from the ones before him and who passes on this knowledge to the ones after him.*

*One such person is Lazaro Ros. When I went into a CD store to ask for music regarding Santeria, when meeting the guy from upstairs in my apartment building, when talking to*

*the guys from Familia, a hip hop group, when talking to my friends, his name comes up.*

*I could have bought all the CDs there were and go home, but that's not why I came to Havana, right, right.*

*Another day I hooked up with Pipo at another Sante-ria party.*

*While I was waiting for him, the guys started to*

*play the introduction and I recorded that. Before it all really started, one young guy, the singer, told Pipo, that he didn't want to have his singing recorded, because he was told, somebody had heard his voice in Europe and he didn't know how it got there.*

*Okay, got the message, no problem, I was there, because of Pipo, so see you next time, really no problem and walked home.*

*Next time was it.*

*I went to Pipo's house.*

*We are playing for some  
guy, who throws a party.*

*No video, but you can  
record us playing.*

*After quite some walk, we  
get to the place. Not much  
light, not too many people.*

*Tuning of the drums.*

*Introduction is being  
played and I hear this  
sound, I heard last time,*

*during the playing of the introduction. Well same guy.*

*People slowly come from the neighborhood to join the party.*

*The guy with that different sound, was now the lead singer, what a voice. High, powerful and the drummers responding as chorus with low voices.*

*Slowly the party starts moving and now as if on a stage of an Afro, Afro, what*

*not Afro, traditional, modern, free, totally improvised Dance Performance starts happening.*

*The host, the guy living in the house, moves, I mean moves. He must have left his bones in the bedroom, because this was moves I saw, no bones moves.*

*I mean he was soloing, like he was playing the saxophone, every octave you can imagine and hear. Nobody can top that, you think.*

*You think, because now the neighbor, a buddy, a cousin, a brother, I don't know, starts his moves.*

*MOVES, written in Capital Letters. Am I missing something.*

*Was there a sign, that said, World Championship in Dry Ice Figure Dancing, because the place was smoking.*

*I gave them Both a Ten. A Gold Medal for them Both.*

*Guys you won, but now my eyes need a rest, so that they can see bones again, as in walking, running and sitting down.*

*Moves, man, moves, man.*

*Pipo walked with me to the main road, waited till I got a taxi and went back to the party. See ya, bones, moves man, moves, man, bones.*

*Good Morning.*

*Coffee with two slices of whole wheat toast and jam and I am ready to go.*

*Sort of, but anyway awake enough to write the name of*

*Merceditas Valdes.*

*She needs no introduction.*

*All I can say, listening to her, brings me, you, another little step closer to Santeria and Afro-Cuban music.*

*When looking, buying, listening to the music, I also catch the comment, file under: ethnic, folk, world, etc.*

*All maybe true, but one is missing, classic.*

*Only once to this day, did I find this word of paying respect, on an album by a French Artist.*

*He took the polyphonic songs of the Aka Pygmies and chose Western compositions inspired by them*

*and African Rhythms as such and recorded them back to back, paying tribute to the source of it all.*

*Taking their ancient way of communication as an inspiration, leaving their contribution, to our culture, in its original form.*

*So I dare and borrow this word classic, to express my respect to the musicians, their music, their culture, that we know in Cuba as Santeria.*

*You go from there, you take  
it from there, with respect.*

*I keep going, looking, find-  
ing deep emotions, plea-  
sure, chills down my spine  
and yes, respect.*

*Sounds like Aretha Frank-  
lin, well, here you got some  
classic.*

*Good Morning Again.*

*Let me fly, jump and come  
back, synthesize and listen  
again to make sure,*

*SINTESIS, Ancestros II*

*On, from, through the streets of Havana and beyond, keeping the ancient roots growing, letting the tree of Santeria stretch its branches and twigs, to be blessed by new, fresh, colorful, shining blossoms, like the beads of the necklaces and bracelets.*

*It's lunch by now and I will have a little snack.*

*Toast, butter, tea with milk and no siesta.*

*Hans, we are playing today.  
Its near your apartment.*

*Santa Barbara, Chango and  
I see a lot of red on my way  
to the party.*

*Women, sorry, but I always  
see the women first, Men,  
Children coming and going.*

*The party, Pipo, his brother  
Michel and friends are  
playing for is special, most-  
ly women were there.*

*I know what you are think-  
ing, but I was busy with*

*making some video, to add to my previous recordings.*

*Wooden boxes. Where are the drums. The wooden boxes where shaped like drums and gave off a very dynamic sound.*

*The drummers got their sounds, not only from playing them with their hands, but also by using short rhythm sticks and using them as jazz drummers do, when playing rimshots.*

*That on wood, the singer  
with a strong voice and  
everybody moving.*

*Women falling, throwing  
themselves at the drum-  
mers. Mothers helping  
their daughters, as they  
drift away, some falling  
into trance, some trying to.*

*I'm holding on to my cam-  
era, just digging the music.*

*Great party and I walked  
home, through the streets*

*of good, old Havana, feeling just fine.*

*Sorry, taking a little break here. Three steamed potatoes with salt, then I have to get some things done at the gallery, where I will hold the next exhibition.*

*Havana Mask Dance, featuring The Red Bag, playing also video shorts of the Santeria recordings.*

*When I get back, let me tell you about the big party at Yerilu's home.*

*The evening started out, by me going to meet Pipo at his house and together we went to join the party.*

*Plenty of people already around. Hello. Can you buy some rum, which one, a name was mentioned and we took a walk to the store.*

*They didn't have that particular one, try the store a*

*little further down the road.*

*No luck, but plenty of rum.*

*We chose a good one and figured it will be killed in no time. Back to the party.*

*Yerilu lives with her parents in a nice neighborhood, where the houses were converted, just like downtown, to accommodate more people, than they originally were meant for.*

*So everybody's got a roof over their head, but it can get quite crowded, which didn't affect the party spirit at all.*

*There were three, you may say four parties in a row.*

*Party number one started, the moment the music came out of the boxes.*

*On the veranda out into the streets, mainly kids started to groove.*

*Two caught my eye, they were going at it, like that cool young guy at the party with grandma and that very, very woman.*

*Right there on the sidewalk. Where there is space, there is room to dance and there is always a reason to dance.*

*Talk about a national fitness program, in Cuba, before anything else, there is always dance.*

*Next a clown entertained the kids and as always, the laughter of the kids infected everyone around.*

*More people and now it got real. Crammed into the Kitchen, in the hallway, on the veranda, were family and friends of Yerilu.*

*In the corner of the kitchen, opposite the entrance was the Santeria shrine.*

*I stood with my back to the shrine, so I could video the musicians.*

*Pipo, Michel, Yerilu, her father and a friend on conga.*

*Michel beating the rhythm on the metal, which looks like the blade of a shovel, with a metal stick.*

*Pipo and Mr. Lugo play the chekeres and did they play.*

*Yerilu, voice, on her home turf, greeting people as they come in, not missing a beat*

*and the mood and temperature are getting better and hotter.*

*Two sets of music, with the musicians rotating and yes, I almost forgot, Michel was singing the introduction and he sang it very nicely.*

*Ceremony over, we all ate and drank and another party started to kick off, Rumba, but Pipo and I had to go, so see you next time.*

*Another day Pipo, his wife and their daughter came over to my place. They had been in the neighborhood to buy new shoes.*

*As we were talking, Pipo suddenly said to his daughter, they are playing your Rumba.*

*His daughter looked at him, walked out of the room onto the balcony and listened into the Havana Evening.*

*They went home to Cerro and we agreed to call each other in a couple of days.*

*Taking in the evening, with the sounds illuminating the city, I went out to get something to eat.*

*Coming back home, I remembered the day, when Pipo played at someone's place, telling me, come, it will be different.*

*The main, obvious difference were the instruments.*

*Chekere and Conga. For me it was a First and I listened intently and after a while there were other differences, I could hear, but never express in words.*

*When I arrived there were still few people and I sat down near the musicians. But then there were so many people coming, that I made space for the Ladies in White.*

*To sit down in the backyard, at some distance*

*from the musicians, but no distance to the music.*

*It was a very intense experience and I heard sounds and rhythmic combinations coming from the Conga, I hadn't heard before.*

*Learning, without knowing what I was learning, only knowing, that my ears were feeding my brain, myself with sounds, to still my hunger and thirst for music, that meant more than*

*the dancing of my feet, my legs, my body.*

*The heart feeling good, the state of not knowing, was not such a bad thing, after all I could still cross the busy Havana streets, without getting run over.*

*But slowly, slowly it all sinks in, letting you to become a person to know, not necessarily in words, but in the eyes, in the body, in the mind, in where you walk, when and how.*

*Emilio called me, Hans my friend wants to meet you, she is going to a Santeria party, you want to go there.*

*I went to her home, having been told, that her husband had died a few years back and that she was rather lonely. Well, nothing wrong with that.*

*Up a few flights, found the apartment and her boyfriend invited me in.*

*She was still busy, getting ready, so we talked about music and how much I love Cuban percussion and he said, then you must listen to Tata Güines and Anga.*

*He played me a tape of their music, I looked later for the CD, couldn't find it in Havana, but finally did in Europe.*

*My mind open like a dry sponge, the drumming on congas just juiced me up*

*and it was time to go to the party.*

*I make this a little short.*

*The drummers were cold.*

*I didn't need that, but I learned from this, too.*

*Her boyfriend and I needed a soft drink, so we slipped out of the party during a break and I didn't go back.*

*After having listened to so much good music from Pipo, his family and all the friends around him and*

*now being juiced up by Tata Güines and Anga, I preferred to move on and enjoy the noise of the street.*

*Better music was coming from the streets, than from those cold drummers.*

*On an earlier visit to the home of the Massip Family, the video as well as the sound recording didn't work out for many reasons, but this time it was going to be just fine and it really was.*

*The Massip Family I will further on introduce to you some more, right now it is Pipo, his father Lazaro and his brother Michel.*

*Like many times before Yerilu was joining them as the Singer.*

*There were some more musicians around and a few more friends, even some visitors from abroad, who Ricardo, Pipo's cousin, had met downtown and asked to come along.*

*The light was good, the atmosphere relaxed and we slowly got ready.*

*Remember we did this to have a good recording of Pipo, his Dad, his Brother and Yerilu.*

*No holiday, no other special occasion, no priest, only few people, sitting around casually.*

*But when the music started, in no time everybody was focused, sang along or*

*just tapped their feet to the rhythm and the room was filled with an intensity, as on any other religious ceremony occasion.*

*No let down, no let's just do this for the camera, no for a little afternoon pocket money we do a little gig for the tourists.*

*This for me was as real as on any other afternoon evening session I had attended before.*

*Maybe the Gods were too busy to join us, maybe they didn't even have time to listen and smile at us, wishing us well, but everybody there and of course me, too, was touched by the musicians and their music.*

*This, as well as all the other video and sound recordings are live, with one mike. You hear the room, you hear the direction of the sound with or without the visuals and for all the*

*wonderful recordings I had bought up until now and will continue to buy for the love and the knowledge of the music, I wouldn't want to miss those live experiences, being there body and soul. Listening to and viewing them a few days, a few years later, doesn't put me at a distance, but rather draws me closer to the very live experience.*

*When I just talk about it to friends or give a little lec-*

*ture, my mind travels back  
and when the music gives  
me those unmistakable  
chills down my spine , I am  
back, right there with the  
music and maybe the gods  
have time and smile a little  
smile.*

*And if the gods are still  
busy, there is always music  
or a particular musician,  
that shines and sends me  
looking for the next musi-  
cian, music, smile.*

*Many 30 years ago, John Bonham played a very, very extended drum solo on Moby Dick and I be damned, if there isn't more than once Africa smiling and shining through.*

*And if I am wrong, it still is more than worth to listen to the drumming.*

*Nobody likes to be wrong too many times, especially on the same page, so ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce a little percussion*

*discussion, courtesy of Art Blakey and Ginger Baker.*

*Where do you find this, on The Album, more details in the back.*

*You'll find some of the finest drumming of Tony Williams and Ginger Baker listening to PIL, back to back.*

*Why, wait, first there still is M'Boom, initiated by Max Roach, a celebration of Per-*

*cussion Music, by some of the very finest musicians.*

*There was a plan, as a matter of fact studio time was already booked, to bring together in a M'Boom session Max Roach, Tony Williams and Ginger Baker.*

*They didn't get to the studio, instead went to the funeral, since Tony Williams had moved on.*

*So let their music come together in our minds, I am sure it will move us all.*

*It may sound like I am getting lost, but I am just in love, so when I came across the album “Survivors”,*

*Max Roach with strings, it just blew me away and made me listen up.*

*Does this get us away from Africa, from Cuba.*

*How could it, they are always there.*

*You want to get further away from, closer to the source, a maybe rather unusual route is by way of MAX ROACH and CECIL TAYLOR.*

*Are we climbing too fast, running out of breath, snacks and water, let's take a break, before we move on.*

*Allow me to insert two quotes by Max Roach here, for a deeper and better understanding of anything to do with drumming.*

*“Ghanaba was so far ahead of what we were all doing, that none of us understood what he was saying - that in order for African-American music to be stronger, it must cross-fertilize with its African origins...we ignored him. Seventeen years later the African sound of Ghanaba is now being imitated all over the United States.”*

*“I wrote a piece in 9/4 and my daughter, Maxine Roach, took it and rewrote it for the Uptown String Quartet. She divided the drums among the strings. One part of my body, she let the cello play and another part was played by the first violin and so on. The result is unbelievable. Dave Brubeck was supposed to have said: God bless that child, for the first time I*

*hear, what a drum set really is.”*

*I believe in the same du article, years ago, I had read, how Max Roach had asked his daughter to take Elvin Jones and rewrite his playing for a string quartet.*

*Wherever I read it or if my memory, with all the music in my head, took several statements and turned it into one, I think, what Maxine Roach did with her father's composition, she*

*sure could do with the  
Drumming of Elvin Jones.*

*But I do remember, people  
in the know on several oc-  
casion saying, Elvin Jones  
is four guys playing in one.*

*Before there was drum-  
ming in my head, there  
were voices with plenty of  
rhythm around the house  
and among my friends.*

*And they were kept like  
precious stones on those*

*black, be very careful 45  
rpm round things.*

*I remember Paul Robeson,  
Harry Belafonte and Sam-  
my Davis Jr. and I vividly  
remember, how I went  
across the street to one  
friend and asked him,  
could you play Tutti Frutti  
for me and further down  
the road to another friend,  
please let me hear Lucille.*

*That was the initiation rite  
to what was to follow,  
thanks to Little Richard.*

*One such thing, that was to follow, was looking at a video in the home of Manek Daver in Tokyo, showing lots of people at the wake of Thelonious Monk.*

*Then Max Roach was getting up, walked up on stage and towards the drums. Sat down and started to play.*

*I remember that, because I said to myself, audible still, I love that man and always remember, how I learned*

*listening and seeing from his drumming.*

*If awe is inspiring, here you go. On and on I went, to find Cuban Percussion driving some of my all time favorite music.*

*Jack Bruce playing Cream classics and Eric Clapton joining and my jaw drops in awe and my body starts dancing, standing, sitting, lying down. I'm inside, outside, everywhere.*

*Music, Drumming, some  
food and coffee or tea.*

*And then suddenly a book.*

*A pocket book, Cadia gave  
me in passing.*

*Thinking of it, she knew  
what she was doing.*

*Sundiata, King of Mali.*

*Alexander, Hannibal,  
Ashoka, Caesar, Napoleon,  
history books sure, even  
movies, but music.*

*If Sundiata has a rival,  
maybe it's Ashoka.*

***Look at the images, sounds  
and dances all the way  
from India to Bali.***

***(And what the Roma and  
Sinti brought over to Eu-  
rope and Beyond).***

***Sundiata at one time ruled  
all the way, from the West  
Sudan to the West Coast of  
Africa.***

***Look at all those drums.***

***Rhythm over rhythms.***

***Colors, Dances, Masks.***

*A Living Cultural Heritage  
Museum.*

*London, Washington, Paris,  
altogether in one and then  
some more.*

*And always living.*

*Today, tomorrow and yes-  
terday still.*

*In the body of the drums,  
in the sounds of the drums.*

*Maybe, while you are sleep-  
ing, eating, walking, talk-  
ing, there is the sound of  
the drums, sitting in a tree,*

*walking through the street,  
traveling through your  
mind, touching your soul  
and shaking your, yes well,  
your precious behind.*

*Walk to your inner drum  
and smile, when you hear  
the drum of another one.*

*And while walking, another  
book comes my way.*

## ***THE HEALING DRUM***

*African Wisdom Teachings*

*YAYA DIALLO a musician  
from Mali, is the thread, on*

*which the beads of life  
dance in all colors and  
MITCHELL HALL a writer,  
from French to English into  
the Book about Africa.*

*From Africa to the Americ-  
as, around the World.*

*Knowledge, Teaching, Wis-  
dom, Boundless.*

*What a pleasure to read,  
learn and yearn for more,  
to listen, to dance and to  
stretch the muscle brain.*

*Music, more music.*

*Milford Graves:*

***GRAND UNIFICATION***

*Guy Warren:*

***THE DIVINE DRUMMER***

*Fela Ransome-Kuti:*

***THE AFRICA '70, LIVE!***

*(Tony Allen / Ginger Baker)*

*By the way, Fela Kuti is a history lesson worth checking out and one can dance to while doing so. The beat, the lesson continue through Femi Kuti, his son.*

***Tony Allen:***

***LIVE and HOMECOOKING***

***Whoever invented what in matters of Afrobeat, he is no back seat driver and actually needs no introduction, but to be sure, you don't miss out on the absolute pleasure of listening and dancing to him, one more time, Tony Allen.***

***Before our travels bring us back to Cuba, let me mention three very different***

*musical experiences from  
West Africa.*

*Ade Olumoko and African  
Spirit:*

***YORUBA APALA MUSIC***

*At whatever time on your  
musical journey you may  
have a chance to listen to  
their music, it will teach,  
make sense and move you,  
in and out of everything be-  
fore and after. It's one of  
those root things. Enjoy.*

*Field Recording in Ghana:*

## ***DRUMS OF DEATH***

***What a way to go. From  
Ghana to Haiti, maybe even  
as far as New Orleans.***

***And while this is music  
played at funerals, life  
doesn't stop there, it just  
goes on.***

***Pathe Beye:***

***ADOUNA - One World***

***recording: Dakar & Vienna***

***He traveled through many  
countries and carried a lot***

*of music with him, from Africa to Europe.*

*Sagar Beye's singing makes me wish, they could have done more music together in Europe and in Africa, but Pathe moved on, leaving us with many wishes and some very fine music.*

*Back in Havana, let me introduce five more CDs with wonderful music from around Cuba, to listen and dance to.*

***CANTOS DE CONGOS Y  
PALEROS:***

*Life recordings from Sagua  
la Grande, Villa Clara,  
Quiebra Hacha, Mariel, La  
Habana, Palmira, Cienfue-  
gos, Jagüey Grande, Man-  
tanzas, Trinidad and Sancti  
Spiritus. Quite a trip  
around Cuba, get on the  
bus and enjoy the music.*

***DANCES OF THE GODS:***

*While also a field trip  
around Cuba, emphasis is*

*on the different Afro-Cuban  
Cults.*

*The Araraa Cult (Songs and  
Dances for the Fodduce),  
Voodoo Cult (Haitian), San-  
teria (Bata), Congo/Palo  
Monte, Santeria (Abwes),  
Wemba of the Abakwa,  
Tambor Yuka and finally,  
La Rumba.*

*It's a gem and a good way  
to start your journey.*

**DRUMS OF CUBA:**

*Grupo Oba-Ilu went into the studio in Havana and celebrated the major Afro-Cuban religions, Santeria, Abakua, Arara, Palo and Iyesa and what you get is a very detailed and rich sound experience.*

**ONI-ONI:**

*Oloyu Obba was recorded in a studio in France and let their hands and voices walk through many percussion instruments and songs from Santeria to Rumba.*

*It is, as always an enriching experience. Just when you think you have heard it all, there is the sound of a voice, of a drum, of a wooden stick, that make it new again.*

***JULIEN LOURAU  
VS RUMBABIERTA***

*To the “usual” percussion fiesta were added, saxophones, keyboards, bass and guitars and after hearing a few sounds, I just*

*bought it, no questions asked. Add it to new again.*

*Books, only three:*

*MUNTU by Janheinz Jahn*

*I came across this book in a jazz magazine article and Cecil Taylor mentioning it.*

*Browsing through it in a bookstore, there was NOMMO as a chapter and now I understood better the music by the same name, on an album of Max Roach.*

*Writing today about the book, all I want to say is, go to page 62 and read about The Santeria, but then I think you would want to read the whole book, really.*

*You will find yourself coming closer to Africa as the source of Santeria and many things African, wherever you go.*

*African Rhythm and African Sensibility, Aesthet-*

***ics and Social Action in  
African Idioms by JOHN  
MILLER CHERNOFF.***

***That is a lot of African in  
the title and a must read on  
things African.***

***Fela Anikulapo Kuti's name  
comes up, before the book  
even starts and once it gets  
going, it will take you all  
over the place African.***

*A book with an endless title, an almanac, edited by Esther A. Dagan.*

***THE SPIRIT'S DANCE IN AFRICA. EVOLUTION, TRANSFORMATION AND CONTINUITY in SUB-SAHARA.***

*A big and heavy book, you can start reading, by balancing it on your head.*

*So much about DANCE, in photos, drawings and texts by many authors, a great*

*reference source for anything you hear and see, from and about AFRICA and of course SANTERIA.*

*Regarding the COLORS, that will be chosen for you to wear, let me introduce some examples.*

*The list is not complete, since informations vary and I therefore only mention those, I found to be the same, coming from three different sources.*

***ELEGGUA 3 black 3 red***

***OSHUN 5 yellow 5 orange***

***OBATALA white***

***YEMAYA 7 blue 7 white***

***OGUN 7 green 7 black***

***CHANGO 6 white 6 red***

***As you go along, you will  
come across different  
spellings and some differ-  
ent colors, even variations  
in the number of the beads.***

***In all cases the number of  
beads indicate a pattern,***

*which is to be repeated, as long as you want or need the necklace to be.*

*Please do not choose colors or patterns, like you would for a souvenir, a gift or some decoration.*

*Let the people, who initiate, guide and help you on your way, be your advisors.*

***MOMENTUM SPACE\***, the title of not just another CD, but the music of Dewey*

*Redman, Cecil Taylor and Elvin Jones and here mentioned for the following quotations:*

*Discipline, in this society, has to do with sin. It doesn't have anything to do with joy. The expression of life is confused as a result of sin. Whatever my mother's intent was, she insisted that six days of the week I practice. And I had to practice. And I mean practice. On Sunday she said, 'You*

*can do what you want.'*  
*That's when the organiza-*  
*tion of my music began.*  
*(Cecil Taylor)*

*There is no such thing as*  
*freedom without some kind*  
*of control, at least self-dis-*  
*cipline. It's impossible.*  
*There are such things as*  
*free forms and I think I've*  
*heard that done. John*  
*Coltrane did a lot of exper-*  
*imenting in that direction,*  
*and so did a few other peo-*  
*ple. I was closer to Coltrane*

*than to anyone else so I can speak with some authority on him... (Elvin Jones)*

*One morning in 1968, I was in the studio, and I just went crazy. I looked around me, and I saw Ornette, Mister Jimmy Garrison and Mister Elvin Jones, the guys with Coltrane. And I said to myself: 'But I have no right to be here! There are so many others better than me!' Jimmy saw I was shaking like a leaf, he took*

*me into a corner of the studio and said: 'If Ornette chose you, it's because you're good. So just play, don't think about anything else.'* (Dewey Redman)

*\*A three-dimensional space in which each particle of a physical system is represented by a point whose three Cartesian coordinates are numerically equal to the components of its momentum in the directions of the three coordinate*

*axes. (Oxford English Dictionary)*

*Momentum Space, a term taken from Physics.*

*It aptly describes the music you can hear on that CD.*

*I believe, it also brings you another step closer to the Rhythm of the Three Bata Drummers.*

*Do I need a dictionary, when listening to the drummers, no, you may just dance, your body will*

*be a great teacher, just let  
the rhythm move you.*

*For many good reasons, I  
will not write here, what  
you can do for your brain  
to join your every muscle,  
because I do not know you  
and when and where, the  
drums will talk to you.*

*But one thing I can say,  
without doubt and fear of  
being misunderstood,  
RELAX and let the rhythm  
carry you. You won't get  
lost, because even if there*

*are no more signposts,  
there are people coming  
and going your way.*

*The Orishas, why worry,  
you got a quarrel, for all  
you know, they join you  
dancing.*

*DRUMS TALK, same way  
as pictures do, to me any-  
way. Admitted, I can read  
photos much better, than I  
even can start saying, that I  
can hear, what drums are  
saying. Naturally, because I  
learned photography as a*

*teenager and dived into it and became so much involved and engulfed, that I again made sure to read books, talk with friends and listen to music, so as not to loose the ability to communicate in everything else, besides photographs.*

*Now before you catch me flatfooted, let me say, while I believe, that we can translate anything from one media to another, it of course is necessary or at least*

*helps, when two people talking in whatever language or media, know what they are talking about.*

*So when you grow up with drums, while still in the belly of your mum, well you win, but if at least you grow up hearing drums day in and day out on various occasions, that make up the daily life of your community, than that's the closest anyone can get to*

*understand the talking of the drum.*

*Living in the city, going to school, without the drum and the native tongue being taught, the knowledge of the drum and the understanding of what's being said, gets lost, just as watching television only or mostly, makes you loose the ability to read certain books or newspapers.*

*Reading a newspaper, with little content in the text and*

*mostly pictures to catch the eye, leaves us literally illiterate, when it comes to more complex issues and more elaborate ways of expressing ourselves.*

*So now, if you didn't know it anyway or don't need to read to believe it, Drums Talk and how they talk, you can learn.*

*Right here and now let me give you a link:*

[www.djansa.be/extra\\_articles.php?lang\\_id=3&art\\_cat\\_id=894&lstr\\_id=320](http://www.djansa.be/extra_articles.php?lang_id=3&art_cat_id=894&lstr_id=320)

*I know you think this is a joke, but no matter which way I tried, I couldn't get from the first page to the article any other way than using my bookmarks.*

*I know you are polite, please bear with me and enjoy the article, because there are plenty of more cross references, to make reading it worthwhile.*

*No joke, I found the way.*

[www.djansa.be](http://www.djansa.be)

*If as in my case, you choose English to continue, you will get to the following:*

*You are here: Main > Instruments > Bata > How Bata Talks*

*(To start please click Extra, click Instruments and then proceed as above.)*

***THE MIDDLE PASSAGE,  
as a reminder, in the music***

*of Ginger Baker, on board of the many hundreds, maybe thousands of boats, making the crossing every year and in the bodies and souls of the millions of people, who were forced to go on a voyage into the unknown, with no stars to guide them, but their spirits, reminding them of the beats, the drums, their hands, their lives, their culture.*

*We are all richer for it and owe it to ourselves, to never sit back and just let it be in the past, but let that past be a reminder of a better future, with lots of drums and dancing.*

***DANCE IS THE MIRROR OF OUR LIFE AND BEYOND. IT REFLECTS OUR LINKS TO THE SPIRITS, OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE PAST AND OUR***

***PRESENT FEELINGS AND  
THOUGHTS.***

***JOMO KENYATA***

***In conversation with E.A.D***

## ***Breaths.***

***In the African world view, the invisible world of spirit, man, and the visible world of nature exist along a continuum and form an organic reality. The same is true of the relationship between past, present and future. In Birago Diop's poem Breaths we are reminded of this continuum.***

***The women of Sweet Honey in the Rock sing the follow-***

*ing poem to the music of  
Ysaye Maria Barnwell.*

*(Barnwell's Notes Co.  
copyright 1980)*

*Above text and the poem  
quoted from the album  
sleeve of GOOD NEWS:*

*Listen more often to things  
than to beings*

*Listen more often to things  
than to being*

*Tis the ancestors' breath*

*When the fire's voice is  
heard*

*Tis the ancestors' breath  
in the voice of the waters*

*ah.....wsh.....*

*ah.....wsh.....*

*Those who have died have  
never never left*

*The dead are not under the  
earth*

*They are in the rustling  
trees*

*They are in the groaning  
woods*

*They are in the crying grass*

*They are in the moaning  
rocks*

***The dead are not under the  
earth***

***(refrain)***

***Those who have died have  
never never left***

***The dead have a pact with  
the living***

***They are in the woman's  
breast***

***They are in the wailing  
child***

***They are with us in the  
home***

***They are with us in the  
crowd***

*The dead have a pact with  
the living  
(refrain)*

*Original poem, Breaths by  
Birago Diol you can find on  
[quaker.org](http://quaker.org)*

*On a last round through the  
internet, looking for a con-  
temporary recording from  
the source, in today's Nige-  
ria, I came across a CD and  
a book.*

*First a few words about the book. I went over to the leading English language bookstore and asked them about the book I had found on the internet and if they could get it for me.*

*They checked in one of their lists. Mind you the book was published in 1961.*

*They found two copies, one in the US and one in the UK. I asked them to get the*

*one, which was in a better shape.*

*It took a good while, but finally they called me and said, your book is here.*

*How much is it? 70 Euros.*

*Now the clerk started looking for it, but couldn't locate it right away.*

*I thought, 70 Euros might mean quite a hefty book, like maybe 2cm thick or more.*

*Couldn't locate it either.*

*Finally, there it was. Sort of a paperback of about a hundred pages.*

*You don't have to take it, if it is not what you were looking for.*

*No, I'm fine. 70 Euros and it is worth every cent.*

***YORUBA SACRED MUSIC  
FROM EKITI***

***ANTHONY KING***

***B. Mus. (Lond.)***

***Lecturer in Music.***

*University College Ibadan*  
**IBADAN UNIVERSITY**  
**PRESS 1961**

*The CD is called:*

*Isele L'agba*

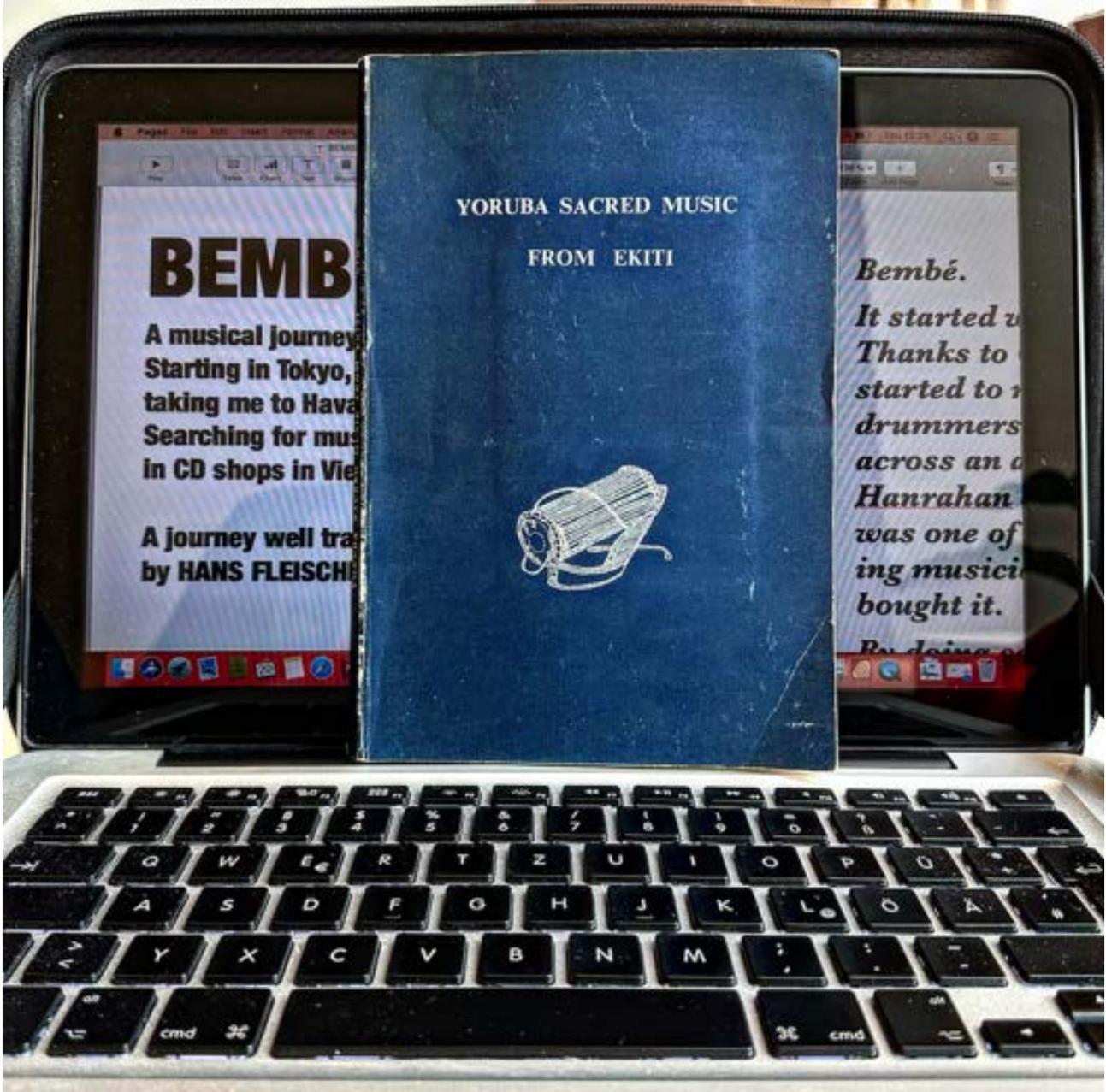
**ASABIOJE AFENAPA**

*(& Traditional Ifa/Orisha  
Bata Musical Band)*

*For Enquiries Contact:*

*Priest Adewale Bogunmbe*

**[walebogunmbe@yahoo.com](mailto:walebogunmbe@yahoo.com)**



YORUBA SACRED MUSIC  
FROM EKITI

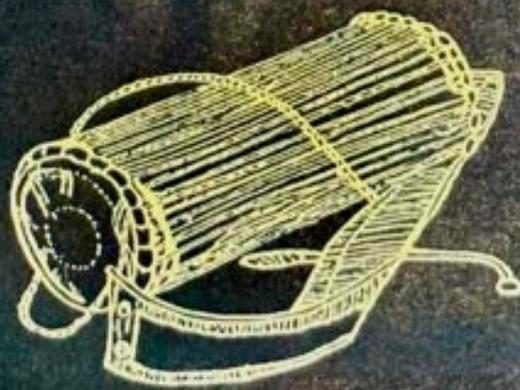


**BEMBÉ**  
A musical journey  
Starting in Tokyo,  
taking me to Hanoi  
Searching for music  
in CD shops in Vietnam  
A journey well traveled  
by HANS FLEISCHER

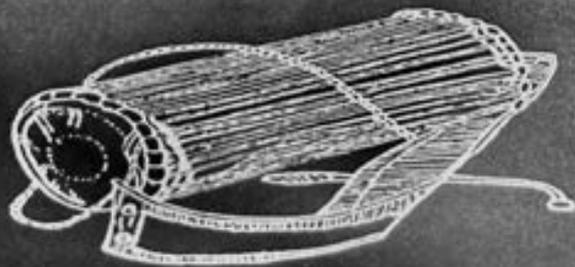
*Bembé.*  
*It started with me*  
*Thanks to a friend*  
*started to record*  
*drummers*  
*across an area*  
*Hanrahan*  
*was one of the*  
*ing musicians*  
*bought it.*  
*By doing so*

**YORUBA SACRED MUSIC**

**FROM EKITI**



**YORUBA SACRED MUSIC  
FROM EKITI**



***Pipo Massip.***

***His family, his friends,  
were mentioned quite a few  
times here, so some visual,  
audio record would be very  
nice.***

***On the internet, as an in-  
dependent movie, you  
name it. I'm thinking.***

***Maybe Pipo and or Ricardo  
have ideas.***

***I would be listening.***

***Let's see.***

*I can hear Yerilu say loudly,  
What!?*

*Let's see.*

*Maybe you have an idea.*

*Let me hear about it.*

*Whichever way, something  
will be happening.*

*Hans Fleischner*

*Vienna 2023, July.*

