

Arts and Africa

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ARTS AND AFRICA

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ANNC. AND SIG. TUNE:

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Welcome to Arts and Africa. This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey and today we feature a composer from Upper Volta.

SIG. TUNE:

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Father Belemside Renee Guirma is a Dominican father from Ouagadougou in Upper Volta. But he's also a composer who takes Voltaique traditional tunes and themes and arranges them with full European orchestration.

In fact, he uses traditional African music in a European framework. He himself is from the Mossi people and the first composition we are going to hear is from the Royal Mass of Moogo. Moogo being the name of the Mossi people's empire that was colonised by France and has since become Upper Volta. Patrick Gilkes talked to Father Belemsida Renee Guirma in Ouagadougou about his music for Arts and Africa.

MUSIC: Royal Mass of Moogo by Father Renee.

FATHER GUIRMA:

I use the Royal Drums saying Pum-dam-pa (phonetic), that means Powerful One and they are speaking drums.

PATRICK GILKES:

And these are drums that are used in the Court of the Mossi Kings ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Yes.

PATRICK GILKES:

When were they used normally ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Every time and mainly when the King gets up in the morning they beat all kinds of praise for him.

PATRICK GILKES:

So you are using here the traditional methods of greeting the Royal Monarchs, Royal Kings of Mossi ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

This kyrie has and this tune has the tempo of the King walking the Royal march with his Court.

PATRICK GILKES:

Is this when he just goes walking or is there some special occasion when this kind of tempo is used, when the King moves?

FATHER GUIRMA:

It is used on certain occasions, not all the time.

PATRICK GILKES:

What sort of occasions ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

When they have been named a lord and they are walking back into the town.

PATRICK GILKES:

So it is a kind of march of appointment on a new Monarch ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Yes.

PATRICK GILKES:

Now the Mass was performed some years ago in New York. What have you been working on since the Mass ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Since the Mass, I've been working on ballet music.

PATRICK GILKES:

Is this going to be, in the same kind of way, a combination of Mossi traditional and Royal festive music ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Yes.

PATRICK GILKES:

What's the title ?

FATHER GUIRMA:

Naab Raiuuga, that means a day when you drink the Royal beer. It is an anniversary of the King.

MUSIC: Ballet music by Father Guirma.

FATHER GUIRMA:

We have two parts to this ballet, separated by an intermission. In the first part you have the overture coming the evening before the day of the anniversary and I am trying to get the feeling of the night and to describe the night.

MUSIC: Ballet music by Father Guirma.

FATHER GUIRMA:

And after that you have the morning coming and the King coming.....

MUSIC: by Father Guirma.

FATHER GUIRMA:

After the entry of the King, the feast begins with the dances.

MUSIC: by Father Guirma.

FATHER GUIRMA:

We have not yet performed it. There are also new ideas, new corrections, new perfections to do. I am continuously working on it.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Father Belemsida Renee Guirma talking about his compositions to Patrick Gilkes in Upper Volta.

MUSIC: "Limpopo" by Jeremy Taylor.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

That brings us to the end of this weeks programme. This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey saying goodbye and hoping you'll join us again at the same time next week for more Arts and Africa.

MUSIC: "Limpopo" by Jeremy Taylor.