

Arts and Africa

BBC AFRICAN SERVICE, LONDON

ALS 4/5/5/3/7

COPYRIGHT CONTROL

ARTS AND AFRICA

FIRST BROADCAST: 10.2.85

581 G

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey introducing "Arts and Africa".

MUSIC: Display of drumming skills by Maitre No-No's drummers at the Centre des Jeunes, Kinshasa, Zaire.

TETTEH-LARTEY

An introduction from drummers in Kinshasa.

MUSIC: Display of drumming skills.

TETTEH-LARTEY

The drummers are the students of Maitre No-No, Master drummer of Zaire.

MUSIC: Display of drumming skills.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Maitre No-No teaches drumming at the Centre des Jeunes (the Youth Centre) in Kinshasa and today they're showing us what they can do.

MUSIC: Display of drumming skills.

TETTEH-LARTEY

There isn't a country in black Africa without its tradition of drumming. And every so often someone with a very special talent emerges. In Ghana we have had our share of Master drummers and in Zaire this is how Maitre No-No has gained his accolade of "Maitre" the French word for Master. Today we're hearing what he has achieved as a teacher. We've heard his group drumming, here they are with a song.

MUSIC: Pende Circumcision song.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Well that was an initiation song. It comes from the Pende in Bandundu. Apparently they're singing about a man with a big belly and it's a song that is sung to cheer them up when they go out to the camp for circumcision in the dry season. Bandundu is a province in the western part of Zaire. This music comes from the mouth of the river Zaire itself - from Bas Zaire on the Atlantic coast.

MUSIC: Music from Bas Zaire concluding with 'Snake' music.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Now we've moved into the mysterious. I don't know which snake the musicians are imitating but imitating the rhythmic movements of a snake they certainly are.

MUSIC: 'Snake' music.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Snake music.

The drummers as teenagers belonged to a group called Chanchamiteu (phon). Maitre No-No was so impressed with the group that when it disbanded he offered to give them professional training. He does it at the big cultural youth centre in the capital of Zaire, Kinshasa. At the Centre des Jeunes young people have the opportunity to study all the arts not just music and not just dance and drumming. It would be interesting to hear what some of the other departments at the Centre are achieving. But for the time being we're staying with Maitre No-No's ensemble. Here they are with music from the most southerly part of Zaire, from Shaba Province. The music belongs to the Balibulu people. Apparently they don't originate in Shaba but have moved there recently and are calling this piece of music Shaba, after their new home. In fact, here the drummers are using it as an exercise piece to improve their rhythm as a unit.

MUSIC: Balibulu music from Shaba.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Maitre No-No's drummers playing at the Centre des Jeunes in Kinshasa, Zaire. After that introduction I'd like to hear them again in a few years time when they've worked together for even longer. As I still have more music recorded at this session we'll be hearing from them again before long.

Next week I'll be looking at another aspect of the arts of Africa and I hope you'll join me for the programme. This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey taking my leave of you for today and while the drummers play us out I'll say goodbye.