



# CHAIA MARIMBA

## MUSIC BOOK 3

*Maria Minnaar-Bailey*



# CHAIA MARIMBA MUSIC BOOK 3:

Church songs from Zimbabwe and South Africa

Choral and marimba arrangements for SATB choirs  
and Zimbabwe-style marimba/Orff ensembles

with accompanying CD recording.

Written and illustrated by  
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*Studio musicians: Choir*

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*Studio musicians: Marimba players*

# LANGUAGE AND SONG



*“We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own languages!”  
(Acts 2:11)*

## **Language: a vital part of song**

Unlike instrumental music, singing depends on words, and therefore requires a language. Every song is a combination of words, melody and harmonies, reflecting the songwriter’s own culture and musical background.

Translating a song into a different language means changing the words, and therefore changing the song. The parts “lost in translation” are not only the sound of the original words but also, the perfect fit between those words and the melody. After all, every spoken language has its own musical intonations, and thus the words often help to create the melody. When different words from a different language are superimposed on that melody, this does not always work well.

The problem is that not everyone understands every language, and for a song to have meaning one has to understand the words. One compromise is to keep the song in its original language, and simply add a translated verse or two. This adds meaning to the song for those who do not know the language, without taking away its original sound.

## **Learning language through song**

From birth onwards, children hear the words spoken by their parents, sometimes soothing and comforting, sometimes harsh, warning of danger. Miraculously they begin to understand the words, and then to imitate the sounds. Finally, after a short period of frustration and misunderstanding, most children learn to speak well enough to communicate with the people around them. However, they soon find out that not everybody speaks the same language. The staggering fact is that there are several thousand different languages in the world.





*Tea with friends*

Some fortunate children are taught two or more languages as they grow up. For them, learning new languages later on will be easy. For those who grew up speaking only one language, it is much harder. Nevertheless, if one wants to make friends with people from other parts of the world, it is worth the effort to learn at least some of their language. When a person is a stranger in a foreign land, there are few things more comforting than to hear words spoken in his or her native tongue.

There is an African proverb that says,

*If you can talk you can sing; and if you can walk you can dance.*

For anyone studying a new language and culture, the proverb works just as well backwards:

*Learn to sing, then you can talk; Learn to dance, then you can walk.*

Why start with song when learning a new language? There are many reasons. Firstly, while both song and spoken language are learned primarily by ear and by repetition, we usually pronounce words better when singing than when speaking. Secondly, we remember songs, particularly those learned in our youth. A person who took French lessons at school may still remember how to sing *Frère Jacques* long after he has forgotten all his other French words and phrases. In addition, songs written in a particular language tend to follow the natural rhythms and intonations of that language in its spoken form. Therefore, singing in another language tends to generate the “feel” of the language itself.

Most of all, singing in a new language is fun, not drudgery. African songs in particular are very rhythmic and have a great deal of energy. In fact, dancing and singing are inseparable in most African cultures. For all these reasons, learning a small part of any African language by singing a song in that language is not hard work. It is more like receiving a gift.

## **Languages of southern Africa**

Many African nations have more than one official language. South Africa has eleven: isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sesotho (South Sotho), Sepedi (North Sotho), Setswana, English, xiTsonga (Shangaan), siSwati (Swazi), tshiVenda and isiNdebele. Zimbabwe has three: Shona, Ndebele and English. There are also additional languages within each country, spoken by smaller groups of people. Most Africans are fluent in several languages.

The language map shows the distribution of various languages and cultural groups within the countries of southern Africa. One can appreciate from this map that there is no homogeneous society of “Africans”. Instead, there is a great diversity of languages and cultures, and therefore also of music and songs.

# Song 7: Sithi Haleluya

## Background

*Sithi Haleluya* is a well-known Ndebele church song from Zimbabwe, often sung in Shona as well. There are probably as many arrangements of this song as there are choir leaders in Zimbabwe. The author has known this song since childhood.

## Words and meaning

The words and approximate English translation (which may be sung) are shown below:

<u>Ndebele (Verse/Chorus)</u>	<u>Shona (Verse/Chorus)</u>	<u>English (Verse/Chorus)</u>
<i>Singaba hambayo thina kulumhlaba Siy'ekhaya ezulwini</i>	<i>Tofamba munzira yakaoma Tinemusha wekudenga</i>	<i>We are walking along in this world of woe, But onward home to Heaven we go.</i>
<i>(Sithi) Haleluya (Sithi) Haleluya (Sithi) Haleluya, haleluya, haleluya</i>	<i>(Toti) Haleluya (Toti) Haleluya (Toti) Haleluya, haleluya, haleluya</i>	<i>(Singing) Haleluya (Singing) Haleluya (Singing) Haleluya, haleluya, haleluya</i>

## Teaching the choral parts

The choral notation shows only the Ndebele version of the song. However, both the Ndebele and the Shona words (shown above) are demonstrated on the audio recording.

Teach the bass and tenor parts first, noting the change between languages:

*Hamba, hamba-woh, Hamba, hamba-woh-oh, Siy'ekhaya ezulwini* (Ndebele)

*Famba, famba-woh, Famba, famba-woh-oh, Tinemusha wekudenga* (Shona).

Teach soprano and alto parts next. The descant/lead part for the chorus can be sung either by sopranos or tenors. The lead part changes between languages from *Sithi* (Ndebele) to *Toti* (Shona). *Toimba* may be used in place of *Toti*, as it also means *Sing* in Shona.

## Teaching the marimba parts

The verse and chorus are different for each instrument, but are not difficult. The tenor part can be varied in many ways, as demonstrated on the *Learn the Parts* track of the **Marimba Instruction** recording. For instance, during the Chorus, the tenor part can either be played as shown in the notation, or syncopated just like the altos.

# Sithi Haleluya

## Choral

Trad. Ndebele/Shona, Zimbabwe  
Arr: Maria Minnaar-Bailey

♩ = 116

Descant

Soprano/Alto

Tenor

Bass

4

Desc

S/A

T

B

Si nga ba ha mba yo thi na ku lu mhla ba si ye ka ya e

Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh oh si ye ka ya e

Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh

zu lwi ni. Si nga ba ha mba yo thi na ku lu mhla ba si ye ka ya e

zu lwi ni. Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh oh si ye ka ya e

Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh Ha mba Ha mba woh

Choral arr. © 2006 Maria Minnaar-Bailey



# Sithi Haleluya

## Marimba

Trad. Ndebele/Shona, Zimbabwe  
Arr: Maria Minnaar-Bailey

$\text{♩} = 116$

Verse

Score for Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor, and Bass.

Key: D major (one sharp). Time: Common time (C). Tempo: 116 bpm.

Staff 1: Soprano. Staff 2: Alto 1. Staff 3: Alto 2. Staff 4: Tenor. Staff 5: Bass.

Alto 1 and Alto 2 have an 8-measure rest in the first measure.



Score for Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, Tenor, and Bass.

Staff 1: Soprano. Staff 2: Alto 1. Staff 3: Alto 2. Staff 4: Tenor. Staff 5: Bass.

Alto 1 and Alto 2 have an 8-measure rest in the first measure.

Measures 5-8 are indicated by a '5' above the Soprano staff.

