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Highlife

P H O T O

EXHIBITION & MUSEUM

The Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation (BAPMAF) Highlife Photo Exhibition and Museum has opened to the public in Accra. Materials include over 100 photographs, rare documents, posters, record sleeves - as well as over 400 hours of recorded music; include 700 old Highlife songs on shellac 78 rpm record.

The central focus of the display is the Golden Years of Highlife Photo Exhibition, which was outdoored at the joint Goethe Institute/BAPMAF Highlife Month held in Accra during February 1996. Organisations which were involved or supported the very successful Highlife Month include the Dubois Centre (Ebo Hawkson, Director), the National Theatre (Dr. Kolma Amoako, Director) MUSIGA (Joe Mensah, President), the University of Ghana (Prof. Kofi Agovi and Dr. Kwesi Yankah), the Ghana Copyright Administration (Betty Mould-Iddrisu, Director), the

Ghana National Folklore Boards (Colonel Amuzu, Chairman) and the African Heritage Library (Kofi Ghanaba, Director). The Padmore Library was also supplied materials from the photo exhibition for its archives.

Musicians and music producers who attended or were involved in the Highlife Month were: Koo Nimo, Oscarmore Ofori, King Bruce, Kofi Ghanaba, the Grassroots and Ankobra bands, 'Opia', Mr. Oppong and Mr. Mensah of the Ghana Concert Party Union, members of Mau Mau Muziki, Jimmy Beckley, Dick Essilfie-Bondzie, Kojo Donkor and members of the Jaguar Jokers concert party.

Bokoor African Popular Music Archives (BAPMAF) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1990 by Dr. John Collins, King Bruce, Koo Nimo, E. T. Mensah, Jimmy Beckley, (of Jimmy's Jazz spot), 'Opia' (i.e. Mr. Y. B.



The Jaguar Jokers before a campaign.

Title-page photo: Musician Victor Uwaifo (left) with John Collins

Bampoe of the Jaguar Jokers), Professor A. A. Mensah, Edinam Ansah (Volta Region, MUSIGA) and the late Kwaa Mensah and Beattie Casely-Hayford: The core of the BAPMAF music achieves are materials collected by its Acting Director, Dr. John Collins, over the last 26 years. Materials have also been contributed by King Bruce, E.T. Mensah, 'Opia', Professor Mawere Opoku (Ligon), the late Kwaa Mensah, and Robert Sprigge (ex History and ex Red Spots Band) including T. O. Jazz, Oscarmore Afuri.

BAPMAF has donated books, materials and music to the DuBois Centre, the Padmore Library, the Institute of African Studies, Legon, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, the Ghana Musicians Union (MUSIGA), the International Centre for African Music and Dance, Legon, the Ghana National Folklore Board of Trustees and the John Tei and Saint John's Schools.

BAPMAF is also associated with the Gramophone Research Museum at Cape Coast and the African Heritage Library, Samsan.

Golden Years of Highlife Photo Exhibition

The materials of the exhibition are organised into 14 separate categories - each accompanied by an information sheet. These categories are:

1) Fife and Brass Bands. Emergence of brass band 'adaha' highlife music in Cape Coast in the 1880's. Its spread and offshoots - like Konkoma highlife.

2) Palmwine music. Early coastal guitar/accordion music. Importance of Kru seamen. Fanti Osibisaaba. First Highlife recordings (in 1928): Yaa Amposah and Odonson

(Akan 'blues')

3) High-Class Dance Orchestras. Elite dance orchestras from 1914 to 1940s. Origin of term 'Highlife'. i.e high-class life.

4) Highlife Dance Bands. Impact of World War II. Postwar appearance of jazzy dance-band highlife in Ghana. Its spread to Nigeria in the 1950s.

5) E.T. Mensah, The King of Dance Band Highlife. The life of the pioneer postwar leader of the Tempos Highlife dance-band.

6) King Bruce and the Black Beats. The story of another important Highlife dance-band leader and manager of the Black Beats Bands.

7) The Concert Party. Overview of the concert party profession from 1903 to the present.

8) The Jaguar Jokers Concert Party. The Comedian 'Opa' (Y.B. Bampoe) and his Jaguar Jokers group formed in 1954.

9) Guitar Bands. The transformation of 'palmwine' music into guitar-band music after World War II. The crucial role of E.K. Nyame.

10) Fusion music. Emergence of various musical blends created by highlife musicians. The Afro-jazz of Kofi Ghanaba (Guy Warren), the Afro-beat of Nigeria's Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Osibisa's Afro-rock, 'Burgher' highlife.

11) Rise of Women Artists. Explosion of female popular musicians and concert actresses since the 1960s. Important role of local gospel music in feminising popular dance music.

12) Black-To-Roots. Indigenisation/acoustic trends in highlife. Kpanlogo drumming. Wulomei and the Ga 'cultural groups'. Koo Nimo's updated palmwine music.

13) Ghanaian Musicians Unions. Ghanaian music unions since 1956. MUSIGA

14) Highlife Diagram/Tree. Large easy to read at glance, diagram of the evolutionary tree of highlife and its many offshoots.

BAPMAF is situated at Bokoor House/Music Studio, Mile 8 Accra-Nsawam Road. Diagonally opposite Taifa Junction and next to MUUS (3 miles North of Achimota).

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