

CULTURE MUSICAL CLUB GRAND ORCHESTRE TAARAB DE ZANZIBAR

Zanzibar— island of spices, and meeting point of the trade winds: Imagine a stroll down Stone Town's narrow alleys, mansions built of coral rag, intricately carved and brass-studded doors—witnesses of past glory—balconies high up to catch a tropical breeze, the aroma of spicy food, cloves, cardamom, *pilipili*, coconut-scented rice, the Muadhin's calls for prayer at sunset. With all this you have got the visual and sensual equivalents to the leisurely sound of Swahili *taarab*, itself the result of hundreds of years of exchange of musical and poetic ideas across the Indian Ocean.

Founded in 1958, the Culture Musical Club is Zanzibar's premier *taarab* club. The orchestra performs widely at concerts in Zanzibar town, but also frequently travels overland with a fold-up stage and an electricity generator to bring its music to the rural areas as well. The club has released hundreds of songs on the local market and since 1988 they have had five releases on the international market After highly successful tours all over Europe in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005. Their next European tour is scheduled for October/November 2007. A short North American tour will take place from mid-September to early October 2006.

Besides *taarab*, many club members are also active in *kidumbak* groups, smaller ensembles that play a more down-home dance-focused music. Both types of music will be played on stage, contrasting the serene sound of orchestral *taarab* to the festive and sexually charged dance that is *kidumbak*.

The tour line-up usually features 15 musicians: The *taarab* orchestra includes 3 violins, qanun, oud, 2 accordions, double bass, dumbak, bongos & rika, plus singers and female chorus. The *kidumbak* side features 2 violins, *sanduku* (tea-chest bass), 2 *kidumbak* drums, *cherewa* (maracas) & *mkwasa* (claves), female chorus & dancers.

The lineup for the 2007/2008 European & US tours features:

Rajab Suleiman qanun, kidumbak; **Ali Hassan** 'ud, bandmaster;
Kesi Juma violin; **Ramadhani Khamis** violin; **Makame Faki** vocals, violin;
Taimur Rukun, Maulidi Haj accordion, mkwasa; **Mahmoud Juma** double bass;
Foum Faki bongos, kidumbak; **Amour Haj** dumbak, sanduku;

Rukia Ramadhani vocals, chorus; **Bi Kidude Baraka** vocals chorus, **NN** vocals, chorus; **Fatma Juma** chorus, rika, dance; **Mgeni Khamis** chorus, dance;

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On its tours the club regularly features invited guest singers. The 2004 European tour featured the legendary **Bi Kidude**, doyenne of Zanzibar taarab and recipient in 2005 of the prestigious Womex World Music Award. It is planned that Kidude will take part in the 2007 tour(s), depending on her health.

A special guest with Culture on its US tour in Autumn 2006 was the current rising star among taarab singers **Amina**. Amina's style combines taarab sensibilities and highly charged song lyrics with Bajuni roots music as well as inspirations from Western popular musics. The result is a very eclectic new taarab style. Amina recently recorded some songs with members of the Culture Musical Club for her upcoming international CD release.

Discography

1988 Taarab 4: The Music of Zanzibar – Culture Musical Club (GlobeStyle, UK)

1996 Spices of Zanzibar (Network, Germany)

1997 Kidumbak Kalcha: Ng'ambo – The Other Side of Zanzibar (Dizim, Germany)

2000 Bashraf – Taaab Instrumentals from Zanzibar (Dizim, Germany)
Songlines/UK top of the world selection, no. 9, Winter 2000/Spring 2001.

2003 Waridi – Parfums de Zanzibar (Jahazi Media/Virgin France)

The languorous swell of CMC in full sail is one of the greatest musical treats in the whole of Africa ... The taarabastic CMC in all their mind-boggling glory.

Songlines/UK top of the world selection, no. 27, November/December 2004

2003 Zanzibar – De l'âme à la danse // Zanzibar – Soul & Rhythm (Jahazi Media/Virgin, France). 2CD compilation of Zanzibari music heavily featuring Culture Musical Club.

2006 The club currently records for its next release, due out in Summer 2007.

Touring History

Culture Musical Club have regularly and widely toured in Europe, with tours in:

- 1996 12 concerts in Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland, with appearances most notably at the Heimatklänge Festival in Berlin and Lowlands Rock Festival in Netherlands.
- 1998 May-July: 27 concerts in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland. Appearances at Musiques Métisses in Angoulême, Amsterdam Roots Festival, Zeltival in Karlsruhe/Germany and major concert halls.
- 2000 November-December: 34 concerts in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and La Reunion.
- 2002 May: 12 concerts at Expo 02 / Mondial in Yverdon, Switzerland.
- 2004 May-August: 37 concerts in Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. The group played all the major world music summer festivals throughout Europe, including
 - Falun Folk Festival, Falun/Sweden
 - Mundial in Barcelona/Spain
 - Musiques Métisses in Angoulême/France
 - Sfinks Festival in Boechout/Belgium
 - Stimmen in Loerrach/Germany
 - Womad in Reading/UK
- 2005 October: Appearances at Festival di Popoli in Florence/Italy and at Caixa Forum Barcelona/Spain.
- 2006 September: US Tour—The Club plays the Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee World Music Festivals; as well as concerts in Dearborn, Seattle, and New York.