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## Culture Musical Club CD Review – *Shime!* Songlines – April/May 2009

This marvellous recording of Zanzibar's best taarab orchestra celebrates their 50th anniversary. The title refers to the original name of the club they performed in, Shime Kuokoana (meaning Hurry Up), affiliated to the Afro-Shirazi political party. As their orientation towards the African, as opposed to Arabic, side of Swahili culture might suggest, the music is driven by a rich texture of drum rhythms (ngoma). There are also a couple of tracks demonstrating the stripped-down, rural style of kidumbak music that the band has often performed on tour. This disc is an excellent introduction to the sublime world of Culture Musical Club.

Taarab music, with its fusion of Egyptian-style oud (lute), accordion and violins with African percussion can be found along the Indian Ocean coast of Kenya and Tanzania, but Zanzibar is its heartland. There are 22 members of the orchestra in the photo in the centre of the booklet. The two vocalists featured on this disc, Makame Faki and Rukia Ramadhani, joined CMC in the 70s and Ramadhani's warm, languorous voice is perfect for 'Ni Yeye' (It's Him), backed by a female chorus and featuring instrumental interjections on accordion. It's a love song proceeding, like many taarab songs, at a gentle, sedentary pace. 'Nuru' is an instrumental track allowing the soloists on qanun and accordion to shine. The strongly percussive 'Muziki Ki Kazi Yetu' (Music is our Domain) is inspired by spirit-possession music with squeaking violin before the punchy, faster-paced kidumbak music, also with violin improvisations, brings the disc to a lively close. A wonderful reminder of the power of Zanzibar's greatest orchestra.

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