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Chartwell Dutiro

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In memoriam: Dr Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi (1952–2019)

Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi, singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist was born on 22 September 1952 and died on 23 January 2019 at The Avenues Clinic, Harare, Zimbabwe, after a long struggle with diabetes. Mtukudzi had been in and out of the hospital since 2018 after developing a heart problem. Ironically enough, Tuku died on exactly the same day as his friend, the South African musician Hugh Masekela, who had passed away a year earlier. Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared music superstar Mtukudzi a national hero. This call for hero status was officially made by the country's arts-regulating body, the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe. Mtukudzi, an international music icon, is buried at his home in Madziva village, Mount Darwin, in Mashonaland Central province, about 150 km north of Zimbabwe's capital.

Mtukudzi grew up as the eldest of seven siblings in Highfield, a poor neighbourhood in Harare, Zimbabwe. While both his parents sang in a choir, they were initially not supportive of his interest in music and broke his first (homemade) guitar. Mtukudzi, whose career spanned more than 30 years, was known for his social and political lyrics, sung in three of his country's languages – Shona, Ndebele and English. Tuku released his debut single 'Stop After Orange' in 1975. Two years later he began performing with the Wagon Wheels, a group who featured the famous vocalist Thomas Mapfumo, but his tenure with the band was short-lived. By 1979 he had left to pursue a solo career and, taking several of the band's musicians with him, formed a new group, The Black Spirits. Their debut single, 'Dzandimomotera', sold enough copies to reach gold record status. As a solo artist, Mtukudzi had his most notable successes shortly after Zimbabwe declared independence in 1980, with his debut solo album *Africa* including two hits: 'Zimbabwe' and 'Madzongonyedze'. The prolific Mtukudzi released his 67th album in 2018 – *Hany'ga*.

Mtukudzi consistently balanced his musical career with his passion for film and drama. In addition to his appearance in several documentaries such as the BBC-produced *Under African Skies* (1989) and *Mbira Spirit of the People* (1990) by the well-known Zimbabwean film maker Simon Bright, he starred in *Jit* (1990), the first film featuring an all-Zimbabwean cast, and also played a prominent role in, as well as composed and arranged the soundtrack for, Zimbabwe's second film *Neria* (1993). His work for the film earned him an MNet award for best soundtrack in 1992. Mtukudzi subsequently wrote and directed the musical production *Was My Child* (1993) on the plight of street children. With the accompaniment of the Black Spirits or the 12-piece supergroup Mahube, Mtukudzi continued to tour and record. In February 1994 they spent six weeks performing in Austria and Switzerland, and in December 1994 they shared a double bill with the late Lucky Dube at a concert in South Africa. In 1997 Mtukudzi performed in Holland, Germany, Zimbabwe and South Africa with Mahube, which consisted of South African musicians, and in 1998 released an album with the same title. Mtukudzi reached his commercial peak with the album *Tuku Music*, which remained at the top of the CMJ New World charts for 11 weeks. The album

was released in Zimbabwe by Zimbabwe Music Corporation, in South Africa by Sheer Sound, in Europe by Label Bleu, in the United Kingdom by Connoisseur Collection and in North America by Putumayo World Music. Shortly after the album's release Mtukudzi toured the United States and Canada along with Taj Mahal, Toumani Diabate and Baaba Maal, as part of *Africa Fete 1999*, with a video of Mtukudzi's September 1999 performance in San Francisco released in February 2000. In November 1999 the album *Paivepo* reached the top position on Zimbabwe's music charts the first week after its release.

The *Pakare Paye Arts Centre* is one of the many noble initiatives by Zimbabwe's iconic musician Mtukudzi, who is also known worldwide for his unique Tuku Music genre. The centre was opened in 2004 and is located in the small and serene town of Norton about 45 km from the capital city along the Harare-Bulawayo highway. Since its establishment, it has come to be synonymous with arts and career development, and the nurturing of talent. The International Institute of Philanthropy (IIP) conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters (DHL) on Zimbabwe's most internationally renowned musical ambassador on 4 July 2014, in recognition for his outstanding work in helping the less privileged. This was Mtukudzi's third honorary recognition following an Honorary Arts degree from the University of Zimbabwe (2003) and an MSc Fine Arts Degree from the Women's University in Africa (2009).

The recent death of Mtukudzi has deprived Zimbabwe, Africa and communities worldwide of a unique, genial and iconic musician. His humility, love, caring and *hunhu* (what it takes to be a human being) masked his depth as a musician, teacher, leader and scholar.

The last time I was on stage with my legend brother Tuku was at the World of Music, Arts and Dance (WOMAD) festival in Singapore, 2005. I was very surprised and excited to collaborate with Tuku during this special event. I was leading a mbira and singing workshop and then suddenly there was bro Tuku singing, calling and responding with me 'Zimbabwean style' in Singapore! I will always treasure and remember this experience, big brother. It will take us all a bit of time to understand and comprehend why you had to go, but eventually our tears will dry up and we will celebrate your life through the wisdom in the music you left us. I know you are there somewhere in the wind (*muri kumhepo*), in the ancestors' world looking down on us all. Give us daily guidance, protection and healing, and may your soul rest in peace.

Chartwell Dutiro †¹

1 Chartwell Dutiro was a Zimbabwean musician, singer, songwriter, composer, author and teacher. He was a master mbira player with a story that begins in the sacred musical rituals of his home village. He played the Shona mbira virtually his entire life. From 1986 to 1994 he joined, recorded and toured the world with the legendary Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited. After 1994 Chartwell was based in England, performing, recording, teaching and building bridges between cultures through his music as a solo artist, band leader and collaborative musician. He died after a long illness on 22 September 2019, while studying for a PhD in music at Bath Spa University, UK.

Discography of albums by Mtukudzi (drawn from The National Arts Council of Zimbabwe)²

Mtukudzi, O T & The Black Spirits

- (1978). *Ndipeiwo Zano*. Kudzanayi, BL 151.
 (1979). *Chokwadi Chichabuda*. Kudzanayi, BL 179.
 (1980). *Muroyi Ndiani*. Kudzanayi, BL 229.
 (1981). *Africa*. Kudzanayi, BL 241.
 (1981). *Shanje* [originally titled *Pfambi*]. Kudzanayi, BL 304.
 (1982). *Maungira*. Kudzanayi, BL 354.
 (1982). *Please Ndapota*. Kudzanayi, BL 409.
 (1983). *Nzara*. Kudzanayi, BL 459.
 (2004). *The Other Side – Live in Basel 1994*. Shava, SHAVACD 014–2.
 (2013). *Sarawoga*. Tuku Music & Sheer Sound, SLCD 254.

Mtukudzi, O T

- (1983). *Oliver's Greatest Hits*. Kudzanayi, BL 430.
 (1984). *Hwema Handirase*. Kudzanayi, BL 479.
 (1985). *Mhaka*. Kudzanayi, BL 502.
 (1986). *Gona*. Kudzanayi, ZIL 205.
 (1986). *Zvauya Sei?* Tuku Music, ZIL 209.
 (1987). *Wawona*. Tuku Music, ZIL 215.
 (1987). *Ya Nhopi*. LP.
 (1988). *Nyanga Yenzou*. Tuku Music, TKLP 2.
 (1988). *Strange, Isn't It*. Tuku Music, TKLP 1.
 (1988). *Sugar Pie*. CSA Records, CSLP 5001.
 (1989). *Grandpa Story*. Tuku Music, TKLP 3.
 (1989). *Tuku Live at Sakubva*. Tuku Music, TKLP 4.
 (1990). *Chikonzi (Messenger)*. Tuku Music, TKLP 5.
 (1990). *Dzandimomotera*. Tuku Music, TKS 008.
 (1990). *Psss Psss Hallo!* CSA Records, ZCSLC 5005.
 (1990). *Shoko*. Tuku Music & Sheer Sound, SLCD 010.
 (1991). *Kuwhaira*. Tuku Music, TKLP 6.
 (1991). *Mutorwa*. Tuku Music, SLCD 230.
 (1992). *Rombe*. Tuku Music. LP.
 (1992). *Rumbidza Jehova*. Tuku Music, L4 TKLP 11.
 (1993). ... *Was My Child*. Tuku Music, TKLP 14.

2 Editorial note: The discography was completed via internet searches after Chartwell's death. We are deeply indebted to this contribution, which is most likely one of the last pieces he wrote.

- (1994). *Ivai Navo*. Tuku Music & Sheer Sound, SLCD 184.
- (1994). *Ziwere MuKøbenhavn*. Tuku Music, TKLP 15.
- (1996). *Mapisarema A Oliver Mtukudzi*. Zimbabwe Music Corporation, ZC 286.
- (1996). *Svovi Yangu*. Tuku Music, TKLP 18.
- (1997). *Nøega Zvangu*. Shava, SHAVACD 008–2.
- (1998). *Dzangu Dziye*.
- (1998). *Tuku Music*. Zimbabwe Music Corporation, OMCD 001.
- (1999). *Paivepo*. Zimbabwe Music Corporation, OMCD 003.
- (2001). *Neria (Soundtrack)*. Zimbabwe Music Corporation, TKLCD 7.
- (2002). *Greatest Hits: The Tuku Years (1998–2002)*. Sheer Sound, SLCD 035.
- (2002). *Vhunze Moto*. Tuku Music & Sheer Sound, SLCD 019.
- (2003). *Tsivo (Revenge)*. Sheer Sound, SLCD 049.
- (2004). *Bvuma (Tolerance)*. Tuku Music, TUKU 004.
- (2004). *Collection 1984–1991*. Tuku Music, SLCD 075.
- (2004). *Mtukudzi Collection 1991–1997*. Tuku Music, TUKUCD 011.
- (2004). *Shanda*. Alula, ALU 1037.
- (2005). *Nhava*. Heads Up International, HUCD 3102.
- (2005). *Pfugama Unamate*. Tuku Music, TKLCD 19.
- (2006). *Wønai*. Sheer Sound, SLCD 101.
- (2007). *Tsimba Itsoka*. Heads Up International, HUCD 3124.
- (2008). *Ndotomuimbira*. Sheer Sound, B07D4NH1RG.
- (2009). *Chinhambwe*. Tuku Music, SLCD 181.
- (2009). *Dairai (Believe)*. Sheer Sound, B073XSBVDJ.
- (2011). *Abi'angu (Duets of My Time)*. Naxos, 878068001594.
- (2011). *Rudaviro*. Sheer Sound, SLCD 234.
- (2014). *Mukombe We Mvura: Live at Pakare Paye*. Tuku Music, SLCD 309.
- (2016). *Eheka Nhai Yahwe*. Sheer Sound, B073XLCZ9Y.
- (2016). *God Bless You: The Gospel Collection*. Sheer Sound, B073XP71LQ.
- (2018). *Hany'ga (Concern)*. Tuku Music & Sheer Sound, SLCD 1802.