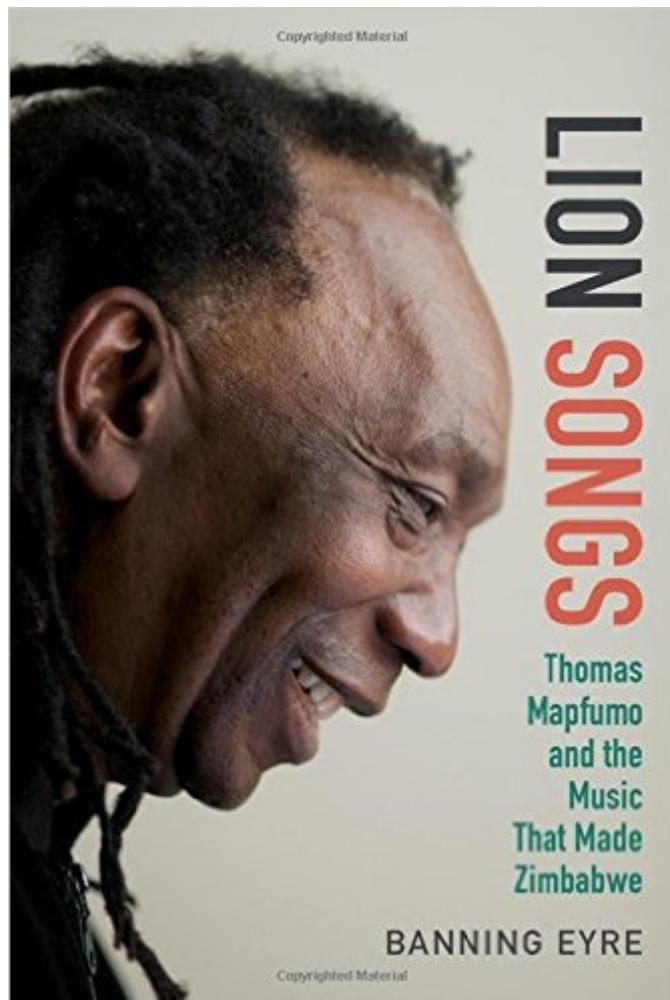


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# Lion Songs: Thomas Mapfumo And The Music That Made Zimbabwe



## Synopsis

Like Fela Kuti and Bob Marley, singer, composer, and bandleader Thomas Mapfumo and his music came to represent his native country's anticolonial struggle and cultural identity. Mapfumo was born in 1945 in what was then the British colony of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The trajectory of his career "from early performances of rock 'n' roll tunes to later creating a new genre based on traditional Zimbabwean music, including the sacred mbira, and African and Western pop" is a metaphor for Zimbabwe's evolution from colony to independent nation. *Lion Songs* is an authoritative biography of Mapfumo that narrates the life and career of this creative, complex, and iconic figure. Banning Eyre ties the arc of Mapfumo's career to the history of Zimbabwe. The genre Mapfumo created in the 1970s called chimurenga, or "struggle" music, challenged the Rhodesian government "which banned his music and jailed him" and became important to Zimbabwe achieving independence in 1980. In the 1980s and 1990s Mapfumo's international profile grew along with his opposition to Robert Mugabe's dictatorship. Mugabe had been a hero of the revolution, but Mapfumo's criticism of his regime led authorities and loyalists to turn on the singer with threats and intimidation. Beginning in 2000, Mapfumo and key band and family members left Zimbabwe. Many of them, including Mapfumo, now reside in Eugene, Oregon. A labor of love, *Lion Songs* is the product of a twenty-five-year friendship and professional relationship between Eyre and Mapfumo that demonstrates Mapfumo's musical and political importance to his nation, its freedom struggle, and its culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Compelling read, well researched and written. A must read for fans of Mapfumo and Zimbabwean music, as well as for followers of Zimbabwean history and culture. The story of Mapfumo is nicely interwoven into the narrative of Zimbabwean history and Shona culture.

I am currently teaching a unit on Zimbabwe's history and find - as always - that to unlayer the "truth" of the matter(s) one must look to the music, the literature, the art of a place and its people, both past and present. The magnificent Thomas Mapfumo knows this - knew it as a young musician activist in his homeland- and his life's work, as told here, tells the tale. I read excerpts from these pages aloud to a roomful and then students write, connect, riff on what they hear and write about how inspired they feel. With Mapfumo's story as a point of departure, we've pursued a vertical study of Shona culture, the spiritual resonance implied by mbira music, played thumb pianos, will even soon endeavor to "amplify" a few. And this is a Humanities classroom. Suffice it to say, this book - and Mapfumo's music - anchor us in our learning about Zimbabwe's wrought and beautiful history - at the same time they fill our sails with wind enough to dream new horizons, and off we go.

very compelling and well documented and detailed book and so much to learn and to feel and how it just brings you inward and never lets up. a very fascinating book.

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