## Mp3 Joel Laviolette - Ndiro Yemidzimu



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Zimbabwean trance music 7 MP3 Songs WORLD: African, NEW AGE: Healing Details: Joel Laviolette is one of the leading players and teachers of the Zimbabwean mbira. He was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time and heard an mbira for the first time at the age of 18. He instantly fell in love with the music and by the age of 20 had taught himself much of the mbira repertoire as well as how to build mbira. He then spent two years traveling around the United States trying to learn from any mbira player he could meet. After a year at UNT in Denton Texas studying jazz guitar, Joel dropped out and moved to New Mexico to join the band Jaka in order to continue his learning of the mbira. For the next two years, Joel played guitar, mbira and marimba with the group. While this was a rewarding experience, Joel had the feeling that he had learned what he could in the US, it soon became apparent that he would need to go to Zimbabwe to study with the originators of the music. In 1998, Joel went to Zimbabwe for the first time. He had high hopes, but little money. During that time, he was lucky enough to meet and study with Newton Gwara, Sekuru Chigamba, Wiriranai Chigonga, and Garidziva Chigamba. He quickly ran out of money however, and had to return to the United States after just four months. Upon his return, Joel had a renewed fire to return to Zimbabwe as soon as he could, and he had a plan. Having studied the pictures on the book "The Soul of Mbira", and any recording he could get his hands on, Joel knew that there were many different kinds of mbira in Africa. Save for the amazing work of Hugh Tracy and his son Andrew Tracy, there is little documentation or recordings of the many different types of music to be found in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Unfortunately, these recordings are also quite hard to get hold of in the United States (though getting easier-now that CD's are being released of Hugh Tracy's work). Joel decided to buy mobile recording equipment and go in the field to find the music that he wanted so desperately to hear. Joel jokes that he recorded the musicians so that he could improve his own mbira

music collection. After working furiously for a year, Joel returned to Zimbabwe in October, 1999. He had also refined his mbira style by then and knew that he wanted to spend his time learning from mbira master Newton Gwara. He met up with Gwara and rented a stand in the high-density suburb of New Zengeza 4 in Chitungwiza. He built a house there which eventually came to be known as Mhumhi Studios. Joel and Newton Gwara formed a band, the "Nheravauya Mbira Group", and played several times a week in the ghetto bars of Chitungwiza and Chikwana. The group was a hit not just because of Gwaras genius on the mbira and vocals, but because of the novelty of "Joel from America" in the group. Often, audience members would jump on stage and look behind the gourd deze just to see if Joel was actually playing the instrument! To their amazement, he was, and was in fact performing at a level of competence that spirit possessions were a common thing at their performances-even in the busy bars and nightclubs. For the next year and a half, Joel traveled constantly throughout Zimbabwe meeting musicians, playing ceremonies, and talking to musicians that were interested in recording. He came to record many groups and types of mbira. These included the ChiSanza, Munyonga, Nyunga-Nyunga, Njari, Dongonda (njari neMakonde), mbira orchestra, Matepe, Nyanga (panpipes), Mbira DzaVaNdau, and well as several of the players of the Mbira DzaVaDzimu. The fruits of those recordings can be seen and heard on Mhumhi Records, Joel's non-profit record label. The profits from those recordings go back to the musicians involved, and if you like the music on this page, please consider listening to the source. After returning to the States, Joel moved back to New Mexico. There, he began collaborating again with Dan Pauli who he had previously played with in the group Jaka. Joel and Dan formed the group Common Thread and began working on original music that was in the spirit of Zimbabwean traditional music. This led to further explorations in using guitars and western instrumentation in the Zimbabwean style. Importantly, this also opened the way for Joel to begin his exploration of his own personal voice in the music. Songwriting and arranging became and continues to be an important part in Joel's musical path. Joel has had the joy of performing on stage and/or touring with some of the greatest musicians to come out of Zimbabwe, including Newton Gwara, Stella Chiweshe, Tute Chigamba, Garidziva Chigamba, Ambuya Buelar Dyoko, and David Gweshe. He has also done extensive teaching for students of all ages and is one of the regular teachers for Zimfest-an annual music festival dedicated to Zimbabwean music. Teaching children is one of his passions, and he is always excited to give workshops and demonstrations for children. Joel is regularly asked to teach Zimbabwean styles of guitar, mbira, matepe, and marimba.

He is also the only North-American specialist of the Mozambiquen nyanga(panpipe ensemble) and has been honored to share that knowledge with others.

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