

### **Lambya traditional dances**

Cultural dances are so precious to many ethnic groups, as they often contain pieces of their history and livelihood that would otherwise be lost. The Lambya of Chitipa is an example of this. As for the Lambya's and related ethnic group found in the district look at the traditional dances as a way to convey joy, mourning and even times of the battles and war. The same is true as at the roots of many people groups, as dance is a common language that unites us all on some level. Below are just a few of the cultural dances that are still in existence amongst the Lambya ethnic group.

### **Sendemule**

*Sendemule* is a traditional dance performed by the Lambya people of Chitipa during chief funerals, chief installation ceremonies and for entertainment. When *Sendemule* is performed at funerals it is performed by women only, the songs are appropriately mourning songs, and when it is performed at a chief's installation ceremony or when a dangerous animal like a lion is killed, the songs depict triumph. Today *Sendemule* is performed at most social gatherings where the dancers usually dress casually.

### **Indingala**

*Indingala* is a highly emotional and expressive dance performed by the Nyakyusa, Ngondes of Karonga and Lambya's of Chitipa districts. It is also performed in Tanzania where the Nyakyusa and Ngonde lived before immigrating to Malawi. *Indingala* is a special drum which was used for sending messages about the death of a chief, the presence of dangerous animals or an attack by enemy tribes in the neighborhood. Strong men would rush to the scene armed, and if the message was about the death of a chief, a fight would break out. This used to be the case because they suspected foul play and custom demanded that a chief must be laid to rest accompanied by a number of his subjects. *Indingala*, therefore, developed as a warrior dance out of this practice. But today it is a peaceful dance in which people participate to express their emotional feelings either to release tension or simply to relax. Sometimes *Indingala* groups compete with each other. When it is performed for entertainment, women and children participate. The men wear a long piece of cloth around the waist and adorn decorations of beads. They paint their bodies with clay

and use flywhisks when dancing. There is very little singing in Indingala otherwise the only music is provided by three drums and whistles. The dancers throw their bodies in different directions gracefully and majestically. In Indingala it is important to keep the movements of the arms and the legs co-ordinated.

### **Mwinoghe**

In the Chisukwa dialect, the word *Mwinoghe* literally means; *za twilaghe mwe waya* ('let us enjoy ourselves thoroughly'). Mwinoghe is an instrumental dance that is popular among people especially school children in Chitipa district of the northern region of Malawi. It is believed that the dance has been derived from a ceremonial dance of Karonga district called Indingala which was originally performed by men brandishing fly-whisks during either the enthralment of a chief or feast over a dead marauding lion. Mwinoghe is a relatively recent dance, having been modified from Indingala between 1953 and 1955. In its original form, Mwinoghe was performed during inter-school competition of traditional dances and as a form of entertainment for distinguished visitors to schools. These days it is also danced on days of international significance like the annual Independence Anniversary celebrations. Mwinoghe has been developed to its present form and made popular since the attainment of independence. The main percussion instruments used in the dance are one big drum called *ing'ina* and two smaller ones called *twana*, but sometimes a whistle is used. The dancers line up in two straight lines, boys on one side and an equal number of girls on the other, facing one another. While the girls continue dancing in a standing position with their hands raised up, the boys squat down wringing and twisting their bodies, all to the rhythm of the instruments. Mwinoghe is therefore a celebration dance. The girls wear a piece of cloth tied around the waist and reaching down the ankles with a blouse on top, preferably orange or yellow in colour. The boys wear short sleeved shirts and short trousers on top of which they also wear a piece of cloth tied around their waists. They dance bare foot.

### **Vimbuza**

Vimbuza, a popular dance among the Tumbuka of northern Malawi, is a healing dance. It is performed to cure a number of mental and psychological illnesses. The name Vimbuza also signifies the disease which is mostly widespread in the northern is very common among the women folk. It is performed by both men and women usually at night in the

vicinity of the afflicted person. However, Vimbuza Dance is also performed purely for entertainment.