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Oliver Mtukudzi

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Oliver Mtukudzi, also known as "Tuku" (short for Mtukudzi) was a singer-songwriter, actor, writer, film director and entrepreneur. With over 60 albums to his name, he was one of Zimbabwe's top musicians and lead of the band The Black Spirits. His music was mainly in the Afro-Jazz genre. Mtukudzi's career spanned 5 decades from the 70s to the 2010s, having started in 1975 when he did his debut single *Stop after Orange*.^[1]

Dr. Oliver Mtukudzi



Oliver Mtukudzi performing

Born

Oliver Mtukudzi

(1952-09-22)September 22, 1952

[Highfield, Harare](#), Zimbabwe

Died

January 23, 2019(2019-01-23) (aged 66)

Cause of death

Diabetes

Resting place

Madziva

Other names

Tuku

Occupation

- Singer
- Songwriter

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- Actor
- Entrepreneur

Years active	1975–2019
Spouse(s)	Daisy Mtukudzi
Children	Sam Selmor , Sandra
Parent(s)	Mtukudzi Senior
Website	www.facebook.com/tukumusik/

Mtukudzi had his own music label '[Tuku Music](#)' which is also the name of his apparel label. Mtukudzi was a lead actor in the movies **Jiti** and **Neria** released in the 90s. Mtukudzi wrote and directed the live musical production Was My Child.^[2] Mtukudzi was one of the few Zimbabweans whose music has international appeal.

Mtukudzi died on the afternoon of 23 January at Avenues in Harare, after being ill with diabetes. He was declared a National Hero by the [Zanu-PF](#) Politburo which meant that he could be buried at the [National Heroes Acre](#). His family, however, decided to bury him at his rural home in [Madziva](#).

Following his death, the [City of Harare](#), announced that it would rename [Willowvale](#) road to Oliver Mtukudzi road.

Background

Mtukudzi was born on the 22nd of September 1952 in [Highfield](#), was the first born in a family of seven siblings. His parents both sang and actually met at a competition of church choirs. His parents continued to sing and compete amongst themselves (parents) and drew in Oliver and his siblings as the judges. This musical environment drew him to music.^[2] Mtukudzi developed a sense of social and economic responsibility early in life due to the premature death of his father.^[3] He had four sisters and one brother.

Early Music Career

Mtukudzi's music career started at the age of 23 with the 1975 release of his debut single, *Stop After Orange*. It's been stated widely, including on Mtukudzi's own [website](#) that in 1977 he teamed up with Zimbabwe top musician, [Thomas Mapfumo](#), at a famous band called [Wagon Wheels](#) that being his official entry into the Zimbabwean music industry. Mapfumo, however, denied this saying,

*"I was coming from [Mutare](#) myself where we were contracted at a hotel in Dangamvura. When I returned to Harare, that's when I met Oliver. He was practicing at James Bond's place because this guy used to own equipment, so a lot of youngsters used to go there just to practice music. After I met Oliver, we had a short tour together. I was already singing my [Shona](#) music, and he was playing something strange... he was playing the guitar, singing a song like... we used to call the song *Green for Go and Red for Stop*.*

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“I said to him, ‘you guy, why don’t you sing in your mother’s language?’ He was a good guy, he took my advice. He even asked for one of my songs Tamba Zvako Marujata (Rova Ngoma Mutavara). It was a traditional tune, which I used to sing myself. He came to me and asked if he could record the music and I said you can go on and record it. It came out beautifully and everybody liked it, and I also thought it was a good song.” ^[4]

With the Wagon Wheels, Mtukudzi recorded [Dzandimomotera](#), a song inspired directly by the [Second Chimurenga](#). *Dzandimomotera* depicted the black man’s life struggles under the white minority government.

One account says Mtukudzi left the group in 1978 to form his own group [The Black Spirits](#) and released the album [Ndipiweo Zano](#). The Album was a hit.^[5] Mtukudzi said he intended to use the name Wagon Wheels with the new group but the Wagon Wheels managers found other musicians to continue with the band, which forced Mtukudzi to find a new name for his band.^[1] Mtukudzi took several of the Wagon Wheels musicians with him to The Black Spirits.^[6]

Another account, however, taken from [an interview](#) Mapfumo had with [New Zimbabwe](#) says The Black Spirits was actually Mapfumo's group first:

The Black Spirits (now the name of Mtukudzi’s band) was my band,” Mapfumo says. “He was with Wagon Wheels, and then they changed it to Black Spirits. Our Black Spirits disbanded, and then we formed the Blacks Unlimited. He never played with Blacks Unlimited; he was with Wagon Wheels before they changed their name to Black Spirits. We played together on that short tour when he was singing Red for Stop and Green for Go. At that time, that group had no name when we toured... it was just Green for Go and Red for Stop.” ^[4]

The Black Spirits

With the Black Spirits, Mtukudzi recorded many albums including [Africa](#) which was done at the country's Independence in 1980 and included two hit songs, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Mazongonyedze](#). The album was regarded as one of the most important albums of its time.^[2]

The Black Spirits been described as ‘a group of rag-tag young stylish ghetto boys who were to become a sure force on the music scene, progressing into a household name in the ensuing years’.^[7] Mtukudzi split with The Black Spirits in 1987 for two years, a period during which he sang with other backing groups like [Kwekwe](#) based [Zig Zag Band](#).^{[1][2]}

Tuku Music, the brand career relaunch

In the 90s Mtukudzi's music started taking him beyond the borders. He performed at a number festivals in Africa (especially South Africa) as well as other continents. During this time Mtukudzi hired a new manager, [Debbie Metcalfe](#) to help him with his contracts, revamp his business strategies and firmly established the Tuku Music brand. A South African musician [Steve Dyer](#) helped produce his first album under this brand and the album was called Tuku Music. This album is widely considered as having re-

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launched Mtukudzi's music career.^[2] Metcalfe is credited by many for Mtukudzi's success, especially his international. Metcalfe remained Tuku Music Manager until 2009 when she and several members were dropped from the group.^[8]

Style of music

Though generally considered to be Afro-Jazz, Mtukudzi's style of music was a fusion of a Zimbabwean music style called Jiti, the traditional drumming patterns of his clan called Katekwe, marimba, and South African mbaqanga as well as modern genres such as Afro-pop. The introduction of a keyboard to his music in the early 80s is said to have been influenced by [West Nkosi](#), a well known South African producer who produced for Tuku in his early career.^[1]

Mtukudzi himself labeled his music "Tuku Music". He says however that "My fans were the first to describe my music as Tuku Music but it was only around the mid-1990s that I began to develop it as a brand name."^[2]

Discography

Albums

For [Oliver Mtukudzi's full Discography, click here.](#)

1. 1978 Ndipeiwo Zano (re-released 2000)
2. 1979 Chokwadi Chichabuda
3. 1979 Muroi Ndiani?'
4. 1980 Africa (re-released 2000)
5. 1981 Shanje
6. 1981 Pfambi
7. 1982 Maungira
8. 1982 Please Ndapota
9. 1983 Nzara
10. 1983 Oliver's Greatest Hits
11. 1984 Hwema Handirase
12. 1985 Mhaka
13. 1986 Gona
14. 1986 Zvauya Sei?
15. 1987 Wawona
16. 1988 Nyanga Yenzou
17. 1988 Strange, Isn't It?
18. 1988 Sugar Pie
19. 1989 Grandpa Story
20. 1990 Chikonzi
21. 1990 Pss Pss Hallo!
22. 1990 Shoko
23. 1991 Mutorwa

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24. 1992 Rombe
25. 1992 Rumbidzai Jehova
26. 1992 Neria Soundtrack'
27. 1993 Son of Africa
28. 1994 Ziwere MuKobenhavn
29. 1995 Was My Child
30. 1996 Svovi yangu
31. 1995 The Other Side: Live in Switzerland
32. 1995 Ivai Navo
33. 1997 Ndega Zvangu (re-released 2001)
34. 1997 Chinhamwe
35. 1998 Dzangu Dziye
36. 1999 Tuku Music
37. 2000 Paivepo
38. 2001 Neria
39. 2001 Bvuma (Tolerance)
40. 2002 Shanda soundtrack
41. 2002 Vhunze Moto
42. 2003 Shanda (Alula Records)
43. 2003 Tsivo (Revenge)
44. 2004 Greatest Hits Tuku Years
45. 2004 Mtukudzi Collection 1991-1997
46. 2004 Mtukudzi Collection 1984-1991
47. 2005 Nhava(Tolerance)
48. 2006 Wonai
49. 2007 Tsimba Itsoka
50. 2008 Dairai (Believe)
51. 2010 Rudaviro
52. 2010 Kutsi Kwemoyo (compilation)
53. 2011 Rudaviro
54. 2011 "Abi'angu" (Duets of my time)^[9]
55. 2012 "Sarawoga"
56. 2015 "Mukombe Wemvura"

Collaboration with [Mathias Mhere](#)

Between 2014 and 2015, Tuku worked helped a young gospel Musician Mathias Mhere in one of his albums. Mtukudzi was featured on the song Tsano Handei, an extract from the biblical verse found in the book of Numbers. Tsano Handei was extracted from Numbers 10 where Moses and his brother-in-law Hobab were prominently featured discussing the divine commissioned-journey from Mt Sinai to Canaan. This was not a new thing for Tuku since his career had always been spiced by collaborations with other local artists. In the recent past, he did successful collaborations with [EX-Q](#) and [Fungisai Zvakavapano](#) in projects which were well-received by the market.

Achievements

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In 2011 the Forbes magazine included him in the Top 40 Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa in a list that included Akon, Chinua Achebe and Didier Drogba.^[10] The message in his music prompted the United Nations to consider him as the UNICEF Goodwill ambassador in Eastern and Southern Africa for children development and HIV awareness.

Awards

Mtukudzi had many awards to his name, these include international awards and local ones.

- 1985–1988: One of The Best Selling Artists in Zimbabwe.
- 1992: M-Net Best Soundtrack (Neria)
- 2002: KORA Award for Best Arrangement in 2002, for Ndakuwara.
- 2002: SAMA Finalist (Best Traditional/African Adult Contemporary DVD) Live at the Cape Town Jazz Festival.
- 2002: National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA) in 2002 and 2004 for Best Group / Male vocalist
- 2002: SAMA Finalist (Best Traditional/African Adult Contemporary DVD) Live At The Cape Town Jazz Festival
- 2003: KORA Award for Best African male artist and Lifetime Achievement Award in August 2003.
- 2003: Reel Award Winner for Best African Language in 2003.
- 2003: An honorary degree from the [University of Zimbabwe](#) in December 2003
- 2003: NAMA Award 2003: Best Group/Artist.
- 2004: NAMA Award 2004: Best Group/Artist.
- 2005: NAMA Award 2005: National Arts Personality of the Year.
- 2006: NAMA Award 2006: Outstanding Album (NHAVA).
- 2006: ZIMA (Best Music Ringing Tone Handiro Dambudziko).
- 2006: ZIMA (Music Ambassador).
- 2007: NAMA Award 2007: Best Musician/Group.
- 2007: Cultural Ambassador – Zimbabwe Tourism Association.
- 2008: NAMA Award 2008: (Outstanding Musician).
- 2009: Honorary MSc (Fine Arts) Degree awarded by the Women's University in Africa in 2009.
- 2010: MTN SAMA Awards recognized his son's achievements in music.
- 2010: University of Zimbabwe (UZ) and The International Council of Africana Womanism (ICAW) Award: recognition of his luminary role in uplifting African women through his artistic work – music and a diversity of art forms – offered as community development at his arts academy at Pakare Paye in Norton.
- 2011: Titled Zimbabwe's first UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- 2011: Honoured by the Government of Italy with the prestigious Cavaliere of the Order of Merit Award in recognition of his work as an international musician. (The award is what the Knighthood is to England).
- 2014: Honorary Doctorate (Ph.D.) International Institute of Philanthropy.
- 2014: Honorary Doctorate from Great Zimbabwe University (GZU). Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology & Choreography (Honoris Causa).
- 2017: All Africa Music Awards, (AFRIMA) African Legend Award

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Pakare Paye Arts Centre

In 2003, Mtukudzi founded an institution of arts called [Pakare Paye Arts Centre](#) to develop and nurture young talent in various practical artistic endeavors, particularly music, dance, drama, poetry, and storytelling. The center is constructed at an old industrial site in the small farming town of [Norton](#), west of [Harare](#). The center has an auditorium, a curio shop, restaurant, editing suite, a show arena with a stage, and a bar.^[11]

Personal life

Mtukudzi was married to Daisy, and the two have five children and two grandchildren. He was the father of five children. He was reported to have other children outside his marriage. One of his sons is the late [Sam Mtukudzi](#) was also an Afro-Jazz musician. Mtukudzi had two daughters with his first wife, Melody Murape. Their names are [Selmor Mtukudzi](#) (herself a musician) and Sandra^[12] Selmour complained publicly that her dad does not support her music career.^[13]

He penned the song 'Svovi' for his wife.

Mtukudzi dedicated the album 'Sarawoga' to his departed son Sam Mtukudzi, who died in a car accident on 15 March 2010.

It was reported widely in the country's media that Mtukudzi had a love affair with one of his backing vocalists, the late Mendy Chimbindi. Mtukudzi is said to have not commented on the issue.^[7]

Unauthorised Biography

In 2014 Mtukudzi announced that a 'biography' written about him by former band publicist Shepherd Mutamba, was unauthorized saying the biography was damaging to him and his family. He said Mutamba had divulged some sensitive family matters without seeking his consent. Mtukudzi said Mutamba had agreed to show him the manuscript of the biography before publishing it but that the publicist reneged from this agreement and Mtukudzi was surprised to see excerpts from the book printed in the local newspaper, [Daily News](#). The book, Mtukudzi said, contained "*so many made-up 'facts', half-truths and false interpretations of my life? Why would someone who was warmly welcomed into our camp and treated with great respect want to pull me down like this Everything about the book that I have seen so far is an attack on me. Nothing positive at all. Is that Mutamba's summary of who I am as a man?*"^[14]

Death

Mtukudzi died on 23 February 2019 from diabetes. He had been admitted to Avenues Clinic in Harare. Hundreds of popular people, fellow musicians and other prominent people attended his funeral. The president of Zimbabwe, [Emmerson Mnangagwa](#) attended and spoke at his funeral. The opposition leader, MDC-Alliance President [Nelson Chamisa](#) also attended and spoke at the funeral.

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Oliver-Mtukudzi-Casket-In-Madziva

Mtukudzi was declared a National Hero on 24 January 2019. His family, however, decided bury him in Madziva. His funeral was covered by the stated and a tribute concert & public funeral was held at the [National Sports Stadium](#) in Harare in his hounour before his body was flown to his rural home in Madziva.

Picture Gallery



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Videos

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Pindula is a place to find information about local things on the internet. We do it a lot like Wikipedia, except everything is hyper-local. We started work on Pindula because we needed something like it. There's so little useful information about local things online and we're working to change that

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