

REVIEW:



SOUNDING IMAGES

A scene from "Kinshasa Symphony," a documentary about a man who starts a symphony orchestra after losing his job.

# 'Kinshasa Symphony' is a triumph

## 'Kinshasa Symphony'

**Nation:** Germany

**Screening:** Noon Friday, Annenberg Theater; 7 p.m. Sunday, Palm Springs High School auditorium

**Directors:** Claus Wischmann, Martin Baer

**Synopsis:** Armand Diangienda, a pilot in the city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo loses his job and starts a symphony orchestra. The musicians must make many of their own instruments, but after 15 years, they present the city's first classical concert to celebrate their nation's

50th anniversary with a level of expertise that is remarkable.

**Scorecard:** 6 (out of 10). Wischmann and Baer have a great story to tell, but the documentary could have been extraordinary with more context and less footage of the orchestra and choir rehearsing "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's 9th. They convince us that the concert is remarkable coming from such an unsophisticated community, but they don't mention that Kinshasa is a city of more than 10 million people and still so backwards (by Western standards) that a local TV journalist doesn't know what an octave is. Diangienda

says his grandfather, Simon Kimbangu, prophesied this concert, but the film doesn't say that the religion he founded, Kimbanguism, is Sub-Saharan Africa's largest independent Christian movement or that Kimbangu was considered an envoy of Jesus. That would have explained why the musicians follow Diangienda as their conductor and it would have made the conclusion more dramatically logical — although it's still weird that the film follows rehearsals of "Ode to Joy" only to feature Carl Orff's "O Fortuna" as its concert clip.

**Bruce Fessier**