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ISSUES FOR MUSIC AND EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

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University of Plymouth

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ISSUES FOR MUSIC AND EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

by

TREVOR WIGGINS

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
[by publication: Staff Candidature]

Dartington College of Arts

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Trevor Wiggins

Issues for Music and Education in West Africa

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ISSUES FOR MUSIC AND EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

Trevor Wiggins

Declaration

My work draws on a variety of study and experience as well as research. My first qualification in higher education was a Certificate of Education in Music (Goldsmiths' College, London 1974), followed by a B.Mus degree (1976), these together providing undergraduate level work in both music/musicology and music education. My music education experience was then extended through seven years of teaching in schools, at the same time taking a part-time M.Mus in Music Analysis (1980). My appointment to the staff of Bretton Hall College in 1983 enabled me to develop experience in both musicology and music education. At Bretton I taught music (including music analysis) to the BA students and all aspects of music in education (practical and theoretical) to BEd and PGCE music students. While at Bretton, I also developed my knowledge of recording techniques, using a wide variety of microphones and digital equipment.

While at Bretton I organised a staff exchange with Dr Daniel Avorgbedor of the University of Ghana which was funded by the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers. The exchange, between December 1988 and April 1989, enabled me both to study Ghanaian music intensively for the first time (rather than attending intermittent workshops etc in the UK), and to perceive some of the problems for students at the University of Ghana studying western classical music. I moved to my present post at Dartington College of Arts in 1991 and published *Xylophone Music from Ghana* (1992) and *Music of West Africa* (1993) drawing on my 1988-9 research.

In 1994-5 I was able to negotiate an extended period of unpaid leave, supported by Dartington College of Arts and the Elmgrant Trust, which enabled by to carry out research in Ghana between August 1994 and May 1995. During the central part of this

time (September - March) I was resident in Nandom in the Upper West region of Ghana carrying out research into the recreational music of the area, in particular the xylophone music, through observation, recording, interviews, transcription and learning to play the instrument. The periods before and after this were spent in Accra taking lessons in drumming from a master drummer who is the senior instructor at the International Centre for African Music and Dance, University of Ghana (directed by Prof. J.H.K Nketia). The material for *Composing the Music of Africa* (written in 1996 but still in press owing to delays by other authors and the editor), the *Bewaare* CD (1996), and the British Journal of Music Education article (1996) were the immediate result of this research.

In November-December 1996 I was able to return to Ghana for a period of a month which was mostly research in Nandom, observing the *Kakube* festival, interviewing more musicians, and also carrying out an extended interview with the Nandom Naa (chief) which was the subject of the article in the BJME (1998). I also recorded more material at this time from the Sisaala area which resulted in the second CD (1998) and the article in the British Journal of Ethnomusicology (1998 volume - in press).

ISSUES FOR MUSIC AND EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

Trevor Wiggins

Abstract

My published output represents an ongoing engagement with the issues of studying, learning, understanding and transmitting music. More specifically, it has the music of Ghana in West Africa as its primary focus. This music is then considered from a number of points of view:-

- as music, where the sonic events can be charted, documented and analysed
- as 'ethnic' music where the function and meaning of this music for its culture can be considered
- as a cultural artefact where the changing processes of transmission and preservation are observed
- as pedagogical material where the nature of learning related to culture and the processes of translation by the teacher and the learner are examined.

Music as object for documentation and discussion is a substantial part of *Xylophone music from Ghana*, the two articles in *Composing the Music of Africa* and the article in the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* as well as the CDs, '*Bewaare - they are coming*' Dagaare songs and dances from Nandom, Ghana and '*In the time of my fourth great-grandfather...*'

Western Sisaala music from Lambussie, Ghana. These same publications also consider the roles and function of the music within its culture. Music as a cultural artefact, its transmission and preservation, particularly in relation to formal education, is the focus of the two articles in the *British Journal of Music Education*, the *Music Teacher* publication, the article in *Cahiers de Musiques Traditionnelles*, and the ESEM conference paper.

Pedagogical issues and materials form the basis for *Music of West Africa*, *Kpatsa*, and the symposium papers.

ISSUES FOR MUSIC AND EDUCATION IN WEST AFRICA

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Critical Appraisal

My published output represents an ongoing engagement with the issues of studying, learning, understanding and transmitting music. More specifically, it has the music of Ghana in West Africa as its primary focus. This music is then considered from a number of points of view:-

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- as 'ethnic' music where the function and meaning of this music for its culture can be considered
- as a cultural artefact where the changing processes of transmission and preservation are observed
- as pedagogical material where the nature of learning related to culture and the processes of translation by the teacher and the learner are examined.

These are not, of course, separate and distinct areas of study and research. It is practically impossible to draw the relatively clear boundaries which exist or are accepted for many types of study of western music. In the West (at least, until recently), the study of music as object would be represented by the discipline of music analysis which might itself be seen as a branch of musicology. Ethnic music, on the other hand, was the subject of study for comparative musicologists, then ethnomusicologists. Of course, some social and cultural anthropologists also studied music as a cultural artefact, in some cases making little comment on the substance of the music itself but concentrating on its function in and for society. The pedagogy of music and issues of music in education has generally

stayed relatively separate from the other areas outlined above. Music education in the UK has been concerned with issues for pupils within the western world, generally centred on the child as learner. Schooling, based on a western model, has perhaps been one of the most insidious influences of the West on other cultures. Because this model is so widely accepted and used, it is not surprising that there seems to be little research into ways of learning which are culturally embedded and the nature and benefits of learning about/with material from another culture.

My background, experience and research (as outlined in the Declaration) has enabled me to engage with all of the aspects outlined above, although there is also a danger that the breadth of the enquiry will militate against sufficient depth of understanding in any area to be able to make an informed contribution. In this appraisal I will set out the issues in more detail and locate my work in relation to the disciplines outlined above.

As Signell (1997) points out, issues of disclosure are key to an understanding of what a writer or musician, especially an ethnomusicologist is attempting to communicate. The researcher needs to present work as transparently as possible, making clear the decisions that were made, the material that was selected and how, the circumstances of any recording, and other relevant issues which minimise or attribute clearly the voice of the researcher as differentiated from the subject(s) of research. This is to a fair degree an answer to the problems raised by Clifford (1986). Clifford sets out a closely argued case for all ethnographic writing to be viewed as 'true fiction' not only in the sense that all truths are constructed, but also because ethnographic writing is partial and incomplete. Clifford identifies ethnographic writing as interdisciplinary; a new area of understanding which has emerged from the earlier anthropological research. Anthropology was/is concerned with the reporting and analysis of the culture and society of (usually) other people, describing all aspects of their constructed existence. It almost inevitably involves comparison; the researcher cannot observe and investigate everything so makes a selection

based on his/her experience to identify those elements which are most 'interesting'. What is interesting will be controlled by the sense of 'otherness'. The researcher will either be from another culture or, as has become more common recently, an autochthonous reporter with a sense of another audience other than the subjects of the study. Frequently the researcher will be writing in a language different from that spoken by the culture studied. Somé (1994, p.2) writes as a Dagara man born in Burkina Faso trying to explain his experience to a western audience:

'One of my greatest problems was that the things I talk about here did not happen in English; they happened in a language that has a very different mind-set about reality. There is usually significant violence done to anything being translated from one culture to another. Modern American English, which seems to me to be better suited to quick fixes and the thrill of a consumer culture, seems to falter when asked to communicate another person's world view. From the time I began to jot down my first thoughts until the last word, I found myself on the bumpy road of mediumship, trying to ferry meanings from one language to another, and from one reality to another – a process that denaturalizes and confuses them.'

The process of translation and of mediation which Somé identifies is a problem for all researchers. Even if you are reporting on an external culture, it is impossible to convey the strength and quality of your experience and difficult for the reader to assess the sympathy or empathy with which you write. On the other hand, some limited information, reporting, or comment is (arguably) better than none at all. For the reader, the most important key to making a judgement of your work is the extent to which you are able to be transparent about the decisions or assumptions you have made, about the thesis you set out to investigate, and about the things you decided to ignore or which happened just off camera. The reporter needs to be as transparent as possible: to give as much information as is possible/appropriate, acknowledging conscious omissions; to present the diversity of music and musicians, allowing different sections of the

community their voices. He/she must also recognise that everybody has their own story which is important and relevant to their music and, finally, consider the receiver of the collection/recordings/information, communicating with them as clearly as possible.

All of my work has these concerns embedded in it, either explicitly, for example in giving information on the CDs about the location and occasion of the recordings and the lives of the musicians, or implicitly as in the *Music of West Africa* volume where I had to consider how best to communicate my experience in a way which was accessible by children at schools in the UK. It is not easy to assess how effectively these aims have been carried through and realised, as published material, particularly in journals, does not usually generate critical comment. The following is part of a review of the CD *Bewaare – They are coming* written by Marie-Laure Manigand of the British Library National Sound Archive (Manigand 1996). I make no apology for an extended quotation since it addresses precisely the issues outlined above and the way I have been able to communicate through my work.

‘Listening to this recording and reading the accompanying 16-page booklet, it is clear that a great deal of thought and effort have been put into its production. At a practical level, great care has been given to the presentation of the recordings and the accuracy of the written information. The correct way of writing the Dagaare language ... has been respected. At a more conceptual level, there has been a conscious decision to give the listener a comprehensive view of Dagaare music from all layers of society, since all Dagaare are involved in its making. There is also a distinct willingness to “situate” the recordings in a physical, historical and human context. For example, the first track is a short extract of ambient animal sounds which form a constant background to everyday life activities, including music. More interestingly, the musicians’ personal histories are recounted in detail, and ample information is given in the sleeve notes about the evolution of the musical styles and the meaning of the songs. For instance, the origins of *bewaa* music are clearly dated to the early 1950s and related to very

specific local events. This kind of historical perspective is most appreciated, for it banishes notions of musical timelessness and immobility which are still too often associated with publications on non-Western traditional music. Indeed, the term “traditional” here must be used with care as the music featured on this CD is above all contemporary, subject to external influences and creative changes. This publication has the distinct advantage not only of filling an important gap in our knowledge of Ghanaian music, but filling it in a meticulous and enlightened way.’

Returning to Clifford’s (1986) essay on cultural study, if he is correct in his assertion that ethnographic writing is interdisciplinary, then Barthes (1984) sets a difficult challenge:

‘Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it’s not enough to choose a “subject” (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one.’

Although an immediate response might be to recognise Barthes proposal as an excellent conceptual starting point, the difficulty of creating this ‘new object’ can be observed in Björnberg (1998) in his paper entitled *Musical Analysis and Interdisciplinarity*. Björnberg begins by setting out the problem as he sees it:

‘Basically, disagreements between musicologists and “culturalists” may be referred back to an epistemological conflict concerning whether “music itself”, as opposed to “music in its social context”, constitutes a legitimate object for scholarly study.

Further down the same page, there is a small, but significant change in the nomenclature:

‘The purpose of this paper is thus to suggest and discuss some music-analytical concepts geared to non-analytical (“popular”) modes of reception, and hence facilitating *multidisciplinary* approaches....’ [My italics]

A multidisciplinary approach – the ‘gathering around of two or three sciences’ – is different from interdisciplinarity. The problems here may lie in two main areas:

education/experience and production/reception. We are all products of our individual education and experience. In formulating new ideas we will draw on our existing experience and understanding to synthesise a new concept – likely to be achieved in a series of comparatively small steps. This is sometimes expressed as the educational premise; proceed from the known to the unknown. Interdisciplinarity is a new (and also a very old) concept. Most artists working in an interdisciplinary way have not been trained in an area identified as ‘interdisciplinarity’ but have come to such a state through the study of more than one established discipline and by extending the boundaries of what they consider to be their arts practice. They have, through this process, become interdisciplinary. They do not think in separate disciplines, changing from one mode to another, but themselves constitute a coherent interdisciplinary whole, taking on board and integrating many different ideas and concepts. When such a person produces work, in whatever form, whether as art object or commentary, it cannot be other than a product of that person’s experience, therefore, interdisciplinary (arguably, even if some specific output is located within a specific discipline, since the awareness will still be interdisciplinary). When it comes to observing, describing, understanding or critiquing this output, the recipient will, of course, draw on personal experience which is unlikely to match that of the producer. More importantly, any dialogue around the work will take place within the established concepts and terminology of existing disciplines since we have not yet developed the interdisciplinary language to match the new area. The producer is thus required to explain or defend work in relation to the disciplines across which it lies, possibly being condemned by all as inadequate in each discipline. The producer’s interdisciplinary output becomes the receiver’s multidisciplinary critique, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the producer to maintain a coherent concept in any subsequent debate. It may be that I can claim to have achieved an interdisciplinary approach if I am able to present research which satisfies the critical requirements and fundamental concepts of each of the disciplines involved, not avoiding areas of debate by

taking refuge in another discipline, but presenting material which extends the debate to an extent where it can be called interdisciplinary.

Björnberg (1998) presents a similar argument around the function and nature of music analysis to that outlined above, observing that the academic disputes around the relevance of musical analysis revolves largely around a lack of clarity about the subject and point of the analysis:

‘... the terminology and concepts of most musical analysis, regardless of the musical style or genre analysed, displays a strong bias towards the *production* of music rather than its *reception*.’

Cook (1990) expresses a similar idea:

‘A composition, then, exists on two quite distinct, and sometimes apparently unrelated, levels: the level of production and the level of reception.’ (p.215)

Some of my work, such as the article dealing with the music of *Neporo*, is an attempt at musical analysis of the construction, techniques and understandings evidenced in the sonic artefact. This is done in the full recognition that the techniques employed (for example, semiotic analysis), are problematic even in relation to those musical genres which led to their conception. Semiotic analysis seems to be most useful as a process towards understanding for the analyst, and least insightful as a statement of decisions made for the subsequent reader. The analyst can consider each diachronic moment in relation to a number of synchronic paradigms, considering multiple relationships in developing a concept of the musical construction. The reader receives only the result of these deliberations, usually expressing what the analyst perceives as the strongest relationships with little of the sense of internal dialogue.

If Björnberg is correct about the bias of analysis towards production, and I think he is, then my application of analytic techniques to *Neporo* is even more problematic in that the producers of this music would share few if any of my concepts of musical construction,

at least as exist in western abstracted theory. My awareness of this, combined with the statement that *Neporo* is 'always the same' is what prompted me to try to extend my research to identify musical concepts which the performers of *Neporo* may make explicit through their music whilst not expressing them verbally. In this way, my work might be seen to have something in common with Hans Keller's concept of 'functional analysis', where the most useful medium of communication for ideas about music, is music (see, for example, Keller, 1986, p.15). For me, the application of analytic techniques to something like *Neporo*, where the analysis is as much about reception as production, is problematic, but justifiable if it enables some additional insights into the musical substance. The application of techniques is also justifiable on the basis that I am aware that the insight offered is only partial and hedged around with many critical caveats which must be communicated to the intended reader – returning us again to a concern for communication and an inevitable sense of my role as mediator.

In order to fulfil my role as mediator as well as possible I must be well informed about existing research relating to my work. There is an increasing quantity of general literature around the discipline of ethnomusicology, outlining techniques and approaches and exemplifying these through case studies, with Myers (1992 and 1993) being the most recent. Whilst it can be argued that our general understanding of the issues, problems and methodology for the study of the music of other people has improved in the latter part of this century, there are still many problems in the more general mapping of music. There is an observable change in the way that the views, opinions and understandings of the people who are the subject of any study are reported, and the ethnomusicologist appears rather less as the 'expert'. This has resulted in a number of studies which are, for example, collaborations between a western musicologist and an indigenous musician, for example, Locke (1990). Although these specific studies, often concentrating on only one form of music in a particular location, are informative and useful, we still have the need and desire to make more general observations about the music of a region, its

relationships with and differences from other music. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa it appears that such generalisations are difficult and possibly problematic. Waterman (1993) expresses the problem clearly:

‘The ethnomusicological literature on sub-Saharan Africa – a variegated land mass inhabited by more than 500 million people speaking over 800 languages – presents a fundamental dual image: on the one hand, a “relatively compact musical area” (Nettl, 1986, p.17) characterised by a high degree of stylistic cohesion (Jones, 1959; Lomax, 1970); and, on the other, a “vast area within which substantial [musical] diversity occurs” (Merriam, 1977, p.244). The notion that African music forms “an indivisible whole” (Jones, 1959, p.200) despite evidence of variation within and between localized traditions, is historically grounded in European conceptions of sub-Saharan Africa as a unified geographic-ethnological entity. Senior Africanist scholars have, in the last two decades, become increasingly ambivalent about generalizing at the level of the entire subcontinent.... Kwabena Nketia’s cautious characterization of African music as “a network of distinct yet related traditions which overlap in certain aspects of style, practice or usage” probably indicates the current limits of reasonable generalization (1975 [not 1974 as in the original], p.4).

Generalisations continue to be a problem in all aspects of the study of African music. In the case of my study of drumming, my instructor, Johnson Kemeh, is an *Ewe* master drummer who is the senior instructor at the International Centre for African Music and Dance, University of Ghana (directed by Prof. J.H.K Nketia). I have learnt a number of specific pieces of music/dance, some of them *Ewe*, and others from various non-*Ewe* regions of Ghana. He has learnt the non-*Ewe* pieces from local musicians. In the course of his work, he has then also developed his own choreography, possibly changing or adding rhythm patterns of his own in the process. In any case, the pieces of *Ewe* drumming which I have learnt are the versions which comes from his home village, Dzodze. These versions will have various subtle but distinct differences from the same pieces in other

villages in the region. There is no single correct version and, without a much more detailed study, I could not distinguish for any one piece the principle characteristics that would be recognised throughout the region. Johnson is happy that I have learnt well what he has taught me. He has told me that there is only one other white person he knows of who has learnt the difficult *Ewe* pieces such as *Ageshé*, and he has even recorded me playing to show to other people that it is possible for a European or American to learn this. However, I still only know what he has taught me and I cannot engage with the finer points of mastery, for example, playing linguistic phrases for communication on the drums. This is partly to do with language issues, to which I will return later. Therefore, my knowledge is in some senses very specific (in that I play one version of a particular piece), but it is also a generalisation (in that my version, for me, stands for the entire corpus of regional variants of that piece). The nature of my knowledge in comparison with indigenous people is also an interesting area – see, for example, the short article printed in *Music Teacher* (1997). Of course, there are parallels in musical practice to be observed, and in my two articles for *Composing the Music of Africa* I have tried to abstract and present particular techniques of construction. These techniques may be observed in a fair number of drumming and xylophone pieces across the relevant areas, but the converse is not true, so the music does not have to possess these attributes in order to qualify as African, *Ewe*, *Dagara* or whatever.

In the north of Ghana, where I have been researching around the area of Nandom and Lambussie (Lambussie and Nandom are only 5km apart), it has taken me some time to understand the complexities and variety of music across the region. When I began to study the *gyil* in 1989 I could find only four pieces of research which might be relevant. Larry Godsey's study of *Birifor* funeral music (Godsey, 1980) is of people from the same *Lo-Dagaa* group as live in Nandom, but this is a very general grouping of peoples who share a language group (not even a common language). Godsey's study was conducted around Sawla, more than 200km south of Nandom, and the subject is funeral music,

whereas I wanted to study recreational music. Mary Seavoy's detailed and excellent study of *Sisaala* music (Seavoy, 1982) was based mainly in Tumu, some 200km east from Lambussie. Seavoy visited Lambussie briefly but my research in Lambussie has shown some significant differences in musical nomenclature and practice between Tumu and Lambussie (see the article in *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 1998). Thus Roger Blench's criticism of my Lambussie CD (Blench, 1999) is misguided:

'There is a useful dictionary of the Sisaala language which describes musical terminology in some detail, though it would have been helpful to adopt its transcription conventions in the booklet-notes.'

There is indeed a useful list of Sisaala musical terminology in the dictionary (Blass, 1975; pp.196-211) but this was contributed by Seavoy based on her work in Tumu, and the linguistic variations across the region are significant. Given the number and complexity of the many Ghanaian languages, I made a conscious decision to use local informants for language translation. This is partly because I would otherwise have needed to learn at least four different languages (*Ewe, Twi, Dagaare, Sisaali*), but also because subtleties of meaning in translation are often only apparent to local people, as in this *Dagaare* song from Nandom:

Dagaare: Pɔgle kulsir a yir viel o yel ke naalo na

Literal Translation: A girl marry the house good she says it is rich

Meaning: The girl has married into a good house and now she is saying she is rich. A warning to people that wealth may be acquired or given by God, but you should not boast that it is yours.

Having defended my present position, I would agree without hesitation that learning the relevant languages would be a further useful research tool. It is already the case that, although a great deal of material is published in English, and English is also the national language of Ghana, I also need to read French to access additional research from the Dagara area of Burkina Faso (see Hébert, 1976).

The other two pieces of published research are more specific to the Nandom area, Atta Annan Mensah's paper (1967) about xylophone polyphony, and Strumpf's short booklet on the xylophone music (1975). My first publication, *Xylophone music from Ghana* (1992) added little in knowledge to these publications but widened the repertoire of transcriptions, added more details of the construction of the instruments, and made available a good quality recording for the first time. In continuing my research, I have found that I have needed not only to build on this research into the music, but to develop a wider enquiry that will enable me to ask, and possibly answer, more of the appropriate questions. The music of *bewaa* cannot be studied separately from the dance as the two totally integrated, there is virtually nothing written about *bewaa* from a dance perspective. The words of the songs and the whole development of *bewaa* cannot be understood without researching local history – I am fortunate that there is a German anthropologist, Carola Lentz, who is also making a study in the Nandom area and whose work I have been able to draw on (Lentz 1993, 1994) in addition to local informants.

I need also to be aware of issues and general stylistic features in African music. An example was in my recent article about *Neporo*. There is a section where the pitch can take one of two lines, a fourth apart, but otherwise using the same rhythm and relationship between successive notes. Is this an example of harmonic equivalence and part of a system of equivalence such as that observed by Blacking (1967) among the Venda, Kenichi (1998) among the Luvale, or Cooke (1994) in southern Uganda. I decided that the usage in *Neporo* was different in nature and had different antecedents, but in order to make this judgement, I must know the other work well also. There is always an increasing corpus of research to keep up to date with.

What I have submitted for the award of this degree is evidence of a sustained engagement with a coherent area of research. It shows evidence of both increasing depth of understanding and greater breadth of enquiry as I have realised that, in order to be able to answer questions, I will need more knowledge of other factors which may be of significance. Of course, what I have submitted is far from the end of the process. I am currently working on a much more detailed study of the stylistic features of *bewaa* and an analysis of the range of performance styles between different players in the villages around Nandom. I also want to extend the work I have done in looking at the processes of cultural transmission and the effect of formal education. When I began my research, Nandom had no tarmac roads, no telephone and no mains electricity or water. As of 1999, there is a microwave telephone in the town and piped water to some of the houses. The road and electricity are gradually progressing northwards. The town in 1994-5 was lit at night only by paraffin lamps and was full of people talking to each other, occasionally singing and dancing. There were some cassette players, but used sparingly owing to the cost of batteries. The women met, probably twice a day, as they walked to fetch water. What will be the effect of increased communications, access to recorded music, ease of mobility, and less need to mix communally outside the house? Some people, like the chief, are quite aware of the negative possibilities as well as the benefits for the people. How will this culture evolve? What music will they use or need?

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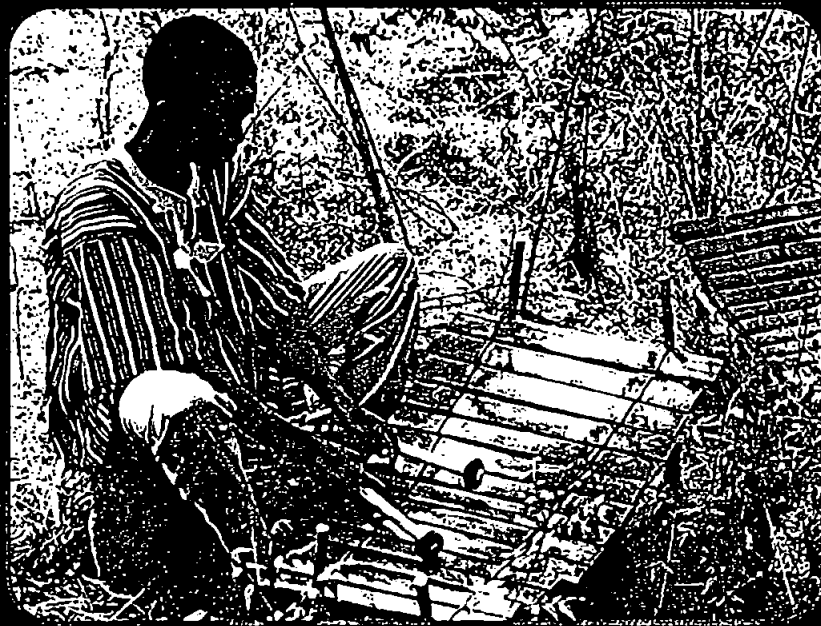
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XYLOPHONE MUSIC

FROM GHANA



Trevor Wiggins

Joseph Kobom

Xylophone Music from Ghana

**Trevor Wiggins
and
Joseph Kobom**

*White Cliffs Media Company
Crown Point, IN*

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Transcriptions of Xylophone Music

The transcriptions show what was taught by Joseph Kobom. The basic patterns have a number of fairly standard variations which may differ in detail between performances.

Chapter One

Introduction

The xylophone (*gyil*) in Ghana is played mainly in the Upper West region of the country by people speaking the Dagaare and Sisaala languages, whose territory also extends into Burkina Faso.

The information and music presented in this book was provided by Joseph Kobom who learned to play the xylophone in his home town of Nandom in Northern Ghana, and who is now an instructor at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana. The xylophone and its music have become widely known throughout Ghana, partly as a result of a short extract of xylophone music played by Joseph Kobom being used as the signature tune for Ghana Television. As a result, Joseph, who now lives in the Nima area of Accra, is much in demand to play at hotels where he may share the bill with a highlife (African hybrid dance music) band.

In some areas the instrument is considered to be sacred and is played only for funerals. However in the Wa district the xylophone is not played for funerals and in the central (Jirapa) area xylophones are frequently used for all kinds of musical occasions. The most common type of recreational music used for dancing is called "Bawa" and is usually an elaboration of a song tune. Funeral music is frequently referred to as "Lobi" xylophone music and is played to announce a death. Music may also be played to encourage mourning at a funeral, and the xylophone is also used for some cult dances.

Xylophone players each have their own individual style which they gradually develop by imitating and adapting the music of other players. Experienced players have their own individual "signature tune" which they have composed and with which they introduce their performances. A master xylophonist is able to improvise on anything he hears and will be imitated in turn. The styles of great players can be recognised instantly, mainly by the strength and style of their left hand. Sometimes players will reverse the xylophone, performing with the lower notes to the right — a practice involving some risk and needing strong spiritual protection. Joseph Kobom suggests that this style has been learned from players in the neighboring country of Burkina Faso.



Joseph Kobom

Joseph Kobom

Joseph Kobom narrates how his wish to play the xylophone was apparent from an early age. As a baby he clenched his fists as though playing the xylophone so small beaters were soon put into his hands. He learned to play in the traditional way by imitating other performers rather than having formal instruction. Practice is sometimes done using a pit xylophone, in which the bars are strung together as usual, but suspended on a grass frame over an earth pit which acts as a resonator. The xylophone can be played as a solo instrument, but is also frequently played as a duet with the less experienced player taking a lower supporting part. Playing the xylophone is considered to be a dangerous undertaking spiritually, so the first money that is earned by a young player is used to prepare appropriate defenses or charms, some of which are suspended beneath the third lowest bar of the instrument.

Traditions and Legends

There are a number of traditions associated with the xylophone. In Ghana it is played only by men. In playing the xylophone the player's left hand is very important as it generally acts as a steady timekeeper for the improvisations and syncopations of the right hand. To threaten to injure the player's left hand is therefore extremely serious. Players will also strengthen their left hand by using it for actions normally done only by the right hand, such as eating food. The Dagaare people have a legend telling how they acquired the xylophone:

A man was walking in the bush when he heard a fairy playing the xylophone. He was so fascinated by the music that he went home and called his friends to make preparations to go and catch the fairy. He knew it would be difficult as the fairy could only be controlled by people with special powers, not just ordinary men. The man went back into the bush with his friends and because he was so brave and strong he was able to capture the fairy. He then threatened to kill the fairy unless it showed him everything about making and playing a xylophone. The fairy told him he must first make a strong medicine using certain leaves. Next he must collect certain sticks, break them, then carve them (to make the bars). He must also find a special long calabash which grew by the river, cut it and put it into water until the inside rotted, then hollow it out (to make the resonators). The man did everything he was told and gradually he learned all the secrets of making and playing a xylophone. The man then took an axe and killed the fairy and built a fire to roast the meat which he ate with his friends. When they took the xylophone home and started playing it the women were completely mystified by the music until the men told them to dance to it. But in spite of roasting the fairy, its blood remained part of the instrument, so the xylophone cannot be played by women because they menstruate and their blood would not mix with that of the fairy.

If a woman were to play the xylophone, according to Dagaare myth, she would become unable to bear children. This legend illustrates well how closely connected are music, myth and social organisation within a culture.

Learning to Play the Xylophone

I have been a lecturer at Bretton Hall College in West Yorkshire, England and I currently teach at Dartington College of the Arts in Devon, England. My long-standing interest in African music led to an exchange program with the University of Ghana. During a full program of teaching and studying, I received lessons in the playing of the traditional Ghanaian xylophone (*gyil*) from Joseph Kobom.

Ghanaians are proud of their xylophones and pleased when other people make a good attempt to play the music. I once sat playing at the side of a road in Accra for 30 minutes while waiting for a lift and received almost non-stop cheering and clapping from passing minibuses! In modern settings outside of Ghana, xylophone music may be played and enjoyed by all, men and women alike. I hope this book will help you, the reader, to appreciate and perform this enjoyable and engaging music from an African culture.

Chapter Two

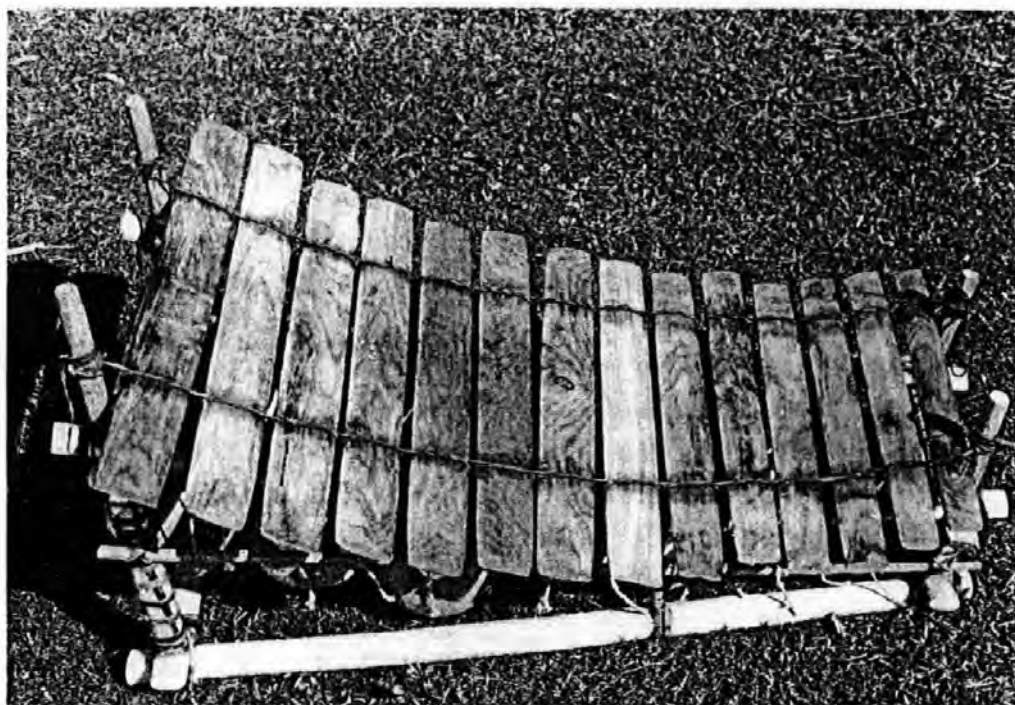
Building a Xylophone

Building a xylophone is a specialized undertaking and players do not normally make their own instruments, although the maker will usually be a very competent player.

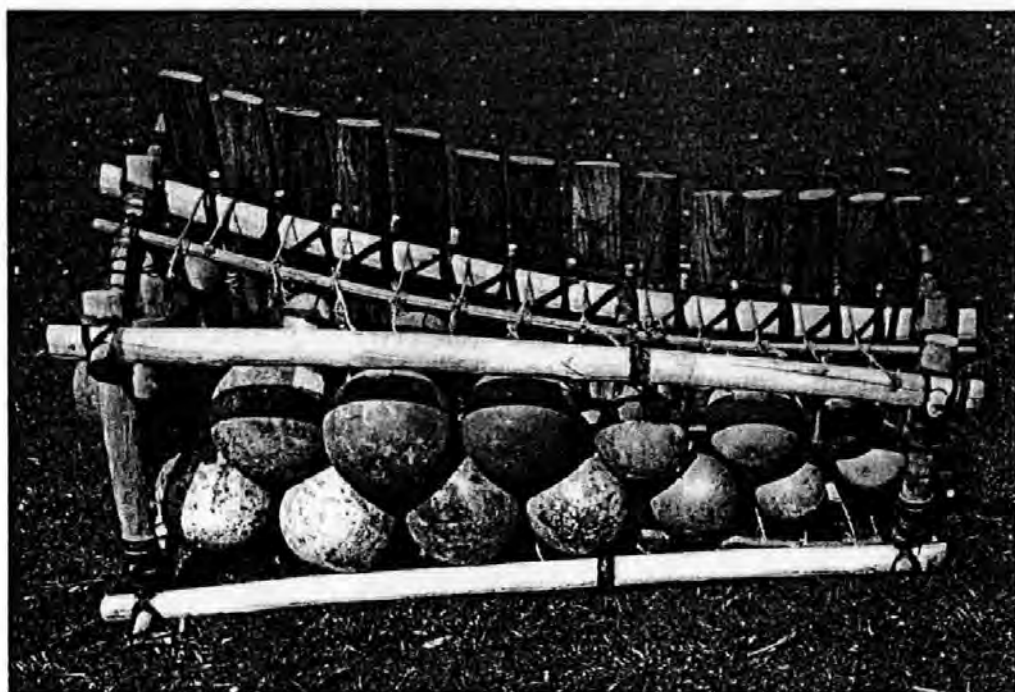
A xylophone builder will need a good understanding of practical acoustics and woodworking. One builder I interviewed told me the methods used include firing the wood for the bars and shaping, tempering and boosting up the sound quality of the bars. This process ensures the uniform vibration of the keys, adjusts the resonating frequency of the gourds, and enriches the tone of the instrument by adjusting the “singing” of the spider’s membranes covering the holes in the gourds.

The tree from which the bars are traditionally made (usually a type of mahogany) is thought to be spiritually dangerous, requiring a black hen to be sacrificed and a prayer to be said a few days before the tree is felled. Sometimes the tree roots are cut and the tree is left until it falls. The wood should be left for some 6–7 years to dry out and become seasoned. A different wood is used for the frame of the instrument; less hard and more flexible, it is frequently found near rivers and is not considered to have the same power as the tree for the bars.

Once the wood has seasoned, the bars are roughly cut to size, then suspended over a pit for tuning. This is done in the same way as for all instruments with bars, removing wood from the back of the center of the bar to lower the pitch, and from the underside of the ends to raise it. For a 14-bar xylophone, they range in size from about 61cm long by 7cm wide for the lowest bar, to 44cm long by 4cm wide for the highest. The scale it is tuned to is anhemipentatonic, that is, it has five notes to the “octave” with no semitones, and does not fit into western tempered tuning. The relative tuning has a tendency towards equalizing the intervals compared with the western pentatonic scale, thus the “whole tones” tend to be larger, while the “minor thirds” are smaller. This means that there is often no specific pitch at which a



Relative size and graduation of xylophone bars.



Resonating gourds with spider's egg case to provide buzz.

piece of music must be begun; the performer will decide where to start after playing a few notes to test the pitch of a new instrument, although music will generally be played at the same pitch on a known instrument.

There are different sizes of xylophone, some having 12 bars, others 14 or sometimes 17, as well as some bass versions of the instrument. There is not an absolute standard of pitch for xylophones, but the relative tuning of the bars is consistent. Most makers will set the pitch of an instrument either from aural memory, or by reference to a known xylophone. In fact the absolute pitch, at least for 14 bar xylophones, seems to be remarkably consistent with the pitch used by Joseph Kobom. Kobom's instrument matches very closely the pitch of a xylophone which I bought independently. Resonating gourds with spider's egg cases are added to provide "buzz."

When the bars have been selected and tuned to the appropriate pitches they are tied together with a thin "string" of antelope hide which has been dried and softened, usually with shea butter (a fat extracted from shea nuts). The bars and string must be treated with shea butter from time to time to stop them from drying out or cracking.

A number of gourds are now tested to find those which resonate the pitched bars the best. The gourds vary considerably in size, ranging from about 7cm to 15cm in maximum diameter, the smaller ones being roughly spherical, while the larger are more bottle shaped, with the bottom part much larger than the top. These then have usually two holes of approximately 15mm diameter drilled in them at the fullest part of the gourd which will later be covered with spider's egg case to provide the characteristic buzz of the instrument. The egg cases are often found in houses, usually in the kitchen, and have a texture not unlike cigarette paper, but considerably stronger. They are stuck over the holes in the gourds (frequently with saliva), and must be slightly slack if they are to buzz well. According to Joseph Kobom, not every bar should buzz loudly, otherwise there is the risk that the tone of the instrument will be obscured.

The xylophone frame is quite light in construction and is held together with strips of cowhide, often with other hide strips used for decoration. The dimensions of the frame match the changing size of the bars, varying from 34cm to 24cm in width, the length being 96cm. The key-bed is cushioned with hide and slopes downward in a curve from the lowest bar to the highest,

being about 40cm high at the lowest bar, and 18cm at the highest. In performance the strings supporting the bars are generally pulled quite tight so that the bars are lifted almost clear of the key-bed to improve the resonance. The gourds are suspended beneath the bars in two rows, resonating alternate notes, in order to accommodate their size within the frame.

The wood for the beaters is about 30cm long and some 2–3cm in diameter. Traditionally the heads are made from thin strips of latex wound round the end and held together with glue to a diameter of 4–5cm. The modern version has a circle cut from car tire as the head, and is more durable, as the glue on the traditional beaters tends to soften and become sticky when the temperature rises.

Traditionally made xylophones can difficult to procure but may be worth the effort for those dedicated to the instrument. Modern xylophones may be substituted to good effect, especially those which are tuned to a pentatonic scale.

Chapter Three

Performance

The player sits on a low stool, or anything else convenient such as a block of wood or stone, with the lowest bars to the player's left, although as was mentioned earlier, they are sometimes reversed.

The beaters are held between the first and second fingers of each hand. This can be uncomfortable at first given the size of the sticks, and the professional player will develop considerable calluses on these two fingers. This grip, however, holds the beaters extremely firm in a straight line with the arm and helps to achieve the accuracy and force needed with such large and quite weighty beaters. The weight of the beaters means that the player needs to develop great strength in the wrists as the bars are hit with considerable force when playing loudly.

Xylophones can be played as solo instruments, but are also frequently played in pairs. When played as a pair the two instruments should be tuned the same, but one, the "female" instrument played by the leader, should have a slightly sharper tone than the "male" instrument of the accompanying player. The two players sit facing each other a short distance apart. The leader will decide which pieces are to be played and will begin to play the basic pattern, the other player then joining with a more repetitive accompanying figure. An example of a typical accompaniment figure can be seen in the "Bass part" of the transcription of *Tomeyielu*.

The start of a performance of each piece of music, or section within a particular style, tends to be fairly standard, partly so that it can be identified by other performers and the song established in the case of recreational music. There are also a number of stock rhythmic and melodic figurations which function as a pattern for further elaboration and improvisation by the skilled performer. The order of the variations and the length of the piece depends on the performer and the occasion — a return to the style of the beginning is



Playing position.



Holding the beaters.

frequently a signal that the piece is about to end. Most of the variation is in the right hand part while the left hand keeps an ostinato pattern, but it is the mark of an expert player to be able to combine this with more difficult interlocking or imitative variations in the left hand part as can be seen in *Kolaperbir*. The accompanying player is allowed some license in varying the pattern in response to the leader, but is expected to enhance rather than obscure the leader's playing! The leader can also introduce variations of dynamics which must be followed, and may link directly into another piece without stopping.

Performances often take place out of doors; with its "built-in" resonance from the gourds the instrument does not really benefit from the added reverberation of a building. The sound of the instrument carries well and can frequently be heard during the evening in Nima, mingled with the smell of wood or charcoal burners from street food sellers, as local xylophone makers play for their own pleasure.

Before commencing any pieces the player will test the sound and pitch of the instrument in order to establish its range, and which note will be used as the "tonic." This often involves playing a pattern of alternate notes from low to high and back (1-3-2-4-3-5 etc.) followed by a pattern of octaves. Players seem to remember the physical pattern of the notes rather than the pitches, and will decide to start a piece beginning on a different note on different instruments. The ease with which they do this is more remarkable considering that there are no convenient marks on the bars, or a pattern of black and white notes as an aid to location. With my Western training I found this difficult as I remembered the pieces by pitch rather than pattern. To Western ears, starting on a different note may give the same piece of music quite a different sound even though the pattern of notes is the same. While playing a performer will also usually sing if playing a recreational piece, sometimes altering the words of a song to praise listeners or friends in an appropriate manner, or make nasal/throaty noises as an aid to concentration or to express feeling.

Chapter Four

Using Ghanaian Pentatonic Xylophone Music in Education

With good reason, there is a great deal of pentatonic music used in music education. There is also considerable interest in the contribution that world musics are able to make to a broad based view of music in education, widening pupils' musical and and social horizons.

Xylophone Music from Ghana has all the advantages of being pentatonic in pitch, but its use of rhythm is in a style unfamiliar to most children. Children make the most sense of unfamiliar music when they are able to play it, or produce similar sounds themselves, which then help them to make more sense of the "authentic" performances they hear. I personally find this music very attractive to listen to, but even more fun to play, and I have had the same sentiments expressed by a number of friends and colleagues.

It is possible, with some loss of character, to play all these pieces on conventional western instruments. In the case of school instruments some adaptation may be necessary as many educational xylophones have a range of only 1½ octaves C-G. The left and right hand parts of most pieces could be split to make two separate interlocking parts which would recreate the music quite well if the left hand part was allocated to an instrument pitched an octave lower than the right hand part, and the limited compass would generally be adequate for each part.

The structure of the pieces is such that once the basic pattern is learned, there is scope and stimulation for creative variations by pupils. In a piece such as *Bobodgilaso tingnebanena* the first and third bars use the same three notes in each part: simple variations might use these in any order while retaining the quarter note pulse, then begin to experiment with adding rhythmic variation as can be seen and heard in the actual piece. *Kpanlogo* could begin as a game on one xylophone where one pupil plays the lower ostinato part and the other explores the effect of playing different notes in the gaps (before being taught the piece at all), thus extending creative as well as rhythmic ability. In any case, I would consider that there are strong argu-

ments for teaching this music, and certainly the basic patterns, aurally in the first instance. This is the traditional way it would be taught in Ghana, and was the way I was taught by Joseph Kobom. It meant that I learned the music first, then considered how to write it in order to help me remember a number of pieces in a short time.

With some younger or less able pupils, the basic patterns may be quite difficult, so I have written out three pieces (*Derkpee*, *Kpanlogo*, *Tomeyielu*) in simplified versions in both regular music notation and in TUBS notation (see below). These gradually introduce the complexities of the original piece in a controlled way. Any music teacher could doubtless adapt the other pieces presented in the next chapter in the same way, suiting them to the ability of the pupils they teach. Most of the pieces, if they are played as two separate parts, have an upper part which is more complex rhythmically and technically than the lower part, and can thus accommodate differing abilities. In a number of pieces the basic patterns could also be played with pupils taking alternate bars e.g. *Kolaperbir*, *Kpanlogo*, then introducing variations within just one bar. For anyone familiar with Ghanaian traditional music, the xylophone pieces can also be combined with drum and bell timekeeping patterns, [How is the reader supposed to know these? There are many different bell patterns. Which one goes with which piece? — LWS] or you can use your imagination and develop the cross-rhythms already present in almost every piece.

TUBS

Following the staff notation the same pieces are presented in the same order using TUBS (Time Unit Box System) notation. The name is probably more difficult than the actual notation which is probably easier to work out than staff notation if you are not a fluent reader of music. It is also better than staff notation in many ways for this music: it does not specify precise Western pitches, nor make an arbitrary decision about whether a note should be written as a short note plus a rest, or a longer note (unless you stop the sound, when you hit a xylophone bar it dies away at the same rate), and there are no bar-lines to divide the music into possibly inappropriate chunks or suggest an accent where none should be. TUBS notation works by starting with a very fast pulse, equal to the speed of the shortest note. A note to be played

can then be indicated using a letter or number, with a dot to show when nothing is to be played on that pulse. As an example, the first part of the tune for "My country 'tis of thee" might look like this:

C	.	C	.	D	.	B	.	.	C	D	.	E	.	E	.	F	.	E	.	.	D	C	.	D	.	C	.	B	.	C	.
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

In the case of the xylophone music, the TUBS notation uses the numbers 1 – 5 to indicate different bars of the pentatonic scale. Like the Ghanaian players, you could decide for yourself which bar you will call "1." The staff notation uses 1 = C, 2 = D, 3 = E, 4 = G, 5 = A, but I have used numbers rather than letters because the pitches of the Ghanaian instrument do not coincide exactly with the western notes. A line above the number is then used to indicate the upper octave and a line below, the lower, so the full range of the instrument is as follows, although the top two notes are not used in any transcription:

2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 $\overline{1}$ $\overline{2}$ $\overline{3}$ $\overline{4}$ $\overline{5}$

Crosses are used to indicate a rhythm played with the wooden handle of the xylophone beater on the top bar of the instrument.

In notating xylophone music with two parts TUBS notation assigns the top line to the upper (right hand) part. The sign :| means that a section can be repeated as often as required. This applies to most sections, but occasionally there is a link section between two parts of a piece which should not be repeated and this has only the line | at the end.

Simple Derkpee

1 Xylophone

Measures 1-5 of the piece. The music is written for xylophone in 3/4 time. The melody in the right hand consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The accompaniment in the left hand consists of quarter notes: E3, F3, G3, A3, G3, F3, E3. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 5.

6

Measures 6-10. The melody continues: F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The accompaniment continues: D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 10.

11

Measures 11-15. The melody continues: F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The accompaniment continues: D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 15.

16

Measures 16-20. The melody continues: F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The accompaniment continues: D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Simple Kpanlogo

1 Xylophone

The musical score is written for a xylophone in 4/4 time. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. Measure numbers 1, 6, 11, 16, and 21 are placed at the beginning of their respective systems. The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 24.

6

11

16

21

Simple Tomeyielu

1 Xylophone

Measures 1-4 of the piece. The xylophone part (treble clef) starts with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) consists of a steady eighth-note pattern: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

5

Measures 5-8. The xylophone part continues with a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F5, and a quarter note G5. The piano accompaniment remains the same eighth-note pattern.

9

Measures 9-12. The xylophone part has a half note G5, a quarter note F5, a quarter note E5, and a quarter note D5. The piano accompaniment remains the same eighth-note pattern.

13

Measures 13-16. The xylophone part has a half note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment remains the same eighth-note pattern.

18 • Xylophone Music from Ghana

17



21



25



29



SIMPLE DERKPÉE

.	1̄	.	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	4	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	:	
4	.	.	.	3	.	3	.	3	3	3	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	4	.	4	4	4	.	:	

.	1̄	1̄	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	.	5	5	.	4	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	:	
4	.	.	.	3	.	3	.	3	3	3	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	4	.	4	4	4	.	:	

.	1̄	1̄	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	.	5	5	.	4	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	:	
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4	.	.	3	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	:	

SIMPLE KPANLOGO

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SIMPLE TOMEYIELU

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2	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	1	.	3

.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{2}$.	4	.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{1}$	4	.	4	.	:	
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Chapter Five

Transcriptions of Xylophone Music

In making these transcriptions I have had to make a number of decisions regarding the presentation and the degree of accuracy I try to show. These decisions, and the reasons for them, are set out below.

The transcriptions show what I was taught by Joseph Kobom, but they are not precise bar-by-bar transcriptions of any specific performance. No two performances of a piece are ever the same. The basic pattern has a number of fairly standard variations but these may differ in detail between performances. The different variations may also be played in almost any order and repeated the number of times that the performer wishes. These variations, and the basic pattern have been printed with repeat signs at either end of the unit. In some pieces there is a "bridge" section which links from one part of the piece to another; these are played only once between each section and have been written without repeat signs. A piece can be ended at any point, often, as on the tape, by getting as quiet as possible, then just stopping.

Since the pitch of xylophones is not totally fixed and a performer may choose to start a piece on a different note which is adopted as the "tonic," the pieces have all been written out with C as tonic. The pitches used correspond to the western pentatonic scale, and should not be taken as an accurate indication of the actual pitch on the *gyil*, although I consider that they do represent the nearest available note in the western system. I decided to use western staff notation rather than any other because it is so familiar to musicians and music educators, and the learning of another system other than that and TUBS might take some time and be rather a negative stimulus to exploring this unfamiliar music.

On some occasions the notated rhythm is slightly inaccurate (such as bar 2 of *Ya ya kole zeke*, where the left hand quarter note/eighth note motif should probably be notated as triplet half note/quarter note) but I con-

sidered that this would be much more complex to read, and also Joseph Kobom, when teaching the piece at a slow tempo, would play it as written, the "inaccuracy" occurring when it was played at speed. Notes are given different durations mainly for convenience of reading; they will all sound the same length except when the same note is played twice in rapid succession. Bar lines and time signatures are fairly arbitrary and are for convenience of reading rather than an accurate indication of stress and meter. All the pieces notated in 3/4 time can also be felt in 6/8. In order to keep the notation as simple as possible, most of the pieces have been written in quarter notes and eighth notes using a very fast pulse, usually 230-250 quarter note beats per minute. In *Tomeyielu* and *Kpawma pogmole ben Tuoper* slash note-heads on the middle line indicates the playing of the top bar with the handle of the beater. Following the staff notation the same pieces are presented in the same order using TUBS notation.

The transcriptions are as follows:

Derkpee

Funeral music "for brave warriors" from the Dagaare area.

Kolaperbir

"Cat and Mouse" — a recreational piece. Legend has it that the cat and mouse could never agree, so departed for separate parts of the forest. The mouse found somewhere with plenty of water and good food and prospered, but the cat found neither and became thin and weak. One day the cat was lying asleep under a tree. Its mouth was wide open from thirst and was full of flies. The mouse crept in unnoticed and bit the cat, the wound festered and the cat died. The moral is never to pick on someone who is smaller or weaker than you — they may be stronger than you think! The two parts of the music chase each other round like the cat and the mouse, especially in the last variation.

Tomeyielu

A work song "for building houses."

Kurkurgambieyima

"Man has gone out" — another funeral piece.

Kpawma pogmole ben Tuoper

"You can get beautiful girls in Tuoper market" — a traditional tune, much played by male xylophone players, extolling the virtues of the girls that can be found in Tuoper market.

Bobodgilaso tingnebanena

Recreational music using highlife rhythms. It dates from the internal wars in Burkina Faso (1960's --1970's) when it was usually played in pitou (locally distilled spirit) bars.

Kpanlogo

Kpanlogo is a traditional Ghanaian drum rhythm from which Highlife is partly derived.

Highlife

Highlife is the traditional Ghanaian popular music. This is a composition by Joseph Kobom using the rhythm pattern of the music.

Sisaala Harvest Music

Also known as the Gola gi dance. Traditionally performed in the Sisaala area of northern Ghana at the conclusion of harvest.

Ya ya kole zele

"Keep on begging!" — a recreational piece addressed to a lover to encourage them to keep up their attentions in the hope that you might finally weaken.

Derkpee

1 Gyl

First system of musical notation (measures 1-5). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The bass line consists of quarter notes. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 5.

6

Second system of musical notation (measures 6-10). The melody continues in the treble clef, and the bass line continues in the bass clef. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 10.

11

Third system of musical notation (measures 11-15). The melody continues in the treble clef, and the bass line continues in the bass clef. A repeat sign is at the end of measure 15.

16

Fourth system of musical notation (measures 16-20). The melody continues in the treble clef, and the bass line continues in the bass clef. The system ends with a double bar line.

Kolaperbir



17



21



Tomeyielu

1 Gyl

5

9

13

Bass Part

17



21



25



29



Both Parts Combined

33



37



41



45



Kurkurganbieyima

1 Gyl



6



11



16



21



Kpawma Pogmole Ben Tuoper

1 Gyl

4

7

10

13

The musical score is written for a xylophone in 4/4 time. It consists of five systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, while the bass clef provides a steady accompaniment. Measure 1 is marked with a '1' and the word 'Gyl'. Measure 4 is marked with a '4', measure 7 with a '7', measure 10 with a '10', and measure 13 with a '13'. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 13.

Bobodgilaso Tingnebanena

1 Gyl

First system of musical notation, measures 1-3. The music is in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef staff contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 1 starts with a quarter rest in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 2 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter rest in the bass. Measure 3 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass.

4

Second system of musical notation, measures 4-6. Measure 4 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 5 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 6 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. A double bar line is placed after measure 5.

7

Third system of musical notation, measures 7-9. Measure 7 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 8 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 9 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. A double bar line is placed after measure 8.

10

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 10-12. Measure 10 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 11 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass. Measure 12 has a quarter note in the treble and a quarter note in the bass.

13



16



19



22



Kpanlogo



13



17



21



Highlife

1 Gyl

First system of musical notation (measures 1-4). The piece is in 4/4 time. The melody (treble clef) starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line (bass clef) starts with a quarter note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, and A3. The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line continues with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and A3.

5

Second system of musical notation (measures 5-8). The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line continues with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and A3.

9

Third system of musical notation (measures 9-13). The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line continues with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and A3.

14

Fourth system of musical notation (measures 14-18). The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line continues with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and A3.

19 D.C.

Fifth system of musical notation (measures 19-22). The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The bass line continues with quarter notes G3, A3, B3, and A3. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Sisaala Harvest Music

1 Gyl

7 %

13

19

25



31



37



43



49



55



61



67



73



78



83



88



Ya Ya Kole Zele

1 Gyl

First system of musical notation (measures 1-4). The piece is in 4/4 time. The melody (treble clef) consists of quarter notes: G4 (half rest), A4 (half rest), B4 (half rest), C5 (half rest). The bass line (bass clef) consists of quarter notes: G3 (half rest), A3 (half rest), B3 (half rest), C4 (half rest). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

5

Second system of musical notation (measures 5-8). The melody continues with quarter notes: D4 (half rest), E4 (half rest), F#4 (half rest), G4 (half rest). The bass line continues with quarter notes: D3 (half rest), E3 (half rest), F#3 (half rest), G3 (half rest). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

9

Third system of musical notation (measures 9-12). The melody continues with quarter notes: A4 (half rest), B4 (half rest), C5 (half rest), D5 (half rest). The bass line continues with quarter notes: A3 (half rest), B3 (half rest), C4 (half rest), D4 (half rest). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

13

Fourth system of musical notation (measures 13-16). The melody continues with quarter notes: E4 (half rest), F#4 (half rest), G4 (half rest), A4 (half rest). The bass line continues with quarter notes: E3 (half rest), F#3 (half rest), G3 (half rest), A3 (half rest). The key signature has one sharp (F#).

17



21



25



29



DERKPEE

.	<u>1</u>	.	.	5	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	.	5	.	.	4	.	1	.	1	.	1	.	:	!
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4	.	.	3	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	:	!

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4	.	.	3	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	:	!

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4	.	.	3	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	:	!

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4	.	.	3	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	4	.	.	4	.	.	:	!

KOLAPERBIR

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.	.	$\bar{1}$.	5	.	$\bar{1}$.	4	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{2}$.	5	$\bar{1}$:		
.	4	.	.	3	1	.	3	.	2	.	.	5	.	.	3	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	1	:	

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.	4	.	.	3	1	.	3	.	2	.	.	5	.	.	3	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	1	.	

.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{3}$	5	.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{3}$	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$.	5	.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	.	4	:			
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.	4	.	.	3	1	.	3	.	2	.	.	5	.	.	3	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	1	.	:	

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TOMEYIELU

.	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{2}$	4	.	4	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	
2	.	1	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	

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.	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{2}$	4	.	4	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	
2	.	1	.	3	.	<u>3</u>	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	<u>3</u>	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	.	.

.	.	.	.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{2}$.	4	.	4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$	$\bar{2}$.	4	.	$\bar{1}$	4	.	4	.	:	!
3	.	1	.	2	.	<u>2</u>	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	<u>2</u>	.	2	.	1	.	2	.	.	:	!

Bass part

2	.	.	1	3	.	.	3	.	.	1	2	.	.	2	.	.	1	3	.	.	3	.	.	1	3	.	.	.
.	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.

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.	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	:	!

TOMEYIELU, continued

2	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	1	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	
.	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	.	<u>2</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	.	.		

3	.	.	1	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	1	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	1	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	1	2	.	.	:	
.	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	.	.	<u>2</u>	.	.	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	.	:		

Both parts combined

2	2	.	1	3	3	.	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{2}$	4	.	4	.	2	2	.	1	3	3	.	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.
<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	1	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	1	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	.	.

3	3	.	1	2	2	.	$\bar{2}$	.	4	.	4	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	3	3	.	1	2	2	.	$\bar{2}$	.	4	.	$\bar{1}$	4	.	4	:	|
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	2	.	1	.	2	.	.	:	|

.	.	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	.	.	x	.
2	.	1	.	3	.	<u>3</u>	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	<u>3</u>	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	.	.

.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	x	:	
3	.	1	.	2	.	<u>2</u>	.	2	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	1	.	2	.	<u>2</u>	.	2	.	1	.	2	:			

KURKURGANBIEYIMA

4	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	4	2	.	.	.	.	4	5	.	5	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	:
.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	.	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	:

4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	4	5	.	1	5	.	4	5	.	5	.	.	4	:	!	
.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	.	:	!

4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	4	5	.	5	.	5	4	5	.	5	.	.	4	:	!	
.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	.	:	!

4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	5	$\bar{2}$.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	4	5	.	5	.	.	4	:	!	
.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	.	:	!

4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	5	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$	4	5	.	$\bar{1}$.	.	4	:	!	
.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	.	:	!

4	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{1}$.	.	5	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$	4	5	.	$\bar{1}$.	.	4	:	!	
.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	<u>4</u>	.	2	.	1	.	.	1	.	:	!

KPAWMA POGMOLE BEN TUOPER

.	
3	.	5	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	2	|

.	.	4	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	4	.	4	5	.	4	.	3	3	.	2	.	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	4	.	1	.	4	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	2	.	.

.	.	1	.	.	1
4	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.	

.	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	5	.	5	$\overline{1}$	.	5	.	4	4	.	3	.	.	.	.
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.

.	.	3	.	.	3	:			
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	:

.	.	4	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	4	.	4	5	.	4	.	3	3	.	2	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.

.	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	.	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	5	5	.	4	.	.	.
$\frac{4}{-}$	.	1	.	$\frac{4}{-}$	.	1	.	$\frac{4}{-}$	.	2	.	$\frac{4}{-}$	.	1	.	$\frac{4}{-}$	.	1	.	$\frac{4}{-}$	.	2	.

KPAWMA POGMOLE BEN TUOPER, continued

.	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	5	.	5	1̄	.	5	.	4	4	.	3	.	.	.	.
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.

.	.	3	.	.	2	.	.	3	.	.	2	.	.	3	.	.	2	.	.	3	.	.	2	:|
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	:|

.	.	4	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	4	.	4	5	.	4	.	3	3	.	2	.	.	.	.
<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.

.	.	4	.	.	2	.	.	4	.	.	2	.	.	4	.	.	2	.	.	4	.	.	2	.
<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.

.	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	5	.	5	1̄	.	5	.	4	4	.	3	.	.	.	.
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	.

.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	.	.	x	:|
<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>2</u>	.	:|

BOBODGILASO TINGNEBANENA

1̄	.	3̄	.	2̄	.	3̄	.	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	1̄	.	1̄	.	2̄	.	3̄	.	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	:	|	
1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

.	1	.	3	2	.	3	.	.	5	.	4	.	5	.	.	1	.	3	2	.	3	.	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	:	|		
<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	.	3	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

.	1̄	3̄	.	2̄	.	1̄	.	5	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	.	1̄	1̄	.	2̄	.	3̄	.	1̄	5	.	4	.	5	.	.	:	|	
1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

.	1̄	.	2̄	.	1̄	.	5	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	.	1̄	.	2̄	.	1̄	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	5	.	.	:	|	
1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

.	1̄	3̄	.	2̄	3̄	.	2̄	5	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	.	1̄	1̄	.	2̄	2̄	.	1̄	5	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	:	|	
1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

.	1̄	1̄	.	3̄	3̄	.	2̄	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	1̄	3̄	.	2̄	4̄	.	3̄	.	5	.	5	.	4	.	.	:	|		
1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	:	|

KPANLOGO

.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.
3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.

3	.	3	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$.	5	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$.	5	:|	
1	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	:|

3	.	3	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$	.	5
1	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.

3	.	3	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	$\bar{1}$	.	:
1	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	:

.	3	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{3}$	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$
1	.	3	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.

.	3	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$.	5	.	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{3}$.	$\bar{3}$	$\bar{2}$.	$\bar{1}$:	
1	.	3	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	:

HIGHLIFE

First part

.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	5	.	.	4	.	3	.	5	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	5	.	3	.	4	.	:|
1	.	4	.	3	.	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	:|

.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{3}$	.	5	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	4	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	5	.	3	.	4	.	:|
1	.	4	.	3	.	.	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	1	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	:|

Second part

4	.	4	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	5	.	4	2	.	3	.	3	.	3	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	4	.	
1	.	.	.	2	.	2	.	1	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	2	.	<u>4</u>	.	

4	.	4	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	5	.	4	2	.	3	.	3	.	3	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	4	$\bar{1}$	.	3	2	.	4	.	:
1	.	.	.	2	.	2	.	1	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	.	.	2	.	2	.	4	1	.	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	:

Link back to first part

4	.	4	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	5	.	4	2	.	3	.	3	.	3	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	5	.	
1	.	.	.	2	.	2	.	1	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	3	.	<u>5</u>	.	2	.	<u>5</u>	.	

.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	5	.	3	.	4	.	|																
2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	<u>4</u>	.	<u>3</u>	.	<u>5</u>	.	<u>4</u>	.	|																

SISAALA HARVEST MUSIC

Introduction

4	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	1	.	2	.	2	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	2	.	2	.	2	.	4	.	3	.	|			
4	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	5	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	4	.	1	.	|

Part 1

2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	4	.	3	.	2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	1	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	4	.	3	.	2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	1	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	1	.	3	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	5	.	2	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	1	.	:	:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	2	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	:	:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Part 2

2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	3	.	1	.	.	2	.	.	5	.	1	.	2	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	4	.	3	.	2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	1	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	4	.	3	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	3	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

2	.	.	2	.	.	2	.	5	.	2	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	1	.	:	:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	2	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	5	.	4	.	1	.	:	:	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

SISAALA HARVEST MUSIC, continued

Part 3

$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	$\bar{3}$	.	$\bar{1}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	5	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	
$\underline{5}$	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	2	.	5	.	3	.	

$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	4	.	3	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	5	.	3	.	
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	$\underline{4}$	.	1	.	$\underline{5}$	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	$\underline{3}$	.	$\underline{5}$.	

$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	4	.	3	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	
$\underline{4}$	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	$\underline{3}$	.	$\underline{5}$	.	$\underline{4}$	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	

$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{1}$.	.	
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	

$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{2}$	.	.	5	.	.	|
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	|

Part 4

$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	

$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{3}$	.	.	$\bar{1}$	.	$\bar{1}$	
4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	3	.	

$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{1}$.	$\bar{3}$.	.		
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	4	.	1	.	3	.	.	.	4	.	2	.	

$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{1}$.	.	5	.	1	.	3	.	
5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	5	.	3	.	5	.	2	.	3	.	.	.	$\underline{4}$.	$\underline{3}$.	

SISAALA HARVEST MUSIC, continued

$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	1	.	3	.	5	.	.	5	.	.	5	.	1	.	3	.	
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$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{3}$.	1	.	3	.	$\bar{3}$.	.	$\bar{2}$.	.	$\bar{1}$.	1	.	3	.	
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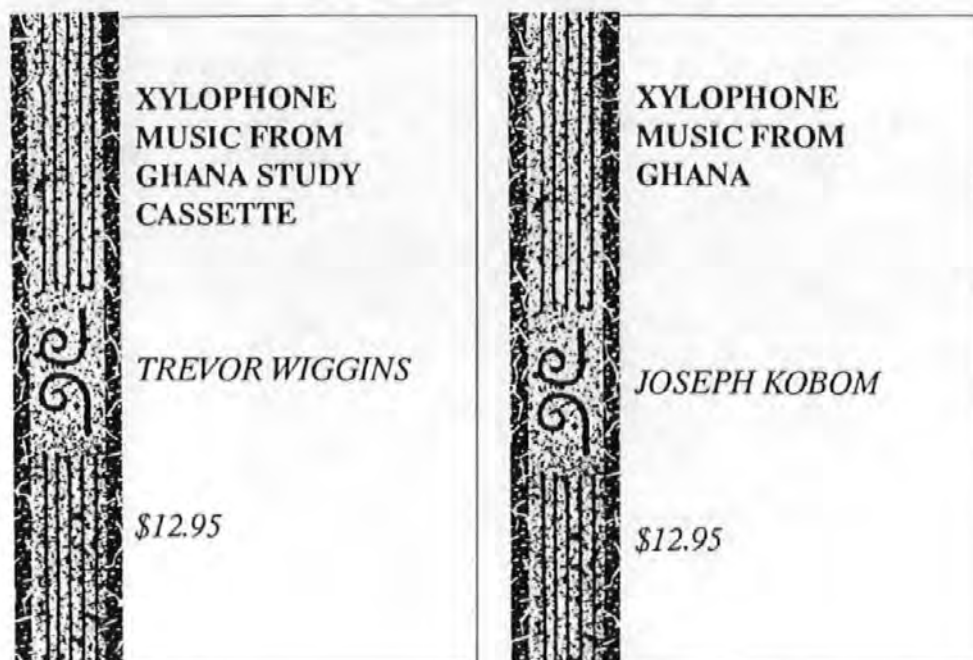
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The world of music in education

Trevor Wiggins

This article is concerned with music pedagogy, especially in relation to world music. The process of learning music varies with musical culture and is an integral part of musical style. Learning musicians bring training and concepts from their own musical background, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The author examines aspects of the pedagogic process for indigenous and foreign musicians, considering the nature of the experience and understanding from their different viewpoints. The article results from a period of field research in Ghana during 1994-5 which was supported by grants from Dartington College of Arts and the Elmgrove Trust.

Introduction

In this article I want to address mainly issues relevant to world music in general education. This could be as part of the general curriculum of a school or college, or within the context of a specialist music school which may be erroneously classed as extra-curricular. Not all of this would be as appropriate to the teaching of specific music at an advanced level in a foreign country.

After studying world-music – and specifically African music – for a number of years in the UK, I have recently spent ten months studying and researching in Ghana. I was carrying out field research into the *bewaa* style of recreational music played by the *Dagaare* people of northern Ghana, and also having more lessons in traditional drumming, mainly from the *Ewe* and *Akan* people. This experience provoked a number of thoughts concerning the pedagogic process for Ghanaian children, for me, and for music education in the developed world, especially the UK. But first, some contextualisation. There are two main areas for consideration: music as a cultural artifact, and the process of transmission and/or translation.

Music is culture. To the people who own the music it may have many functions and meanings. The concept of ownership in this context is concerned with usage rather than rights which may be conferred by creation. It can apply equally to a group of people or to an individual person. This can mean that a piece of music may acquire numerous owners in different situations, 'Nessun dorma' being one example. In Africa a particular piece of music might communicate that someone has died; whether the person was male or female; and his or her age group. All such levels of meaning are lost when the music is used outside its own culture. Of course, people can be told what the music means but this is not the same thing. Also lost will be most other levels of extra-musical association: occasions on which a piece of music would be heard; or the use of music as a badge of identification.

Within western culture the process of transmission is often formal, with organised classes and individual tuition, but for most orally transmitted musics this is not the

case. The *Dagaare* people are a good example. Many *Dagaare* people can play the *gyil* (a large xylophone) to some extent and there are numerous good players. When asked who taught them to play they will deny ever having a teacher; they just 'came out with it'. The only slightly formal instruction you might see is a young child sitting on an adult's knee and having his small hands clasped around the beaters while the adult plays. The adult will not usually play at less than full speed, will not play a repertoire of easy pieces intended specially for children, and will not expect the child to be able to play something specific at the end. Teenage children (mostly boys) can be seen playing the *gyil* at home or during breaks at school (if the school has one), but the instrument is not taught in school as part of the curriculum. When a young person is playing a passing adult may come and take the beaters and play something, but would not correct mistakes. The ability to play is perceived as a gift from God, the *kotomme* (fairies), or the ancestors, and if you possess the gift 'it will come out'.

The repertoire played on the *gyil* is acquired by listening. The music is based upon songs and these vary from place to place, so there is no one correct way to play a particular tune. The accompaniment follows a fairly standard alternating pattern, but the elaboration of this pattern and the nature of any variations of the tune are the choice of the player. Of course, even as children, *Dagaare* people have acquired a large repertoire of songs and will remember a new one very quickly. The memory is often not entirely accurate (in the sense that a recording is accurate) so a new variation develops spontaneously. Mistakes are not corrected (at least, not in my experience) because there is not a rigidly defined norm for the music. A good illustration of *Dagaare* musical conceptualisation might be the tuning of the *gyil*.

The *gyil* is pentatonic, but instruments vary widely between makers and the interval between adjacent notes can be between 202 and 283 cents. The following figures relate to instruments I have measured. Since my sample is quite small there may be some instruments which would extend this range. Typical intervals might be:

Octave 1	274	224	275	237	242
Octave 2	249	232	225	245	228

Each maker will normally be quite consistent, tuning a new instrument to an existing one or just to his memory. Thus, when a player is faced with a new instrument he will often play a pattern of alternating notes up and down the instrument, followed by a well known tune. The purpose of this is to establish 'where its voice lies'. The player may be unhappy starting a tune on one note and will begin again one bar higher or lower. The instrument is in tune when the performed tune sounds satisfactory. The tuning is not judged in isolation but is good when it performs the desired function. Similarly, the quality of performance of a piece of music may be assessed more by whether it is good to dance to rather than whether the pitches used are the correct ones.

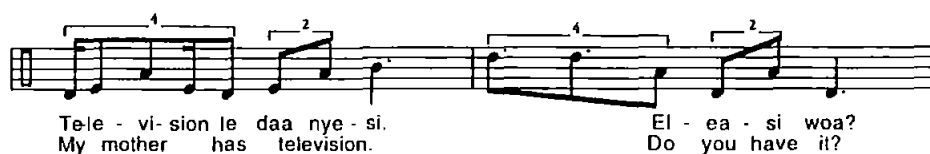
It has also been interesting to monitor my own learning of Ghanaian drum music. Although I have some previous experience, new rhythms are unfamiliar, I must acquire appropriate playing techniques and I must put everything I have learned into practice at some speed. For most Ghanaians their traditional music is something they hear very frequently. In the same way that they have acquired ability in one, or usually more, languages, they know how the music should sound. They are also familiar with the dance which is integral with the music. Just as we recognise that regional accents in language do not change the meaning of the words, they know what are the essentials of a particular piece. There will be a number of different versions of the same piece which are proudly cherished because they *are* different. In fact a group of performers

will be quite offended if you comment that their version is like the one you recently heard somewhere else. However, the essentials of the piece remain the same. The problem is that I have no knowledge of which are the essential elements, nor a vocabulary of experience on which to draw.

During most lessons there will be one or two teenage boys who help by playing some of the other parts of the piece I am learning. They have heard this music since (before?) they were born and know how it goes. A typical scenario would find me learning a particular pattern one day. The next, while, waiting for a master drummer to arrive, I will be practising quietly and, inevitably, making some mistakes. I will try to correct my mistakes by playing more slowly, or by taking a particular passage and repeating it. The boys who also arrive early will be frustrated by my efforts and will try to show me how it should be. This will always be at full speed and will probably be a variant of what I am trying to do. It may also start from a different point but to them it is 'the same'; i.e. it is a manifestation of an unheard central paradigm for this section of the piece. They are most surprised when I am not able to copy their actions immediately – don't I know this piece?

A parallel situation occurs in my lesson later. My teacher is expert and used to teaching people from the USA and Europe. He is quite happy to play things much more slowly and to break sections down into smaller fragments that I can assimilate. In my mind I can identify at least three elements in what I must learn: I must memorise the rhythm and which sounds are used; I must acquire any necessary new techniques which the sounds require; and I must rehearse the sequence of events so that I can proceed beyond the snail's pace necessary when you have to think of every action. I make frequent mistakes. This is a necessary part of the process. I may have memorised the rhythm, but I am unable to demonstrate my knowledge because I have not developed the skill. In my vocabulary 'I know how it goes'. For my teacher, I don't know it. He slowly and patiently explains again the sequence of sounds and demonstrates them for me to copy. I think I can do this, but in his perception, I can't.

When I began, I needed to analyse and try to notate everything so that I could get it right. It felt as though the only way I could hope to understand was to dissect the structure immediately, and then reconstruct it using my own mental processes. As I have progressed I have been able to adopt a more Ghanaian approach where I first copy, maybe quite approximately. Ghanaian drummers use mnemonics to enable them to remember a large range of rhythms. Sometimes the mnemonic will be drum syllables imitating the sound produced. Because the languages are tonal (where the pitch of the syllables may alter the meaning of a word radically, although context is also important) particular combinations of rhythm and pitch suggest common phrases: e.g. this master drum pattern from the *Ageshe* dance of the *Ewe* people.



(The transcription uses staff rhythm notation normally but pitch to indicate which type of stroke to play on the drum. These strokes will result in the drum sounding



Fig. 2. Young xylophone players in Lambussie, Upper West Region, Ghana

different pitches relatively high and low as in the notation, but not the precise pitches as notated.)

When I feel confident and my teacher is happy with my playing I will probably write down a version of staff notation as an aid to memory as above. However, it is very probably the case that, because of my training as a western musician, I am slower than many children would be in adapting to a different style of instruction.

Without entering the sphere of philosophy, at what point do you know a piece of music? What is it that we know? How does a teacher assess what a pupil knows? Because of my training I could probably demonstrate what I know by writing a transcription on a piece of paper. But when it comes to where the music really lives, in performance, I can't say, 'It goes like this'. My version of knowing is that I have a complete mental image (wrong word!) of how it should sound and I consider this to be separate from the skill needed to perform it. For my teacher, the two are totally integrated. The internalising of the music, by its nature, implies the skill.

In western instruction it is usually teachers who analyse, present the information in conceptualised form, and correct mistakes (although they may be exhorting pupils to listen to what they are playing). In a typical African setting the teacher (if there is one) may play, then leave the pupil to copy and understand in their own way. Any conceptualisation is by the individual pupil and it is most unlikely that this will be in a form which can be verbalised. An illustration might be this typical exchange between me and a Ghanaian musician:

- 'Can you tell the difference between old and new styles of *bewaa* from listening to the music?'
- 'Yes, I can do that.'

- 'How can you tell the difference?'
- 'We have modernised *bewaa* now.'
- 'How have you modernised it?'
- 'We have taken away all the old things.'

You might imagine from my enthusiasm for music in Ghana that music in Ghanaian schools would be vibrant and lively. Unfortunately, this is far from being the case. In the first place, the concept and requirements of a western style of formal education militates against some aspects of traditional culture. An example might be the nubility rites which were common in many parts of Ghana to mark the transition from girl to woman. The ceremonies took place to celebrate the first menstruation. They usually involved the preparation of special food, singing and dancing, and the newly announced woman being the 'queen mother' of a court of her peers for up to a month. This whole ceremony is not something which can be conveniently accommodated in evenings after school, so the celebration is now often severely curtailed or abandoned completely. Many other aspects of traditional dance and music also fall foul of formal education. An all night celebration of harvest or a funeral wake makes that the children will often miss school the next day.

Music, of course, has a place in school, but this is fraught with problems. Most teachers in Ghana have little or no formal training in music, although they may know a good deal about the traditional music from their own area of the country. Ghanaian traditional music changes in different parts of the country in the same way that there are over 100 languages and dialects in use. Sometimes the differences are quite small, sometimes unintelligible. Ghanaian teachers don't necessarily teach in the part of the country in which they grew up, so they may know little about the local music and be unable to use it effectively in the classroom. They will also not have any conceptual framework for enabling the study of different music. There are, of course, questions about whether and how this music should be studied. The method of transmission of music is an integral part of its existence. Learning it in a different way raises many questions about what is being learnt. If I learn an aural music from notation there are likely to be subtle changes in both what I do and don't learn and play. Similarly, it is important to understand something of how different people conceive of their own music, before applying analytic methodology and conceptions from elsewhere. This is more problematic when the culture in which the instruction is taking place has no systematic spoken analysis of music. Thus, the verbalised concepts which we employ in the UK to enable our study of different music do not exist for any traditional Ghanaian music. How relevant or appropriate is it then to teach them? All this is in addition to the considerations relating to the relocation of the music from its intended context into the classroom.

In northern Ghana most children still know a great deal about the traditional music and dance and will join in at the least opportunity. If they are taught music in school it will most likely be singing, often of English songs (there is no equipment such as instruments or hi-fi). In one school I passed regularly there was a xylophone permanently in the playground and it was played by the children at every opportunity. Cultural Studies are a required part of the curriculum in every Ghanaian school, but they seem to have lost the enjoyment and celebration of the culture in many instances. Certainly, much work in Ghanaian schools seems to be dictated by the requirements of the examinations (now where have I heard that before?). One of the saddest occasions I remember was a 'Cultural Competition' in northern Ghana. From early in the morning children could be seen walking along the main road from the outlying



Fig. 3. The *Choro* (chief) of Lambussie, Ghana, encouraging a young musician

schools. In fact the children from the most remote schools were the first to arrive, turning up at the ground around 8 am after walking seven or eight miles. The competition proper started around 10.30 am. It was dominated by school choirs singing, often western music, with little real enthusiasm; or singing some Ghanaian songs but being mostly preoccupied with everyone starting on the correct foot for a simple stepping pattern which accompanied the music. What was really depressing was the lack of spontaneity and engagement on the part of the children compared with their usual behaviour. There were also numerous poems in English telling people how you should behave (in the words of one informant, they were 'very advisable'), delivered in loud voice with little apparent understanding of the words. The winners of the competition were from a Catholic Primary school who performed the local *bewaa* music, dancing and singing with great enthusiasm. I later went to the school to find out more about their attitudes, expertise and policy. The first thing that struck me was the genuine interest that the teachers, especially the headmaster, showed in the welfare and concerns of their pupils. The dancers and musicians in the school's *bewaa* group had not learnt at the school but in their own villages. The staff did not have great expertise in music, but were concerned to encourage and enable the pupils to learn and perform the local music. The musical expertise mattered far less than genuine interest and enthusiasm for the pupils' own interests and work. (In fact, the teachers' lack of learning showed in a way of which they were not aware. The xylophone player, a boy of about twelve, learnt most of his music from his grandfather. One of the dance tunes he played was an old song giving advice to the men about the availability of girls at a particular market. The words were 'Tuppence can't get vagina, ten pence gets vagina'. I don't know whether the boy knew the words, but I am sure the staff of this Catholic school didn't.)



Fig. 4. Young musicians and dancers from Gegenkpe school, dancing Bewaa

Dagaare musical culture is typical for many aurally transmitted musics and contrasts with the situation in the developed world. We have formalised most, if not all, musical instruction. Of course, we too acknowledge that some people have a gift for music, but this must be carefully nurtured and developed, almost always by individual instruction. The first sad casualty of this approach may be the idea of music as play. When we tell our children to 'Go out and play' we do not usually mean music. Pupils in the west expect to learn music in a pedagogic situation. They expect their mistakes to be corrected by the teacher. They can only devote brief constrained periods of time to the study. Our western system generally also expects some form of absolute assessment. A report from a teacher (or a pupil?) that says they are making progress is not generally acceptable. A demonstration of their achievement is necessary.

It must be acknowledged that for many western musical instruments there is an initial difficulty in actually producing a pleasant sound, or any sound at all. Partly because of this, we have developed a repertoire of music with carefully graded technical difficulties so that the child is not put off, but such pieces often bear only passing resemblance to the real music played by adults. These learning pieces must all be studied until they can be played correctly. The concept of correctness here is very culturally controlled. Variation in some aspects of the music is tolerated or even encouraged, whilst in other aspects it is an error which proves that you have not learnt the music. To help children and encourage them we have developed a series of graded tests which will enable them to monitor their development and have a sense of achievement. Do you still want to go and play?

We recognise some of these problems and do our best to provide music education for all children in school and to make available a wide range of musical instruction in music schools. It is in these settings that world music has made a great impact in recent

years. Following the revolution that brought practical music into schools to replace the life of Beethoven, children have been introduced to musical ideas drawn from many parts of the world. There are some concerns about this, mostly to do with the cultural aspects of the music. A piece of Indonesian gamelan music is important to the community which created it because of all the things it represents. For the western child it is 'just music'. We cannot spend all our time telling the children about the music otherwise it is no better than the life of Beethoven. On the other hand, particularly with more advanced students, it is equally indefensible to say nothing at all about the origins of this music. It needs a sensitive teacher to judge the correct balance for each and every situation.

There is a difference here also between the likely approach for the general curriculum and the specialist music school. The generalist music teacher will want pupils to have some understanding of the techniques for the creation of music which are used in different parts of the world. Given that it is impossible to study all the music of the world, there may not be any particular style of music which it is essential to study. The choice of genres is a decision best left to individual teachers according to their own knowledge, providing there is a suitable breadth. Thus a teacher may follow a technical approach examining a musical concept such as *hocket* in its various manifestations of time and place. The amount of supporting cultural information which can be included within such a regime will be limited, but the thoughtful teacher can still maximise it by making resources available for pupils to follow up their musical experience and by making links with other teachers who may be interested in looking at aspects of a particular culture.

Music schools in particular tend to offer individual study more than community based musics which need a group of people in order to practise. Music schools which offer world music instruction seem to concentrate more on instruments which emphasise the individual and the acquisition of skill. In this case it is much easier for the pupil to acquire contextual information about the music as a continuous drip feed. Sadly the possibilities of many community based musics seem to be explored much less. In contrast, general school teaching avoids music where the development of individual instrumental skills are a pre-requisite, although there are more opportunities in extra-curricular music studies. Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of virtually all world music teaching is the school timetable. Within schools pupils may study music for one or two hours a week, and the music school is unlikely to provide sessions more than once a week. World music is thus constrained by its western setting to an intensive period of tuition and perhaps a lesson which most pupils will enjoy, followed by either nothing or a week of solitary practice. For many aural musics this is unsatisfactory and unrealistic.

If anyone is to learn more than just the notes of another music, they need to take on board to some extent the whole learning environment and the traditional method of instruction. Unfortunately, we cannot surround children all of the time with the mix of music which they might hear in another location. The ideal would be an environment in which a pupil could absorb as many aspects and ideas as possible over a longer period of time – but even the occasional whole day or weekend would be an advantage. At worst, music can be a production line.

One of the most valuable aspects of spending time in a different culture is the view it gives you of your own culture. There are many things we might learn for our education system. A different understanding of wrong notes and mistakes might make music learning more enjoyable. If pupils are copying another music, even quite approximately, they can be learning and being encouraged by the sound they are

producing. After all, easy pieces could be seen as an approximation of real music. Pupil centred learning may not be the latest good idea in education, but have we really taken it on board in music, especially world music? Given that we cannot make pupils members of another society, we have to try to give them as complete a picture as possible, but this should be a prescription not a proscription. Ideas for what is possible are far more helpful than directives about what should not be done. This complete picture needs a wide view of the whole activity. An essential part of most African music is the dancing, and experience of this will inform the learning of the sonic element.

The process of mediation and translation is a delicate one and it is the individual teacher who must make most of the decisions – since pedagogic situations vary so widely. However, children, especially young children, can be more flexible than is often expected. How about spending more time playing with them, and less time telling them what to do?

Bewaare - They are coming

Dagaba songs and dances from Nandom, Ghana

The town of Nandom is in the Upper West region of Ghana in West Africa, about 15km from the border with Burkina Faso and 10km from the Black Volta river. About 10,000 people live in the area covered by the traditional chieftaincy of Nandom. The people here are from several different tribal traditions. Nandom is mainly Dagaba although there are significant numbers of Waale people (migrated from further south) now living in the town. Sisaala people also live in the area. The nearest Sisaala village, Lambussie, is only 5km from Nandom but it is part of a different administrative area and few Nandom people speak or understand the language. The countryside is mainly long grass savannah dotted with trees, many of which are frequently cut for firewood. Forty years ago there was abundant wildlife in the area, including lions, elephants and several species of antelope. Now, these have either completely died out, mainly as a result of hunting, or are found only in the game reserve 200km south. The area has one rainy season between April and October and there is little rainfall outside this period. Farming millet, corn, yams, groundnuts and sweet potatoes provides the main source of food, with walled dry-season gardens, watered by hand, providing salad vegetables. Many of the adult men live here only during the farming season, travelling to cities in the south to seek work during the rest of the year. The women are busy throughout the year farming, carrying firewood and water, making pots and baskets, brewing *pito* (local millet beer), preparing food and caring for children.

There are no phones or mains electricity in Nandom, although these are advancing

rapidly from the south. People wake early in the morning to make the best use of the 12-13 hours of daylight. At this time of day sound seems to travel long distances. Birds (including domestic fowl) and insects seem to move the day from darkness to light (**Track 1**). As soon as there is light enough to see, people begin to travel, either on foot or by bicycle. The Dagaba people have a traditional instrument, the *koriduo*, which was used to provide music when travelling. Dagaba people used to walk long distances (500km) to the south to trade and work and would carry an instrument with them for entertainment when they stopped to rest. The instrument is a small harp with 6 strings which are tuned by twisting a "button" at one end of each string to increase the tension. It is tuned to a scale similar to the local xylophone and plays the accompaniment to traditional songs although it cannot play the tune. **Track 2** is a children's marching tune. *Bolbol worbru yangna tiwaka* (We have come here to eat balls [of kenkey - a staple food from the south]). This is a song for school children to march into their classroom but is no longer used for this purpose. The *koriduo* is played by Alezenda from Nandomkpe (a village near Nandom which is reputed to be one of the oldest settlements in the area). Alezenda made this instrument himself.

The main traditional Dagaba instrument is the *gyil* (sometimes also spelt *dzi*), an 18-key xylophone. This is used to play music for funerals as well as recreational music but the two styles are quite different and players specialise in only one style [and this CD does not include funeral music.] The xylophone is common throughout the Lobi/Dagaba region but varies in tuning and size. The Lobi xylophone (found in places like Lawra and Jirapa, 30-50km south of Nandom) has 14 keys which are about the same pitch as the upper 14 notes of the Dagaba instrument, but the tuning is slightly different. Dagaba performers in

Diebougou (a town in Burkina Faso on the road to Bobo Dioulasso and about 50km from Nandom) use a 19-key instrument with smaller, higher-pitched bars having obvious connections to the Mandinka balafon. The 18-key Dagaba instrument is large and heavy. It has individual gourd resonators for each bar except the one which looks as though it should have the lowest pitch. This bar is not tuned to produce a note but is hit with sticks to play the *kpagru* (lit. beating) rhythm. The gourds each have two or three holes about 2cm in diameter. These are covered with a membrane - properly *pempene*, the egg case of a spider. As concrete houses are built replacing the traditional mud-brick design *pempene* are becoming more difficult to find and are being replaced with a durable modern alternative - high density plastic from the ubiquitous plastic bag. These membranes add a buzz to each note, but makers agree that all the notes should not buzz evenly or the voice of the instrument will be obscured.

The bass part of the xylophone is called *gyil nyaa* - xylophone chest (part of the body) - for funerals you play tunes here late in the afternoon between the time when the sun is hot and its setting. The middle is *gyil sog* - xylophone middle, played in the middle of the day. The top bars are *gyil pile* - *gyil* low-down (because these bars are closer to the ground) and would be played in the morning. For recreational music where there is singing involved, these ideas are less important than finding a pitch which is comfortable for the singers. The xylophone is played with large heavy beaters traditionally made from raw latex and glue wrapped round the end of a stick about 30cm long and 2cm in diameter. The modern alternative replaces the latex with a disc cut from a lorry tyre. The beaters are often called *gyilbie* (lit. xylophone children) but the same term is also used in some places for the bars. Beaters are also called *gyilluore* - jumping from place to place,

gyilnɛɛ - xylophone mouths, or *gyilduɔɔɛ* - xylophone stretching.

One of the main forms of recreational music and dance in Nandom is called *Bɛwaa* and its development owes much to just one person. In the late 1930's a boy called Polkuu Paul, from the house of the Nandom chief (*Naa*) was sent to the south to receive a western style colonial education. He returned to Nandom about 1946 determined to develop the town and give local children an education. He worked with the people to build and open the first primary school in the area. Polkuu wanted the children to learn about the traditional music of the area, so he called together the old men and asked what were their original dances. They demonstrated many things including *Kpaa ngmaa* - a recreational dance, and *Sɛbɔkɔpɛrɛ* and *Bagrɔbɛnɛ* which are fetish dances. These are all still danced today although some aspects of the performance have changed. There are no recordings from this time. The nearest idea we have is this performance by Komkpe Jangban. Jangban is now a farmer with his own land and 4 wives but he learnt to play the *gyil* in the 1940's. On track 3 Jangban plays *Kpaa ngmaa ɔɔgmɔɔɛ ben Tuɔpɔrɛ* (Ugly person, free girls at Tuoper market) This is an old song composed by people from Gwo (a village about 10km south-east from Nandom). It was danced by old men wearing sheepskins and carrying cow-tail fly whisks. Tuoper market was one of the biggest in the area and there were always young men and women there looking for a marriage partner. It was said that there were so many girls that even if you only had ten *kobo* (Nigerian word for pennies) you could find a girl to marry. *Kpaa ngmaa* literally means "short back of the head."

After he had seen the traditional dances, Polkuu Paul decided to form a group of young people who could be taught to dance, play and sing them well. The group he formed was

called the *Nandom Sebhpere* group, taking the name of one of the fetish dances of the region. Polkuu was also still looking for a new dance style which would make his group really distinctive. When the Nandom *Naa Imoro* held a *durbar* (gathering of people) in the early 1950's, the chiefs who attended brought with them groups of dancers to entertain the assembly. The chief from Jirapa had a group who performed a recreational dance which they called *bawa*. This was quite similar to the Nandom *sebhpere* dance so the local people liked it. Polkuu decided to teach this dance to his group. In West Africa such a process always involves making some changes so that the music and dance becomes personal, not just a copy of what is done elsewhere. Thus *bawa* became *Bewaa* in Nandom, the new name recalling the Dagaare word *bewaare* - they are coming. *Bewaa* also became faster than its parent so that it was more exciting. Songs were written or adapted to the new style and the dance format was also changed by putting a female dancer between each of the men, whereas previously the women had danced separately for most of the time.

This CD has recordings of three generations of Nandom *bewaa* musicians. When the Nandom group began to dance *bewaa*, Ambaa Patrick and Komkpe Jangban were the two *gyil* players. When *Naa Imoro* originally invited Ambaa to come and play *bewaa* he didn't agree to come, but then he got married to one of the chief's daughters! However, he still didn't want to join the *bewaa* group as he felt this would result in him being over-reliant on income from *bewaa* performances and neglecting his farming. The chief called Ambaa back and invited him again to join the group, saying that the *bewaa* would not take too much time. When the group was invited to travel to perform elsewhere they would give Ambaa notice so that he could organise his affairs, and they would then travel

and return within only a few days. At this point Ambaa accepted (1955/6). Within 3 years of Ambaa starting to play *bewaa*, Naa Imoro died and was succeeded by Polkuu. Polkuu found Ambaa a job working on one of the state farms which were in existence at that time. This meant that when the group were invited to perform somewhere Polkuu could write to the farm requesting Ambaa be released for the required period. This was a very satisfactory arrangement for Ambaa as it meant that he had money either from the farm or from playing. At this time Jangban was a bicycle repairer and both of them were playing together. On track 4 they play three songs from this time interspersed with dance sections. Ambaa plays the lead (female) *gyil* with Jangban playing the supporting part on the male instrument. The songs are:-

- 1 *Kpaa ngmaa pɔgmɔlɛ ben Tuopare* (as before)
- 2 *Zɔng bɛ nyɛɛ yee ɛ kyɛ nyuur pataasi*. (Blind person who cannot see, drink alcohol, even you, blind person who cannot see, drink what is in the bottle) and *Koli, koli, kaa, kaa siigbile nyuure* (Go and check your bambara beans - I can smell them burning) as a dance
- 3 *Katarima kyen bekuɔnɛ yir o paar ti leb zamakuɔ kyire*. (Katarima [woman's name] went to *bekuɔnɛ* clan, her women's parts were hit and instead of blood the dregs of *pito* came. Someone's son who tested her found she was not sweet and sent her away. Go home Katarima, go straight home.) Katarima was a well-known woman from the chief's clan. She was "flirting too much" and "behaving like a prostitute" so the song was composed to "bring her down a bit." The song is implying that she is like the last dregs of *pito* making (*zamakuɔ*) - anyone can have it or pour it away.

These last two songs are then repeated.

In the 1960's there was a dispute between Jangban and Polkuu. The *Sebkpere* group were invited to perform at a National Alliance of Labourers Party rally at Bolgatanga (Polkuu supported this party). Jangban said he supported the Progress Party and that he did not think it was right for the group to be involved in party politics in this way, so he refused to go. Polkuu promptly had him locked up in the police cells. It was at this point that a new *gyil* player, Joseph Kobom, although still a small boy, was invited to join the group. Jangban was quite happy with this arrangement and "handed his sticks to Kobom" in 1968. Ambaa also moved over around this time and was replaced by Rallio Kpampul. Rallio plays the *gyil* from the opposite side to normal, playing the tune with his left hand which is thought to be spiritually dangerous. On track 5 he performs two songs with Sambaa Sopele playing the supporting part:-

- 1 Introduction leading to *Timantio farayir nyaarkuɔ na beɛ wa Timantio, e Timantio, e Timantio* (Timothy, the church salt water didn't come, Timothy's fault, Timothy's fault) Timantio was known to be a very good Christian but also refused to give up his "pagan" religious beliefs. The song was written to advise him that this could have serious consequences. Next is *DOO ben ka* (Man is here) as a dance.
- 2 *Zɔng be nyereɛ kyen Nandom daa ti yaa sense zini kpolakpola* (The blind man cannot see, walked Nandom market, bought bean cakes, sat down and ate them) People were very surprised when a blind man walked round the market, bought food and ate it without any help. Followed by *Pɔgle na wa* (Woman has come) as a dance.

Joseph Kobom has become widely known throughout Ghana for his performance on the *gyil*. He now lives in the capital Accra where he plays for hotels, public functions and Ghana TV and radio stations. On **track 6** Kobom takes the lead with Ambrose Braima Pikyulo *Gyil* 2, Miller Kpee *Kuor* (calabash drum) and Peter Dery *Dalaari* (lit. broken pot - a drum made from the neck of an old pot). He plays a mix of four songs:-

- 1 *N maa wo na wa kume buule. N yi yeng ti seb bewaa.* (Oh mother, come and give me the jingles. I will go out and dance *bewaa*)
- 2 *Kuu wo, kuu woye, kuu wo, kuu wo-o, Naangmin tome ne a le* (Death, so many deaths, death, deaths are surprising, God's work all) I am surprised there are so many deaths, but it is all God's work.
- 3 *Kuu na waari, kuu na waari pogle* (Death is coming, death is coming girl, the people of Nandom sugar because of it) If you are a girl and go chasing sweet things, death will come to you.
- 4 *Bayeluma mimi ya ya, me nyenga kele nyenga, ko wa* (Bayeluma [woman's name] has got so many eyes, you see this one, and you see this one again, you should come) Bayeluma has a roving eye and will flirt and come if anyone calls.

For competitions and important events, the 1960's Nandom *Sebkpere* group would have at least 5 musicians. On **track 7**, four of the musicians of this time, together with a younger drummer recreate the sound. The performers are Joseph Kobom and Rallio Kpampul (*gyile*), Komkpe Jangban (*kpagru*), Yuoseg Nakpi (*wele* - flute), Antari John Bosco (*kuor*). They play two songs:-

- 1 *Kurema woe, Kurema woe be dang be yel fo* (Kurema [woman's name] advice,

didn't we tell you. Serious advice, didn't we tell you. Zietuo [man's name] is calling his wife to come and take a calabash of *pito*.) Kurema liked people to buy her free *pito* whenever she could get it. Zietuo called to his wife to take *pito* and Kurema thought she was being called, but was sent away empty-handed and very disappointed.

2 *Maa bε bɔbr a pɔgli pɛr kpagr kulu* (I don't like the girl's fat buttocks, she is lazy.)

All *bɛwaa* music is based around songs. The words of some songs are joking, often at the expense of some of the Dagaare's neighbours. Other songs give advice about how one should behave. The people who write songs are highly regarded. New songs are often to some extent adaptations of existing songs continuing the circle. Many of the song writers are women, but the men who write are generally better known. If, at a performance, a singer gives advice which you appreciate it is customary to take some money and press the paper to his/her forehead before letting it fall to the ground to be collected by them later. John Dery (the name means he was an only son) comes from the village of Ko south-east of Nandom. He started making songs on his own initiative when he was a child and was encouraged because people liked the sound of his voice and the words he used. Each year now he might compose two songs. He will observe the way people are behaving and see something which he thinks they should be advised about. He will then start putting the words together - often in the middle of the night when it is quiet. **Track 8** is his performance of one of his own *bɛwaa* songs; *Bibile zie na Naalu za mi yi* (From the child Chiefs come from) Every child could grow to be a chief so you must take good care of children and treat them well. He is accompanied by two *gyile* plus *kpagru*, a *kuɔr* and a chorus of mainly teenage children.

The advice in the songs often has an element of humour so that people will be more likely to remember the message. One of the best known *bɛwaa* songs is *Ya ya kole zele. Ya ya o puɔ wa peli o i kob* (Keep on begging. If she is happy she will give you love) If you want a woman who is not interested you should keep up your efforts, they may be rewarded with love. This is modern *bɛwaa*, first heard in Accra in 1986. The lead vocal part on **track 9** is performed by John Dery's friend Matthew, the chief dancer of the Ko *bɛwaa* group.

Most of the villages in the Nandom area have their own *bɛwaa* group which rehearses to take part in the annual *Kakube* festival. This is a *durbar* and cultural event which takes place every year in November after the harvest. In Nandom itself the *Sebkpere* group is no longer active in the way it used to be. *Naa* Polkuu died in 1984 and his successor was appointed only after a bitter dispute which continues in the background today. Different members of the *Sebkpere* group found themselves on opposite sides through clan loyalties and the group split up. The present *Naa* Puoure Puobe Chiir VII wants to support and develop traditional Nandom arts but the factional dispute presents an impossible situation in the town. However, there are still a number of good young *gyil* players who can play *bɛwaa*. Some of them also play for the Catholic church which uses local musical instruments and styles. **Track 9** is a recording of some of the young players: Braima Pikyulo (*gyil* 1), Vitus Dibbin (*gyil* 2), John Bosco Antare (*kuɔr*), Kog Yawra/Vuukang Domper (*kpagru*), Miller Kpee (*dalaari*). They play 7 songs and dances:-

- 1 *Nandomme Naa yela ye maali, maali, maali. Bɛ maali a viele za belop kpankpaare yang taa* (The Nandom *Naa* is saying come together, come together, come

together. It is good to unite together and contribute to build up the place.) This song was written by the Nandom *Sebkpere* group to publicise the advice which Polkuu was always giving.

- 2 *Fu na be ter bagngman kuɔra, ɛ ɔɔbr a pɔgbɛ, ɛ ɔɔbr a pɔgbɛ, ɛ pɔgbɛ. N i fu ngmin?* (You don't have strong arms to farm, and you are looking for women, looking for women. When women come, what will you do?)
- 3 *Fuu wa ɛr pɔg sig-kpɛ.* (Come and join if you have a wife.) as a dance.
- 4 *Nandom na numɛ lɛ a kang tuɔ kyen nyin?* (As Nandom is sweet, who will go where?) Nandom is good to live in, where else would people want to go?
- 5 *Sebro bambala wele, sebro naa nang bɛ wa.* (Dancing they blow the big flute, dancing chief has not come.) The large flute (*welɛ*) has sounded, but the chief dancer has still not arrived.
- 6 *Kpere bandazuziɛ* (Shake your head, [name of the lizard]) You should stand and dance like the lizard. The particular lizard referred to has a red head and a habit of shaking its upper body rapidly. This is a dance tune which can be used with a number of songs. The words would not be sung. The gyil player would improvise around the tune while everyone danced.
- 7 *Kpaa ngmaa pɔgmɔlɛ ben Tuopare* (song & dance as before)

The *gyil* is used in Nandom for most types of music. After the harvest, the rites of the fetish festival *Bagri* are observed in some villages. This is mostly a secret ritual. The initiates are enclosed for a number of days and deprived of food and water. At the end of this they are brought out as part of a general dance. **Track 11** is a *bagri* piece *Nyu nyu ke*

kpi. (Drink, drink and die) played by John Bosco Mimidem and his son Dominic of Kogle village.

The village of Kuonyugan is just off the main road from Nandom to the south about 1km from the town. The musicians in this village specialise in playing *dalaari*. These drums, made from broken pots, are traditionally played by boys and young men at the end of harvest. There are at least 6 drums plus a *kuɔr* in the ensemble. The drums have names based on their size i.e. the size of the pot neck, but mainly derived from the rhythms they play. These are the names of the drum in order of ascending size:-

- 1 *Kiri* (Imitating the sound of the part)
- 2 *Velkpele* (Works with kiri)
- 3 *Maali buulu denkpere* (Make the porridge plenty)
- 4 *Zeɛ nkyekp ɛɛ* (The beggar's mouth is carelessly open)
- 5 *Tangkura lɔb gyɛɛ* (The old mountain lays eggs)
- 6 *Gyangyang* (Crab)
- 7 *Dɔɔ ra nu nye bibile sakpong tag tare* (The man has seen the small child's food)
- 8 *Zeɛ mi kyen a karo be sagr u la gbungbuli* (The beggar was ashamed and laughed so much he couldn't beg). This part can also be taken by the *kuɔr*.

The rhythms they play are taken from the music of the area. On **tracks 12 and 13** they play *bagri* and *bewaa* rhythms respectively.

The end of harvest, especially during full moon when there is light, is a popular time for all sorts of celebration. At this time, drumming and singing can be heard through the night. One popular music and dance style has been imported from the south of Ghana. *Gombe* uses a frame drum which has travelled back to West Africa from the Caribbean.

Slaves there were forbidden to make drums as their masters thought they would use them to communicate and organise rebellion. Every night drums could be heard, but the owners could never find them. The slaves had made chairs with leather seats. When drums were needed the chairs were laid on their side and the skin tensioned with the heels. The *gombe* drum is still played by sitting on it and using the heels but the rest of the chair has disappeared. **Track 14** is two *bewaa* songs using a *gombe* drum and rhythm:-

- 1 *Nandomme polbili sebseveli wul nibe, dome gyiele eh, wuorye, yare, yare yahweh eh.* (The young people of Nandom do very good dancing and show the public, the enemies begin to spy on them, they cannot do anything to us.)
- 2 *Kuu wele yiiri, kuu wele yiiri, daa, daa, daa, kuu wele yiiri, fu saa ni ano na faa fu, fu saa ni ano na faa fu, kuu wele yiiri ah.* (Death divide the house, every time, every time, your father, who is he to rescue you from death, death has already divided the house, surprise.) When your father dies, his brothers may come to claim his property over the claims of the wife and children.

These songs were recorded at a big *gombe*, *gago*, *kari* and *nuru* party at Biligau, 1km west of Nandom.

Track 15 is of a girl's game called *gago* recorded at the same party: *Gago ye gago, eh gago pogle kang no be yir kare eh gago, fu na tu na gago eh gago te lin, te lin, lin, lin, lin.* (Gago girls enter dancing and crossing your legs, go higher, go higher, higher [the words *te lin* are in the rhythm of the dance step.])

Children are very much part of the adult world in Dagaba society. Babies spend most of

their lives tied on to their mother's back by a cloth. By the time they are 5 years old they will have their own responsibilities and freedom. One of the solo singers at the Biligau party was Bengbe Nagye. She was 12 years old and was taking after her mother, who was also a good singer and composer of songs. The next day Bengbe came with her younger sister to record some songs. On **track 16** she sings three *kari* songs:-

- 1 *Yaani, yaani yee. Maal a alepele u do saa, nimoore yee. U do saa nimoore yee nasamine maal a alepele u do saa.* (Good day, good day greetings. Making aeroplane to go up, praise them. To go up praise them white people making aeroplane to go up.) Greetings and thanks to the white people who have invented aeroplanes.
- 2 *Haya puru, puru, puru, pantir na kyen kula fu nye ni Yelwarima na er zo maali ko bie a.* (Surprising, puru [the jumping of the frog] frog going for water you see Yelware's [man's name] mother grind flour to prepare food for a child.) Yelware's mother is foolish like a frog. People are surprised when she grinds flour to make food for a child.

This is followed by one of Bengbe's own *kari* songs:-

- 3 *Pogle so kuo i kaa layaari yee mawoo. Dankyin paala liebi dankyin kura ma woo.* (Girl bath rub oil laughing too much. A new building becomes an old building, surprising.) A girl is washing and rubbing oil on her skin, laughing too much at her own beauty. She should remember that she too will become old.

Kari is a dance for women and girls. The songs are usually quite short and small groups of people take it in turn to dance. The only accompaniment is clapping. The words of the

songs sometimes give advice but are more often making fun of someone, especially men! **Track 17** is a *kari* song *Saayir gang muɔ, senlere. Saayir gang muɔ, saayir gang muɔ senlere laaliero. Kε wa lanne luge, senlere laaliero.* (Your father's house is better than the bush. Your father's house is better than the bush, your father's house is better than the bush. Hiding yourself with sticks in the room.) It is better to be at home. Your father's house is better than the bush so don't try to hide in the room.

Also performed at the party was another enjoyable *kari* song. (**Track 18**) The words sounded like "Bom saba, bom, bom saba, hebaa." When asked what the words meant people said they were not Dagaare but French and had been learnt from the Dagaare people living in Burkina Faso. The first part could be "Bon ça va, bon, bon ça va?" but the last word is still a puzzle.

Finally, the Biligau party got to the serious business of *nuru*. This is another game for women and girls. About 10-20 people stand in a circle. One or two women at a time dance briefly before leaning back into the circle and being thrown high into the air. This is especially hazardous when wearing the usual plastic thong sandals. One *nuru* song tells how to land to avoid breaking bones (**track 19**). *Fuu wa lore wa kyer gbεε a mi in nu / gbε kabr. Ensee, ensee, ensee ya yee.* (If you are falling down you open your legs and don't land properly you will break your hands / legs. [Chorus] It's true, it's true.)

The basic rhythm of these different types of music (*kari, nuru, bewaa*) is also used for songs intended to be performed separately from the dance. In this case it is the message of the words which is most important, as in this *nuru* song recorded at Biligau on another occasion (**track 20**). *U-huu, bε kurε yee a pɔgbε, u-hu, bε kurε yee. E bunu paa kurε pɔgbε?* (U-huu [It's painful], it doesn't kill women, u-huu, doesn't kill. But what is killing

women?) Sometimes a woman will just say "U-huu" when something is painful but the pain doesn't kill. So what is killing the women?

One of the most famous singer/songwriters in the area is Mary Amelia Bemele. Mary Amelia is blind and lives near the church in the border town of Hamile. She is a deeply religious woman and is highly regarded for her powerful voice and her songs and the good advice they give. These last two songs were recorded in the compound of her house with her children and neighbours providing the chorus. The occasional extraneous noises are provided by her chickens and the *harmattan* - a powerful hot wind which blows south from the Sahara. **Track 21** is a *bewaa* song *Pɔgli kyakyapile kang nu so a puɔ teru. U na ngme per mi ke u nu so a puɔ teru. Wana wa tire ke be yaɛ.* (A certain small girl is the cause of her pregnancy. Because she has knocked her buttocks that brought about the pregnancy. Now you have come to say your parents should look after you.) The girl has been the cause of her own downfall by exhibiting her body too freely. Now she is looking for money and support from her parents.

Track 22 is a *nuru* song with a large number of verses of which five are given here:-

- 1 *N bangni na n kuu ɛ kyere aa, a Naangmin na nu ir me n be bune kuu yange.* (I am aware of my death and because God created me I don't doubt it.) [verse 1 is also used as chorus]
- 2 *Gyere maa sagle zaa gyere maa n kuu yang n de ni Naangmin puori zagle yaani.* (Everybody should be avoiding me because of my death and I am using God to greet people who are not related to me.)
- 3 *Gyere maa sagle zaa gyere maa n kuu yang n de ni Naangmin puori zagle barka.*

(Everybody should be avoiding me because of my death and I am using God to thank people who are not related to me.)

4 *Ni nyɛ na tenzu nibɛ ni nyɛ na a ti ibii, ti za dɛ bɛ lang ni Naangmin togtogtoge*
(People of the world have you seen our deeds, we are not close to God at all.)

5 *Ni nyɛ na tenzu nibɛ ni nyɛ na a ti ibii, ti za dɛ bɛ lang ni Naangmin puoru yele.*
(People of the world have you seen our deeds, we are not close to God in prayer.)

[5139 words]

Photos

- 1/1A Nandom savannah countryside
 - 2 The *koriduo*
 - 3/3A Komkpe Jangban
 - 4 Ambaa Patrick
 - 5 Rallio Kpampul
 - 6/6A/6B Joseph Kobom
 - 7 John Dery
 - 8/8A/8B Village bEwaa groups performing (8 from Dumanje, 8A/B from Tom)
 - 9 Leg jingles for dancing bɛwaa
 - 10/10A Young players Braima Pikyulo (10)& Vitus Dibbin (10A),
 - 11 John Bosco Mimidem and his son Dominic
 - 12 *Dalaari* drums
 - 13/13A *Dalaari* drumming
 - 14/14A *Gombe* drum
 - 15 Bengbe Nagye and her sister
 - 16/16A Dancing *kari* [16 is also a possible alternative cover photo]
 - 17 Dancing *nuru*
 - 18 Mary Amelia Bemele
- + Cover photo (original is a slide. Might need strategic cropping to remove knee on lower right.)

Globalisation

'Globalisation. L'Afrique occidentale dans
le monde ou le monde en Afrique
occidentale'
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West Africa in the World or The World in West Africa.

Abstract

The last ten years have seen a tremendous growth of interest in world music, mainly in Europe and the USA. At the same time, the pressures and manipulation of the industrialised world has reached out to even the most remote societies and cultures. Ten years ago, an interest in the music of other people was restricted to ethnomusicological research into traditional music of other cultures. Now many people are wanting to hear "exotic" music, both traditional and popular. This brings with it certain problems. Many traditional musics are not concert music, they are participatory. There will be pressures on all musicians to make their music more audience directed; to give the audience what the promoters believe it will like. The assessment of success will be financial. This paper examines the current situation for music and musicians in West Africa. How are they responding to the demands of their local and international audience? Are these two requirements in conflict? What are the musical influences on musicians in West Africa and how are these evident in their music? Is there a danger of convergence to a norm; of music having to meet certain requirements based on past successes? Will we all end up singing the same song and who will write it?

Paper

West Africa has it all. A climate in which you are seldom cold, but which is a breeding ground for numerous nasty diseases. A long tradition of aural musical cultures which involve everyone in the area, but a burgeoning industry in illegal cassette copies of all types of music. A large number of popular musicians eager to do their next recording, as long as it's not in West Africa. People eager to buy the latest products and recordings, especially those from the USA and Europe. Economies where labour is cheap, so cheap many people can barely survive. Areas of rainforest and nature reserve that the west would like preserved. Superb beaches and scenery, but not many tourists, thanks to wars and the general lack of amenities. In some places tourism has had a considerable impact. In Bali the midday and early evening temple ceremonies are observed in full, presenting an impressive spectacle to the tourists. The early morning ceremony, deprived of the oxygen of publicity, is more of a statutory walk through by the second team. The tourists have not yet arrived in West Africa in sufficient numbers to have this effect, but there are an increasing number of expensive hotels who want appropriate music for dancing and floor shows with an "ethnic" content. Of course, people are aware of all these problems and contradictions but what can you do except document the passing of history? Some West African governments would like to change the situation, but they are hampered by the massive "debt" owed to western banks and the manipulative ability of multinational corporations. (I make no apology for introducing politics into an article about music. Politicians have always used music, and music is an economic industry like any other.)

Globalisation and the idea of the global village (is this an oxymoron?) are the subjects of much current debate. The idea of globalisation is a complex one and can encompass a variety of ideas. At one level it can simply be referring to the fact that communication is easier now than at any time in the past. People in West Africa are more aware of what is going on in the rest of the world, and we are more aware of West Africa. But even this simple statement contains an imbalance. West Africans want to know what is happening in the rest of the world because that is

where the greatest financial rewards are situated. The western interest in Africa is marginal, confined mainly to an admiration of its culture, or expressions of distant sympathy at another natural(?) disaster. People in the West rather like the idea of belonging to a global village. They like to feel solidarity with their neighbours in Africa and they are particularly happy to share their music, but not the life that goes with it.

Since 1990 these issues have been debated in some detail, often from a sociological viewpoint rather than a musical one. Goodwin and Gore¹ in their article in *Socialist Review*, ask an important question; should the increasing presence of non-western music in the west be viewed as 'progressive intervention within western culture' which might be seen as a positive direction, or is it another example of 'old forms of exploitation and cultural imperialism'? They consider that neither of these models are sufficiently complex. The first is too naive although such music 'suggests an element of feed back in the one way flow which has often characterised global communications.' The second is too negative in spite of the fact that much of the profit from the music goes to multinational corporations. Since 1990 the gap between western musicians using (exploiting?) ideas from outside the west, and non-western musicians entering the western popular music scene could be seen as continuing or narrowing. As I write there has been a problem at a pop awards ceremony when one performer objected strongly to Michael Jackson performing another "We are the world" type of song. Equally, the range of recordings of non-western musicians available in many music shops has increased dramatically.

Part of the problem in our study of this phenomenon is the complexity of the situation and the models we develop to try to understand it. Change is a constant factor. The only things in the world which are unchanging are those which have been preserved and are therefore dead. A concern is that, as western musicians continue to look for new ideas outside their own culture, borrowings become incorporated into an alien culture and thus lose their meaning. Equally, non-western musicians will be faced with major pressures to adapt their music to a form which is acceptable to western audiences, producing a hybrid with no meaning, little focus and passing

interest which, nevertheless, diverts interest and resources from a more meaningful expression of the culture. The alternate view of this would suggest that music is constantly changing, driven by a variety of internal and external influences, and musicians have always drawn ideas from any source which appealed. In looking for evidence to support either view we run the danger of 'seriation' ; formulating the thesis then looking for evidence to support it, ignoring anything which does not fit the theory.

Western approaches to education can also present a problem. There are very few places in the world where education is a process by which young people work with the adults of the community learning what they need for their future life. Education takes place in classrooms with areas of study delineated by conceptual divisions. Unless you have a western education, you may not know that you possess a 'culture' which it might be important to preserve or pass on. There may still be a few places left in the world where culture is life, but not many. The notion of abstracted concepts such as 'culture', together with an understanding of music using western reified concepts of rhythm, harmony, and melody, moves even the most traditional non-western musician into a very different situation. He or she will then conceive of the need for certain attributes to be present in his or her music and for it to fulfil particular functions for the audiences (where such things exist).

I want to examine some of these ideas in more detail using music from Ghana as a case study, looking initially at some more historical changes before trying to assess the current situation. Ghana is a proud country and rightly so. Among its many attributes, it has a great musical heritage but, to paraphrase Mae West, "Who wants to live in a heritage?" Ghana's musical heritage is, from one point of view, the ethnomusicologist's delight. There are a large number of tribal groupings in the country speaking over 100 languages and dialects. These languages can be divided into groups according to similarity and some are mutually intelligible but the diversity is impressive and daunting. The traditional music tends to change in parallel with the language, particularly because the languages are tonal (a change in pitch of syllables can change the meaning

of the word). The music links very closely with the culture, being the traditional vehicle for rites of passage and formal occasions as well as the main form of recreation. Traditionally also the music is functional as communication. What is played may imitate a phrase in the language. The tune played may tell you for example that a person has died, and also give his/her age, gender and even what he/she did for a living. Even in recreational music there are often words associated with a tune and the words often give good advice, tell people how they should behave or advertise the prowess of their village. The instruments used would also be traditional and made locally, the most common being drums of all shapes and sizes, rattles and metal idiophones, xylophones in some areas, and flutes, the voice being universal.

Each town or village is proud of its music which is seen as distinctive and different even if in many respects it is similar to the neighbouring village. It is seen as very insulting for an outsider (especially an ethnomusicologist) to observe that the music in one village sounds just like that heard in another village a few miles away. The concept of music is a very inclusive one. In one village I asked if the recreational music was different from that of the nearby town. "Yes, it is different" was the immediate response. This not being satisfactory to my western mind, I asked "How is it different?" The reply: "Our dance is different."

In the preceding description I have used the word "traditional" without qualification or exploration as though it were something long established and unchanging. In fact much of the music of West Africa has been constantly changing. If it is to remain alive it must change. Contacts with Europeans in the late 19th and early 20th century brought European instruments and musicians. Local musicians quickly learnt to play the new instruments, especially brass instruments which survived the climate better than those made of wood. Brass instruments were also loud enough to be used in conjunction with local drums and a type of African brass band music called *Adaba* developed by the Fanti people became popular all over southern Ghana before the end of the 19th century. These brass bands have continued to this day and become traditional throughout much of southern Ghana. Another brass instrument, the bugle, has also found its way

into another type of *Ewe* music called *borborbor*. This is basically singing with drums, but the bugle plays phrases imitating the language, thus adding its own voice and comments, and has become very much a traditional part of the music.

At the same time, around the turn of the century, Ghanaian musicians (and musicians throughout much of Africa) were learning to play a wide variety of European instruments and music. Ensembles such as the *Jazz Kings*, the *Cape Coast Sugar Babies* and later the *Excelsior Orchestra of Accra* and the *Lagos City Orchestra* of Nigeria combined brass, woodwind and strings to play waltzes, foxtrots, ragtimes and other ballroom numbers for upper class audiences.² These bands also played indigenous tunes which were very popular with these same audiences and developed into a music which became known as Highlife, partly because of the high cost of entry to the dance clubs. *Highlife* continued to develop in the 1920's, drawing on a wide range of sources for inspiration and ideas. A good non-musical example comes from the "concert party". A concert party performed a complete show which drew on European and American ideas seen often through the new medium of film. The performance would include a number of sketches interspersed with songs and dance, frequently using *Highlife* music. The sketches soon acquired three principal stock characters: the Joker, the Gentleman, and the Female Impersonator. The Joker quickly became africanised when a leading performer, Bob Johnson, blended the character with that of Ananse-the-spider, a traditional devious joker in *Akan* folk stories.

What were the external musical forms which contributed to *Highlife* music? John Collins³ suggests there were three: western marches and popular tunes played by regimental fife and brass bands; the sea shanties of visiting seamen from the West Indies, the Americas and other parts of Africa, accompanied by guitar, banjo, harmonica and other portable instruments; and the piano music and hymns of missionaries and school teachers which became popular with the Christian educated African elite. These sources were combined with the traditional songs, singing styles and drumming. *Highlife* music was performed by diverse ensembles including brass bands, dance orchestras and "palmwine" groups who played with available instruments in local drinking bars.

The genesis of *Highlife* could be seen as external, driven mainly by western musical styles and money, but it really only emerged when local people contributed their own music and began to own the result. It evolved into something continuing to this day as a distinct style of popular music which is essentially West African.

Other musical changes can be effected by the wish of the people, sometimes with one individual playing a major part. I want to look in some detail at a recreational style of music called *Bɛwaa*, to examine the development of this style. *Bɛwaa* is the main recreational music among the *Dagaare* people of north-west Ghana around the town of Nandom, and its development is comparatively recent. The first unknowing step in its development was that Polkuu Aul, a young man from the house of the Nandom Naa (Chief) Imoro, was sent to the capital, Accra, for education. On his return in 1946 he worked to build and open the first primary school in Nandom. As a result of his education he was aware of the potential of cultural activities in establishing a strong feeling of community, so wanted to teach local dance and music in his new school. He called together the elders from the area including the surrounding villages and asked what was their original dance. The old men demonstrated how they danced *Kpaa ngmaa*, *Sɛbkper*, *Dalaari*, *Bagrbine*, and other dances. He told them they must let their grandsons know the dances so that they would not be lost. Having formed a dance group Polkuu worked with them to establish their own style and identity. His experience of education had convinced him of the importance of cultural heritage. He wanted not only to preserve the existing songs and dances but to develop a local style which could identify and promote the town of Nandom. Polkuu also wanted local songs and dances to be part of the education in his new school and this was a valued and popular element of the teaching.

Bɛwaa was developed from a related dance form called *bawa*. *Bawa* historically was a loosely organised social dance for all Dagao (*Dagaare* people and land are inseparable in this term.) The idea of an organised choreographed *Bawa* group was originally brought to Nandom by the people

of Jirapa (a town about 50 km south and a local administrative centre). There was a large durbar organised in Nandom to which all the chiefs of the area were invited. They all brought groups of dancers with them and the group from Jirapa performed *Bawa*. The Jirapa style of *Bawa* was quite similar to the *Bagrbine* and *Sebkper* style of Nandom so people took to it quickly. The Nandom group formed by Polkuu was beginning to develop its reputation and was always looking for new ideas to "modernise" its dances and add new ones, so copied *Bawa*, changing the name slightly to *BEwaa* in the process. *BEwaa* at this time was still quite different from the modern style which developed much more during the early 1960's.

In 1957 Naa Imoro died and was succeeded by Polkuu. After his accession to the skin (northern chiefs are seated on a skin rather than a throne or stool) Polkuu continued to be actively involved with the Nandom *Sebkpere* group. He encouraged the development of a distinctive style which the group could perform in the various cultural competitions which were becoming popular. He selected new players, singers and dancers for the group and also removed any who did not agree with his own political opinions. All new *BEwaa* songs had first to be performed and approved at the palace.

Nandom people say that the speed of their *BEwaa* shows how happy and proud they are of their music and that it became faster in order to entertain the new spectators at dance competitions. Polkuu was also responsible for the greater role of girls in the dancing. Previously the men danced alone with the women dancing separately at one side, or joining in for a short time when they wanted, but Polkuu included a girl between each pair of boys for most of the dances. *BEwaa* dances in Polkuu's time often took place on a Sunday afternoon. Many people, especially young people would attend to watch and participate informally. There was plenty of opportunity for general dancing as well as a demonstration by the *Sebkpere* group. It was known to be a good time

to meet people of the opposite sex who were potential marriage partners. If there was to be a *BEwaa* dance, a flag would be hung in the market as a signal to everyone.

Nandom now has its own cultural festival, *Kakube*, (gleanings) which takes place in late November. This follows the standard Ghanaian pattern for "cultural" events with a *durbar* of chiefs on the first day which includes a large number of speeches, and music and dance demonstrations by invited groups. On the second day the dance competition takes place with, in 1994, some 45 groups competing. Many of the groups competing at *Kakube* come from the villages surrounding Nandom. Most of them dance *BEwaa* and usually include another local dance style in their performance. The stylistic differences between groups are quite small but cherished and promoted.

At present, within the villages, and within Nandom itself, it seems that everyone can dance *BEwaa* with a fair degree of skill. If someone starts playing *BEwaa* xylophone music there will quickly be a small gathering of passers-by who will dance with great enjoyment, but there are no organised dances as there were in Polkuu's day. It is also the case in the Nandom area that, when the group is performing, people other than those in the performing group, are discouraged from joining in. The group meets only to rehearse or perform.

BEwaa, like most of the other forms of recreational music in the area, has always been based around songs. The words of the songs seem to fall into two main categories: local gossip and giving good advice. There are still quite large numbers of songs being composed. Many of the songs are composed by women and sung as part of other recreational events for women such as *kari* or *nuru* dancing at harvest time. These songs are subsequently borrowed for inclusion in *BEwaa*. The usual pattern for the composition of most songs seems to be to find an existing song which you like, then modify the tune slightly and compose some new verses. The young people now seem to learn *BEwaa* by osmosis. Schools, whilst expressing a wish and intention to promote

local culture, in fact do little about it. There is a xylophone in the playground of a few schools but the local music and dance forms no part of the curriculum. Across the whole of Ghana the development of formal education has often meant the end of many other social rituals, e.g. nubility rites which cannot take place in the traditional way if a child is attending school every day.⁴ Schools now tend to teach about rituals and social events - it is not thought useful to teach the event directly; but then, how could they? The school has become a national institution with its role defined by Western concepts. Much as we may lament this, it is arguably essential for African young people to be taught in this way to a great extent - they must survive in a world dominated, at least conceptually, by the West.

The next example also comes from north-west Ghana and is a cassette called *WUO ZA WUO NU* recorded by *Begyil Paul* in Wa, the capital of the Upper-West region. The photo on the front of the cassette shows the artist in the traditional *batakari* striped smock of the area, complete with ceremonial leather bag seen only at funerals and similar important occasions. Also prominent in the pose is a new black plastic watch. The name of the artist is also a blend of old and new: *gyil* is the Dagaare word for xylophone⁵, but Paul is a Christian name. The cassette label also states "All Songs Composed and arranged by BEGYIL PAUL." On the cassette are nine songs performed by a male vocalist with a small supporting chorus of three female vocalists. The songs all follow the traditional format of a number of verses interspersed with a repeated chorus. The accompaniment is provided by the auto-accompaniment section of a typical small electric keyboard using standard western rhythms (mediated via Japan?) such as cha-cha and slow rock. This mostly provides an alternating chord accompaniment which imitates the ostinato style support part for songs generally played on the xylophone.

The claim that Begyil Paul composed all the songs should also be understood contextually. As was stated earlier, when someone claims to have composed a song this may mean that a new verse has been added to an existing song, retaining the other verses and tune. There is already a similar song

to the title track in existence. The words in Dagaare are: *Pɔgle na dɔg bie (tɛr puɔ) ti kyɛ bulang naa kpi. Baa wuɔ, dobaa wuɔ, dobaa piila wuɔ, wuɔ za wuɔ nu*. Literally translated this means: 'The girl who can bear a child (is pregnant) nearly small would have died. Dog skin, pig skin, small pig skin, every skin is a skin.' The meaning is typically somewhat open to interpretation, but two possible versions offered to me were: "Every child, even if it miscarries, is a child, just as every animal has a skin." and, "Someone had sex with a small girl who then became pregnant. When people made fun of him, he replied, every skin is a skin." Local people insisted that the song by Begyil Paul was "the same thing". The tunes are similarly related.

What is also interesting is the tuning. The keyboard, of course, plays western tempered tuning. The vocalists often have a "tonic" which relates to that adopted for the keyboard part, but there the similarities end. All the vocalists consistently hold their own tuning system which sometimes (to western ears) clashes violently with the accompaniment. The vocal tuning system relates to the xylophone (*gyil*) which is anhemipentatonic. Xylophone tunings are not fixed precisely but are simply in tune when the song sounds good. However, on instruments I have measured the tuning is somewhere between western pentatonic and equipentatonic⁶. The vocalists hold their pitch system so consistently as to suggest that they are not hearing the accompaniment in the same way as I am. The singers all appear to be quite young with the backing vocalists probably in their late teens. You would imagine that the young people would have been exposed to western tuning to a fair extent through radio, cassettes and other sound media but the current evidence is that their hearing is firmly traditional.

Possibly the next stage on from the previous example can be seen in the church in Nandom. Early missionaries brought their religion and its music. The linguistic evidence is that instruments such as the harmonium were known in the region, although how long they survived the attack of the dusty climate and termites is doubtful. The music in the church (there is only the Catholic church in the region) now uses xylophones, drums and rattles and is based on the traditional

music of the area. This may, in part, be due to the church promoting indigenous music over imported styles, but the local motivation and interest must still be present. In bringing local music into the church there have been certain problems. All music is "owned" by someone. There is a great tradition of funeral music which is very appropriate for its function, but you don't want funeral music all the time. Other music may be associated with particular secret societies or with certain types of recreational dance which may not be entirely in keeping with the religious requirements. The solution has been to create a style of church music which draws mainly on the local recreational styles without being specifically any one of them. There is a long tradition of writing songs giving good advice and there are several people in the area well known for their songs. The church in Nandom is also fortunate in having one of the priests who is a trained musician. This can have its drawbacks in some respects but Father Dominic in Nandom is largely responsible for the development of a new musical style which is becoming common throughout the region. Equally, much of the traditional music and dance is acceptable within the church⁷.

A parallel example on a more international scale comes from Accra. Nana Danso Abiam studied music at the University of Ghana and has now formed the Pan African Orchestra. This ensemble includes *atenteben* and *wia* flutes, *gyile* xylophones, *Asante* horns and numerous percussion instruments from Ghana as well as *kora* (harp-lute) and *gonje* (African violin). This ensemble plays arrangements of traditional music mostly from Ghana and this has been very successful. Danso Abiam is an expert composer and arranger and the ensemble was invited to perform at WOMAD festivals and also recorded a CD⁸ in 1994. The problem in some ways is that the arrangements have been too well done. Danso Abiam knows his music well and has included many traditional stylistic elements within the ensemble. However, the musicians now need to read notation in order to cope with complex arrangements. The instruments have also been brought in line with an acceptable standard of Western tuning - not perfect, or the character would be lost, but very different from the original sources. For many people this is traditional African music - does this degree of misperception matter?

My final example comes from the drumming of the *Ewe* people of south-east Ghana. One of the dance pieces is called *Ageshe* and is a fast version of the traditional *Aghadza* war dance. When I was taught to play this piece I was told that one particular section was a *reggae* section. *Reggae* music had become very popular with the young people so the drummers had decided to include it in their music. Here is a little of what I was taught for the *reggae* section⁹.

The musical notation is divided into two systems. The first system is labeled 'Bell' and 'Master drum'. The 'Bell' part is on a single staff with a 12/8 time signature, showing a steady eighth-note pattern. The 'Master drum' part is on a single staff with a 4/4 time signature, showing a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The second system continues the 'Bell' part on a single staff and the 'Master drum' part on a single staff, both with 4/4 time signatures. The 'Bell' part continues with eighth notes, while the 'Master drum' part features a more varied rhythm with eighth and sixteenth notes.

It is certainly true that in this section the master drum often uses rhythms with a semiquaver base in $\frac{4}{4}$ time rather than the previous $\frac{12}{8}$ feel which the bell maintains. However, I find it hard to hear *reggae* in this. What is wrong? Is it that I don't know *Ewe* music well enough? *Reggae* well enough? Would *Reggae* musicians recognise this?

There are many confusing elements in the examples above. There is an incredible patchwork of influences, borrowings and change. The complexity of the situation is such that you could easily find evidence to support almost any view of the changing situation. Yes, there is change heavily directed towards the demands of the western music scene with its commercial edge combined with a cosy image of "ethnic" music. But the West African music world is also vibrant and alive, producing its own new music. This draws on many sources but remains the personal expression of the people. There are worrying elements, some of them not musical. Two examples from northern Ghana are pots and baskets. Pots for carrying and storing water, and baskets for carrying just about anything else have been made locally for as long as people can remember. They are

made from local resources of clay and grass, involve many local people in their production and, at the end of their working life, they decay ecologically. The modern replacements are the plastic or metal bowl and the plastic bag. These are not made locally and use non-renewable resources. When they are worn out they litter the countryside for many years adding nothing to the environment. The young people do not want to be seen using pots and baskets. These are old-fashioned; they are "colo" (colonial), and the effect on local employment is not taken personally. These aspects of life are not recognised as part of a cultural heritage.

Music and dance are recognised as cultural and therefore worthy of preservation, but this carries its own dangers. My college in the UK, Dartington College of Arts, has recently carried out a survey of musical activities in the rural area of south-west England where it is located. The survey revealed a surprising level of activity in many different styles including village bands, bellringing and folk music. The majority of this activity was centred around two organisations: the church and the school, mainly additional to their essential function. The possible danger here is the power this gives to the priest and the headteacher. Not that they would intentionally obstruct music, but the degree of enthusiasm and support they give can be a vital element. These organisations are also subject to national edict, which, with the aim of providing equality or leadership, can restrict the scope for essential local variation. In West Africa the church and the school are beginning to assume this role but their importance has not yet been fully realised or developed.

I have a great deal of faith in the ability of West African musicians to remain their own masters, changing and adapting their music in response to the needs of their people and audiences. All we can do in predicting the future is to draw on the evidence of the past. A worst scenario for any culture and music might be the large-scale abduction and transportation of large numbers of the community to another continent. When this happened in West Africa the outcome was Ragtime, Blues and American Jazz, so I'm hopeful.

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¹ Goodwin & Gore (1990)

² Collins (1985)

³ Collins (1994)

⁴ Sarpong. (1977)

⁵ The word *gyil* is used to denote the traditional xylophone and music associated with it. Thus *bɛwaa* music is known as *bɛwaa gyil*. The Dagaare word for "white person" is *nasaala*. Thus the harmonium introduced by the early missionaries became *nasaalgyil*.

⁶ Typical intervals in cents might be:

Octave 1	274	224	275	237	242
Octave 2	249	232	225	245	228

⁷ I was invited to a service to celebrate 25 years in the ministry of two Nandom priests. At one point in the service there was dancing in the local recreational style throughout the church, including a large group of nuns and priests in full vestments gathered around the altar.

⁸ The Pan African Orchestra: *Opus 1*. Virgin RealWorld CDRW48 (UK) PM 527 (F).

⁹ This transcription uses pitch to indicate the different hand strokes to be played on the master drum. These will result on varying pitches which relate to each other approximately as shown in the example, but the pitches are not in any way precise.

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Trevor Wiggins is Director of Music at Dartington College of Arts in the UK. He has studied West African music for many years and plays the *atenteben* (flute), *gyil* (xylophone) and drums. He has published a number of books and articles dealing with issues for music and music pedagogy drawing on his research. In 1994-5 he spent a period of 10 months in Ghana, funded by Dartington College and the Elmgrant Trust, carrying out field research into the recreational music of the Dagaare people based in Nandom. A CD of his recordings has recently been released by Pan (*Bɛwaare: They are coming*. Pan 2052CD).

Photos

- 1) Joseph Kobom playing the *gyil*. Kobom was an outstanding exponent of this instrument who died in October 1995. He is wearing a traditional *batakari*.
- 2) A girl dancing *kari*, a recreational dance of the Dagaare people. Notice the mix of clothing in the circle of supporters. Western T-shirts and dresses plus the traditional waist cloth made and dyed locally.

GLOBALISATION

L'Afrique occidentale dans le monde ou le monde en Afrique occidentale¹

Trevor Wiggins

On trouve de tout en Afrique occidentale : un climat où l'on a rarement froid mais qui constitue un terrain favorable à la prolifération de méchantes maladies ; d'anciennes traditions de cultures musicales transmises oralement et partagées par tous, mais aussi une industrie naissante de piratage de cassettes de tous les genres musicaux ; de nombreux musiciens n'ayant qu'une idée, celle d'aller enregistrer des disques hors d'Afrique occidentale ; des auditeurs friands des derniers enregistrements réalisés en Europe et aux États-Unis ; une économie où la main d'œuvre est tellement bon marché que beaucoup de gens ont de la peine à survivre ; des forêts tropicales et des réserves naturelles que l'Occident voudrait voir préservées ; de superbes plages et de magnifiques paysages qui n'attirent pourtant pas beaucoup de touristes à cause des guerres et du manque de commodités. En certains endroits, le tourisme a joué un rôle important. En Afrique occidentale les touristes ne sont pas encore arrivés en nombre suffisant pour produire un tel effet, mais les hôtels de luxe s'intéressent de plus en plus à la musique de danse et de spectacle à contenu « ethnique ». Bien entendu, les gens sont conscients de ces problèmes et de ces contradictions, mais que peuvent-ils faire sinon constater le déroulement de l'histoire ? Certains gouvernements d'Afrique de l'Ouest souhaitent changer cette situation mais ils sont entravés par l'énorme « dette » contractée auprès des banques occidentales et par le pouvoir de manipulation des sociétés multinationales. (Je ne m'excuse pas de parler politique dans un article sur la musique. Les politiciens ont toujours utilisé la musique et la musique est une industrie économique comme une autre).

La globalisation et le concept de village planétaire font actuellement l'objet de nombreux débats. Notion complexe, la globalisation peut embrasser différentes idées. A un certain niveau, elle indique simplement que la communication est devenue plus facile aujourd'hui que par le passé. Les peuples d'Afrique occidentale sont plus au courant de ce qui se passe dans le reste du monde, et nous sommes mieux informés sur l'Afrique de l'Ouest. Cette simple affirmation contient cependant un déséquilibre. Les Africains de l'Ouest veulent savoir ce qui se passe dans le reste du monde parce que c'est là que se trouvent les plus gros enjeux financiers. L'intérêt de l'Occident pour l'Afrique est marginal, réduit

¹ Traduit de l'anglais par Ramèche Goharian.

'And for next week, I want you to...'
learning world musics'
in *Teaching World Musics*, *Music Teacher*,
London, November 1997 pp31-3

'And for next week, I want you to . . . ; learning world musics

Trevor Wiggins

How do you learn to play an instrument? Well, first you need to get hold of an instrument. Then you find a teacher for your instrument. You go along each week for a lesson, maybe on your own or in a small group. The lesson lasts 30-40 minutes with the teacher telling you what to do, correcting your mistakes, and setting things for you to work on for then next lesson. Once you can produce a sound, you work at simple pieces, often following a graded series of music especially prepared with the challenges of your chosen instrument in mind. When your teacher decides you have progressed sufficiently they will start to introduce you to music written for your instrument and you probably start to feel as though you can own up to playing the instrument without embarrassment.

So when, a few years ago, I met a superb xylophone player from northern Ghana called Joseph Kobom Taale, one of my first questions to him was 'Who taught you to play?' His reply was quite a surprise, 'No one. I came out with it.' I assumed that he might be saying that he had not had any one particular teacher, or did not want to admit to having received specific help from anyone, so I tried again. 'But you told me that your older brothers all played. If you made a mistake, wouldn't they come and correct you?' 'No. If I was playing, one of them might come and play *kpagru* (playing a repetitive

rhythm using sticks on the lowest bar of the xylophone) to help me keep in time but they would not tell me what to play.' This same reply, or a near version of it, was repeated by every other Ghanaian musician I met so I was forced to review my ideas about how people learn music.

Of course, I had previously come across people in the UK who were self-taught. They generally played either pop-music instruments or limited themselves to quite simple classical music, often with an individual style of technique and performance, and they could seldom read music notation. But these Ghanaian musicians were superb performers, playing intricate cross rhythms, displaying dazzling technique, and responding immediately to the other musicians in the ensemble. They also had a wide repertoire of music although they couldn't read notation. With my assumptions in tatters I started to try to understand what was happening, since I wanted to learn to play both Ghanaian drums and xylophone.

I started by having drumming lessons from a Ghanaian master drummer. The first day he showed me how to hit the drum and some of the first patterns from a piece of music. I found it hard to remember all the patterns – some of them were quite similar to each other and they all had to fit with the repetitive bell rhythm which acted as timekeeper for all the parts. What was particularly hard was changing from one pattern to another. The first problem was thinking of the next pattern while continuing to play the existing one; the next problem was physically changing to the next pattern. I felt like someone trying to pluck up courage to leap across a gap. I'd take a run-up, but keep stopping at the edge, until my teacher finally took pity and played through the change with me. My response was typically western: I brought out my portable cassette recorder and asked the teacher to play the patterns for me. That evening I sat down and worked out how to notate the rhythms using an adapted version of staff notation. The next day, when the teacher yelled, 'Change!' I could take a quick squint at my score and change relatively quickly to the new pattern. I'd sussed it – I could use all my skills, developed in western music over many years, to notate and play this music. Then the

problems started.

I'd been learning a new pattern that I found quite difficult. The next day, while waiting for the master drummer to arrive, I am practising quietly and, inevitably, making some mistakes. During most of my lessons there are one or two teenage boys who help by playing some of the other parts of the piece I am learning. They have heard this music all their lives and know it well. I try to correct my mistakes by playing more slowly, or taking a particular passage and repeating it. The boys, who also arrived early, are frustrated by my efforts and try to show me how it should be. They play at full speed and I don't recognise it at all as the same rhythm. They are most surprised when I am not able to copy their actions immediately – 'Don't I know this piece?' When I had learnt the piece better I realised that what they played was indeed 'the same' rhythm, except that it was a variation of what I was trying to do and started from a different point in the pattern. My western training assumed that there was a single 'correct' version of the rhythm which I could notate. In fact, there are many slightly different versions of many rhythms which are all recognised as being 'the same' because they have particular characteristics, in much the same way as we recognise many different tools as a 'tin-opener', not because they look the same, but because they do the same job.

My next few problems followed quickly and might be summarised as notation, correction and dancing. I spent a long time at the end of every day listening to my recordings of the lessons and playing that day, and working out how to notate them. Although they were difficult, I thought I was getting pretty close. But the rhythms continued to get more complex, in particular, they seemed to deliberately avoid being clearly one thing or another. One time a rhythm would sound like a triplet, the next, 3+3+2. The reality was somewhere between the two. I could write down either and know what I was meant to play but it would be useless for anyone else to try to use this notation to learn in the western manner. This also linked with the problem of getting the rhythm correct in the first place. My teacher was very good and would soon tell me if I was not playing correctly, usually by keeping playing himself

and yelling, 'Off!' at me. But he didn't tell me what was off. Was it the rhythm? The sounds? Was I in the wrong place against the other parts? I realised I had to listen and use my own brain and ears – for my teacher it was either right or wrong, not right in places.

Finally there was the dance. I had realised early on that, in order to know how the complete piece went, I needed to know the rhythm of the dance steps, as these frequently held the key to identifying a main pulse. But, as the teacher showed me, the dance steps changed in response to signals from the master drum. So the drummer had to know the dance because if the drummer gave inappropriate signals or didn't play them correctly, there would be confusion among the dancers and they would probably come and push the drums over as a signal that the drumming was not worth dancing to.

My lessons on the xylophone with Joseph Kobom followed a similar pattern. I had to listen for hours to try to get things in my head, then try them out on the instrument. Each xylophone had its own voice, its tuning was slightly different. You could start a tune on any bar you thought appropriate – there was no pattern of notes laid out to guide you. Each part: left hand, right hand, *kpagru*, support xylophone, might have its own time signature in western terms, but they all fitted together. You just had to listen and keep trying to find where you were. As I learnt more I came to understand that there were many different versions of most tunes. A xylophone player would hear a tune he liked, usually in another village. When he got home he would play the tune on his own xylophone which might have a different tuning. He would also add some words of his own, maybe borrowing odd phrases from the original. This would mean that the tune also needed to be changed in some places to accommodate the new words, so by the end of the process, a new song was composed.

The outcome of these experiences was that I realised that the way that you learn is very much part of the music you are learning. I could use some of my experience as a western musician to get into the music quite quickly, but only to a certain level and in a limited way. If I wanted to go further I had to acquire new skills and understandings which were

not part of my training and the only way to do this was by the traditional methods of the society in question. The music belongs in its society. It has a function for the culture and, if you are to play it well, you have to try to learn all of it. Inevitably this leads to another realisation: I will never play music like a Ghanaian. I do not share a Ghanaian experience or culture. Unlike Joseph Kobon, I have not spent my whole life hearing xylophone music, so I have to learn how the music goes as well as how to play it. However, if I learn well I can get very close to the real music. Last November I went back to the town of Nandom in northern Ghana where Joseph Kobon was born. I was invited to play the xylophone at the Kakube festival (an annual cultural event). It was a wonderful experience to hear people laughing and then singing with me because they recognised the tune, and therefore the song, I was playing.

Where does this leave you in learning world music? Most teaching in the UK will follow the western system, with a weekly lesson and individual practice in between. This is going to leave out many important elements of whatever music you learn. In any case, how do you know what are the important elements of the traditional style of playing and learning? Different cultures have very different styles: a friend of mine learns *shakuhachi*, the

Japanese flute. In his lessons the teacher plays and my friend listens, copies and learns. The teacher will not correct what he plays – to do so would be extremely insulting, suggesting that the pupil could not think for himself. In north-Indian music there is a long system of traditional apprenticeship. This usually begins with the pupil living in the teacher's house and carrying out menial household tasks. When the teacher thinks the pupil is ready he will begin teaching him and will expect the pupil to do absolutely and only what he is told until the teacher indicates that he has progressed far enough to be allowed some licence. Is it the case that you can't learn Indian music properly until you have prepared your teacher's breakfast or done his washing? Probably not, but it is indicative of the relationship between pupil and teacher which is an integral part of the learning process. The final conclusion of all this, of course, has to be that you can learn so much about any music in the UK within an institution, but to get the real flavour you have to go and learn for yourself in the place where the music comes from.

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'In the time of my fourth great-grandfather...'
**Western Sisaala music from Lambussie,
 Ghana
 PAN RECORDS 2065CD (1998)
 Western Sisaala music from Lambussie, Ghana**

In the time of my fourth great-grandfather...

The town of Lambussie is in the Upper West region of Ghana in West Africa, about 15km from the border with Burkina Faso and 10km from the Black Volta river. The people who live in this area are mainly Sisaala and Dagara. Sisaala people inhabit quite a large area of land in northern Ghana from the central northern area across to the west. Lambussie lies at the western extreme — the nearest Dagara town, Nandom, is only 5km away but it is part of a different administrative area and the languages are not mutually intelligible (see PAN 2052 CD). The countryside is mainly long grass savannah dotted with trees, many of which are frequently cut for firewood. Forty years ago there was abundant wildlife in the area, including lions, elephants and several species of antelope. Now, these have either completely died out, mainly as a result of hunting, or are found only in the game reserve 200km south. The area has one rainy season between April and October and there is little rainfall outside this period. Farming millet, corn, yams, groundnuts and sweet potatoes provides the main source of food, with walled dry-season gardens, watered by hand, providing salad vegetables. Some farmers cultivate cotton as a cash crop — the Lambussie *Kuoro* (chief), Baloroo has won several national awards for his farming. Many of the adult men live here only during the farming season, travelling to cities in the south to seek work during the rest of the year. The women remain all year, farming, carrying firewood and water, making pots and baskets, brewing *pito* (local millet beer), preparing food and caring for children.

In many respects, men and women lead quite separate lives in the community. They each have clear roles and responsibilities and work co-operatively with other women or men. Thus, it is the responsibility of the women to prepare and cook food, to draw and carry water from the borehole, and to make beer. Many of these things require help from other women. A woman on her own cannot lift a full water jar weighing more than 25kg onto her head. Older women who can no longer do heavy work look after the children of the younger women — in this way everyone feels they are contributing. It is not surprising then that women and men make music and dance separately for most

of the time, even during the same special occasion. The tracks on this CD are arranged to demonstrate this, but are also cross-referenced to show a typical sequence of music during, for example, a funeral.

#1 is a recording of *Neporo* which is women's music, combining clapping and singing. This is the first music to be played at a house when a death of a member of that house is announced. This is performed whatever the age of the deceased person, often beginning at around 3am. While the women sing the men mourn and the body is prepared for burial. *Neporo* I was told, is 'always the same', although there are small changes in the patterns clapped, and the pitch, but not the shape of the tune. It is led by one of the senior women present, with each one taking her turn to lead. When there has been a death, the spirits are close by, so, if the leader makes a mistake the spirits may be offended and take her also! For this reason, only older women lead *Neporo*. The words are symbolic of crying (weeping) and have no specific meaning.

Marriage is a serious contractual obligation in northern Ghana. Women tend to be married at a quite young age, whereas the men are generally older, as they have to save money for the dowry and have to be able to convince the woman's family that they will support her and her family. The dowry is traditionally 50-60,000 cowrie shells (depending on whether this is a first or subsequent marriage) and the support includes an obligation to work, when required, on the in-law's farm. The dowry is now often replaced with a cash equivalent. When a woman is to be married she is taken to her new husband's house by her mother, accompanied by other women from her village. When they arrive at the house where she will live from now on, they will sing this song (#2): A ele haawu lɛ yɔu kue. Werro wiɛ ni lissa. (We have not come to the man's house for no reason; we have come here to enjoy ourselves because of the marriage.) #3 is another wedding song in praise of the women of Lambussie: Bosiilo haala kyin buntuo wer fiema yee. Luu kyin diiboli yee liima neu i tɛn pɔrɛ. (Even if the women of Lambussie are standing far away, any passer-by will be attracted by the sight and be happy.) Sometimes songs performed at weddings seem to offer quite general advice or comment that would not be heard at a wedding in the West. The next song (#4) talks about death and its inclusion at a wedding demonstrates how death is very much part of everyday life in Lambussie. Li suu faa tɔɔ liɛ, sosoro fa a ɛrɛ eri. Suu ha liɛ ri dindɔmɔ suu baara die. (If death did not exist, what would my enemies do, since they rejoice over any death related to me?)

The relationship between a man and his wife is the subject of the next song (#5). *I si n li dzaa me n ken dzaa tun le eleo ina nibiino haa saaking you me. N'yaa wo nyei.* (I am being sacked [dismissed] from the house on no good grounds. Just imagine how I am being disgraced for nothing.) This is a *Guola* dance and song for women, played to celebrate harvest. *N'yaa wo nyei* is a repeated refrain, around words which are improvised, continuing the theme. The dance (called *hanyei*) is particularly for older women and is always the first one in the harvest celebration. [PHOTO 3] During the dance, the women take turns to fall backwards into the arms of several others, who then throw them as they jump up and forwards (very similar to *nuru* — see PAN 2052CD #19). *Guola* is the main dance rhythm used in the Lambussie area. Traditionally *Guola* as a dance does not have any words (see tracks 18-20) but the rhythm is used with a tune and words as here. *N'yaa wo nyei* leads directly into another song which again comments on marriage prospects: *Dzanga dzanga ye kuor bele lul lo tolle a pi pa dzanga.* (The wealthy people prefer their daughters to marry the *dzanga* dancers.) *Dzanga* is a type of dance which is very difficult and so the *dzanga* dancers are extremely skilful; they are in demand to dance at important occasions. This song is performed by the women when they want to dance for themselves. The dance is particularly for young girls, to show happiness, which they do by jumping up high and knocking hips or bottoms together.

Harvest is a major occasion for celebration. Because there is a single rainy season between April and October all the crops are dependent on the rain coming at the right time and being sufficiently heavy. The rains are not reliable and may be late or only light at the beginning, followed by heavy rain later when sun is needed to ripen the crops. Harvest is an extended period of hard work to gather the food and cash crops before the ground becomes too hard or the crops are spoiled by wind, bush fires or pests. At the end of this time, in late November, people can relax more, brew some *pito* and dance. #6 is a women's harvest song with a somewhat obscure meaning, using the *Guola* rhythm: *N ma kyo illi panwa dzengelen, a bul n tag di na dzengelen, n tag di tuorse illa dzengelen.* (My mother has boiled some breast milk for me and told me to dip my finger in and taste it. I tasted it and vomited milk.) In this dance, two women hold a stick on the ground, lifting it up and down while a third dances onto and off it. [PHOTO 4] The stick symbolises the wooden pestle which will be used to pound the recently harvested millet crop.

#7 is another harvest song: Kabri, Kabri membila longo. Suu he yaara haa kuee. (Kabri, your wife has run out naked crying, while death, which has brought so much poverty on our families, has not yet come.) Kabri is the name of the Lambussie land god. The suggestion here is that it is a bad sign for Kabri's wife to be running about naked and crying — this could mean bad luck, i.e. death, for the village. There is also an association between harvesting the land and seeing the naked genitals of Kabri's wife — they are linked in their fertility. In the dance, the women imitate the way Kabri's wife walked, holding their knees together with their hands and jumping! Songs are a medium for communication about all sorts of unlikely matters and this function does not stop them being fun. #8 is another women's *Guola* dance and song, played to celebrate harvest: Ku nya-nya-nya a ning loking kuro kunyaare. A ning loking kuro kunyaare ana naawule kunyaare. (I am scratching my body, my body is itching, my father spider.) 'My father spider' refers to the infectious disease chicken pox, which causes small irritating spots all over the body. Although this song is a recreational dance in which the women run their hands up and down their bodies, as if washing or scratching themselves, all to general amusement, it also has the function of informing people about chicken pox and the fact that, though common, it is not usually a serious illness.

The final women's song, which is particularly for the younger women and played around harvest time (#9), is in the Dagaare language: Doo benye ngmaam saa ko, Doo benye ngmaam saa ko, Bebouole ngmaadaa sa koe, koe, koe, koe saa hii. (Man, having seen the monkey, it is about to rain [repeat], They are calling the male monkey, it's cloudy, cloudy, cloudy, cloudy, the rain should stop.) This is a song to stop the threatening rain which would spoil the crops. The monkeys also want the rain to stay away as it prevents them finding a good hiding place from which to steal the crops. The dance imitates the antics of the monkeys as they steal the cobs of corn, then run away to hide and eat them — highly amusing for all involved. The relationship between the Dagara and Sisaala people in this area is complex. Nandom and Lambussie are part of separate administrative areas. The town of Nandom is considerably larger than Lambussie, which is the older settlement. I was told by a Dagara that Sisaala men often take Dagara wives because they are hard-working, but Dagara men will not take Sisaala wives. The people of the Nandom and Lambussie know each other well and seem to have an amicable relationship but there certainly have been some serious disputes in the past (see track 20).

Given that there are a number of Dagara women living in Lambussie it is no surprise to find that an enjoyable Dagara song has been adopted in Lambussie.

With the exception of the drum heard in some of the women's music in previous tracks and the *bugiloo* (see #16), the other musical instruments are played by men. The main 'chamber' instrument is the *kyanna*. This is a raft zither with the raft made from stalks of a special grass called *filla* tied together. [PHOTO 5] The strings are made from strands split off from the grass, passing over movable bridges and wound round with fibre from *dawadawa* pods (West African locust bean) to give a lower pitch. The strings are plucked with the thumbs. The *kyanna* often plays music similar to that played by the second supporting xylophone when these are used. When someone dies, another family member will call the *kyanna* player to the house, to play and sing privately for him/her. This could be before the main funeral or perhaps during the funeral, in periods of rest between dancing sessions. The lightweight portable *kyanna* thus provides music similar to that of the xylophone but in a private, more intimate situation, where it would be difficult to play the much larger xylophone. #10 is a typical song with repeated falling phrases, offering advice as to how you should behave: Nya nya nya nya sin dzaa zu. (The *nya nya* person should not come to my house.) The *nya nya* person is someone who does not sit still in one place, is always moving around and gossiping about other people.

The next *kyanna* song (#11) was performed by Barbini, who lives in the Sisaala village of Hapa, about 10km north of Lambussie, close to the Burkina Faso border. Ni yar bito ni suu kata ni ka ni yar yaa. Ni yaara to. (There are no longer poor people, except the orphans.) This song could be played at any time for someone whose parents are dead. Families are far more of a social system and support in West Africa than they are in Western countries. Someone whose parents had died would send for the *kyanna* player to come to their house and help to express their grief. #12 is a song with a similar function: Li ini biini suu wie wer-wer i kyɔɛ si wɛ. (You feel very angry when you think about death.) This is a colloquial expression of the uselessness of pondering seriously over death. It is an inevitable event which causes sadness. It was recorded by Bibeo Bagulibe from the village of Pina, about 3km north-east of Lambussie. Other *kyanna* songs, for example, praise songs (which can be in praise of anything from a famous chief and warrior, to your partner at last night's dancing), have a similar construction and sound.

The village of Billaw is midway between Lambussie and Hapa. The village has its own water reservoir, complete with crocodiles. It is also notable because the Billaw chief has 15 wives and very many children, and the village is well known locally for having its own flute ensemble — *Bilaawa Gbeolo*. The flutes are single-note instruments made of bamboo and played by men and boys. There are five different pitches and the complete sound they make together is a result of the combined rhythms of the different parts. [PHOTO 6] The other instruments in the ensemble are two *zense* (called *jengsi* further east) [xylophones], and a drum. There is also a time-keeping rhythm played on a bar of one of the xylophones. The flute players — 20 or more — dance around the xylophones and drum playing the flute held between thumb and forefinger. On one occasion when I recorded them there were not enough flutes for a few of the youngest boys taking part, so they sang their parts, holding their hands to their mouths as though they were holding flutes. As usual, what they play is an accompaniment to known songs or a linguistic phrase suggested by the musical pattern. The first song (#13) is: Samboi Keningbie ka nuɔ ɔ. (Samboi Keningbie should close her mouth.) Samboi [woman's name] is dancing with her mouth open and looks foolish. This was recorded from outside the ensemble so that the total sound can be heard. The next song (#14) was recorded from inside the group so that the individual parts can be heard more clearly: Mobie belle bombo kabe. (Two cowries will not buy cassava). Cowrie shells were used as currency before money was introduced. The song warns that if you have little money you will not be able to buy enough cassava [a staple root vegetable] to eat.

Lambussie people have a great sense of their history. I was fortunate to be shown round the inside of the oldest parts of the old chief's palace. This is built of mudbrick, with the roof supported by timber and then covered with mud which is baked hard by the sun. [PHOTO 9] A roof like this can last for at least 20 years with minimal maintenance. New sections are added to the building as new families grow. Often, rooms 'belonging' to notable members of the family are left untouched at their death, and their possessions are left hanging on the walls. At one point I was shown a room built into the structure but with no obvious access. I was told, 'In the time of my fourth great-grandfather when Babatu [a notorious slave raider] came we hid here. The chief made an agreement with Babatu that our people should not be taken. So he fed Babatu and all his men, and his horses, even the chains.' I assumed that this was a folk memory dating back to the time before slave trading was officially

abolished nearly 200 years ago, but further research showed this to be far from the case. In the latter part of the 19th century Samory and Babatu were, according to your point of view, freedom fighters or slave traders who had large personal armies, with which they dominated a large region of sub-Saharan Africa. Early in the 20th century a narrative, *Histories of Samory and Babatu and others* was written by Mallam Abu, who claimed to have been with Samory and Babatu. He wrote about one of Babatu's lieutenants, Gazari, 'who departed from Kasana to a certain country, the Billaw country. The people of Billaw heard the news about Gazari. The people of Billaw ran away, both they and the people of Hapa. ... [They] climbed a mountain between Billaw and Hapa. Gazari found them on the mountain. ... In three days he defeated them. Gazari returned to Billaw and stayed [there]. The people of Busie — the town was called Lambussie — who were proprietors of the Billaw country, they ran away. ... The Zabarma people [Babatu's army] were raiding the interior of the Lambussie country.'¹ In Lambussie I was shown the tree where Babatu tied his horse. Later, in response to my questions about the history of Lambussie, a group of elders were assembled. The *Tɔɔ-tina* (earth-priest — an important ritual function separate from the chief, who looks after the people) narrated the history of Lambussie. What he said was carefully listened to by the other elders who indicated their approval that what he had said was the truth. Part of this narrative can be heard on #15. Here the *Tɔɔ-tina* is telling how 'in the time of his fourth great-grandfather' the people of Lambussie learnt to play and make xylophones to accompany their singing.

Funerals are major occasions which have a pattern of events governed by the age and seniority of the deceased. If it is a baby that has died, then *Neporo* (track 1) will be performed for about 30 minutes, after which the burial takes place. For an older child, *Neporo* is played/sung for several hours, then the xylophone is played for a short time at the compound [the family's house]. Then the dead body is brought outside and displayed, seated on a chair, on a raised platform of branches and cloth, so everyone can see the body. The xylophone too is brought out and continues playing funeral music, until the burial around 4pm. For a very old person, that is someone who is too old to work in the fields and therefore stays in the compound to look after children, first the *tangpanne* drums (like Asante *atumpan*) are played during the night following the death, so that people all around, up to 5km away, know there has been a death, and that the dead person was old. The drumming might also

¹ PILASZEWICZ, Stanisław. *The Zabarma Conquest of north-west Ghana and Upper Volta: A Hausa narrative "Histories of Samory and Babatu and others" by Mallam Abu*. Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers (1992)

contain some ritual phrases which could tell something about who had died. Messengers are also sent out on foot and bicycle to surrounding villages. *Neporo* may be performed for several hours until the xylophones are brought to the entrance of the house to play funeral music, accompanied by the *benter bie* and *benter zeno* (small and large calabash drums), for the people to cry (mourn). For a very old person the burial may take place at this point, whilst the funeral celebration may be delayed for several months while relatives are summoned and money collected to meet the cost of a large funeral. The social pressure to attend funerals is such that everyone in the extended family must attend regardless of other pressing needs, even the harvest is interrupted. The pressure is only slightly less for non-related members of the community, as non-attendance could lead to a poor turnout at your own funeral in the future. This would be a disaster as there would not be enough financial contributions to pay for the costs (attending funerals can be a costly business, as mourners must give money to the corpse, widows, family elders, musicians, etc.)

At the later funeral, the corpse's hat and sandals, and a cloth are placed on and below the chair on the raised platform, to represent the dead body, for people to mourn. A round basketwork fish trap, wrapped in a cloth or smock, may be used to suggest the body, and, if it is a woman, her head tie is placed on the chair, and perhaps her pots at her 'feet'. There would also be photographs, if available. People who can 'see twice' say that they have seen the spirit of a deceased person at their own funeral, enjoying the dancing. At this later funeral, *neporo* is played in the night in the compound, but at dawn the xylophones take over, playing funeral music as the cloths are brought out onto the chair/platform, as the people cry. The Sisaala people believe that the dead live in another world. So, on the death of an elderly person, the spirits of their ancestors are invited to come and help the soul of the deceased into the next world. This takes place between 2am and 4am during the funeral when everyone else is asleep. The *kyanna* player provides the music and the *gɔkɛ* (hoe beaters) then go round the 'sitting grounds' of the family and in-laws, calling the names of their ancestors to invite them to come for the soul of the dead person to take him/her into the other world for good. Then the people are happy, they give the *kyanna* and the *gɔkɛ* money, put on their smocks and go to dance. Only the family dances *guola*, during the day, but later, at night, everyone present joins in with the *yiila* dancing, by which time enjoyment and celebration are the order of the day. For an adult, with grown children and perhaps grandchildren, but is not very old (i.e., is still working in the fields), the

funeral all takes place before the burial, with a similar sequence of events but no *kyanna* (only the *gɔkɛ*), and no *yiila* dancing.

#16 is a recording of the *Gɔkɛ*, the *kyanna*, the *pitilo* (hoe blade, which is played by hitting it with a thick metal ring) and the *bugiloo* (metal jingles similar to cow bells sewn en masse onto a deep leather belt, worn by a woman, and played by dancing vigorously). [PHOTO 7]. Together, the musicians walk around the village playing to call the Lambussie people to come and dance. On hearing the *Gɔkɛ* the people will come out of their houses and move in procession behind the musicians to the place of the funeral, where the two xylophones will be in position, usually near the dead body (on display in the open coffin on a raised decorated platform). ready to assume their lead role in the music. The *kyanna*, *pitilo*, *bugiloo* and drum players take up positions next to the xylophones, and the people dance in file around them. The *Gɔkɛ* also call the people to dance at other occasions, such as harvest celebrations.

There are two main dances used for funerals and cultural events in Lambussie, *Guola* and *Yiila*. I was told that the difference is that *Guola* does not have singing, while *Yiila* does. This was confusing as both forms seemed to have singing, however, the distinction is clear for the people — in *Guola* music, the musicians play a song which has known words, and they will sometimes sing those words, but the dancers do not sing (whereas, the dancers would sing in *Yiila* music). Traditional *Guola* has no singing whereas *Yiila* is a general term for voice/singing. #17 is a *Guola* dance with singing: *Bosiilo nyan kuo yee a ba wɔ nyuk daare*. (The people of Lambussie have come in with their pomp and pageantry.) This *Guola* dance would be the first one to be played/sung/danced after the *Gɔkɛ* have gathered everyone together. There are a pair of xylophones (*zɛnsɛ*) used here (similar to those used at Billaw and Hapa). These are large 18-key pentatonic instruments, up to two metres in width, similar in all respects to the Dagara *gyil* (PAN 2052CD).

#18 is the most popular *Guola* dance (without singing), played at every Sisaala funeral which has dancing, and now the foremost cultural dance of the Sisaala people, frequently included in group or competition performances. [PHOTO 2] At funerals, if the deceased was up to about 60 years old, this *Guola* is danced in front of the dead body. If the deceased was older, he/she is buried immediately and a date is fixed later for the remaining part of the funeral, including the *Guola* dancing. As the people dance around the musicians, they turn left in towards the centre, take two

consecutive steps on each foot, then turn right again to continue round the circle. At funerals, the *Guola* dances are played one after another, followed by the *Yiila* dances at night or the following morning. The style of *Guola* varies across the Sisaala area. People will often know how it is danced elsewhere and will copy the style if they like it. #19 is Fatchiiwɔ Guola — a funeral dance, known as double-step *Guola* from the village of Fatchu, near Tumu towards the eastern edge of the Sisaala area, but recorded in Lambussie.

The complex relationship between Lambussie and their Dagara neighbours in Nandom (see #9) returns in the next track recorded in Hapa (#20): Gɔwɔ n kyine Nandom kuoro si gɔwɔ n kyine. (The eagle does not have any standing place, Nandom chief says, the eagle does not have any standing place.) The eagle flies high in the sky and stays high for a long time, so it seems never to land. This is a reference to a famous fight between the Nandom Naa Imoro and the previous Lambussie Kuoro Biise Tenjie Salifu. The Lambussie people were the first settlers and original owners of the land, but Nandom became bigger, as more Dagara people settled there. The victory of the Kuoro in this fight is still celebrated in Lambussie on *Bosiilo tito*, Lambussie Night. It is said that the powerful Lambussie wizards went into the Nandom houses in the night and killed the young men who were to fight against Lambussie the next day. This is again a *Guola* funeral dance but during the course of this song, to add interest, the xylophonist changes temporarily into a repeated phrase *ine baazommo* (have you seen your boyfriend?).

#21 is Gombisi — a *Guola* funeral dance, to be danced in a pair by the son-in-law of the deceased, joined by his best friend, at the beginning of the *Guola* dancing. It is a very energetic dance, with much shaking of the body to demonstrate strength to your in-laws. [PHOTO 8] This is followed by *Hanyei* (see #5), the woman's version of the funeral dance for the in-laws. Then follows a gentler version of *Gombisi*, called *Zigitigi*.

The last two tracks are *Yiila* music. #22 was recorded at Hapa and refers to the obligations of marriage (see #2): Bahɔɔ toper dzaru hirla par ma sei limu. (Elderly man who has married a young girl, you must go to your in-laws' farm.) The older man who marries a young girl cannot avoid having to work on his in-laws' farm every year, an obligation which is a traditional part of the dowry. Older men will often take a young girl as a third or fourth wife. When the husband dies, his brother or son must marry her. This *Yiila* song and dance is traditionally played during the farming season when

there is a great deal of hard manual work to be done, especially hoeing between the crops. It can also be played at funerals and other occasions. Finally #23: Basin si tie valu, ba sin si le ma valu, n kyo an zi banna duɔ va yaa ba sin si tie valu. (My enemies detest my walking about on this earth. Should I go into the sky and walk?) This is a *Yiila* song of the Lambussie *Guola* cultural group, in the modern, faster, shorter and more entertaining style preferred by the dancers and the group's audiences. When this is sung/danced, it is a signal that the dancing is finished.

Words = 4872

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- [2] Wedding song #1
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- [10] Kyanna song #1
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- [16] Gəke music
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Field recordings by Trevor Wiggins in 1994-1996 around Lambussie in the Upper West region of Ghana using a Sony D3 digital recorder with a Sony ECM999 microphone.

Notes—Trevor Wiggins

Photography—Trevor Wiggins, Vivienne Wells

All tracks—traditional repertoire

It was generally necessary to set up separate recording sessions as public occasions such as funerals are also markets with too much noise. Even so, the environment occasionally makes itself heard in the form of the *harmattan* wind (a hot wind blowing south from the Sahara) and passing trucks and bicycles.

The letters *ɛ* and *ɔ* are part of the correct way of writing Sisaali as well as many other West African languages. *ɛ* is pronounced as a short *e*, as in *bed*. *ɔ* is pronounced as a short *o*, as in *top*.

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Teaching Culture

Thoughts from northern Ghana

Abstract

This article considers ideas and issues raised by an examination of the function of education, particularly music education in Ghana. There are many musical traditions in Ghana that the people want to pass on to the younger generation. How are these to be taught or learned? Where are the duties and boundaries of formal education to be drawn? What can be expected of parents and family? What is the situation for the teacher, given that few teachers return to their native area after training at a centralised institution? The article is based around an interview with the Paramount Chief (*Naa Puoure Puobe Chiir VII*) of Nandom in the Upper West Region of Ghana. He is one of 25 members of the National Council of State of Ghana (a non-elected Upper Chamber) and, as mentioned in the interview, vice-president of the National House of Chiefs and Chairman of its Research Committee.

The western concept of the role of music in education has, in recent years, been greatly influenced by ideas resulting from an interest in 'world music'. Linking with aims drawn from anti-racist education, music in education has generally tried to avoid the cultural implications of music, preferring instead to concentrate on its technical construction. Thus Swanwick (1988, p.111) wishes: '...to stress the *autonomy* that cultural products can have, once they are freed from the chains of local cultural ownership, media labelling and territorial signalling. Time and use are able to unlock these chains and teachers would do best to avoid strongly culturally loaded idioms until their context has eroded, leaving behind what there is of musical value.' John Blacking, (1987, p.147) in a parallel statement, urges that: 'Music should not be used to emphasize culture, because as soon as that happens there arise arguments about cultural hegemony, as well as false notions of what culture is: it should emphasize *human* variety and ingenuity.' One could extrapolate from these statements that schools should not be the place for the transmission of cultural values, at least this should not be a primary aim. Separating cultural implications from music presents problems, however, because social location and cultural values are felt to be integral to many musics. As Stokes (1994, p.5) argues: '...music is socially meaningful not entirely

but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and boundaries which separate them.' In the earlier Swanwick quote, the author had in mind examples of pop/rock music from which mainstream education wanted to be separate, hence the advice to allow the power of popular icons to be dissipated. Both Blacking and Stokes identify the effect of music in defining cultural boundaries, something which is often seen as unhelpful in a plural society. Whilst it is clear why both Swanwick and Blacking promoted the teaching of musical techniques free from cultural implications, such methods do remove a major part of the social meaning of any music. This approach could be seen as an argument against teaching designed to preserve a cultural and musical heritage.

I want to use the situation in one West African country, Ghana, as a case study. Ghana has a large number of tribal and linguistic groups. Identifying and promoting their differences might be problematic, but, at the same time, this variety is an essential part of Ghana's rich cultural heritage. Traditionally, children would learn about all aspects of culture from being part of it. They would learn its music, its dances and observe its rituals. Specific rituals might be the subject of instruction from an elder, but many would be learnt purely through participation. Similarly with the music and dance; no-one would admit to being taught it, it would be gift they had developed for themselves. As the society inevitably changes, many of these modes of acculturation are dying out. The school timetable means that a girl cannot observe a puberty ritual which demands that she does no work for a month after her first menstruation. Formal schooling occupies the hours which would have been available previously for less structured education, and many of the young people must travel to the cities to find work when they leave school thus removing them from their cultural base. Traditionally, although parents were responsible for the upbringing of their children, this did not include having to teach them music and/or dance.

Ghanaian schools were mainly begun either by colonial administrators or religious, generally Christian, foundations. Their curriculum was based on western models and, if it included music, this was mainly an introduction to Western classical music or folk songs. The schools would have felt no need to teach local traditional music and might even have felt it to be the antithesis of the values they were trying to inculcate. Thus, neither parents nor teachers would consider they had a duty to teach most aspects of traditional culture. In any case, music and dance was not an area in which teachers were generally required to be expert.

The Ghanaian education system is under some strain. The school population is large and, I was told, there are not sufficient trained teachers. Currently in Nandom the Primary schools operate a shift system with one group of pupils in the morning and another group in the afternoon. Facilities are also very limited with barely enough tables and chairs, let alone equipment for music. Teachers are not well paid and many try to find private tutoring or other ways of supplementing their income. After training, teachers can be assigned to any part of the country, so may not speak the local language (Ghana has over 100 languages and dialects and, although some are related to each other, English has been adopted as the official language, so this may be the only means of pupil-teacher communication.) In the training of music teachers there is a tension between the demands, expectations and reality of higher education. Students are expected to acquire a degree of competence in the concepts, language and practice of western musicology. There is at least an equal demand for them to learn more of the variety of indigenous music and scholars such as Nketia are working to develop an approach which might be described as African musicology.

There has been some debate about the extent to which African music could or should be part of the school curriculum with New (1980) arguing for the importance of social meaning, 'As taught in the school context, African music ceases to have any social

function, and without the function, it is meaningless.' Others, for example, Kwami (1993) have argued that some aspects of African music can be successfully integrated into class music lessons. Nketia has expressed his opinion and the joint responsibility of home and school very clearly: '...if traditional instruction is to be maintained, it cannot be done entirely by traditional methods or by relying on informal enculturative process. ... Continuity must be maintained both within the community and in schools and colleges.' (Nketia, n.d.)

This joint approach has been taken up by the Ghanaian authorities. In 1987 the West Africa Examinations Council initiated a new School Certificate/GCE O-level examination which included African music, Western music, Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean music. In 1985 the Ghanaian Cultural Enrichment Programme (CEP) was also initiated. This provides for cultural education alongside community and physical education. Cultural education includes music, drama and folklore — traditional music and dance is at the core of this. The programme also proposes that experts in particular styles, and chiefs, as sources of information about traditional culture, should be consulted. Schools are to find the money for the purchase of instruments through community work and a future aim is for each school to have its own system of organisational messages disseminated by drums replacing the western bell. Unfortunately, reality has not yet caught up with these aims. Very few schools, at least in the Nandom area, have their own instruments, and teachers with musical knowledge and experience or training in music education are scarce.

The Background – north-west Ghana

The town of Nandom is in the Upper West region of northern Ghana about 15km from the border with Burkina Faso. About 10,000 people live in the area covered by the traditional chieftaincy. The people are mainly Dagara but with significant numbers

of Waale people, migrated from further south, now living in the town. At present there are no telephones or mains electricity in the town, although these are advancing steadily from the south. The nearest phone is now in Lawra 30km away and the national electricity grid has reached the regional capital, Wa, 117km to the south. The Ghanaian government has promised that both will soon come to Nandom. Radios and cassettes are quite common in the town although mainly they are powered by expensive batteries so are something of a luxury. Pre-recorded cassettes are on sale in Nandom, but the range is quite limited. The selection comprises mainly reggae from both West Africa and the Caribbean, other West African popular styles e.g. *Highlife*, and South African *Mbaqanga* and disco styles. Current Western pop music is not much in evidence. There are very few TV sets and those that do exist are often used mainly for showing videos (war/action films are greatly preferred to any other type.) The main traditional local instrument is the *gyil* (sometimes spelt as *dzil*), a large calabash-resonated xylophone with 16-18 keys. The xylophone is used for funeral music (*bine*), fetish music (*bagri*) and a style of recreational music called *bewaa*. There are also small drums called *dalaara*, traditionally made by children from the neck of a broken pot. These are used in groups of six drums to play *bewaa*, *bagri* or other rhythms.

The recreational music, *bewaa*, is still very popular with people, but the nature of the participation is changing. There used to be a general *bewaa* dance after the main Sunday market in Nandom. People were keen to attend because it was known to be a good place to look for a wife or husband. As a result of changing circumstances the Sunday *bewaa* dance has died out. Each village now has a dance team which competes in the cultural festival, *Kakube*, which has been an annual event in Nandom since 1989. The dance team is usually a small group of about 12 young people who may dance *bewaa* or *bine*. Fewer people are actively involved in *bewaa* now but there is no problem in finding enough young people prepared to put in the necessary time and preparation required by the team. Some of the current dancers are not so enthusiastic about

shaking their whole body and getting their chest and shoulders moving in the traditional style and some new dance steps are coming in. These are mainly seen when the group is about to go out [at the end of a performance] when there is an opportunity for some individuality. Some of the young boys, in particular, want to show their skill and don't want to continue dancing in the traditional way. What they dance is often influenced by, for example, breakdance which they may have seen on TV. People enjoy seeing *bewaa* performances, which are still popular social occasions, but video shows are equally popular and preferred by many young men. External influences are having an observable effect in changing the preferred style of dancing. The music, at present, shows much less effect of external influence in its style. This may be attributable to the traditional instruments used. However, local musicians are very adaptable and some performers in the regional capital have begun to use digital keyboards to accompany songs. When keyboards are used, most of what is heard is the pre-programmed automatic percussion and chord accompaniment.

The Chief

The Nandom *Naa Puoure Puobe Chiir VII* — part of this name means 'he makes his enemies' stomachs churn with fear' — became chief in 1986. *Naa Puoure* was born in 1945 and was educated in Nandom, then Tamale. As a young man he went to Venice to study Economics. *Naa Puoure* lived in Europe for nearly 20 years and developed a successful career as a merchant banker in Europe and West Africa. The following transcription is part of a longer interview which ranged more widely over cultural issues.

The Interview

What is the importance of *Kakube* and the traditional culture?

Kakube was a festival that every Dagara used to perform from day one at the end of the farming season. At the end of the farming season, when we have put everything into the granaries we collect whatever remains on the ground [Kakube = gleanings]. ... So each family, as well as visiting their shrines and sprinkling guinea corn to thank the ancestors and the earth for a good harvest, should bring something to Kakube so we can invite everyone to come and celebrate with us. By doing that we are also discovering more of our own music too. The dalaara for instance is our traditional background. When we were all children we [used to] play the dalaara and dance. I still remember that we would sometimes break our mother's pot and say that it fell because we wanted the neck to go and make dalaara. The children would be playing this in front of every house.

Dalaara in this sense then is being preserved. It is not the case that the children now are eager to go and break a pot so that they can play. Has it become something which is a formal festival?

Yes. It is because of the modern music, the discos and other things which are coming to spoil our culture. Young people want to go and watch TV. They are more interested in going to watch a film or going to a big dance, which I don't like personally. I'm not in favour of all these video things that show you western or foreign cultures.

At the moment that exists in just a few places here. When the electricity comes...?

You are right, there's going to be trouble. But I think now too Kakube has come to stay.

What interests me is how this is going to continue. When you were a boy everybody knew dalaara, but at Kakube this year they were having to tell people about it and what the drums were. People will not know about it in the same way. What might be the situation in 50 years? How will people learn?

Tradition is such that you move forward and, at times, backward. In my experience, one year they will say that is the style. Then two years later they will say that style is 'colo' [colonial, therefore, out of date], then later on they will come back to the first thing and it is being admired as the best. So I think that when they try something new and they see

there is nothing meaningful in that they will come back to tradition. Custom and tradition is something that you can never change.

With something like the funeral ritual, the reason for the music is always there and everybody knows it. But with, for instance, the grinding songs the reason for their existence has practically disappeared, so people tend to forget the song.

That is true. It is easier to send your corn to the grinding mill where it will be done in ten minutes than to spend time using grinding stones. But the songs are still used and remembered as praise songs. When you need to praise your maternal house you may use one of these songs.

Are these things still learnt as part of the family? As you know, in Europe traditional songs are no longer learnt this way, they are learnt in school. I wanted to ask you what you thought the schools should be doing about traditional culture?

In fact, the present government has decided that all schools should be community based and traditional rulers should be on all the boards [of governors]. Not only that, the committees of all the schools must be headed by traditional rulers. We are the people who will now make sure that tradition is included in the curriculum of all the schools.

Is that going to be a problem because I understand that many of the teachers in this area are not Dagara?

Yes, that could be a problem because some are not Dagara. In the past our teachers, particularly in classes one and two [reception/primary] were Dagara and we can insist on that. We can go back to the situation in the 1950's and 1960's and insist that the teachers are teaching their own culture. When I was at school almost all of our teachers could play. They taught how to play and, later on, how to dance other things such as the waltz. I used to be able to play — it was only later when I went to Tamale that I forgot. My father and my uncle were both great xylophone players. Its a pity that none of us can be as great as our fathers in the songs, but at least we can dance.

Do you think that the teachers will be happy that they have to teach the local music, or do you think you will bring local musicians into the schools?

In fact we will have to do that. What used to happen is that there used to be xylophones in the primary and middle schools. These we would use to march into our classrooms. If there was no xylophone, no-one would have understood what was going to happen. Even when I went to Secondary School in Tamale we would use drums to signal the change of lessons. I'm sure that if I were to go there now it would be the bell or something which is actually not music being used. So I think we have to go back to that. No-one can say it is wrong — we used to do it, and, in fact that has made us more intelligent about those issues because we started from our culture then went to the foreign one.

I have the impression that, in the past, nearly everybody in any one village would be involved in the music, singing and dancing or playing.

That is true.

Is that still the case, or are there more people now who don't participate?

Yes. I would say it is because more of our people migrate to the south. There they learn all these discos and when they come back they want to show that they have been to the south. They want to show they are above the local culture. But when they stay here for some time they are compelled to go back to their traditional dances. When they see everybody dancing they have to dance. If you don't dance then people will laugh at you because you don't know your own culture. ... If I am the custodian and I can't dance the traditional music it means I have disqualified myself. But things are changing. The influence of the modern industrialised world is having its impact here. In Accra [the capital of Ghana] and other places they only go to discos and other big dances. They only dance their traditional dances when there is a cultural festival. But most of the time they are in the discos. I have seen that they are losing their culture.

Do you think that situation will come here?

Well, I would say that from Kumasi [Asante capital 700km south] up here is a long way. We still feel we are bound to our culture. We don't joke with culture. As you said, when people come to a funeral everyone knows what to do. ... I would say that in Kumasi, Brong-Ahafo, and even in the Volta region, they don't know their culture.

I can see that the funeral culture is still very strong. The thing which seems most likely to change is the recreational culture.

Yes, but things come back. In the churches we used to play the piano, but now we have decided to do away with that and to play the xylophone in churches in the Upper West region. So, slowly you see that even during weddings they will bring their band or whatever it is, but, if you are from Nandom or if you are Dagara, you have your wedding and if they don't play the traditional music for you to get up and show your identity it means you are nobody.

I will be very interested to see what happens when the mains electricity comes to Nandom. I think, as you said, the funeral music will continue, but I'm not so sure about the recreational music. People will have different forms of recreation such as TV and, although the traditional music will be in schools, the children may not learn it in the same way; they may only learn about it?

But if you learn about it in school you will like to practise it when you get home — this is what I feel. Now there is a great demand for xylophones and everything. As I told you, I am intending to buy two new xylophones for the Nandom group and, once they have those, they will be performing more and more.

But, as you know, in schools in the west, most children wouldn't really think of coming home and performing the music they learnt in school. The music in school is education, it is compulsory, therefore it must be boring. When the children come home they want their own music, which is pop music. I wondered whether, if the xylophone music is in the school, it becomes something which is compulsory and not something you choose to do in your own time?

Yes, I see your point, but I still think that the presence of the traditional music in school will help in maintaining our culture. We feel we should go back to our roots and that is what I am insisting on here. In the next three years I am going to make sure that it is on our agenda at the national level. As you know, I am vice-president of the National House of Chiefs and Chairman of its Research Committee and I want to make sure I achieve this goal for the whole country, not just for Nandom, before I leave this post.

Further comments

With his wide experience, *Naa* Puoure is well aware of the nature of the changes taking place in Dagara society. The changes in attitudes to *dalaara*, and the move towards the use of drum signals for changing lessons in school are indicative and might be understood as an indicator of long-term changes which will alter the structure of society in Nandom. As the *Naa* acknowledges, in the cities of Ghana people are becoming more divorced from their cultural roots and there are strong social pressures to conform to a western style. There is some evidence of this even in Nandom. People who have been to the South and learnt to disco dance, make fun of other Nandom people who try to dance disco using a traditional dance style with the body bent sharply forward from the waist, rather than a more upright Western style. At present, most children still learn the traditional music by osmosis. One school in the Nandom area has created a good *bewaa* group through supporting the children's existing experience and utilising the skills of parents and relatives, although none of the teachers is a musician. The process of enculturation is essentially the same whether children are learning the funeral dance and ritual through attendance at funerals, or *bewaa* dancing by watching the rehearsals of the local group. *Kakube* in this sense is very important. Although *Kakube* is now a formal cultural festival replacing a ritual of life, i.e. the celebration of harvest, its presence means that there will still be many groups dancing on a regular basis. There is an observable trend for groups coming to *Kakube* to perform the funeral dance rather than a recreational dance. The *Naa* has recognised the

danger that this may constitute to the continuation of *bewaa* and wants to reinstate the traditional Sunday afternoon dance, which has a clear social function, so that *bewaa* does not become only a vehicle for cultural competition.

This society appears very strongly and traditionally organised around a chief who has tremendous power and influence, but a Western perception of tribal organisation and linguistic and cultural unity in this region is at least problematic, if not inaccurate. Early colonial officers classified the inhabitants as 'wild tribes, naked', and observed that they lived in 'independent family communities' (Ferguson in Arhin, 1974). The British commissioners sought to impose order by dividing people into 'tribes' with a common language, history and culture, ruled by a chief. However, as Lentz has observed, 'The area was, and is, characterised by a complex of linguistic and cultural characteristics that only partially coincide. The boundaries of earth-shrine parishes, patrician ties, religious communities, market networks, and so forth, do not correspond.' (Lentz, 1994). The Nandom chief is not the traditional ruler of a coherent cultural entity, although changes in the twentieth century have created, to some extent, a greater Dagara ethnic identity. The chief rules by consent — if he does not behave well and make appropriate decisions his wishes may be ignored and generally subverted. He can call on the support of the government, police and troops, but they would only be able to enforce his role as an administrator, not a cultural leader. At present he is a very powerful role model — people will come out to join in when he is dancing, they will imitate his dress (but theirs must not be as fine), and they will listen to advice he gives. In the West, it is scarcely conceivable that one person could have sufficient influence to be able seriously to deflect the passage of cultural change. The *Naa's* power as a leader may be of limited value, though, because the underlying issue of the previous discussion refuses to go away: can schools teach culture directly, or can they only teach about it? If a particular music and dance has lost its function in society it will die out unless steps are taken to preserve it artificially. Simply arranging for this

music to be taught in school will not resuscitate it and could even militate against its acceptance as part of the children's own inheritance by making it appear to be the property of the (middle-class) teachers. The attitudes of children to their own culture are formed by more subtle and forceful influences than teachers. In Nandom society, the *Naa* could constitute such an influence or could be swept away by the inundation of communication.

The changes which may be brought about by the arrival of mains electricity are still a subject for speculation. Currently, if you walk through the streets of Nandom at night, the main sound heard is that of conversation in all the local bars. In one place, however, there is a generator and a monochrome TV. Here there is only the TV, with no conversation, as everyone sits in silence facing the screen. Without wishing to sound Luddite, there will be considerable losses, as well as gains, when the mains electricity arrives and the cultural impact will doubtless be considerable with the increase in communication providing a wider variety of role models for the children.

There is also the problem of what is to be taught in schools. Ghana has the dual problem of wanting to maintain its African traditions while preparing its children for life in the 21st century dominated by Western technology and language. The point was made earlier that even north-west Ghana is not mono-cultural. The most obvious boundaries are linguistic, which means that, even where the music is quite similar on both sides of a boundary, the songs are different. In fact, the variation in songs is carried right through to village level, with each place having its own unique repertoire to a fair extent. This is without considering variations in tuning (Lobi and Dagara xylophones have different tuning systems), dance style, or dress (all part of the 'music'). I have written previously (Wiggins, 1996) about the traditional manner of learning music in Ghana where children (and adults) hear a new piece and copy it, transforming it to some extent as part of the learning process. This mechanism helps to

maintain the variety and vitality of the music as each musician cherishes his/her own version of a song. If the music is to be taught in schools, there is likely to be some degree of standardisation, possibly, ultimately, the production of a 'textbook'. An ideal to maintain the culture might be the community model, where musicians from each village come into their local school to teach the children. This approach might most nearly continue the current process of dissemination and variation. It makes assumptions about the availability of appropriate musicians and the way that they might be integrated into the educational structure, especially in terms of assessment where this is necessary. If local musicians are not forthcoming, then it is the teacher who will be the source of most of the material. As mentioned earlier, teachers are not necessarily local people so will probably teach what they have learnt from a standardised source which will lack the relevance and immediacy of the local songs. What is transmitted to the children will be of a different nature – it will have been translated through the process of formalisation and there will be a tendency on the part of the teacher to insist that it is learned and repeated accurately, valuing conformity rather than variety. Alternatively, one might argue that this is an exaggerated concern. *Bewaa*, in particular, and some other Dagaba music, is already to some extent in a state of preservation as a cultural artefact, seen at festivals like *Kakube*. There may be little point in making too much of an issue about the changes that might result from a future role in education.

The *Naa* talks about moving towards a situation where all teachers in classes one and two are Dagara. This may help linguistically but some of the cultural variation throughout the area may be lost unless the local communities become more involved. The *Naa* mentioned that the Ghanaian government had decided that all schools would be community based, but this will need much more than a decision to make it effective. In the UK, there are a number of schools with a 'community' label — sometimes appropriate, other times less so. Community members need to be consulted

about their role in school and there will doubtless be questions of remuneration or at least some sort of *quid pro quo* for some people who have particular skills to offer. Teachers will also need to be more prepared for their new role as animateurs and co-ordinators in addition to their more established functions. Some of this is already beginning, with projects such as *Agoro* in Cape Coast, Ghana leading the way. The next 10–15 years promise to be fascinating and I look forward to more conversations with the Nandom *Naa*.

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Drumming in Ghana

Trevor Wiggins

West Africa, especially Ghana, has always been known for its variety of drum ensembles. Although some early white visitors referred to the "heathen noise" of the music, many others were impressed. Unfortunately, we can have little idea how the music sounded until recordings began to be made in the twentieth century. Drum music is not written down but is an "aural" music passed down from one generation to another. This process is also one of change. When one person learns from another they cannot perform the music in exactly the same way so each process of transmission results in variation. Equally, people do not want to play music in the same way as their teacher. Music is something which identifies you and says something about you, so you want to make sure you have your own voice, not one you have borrowed. In Ghana there are many different tribal groups. Most of these will have their own language or dialect which may be more or less different from that of their neighbours. There are close links between language and music so there is a similar richness and diversity to the music of Ghana.

Of course, not all Ghanaian music is for drums. There is a wide range of instruments, some traditional, some developed from traditional instruments and some imported from other areas of West Africa. The *gonje* is a one-string fiddle probably originally from Nigeria which is now used in Ghana. The *atenteben* is a flute like a recorder which was developed by the late Dr. Ephraim Amu from simpler traditional flutes. Animal horns of different sizes are played as an ensemble. The xylophone with 14-18 keys is common in the north-west of the country, but the most common instrument after the voice is the drum. This is found in a vast range of shapes and sizes ranging from something maybe 30cm high through to massive instruments often used for ceremonial purposes which are up to 2m high and 1m across.

Drums are usually in sets of between two and five drums although some parts may have more than one person playing. The different drums have a clear function within the ensemble; they will usually be tuned to different pitches and one will act as the leader while the other drums have simpler more repetitive parts which sometimes change in response to the lead drum. The parts in drum ensembles integrate in a wide variety of ways and explore the range of rhythmic interaction to an extent unparalleled in western music. This integration is so complete and at such a speed that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a western musician to work out what is going on. Some of this problem lies in the western way of listening. In the west we tend to use staff notation at an early stage of our learning. Staff notation is an extremely useful and powerful tool, but this also means that, in some

respects, it is severely limited. In fact, we are so used to staff notation that we tend to hear through it. When faced with a new piece of music our understanding rests on an identification of such features as the time signature, the beat and a unit we can identify as a bar. This is a problem for much West African music. There may be several time signatures operating concurrently and different parts may effectively have their barlines in different places. This will also be a problem with understanding the music examples in this chapter. I have decided to use staff notation because so many people are familiar with it but I will also need to continually point out how it is misleading as a model for the music.

Ghanaian people do not learn their music from notation. It is all around them and they have probably heard it since before they were born. They will not conceive of it in western terms. A Ghanaian drummer would look mystified if asked "Where is the beat?" However, if you ask, "Where is the dance step?" your answer might be much more useful and instructive. Dance and singing are part of the music for most Ghanaians. My notations are a transcription of what I have been taught or what I have observed myself. They represent one possible version of this music interpreted through my ears, which may work in a similar manner to yours. To begin I want to look at a piece of music where the pulse is relatively easy to identify. *Sikye* (pronounced see-chi) is from the *Akan* area of Ghana around the regional capital, Kumasi, Ghana's second city. It uses an ensemble of four drums together with a bell and a rattle. As with many ensembles, the bell and the rattle act as timekeepers. They have a sound which the other players and the dancers can hear clearly over the rest of the sound. Their parts are usually unchanging throughout the piece and the rattle part in particular often has more than one person playing the part - sometimes as many as ten people. *Sikye* has the simplest bell and rattle parts of any piece I know:-

Ex. 1



but even this simplicity becomes much more difficult when the rest of the ensemble begins to pull against it.

Example 2 shows how the rest of the ensemble begins this piece.

Ex. 2



The *donno* is sometimes called a talking drum. It is about 60cm long with a wooden body shaped like an hourglass. There are two heads which are connected by leather thonging. Thus, by squeezing the drum under your arm you can raise the pitch by maybe a fifth. The notation here shows when the drum should be high and low in pitch. The *donno* part immediately establishes a quaver pulse against the crotchet of the bell and is repeated every two crotchets giving a hierarchy of relative pulses. The high drum part adds another level to this introducing a semiquaver pulse. Being played with sticks, its high sound cuts clearly through the sound of the other drums. The low support drum is played with the hands using pitch to designate which hand and which sound to play. The pitches used for this also indicate the relative pitch of the sounds produced by the drum when played, but should not be understood as precise pitches.

Ex. 3



These are all the symbols used in the transcriptions for playing a drum with the hands or sticks. A **bass** note is played in the centre of the drum with the hand flat and bounced off the drum head. An **open** note is a bounced stroke played with the hand flat at the rim. The rim of the drum should come under the top of the palm towards the fingers. When an open stroke is played with sticks, the sticks are bounced about one-third of the way across the drum head. A **mute** sound is played in the same position as an open stroke. With the hand you do not bounce it off but continue to press the head quite firmly giving a shorter note with a pitch about a tone above an open sound. The same technique is used with sticks: the stick is not bounced off but presses the head, not too hard, giving a sonorous click. A **slap** can be a conga-style slap or an open slap with the hands towards the centre of the drum head. The sound should be relatively high in pitch. A **soft fill** is a quiet conga-style slap which is used by good drummers to keep a rhythm moving so that there are no gaps in the sound.

The low support drum reinforces the rhythm of the high drum in the first half of the pattern then interlocks with it in the second half. It also establishes another pattern length lasting one bar in my version, but its real function only begins to emerge when the master drum begins its first main pattern.

Ex. 4

Bell & Rattle

Drum 2 (Low) - Hands

Master Drum - Hands



The two parts coincide every two crotchets but the rest of the time they are mainly interlocking producing a composite rhythm like this:-

Ex. 5



The effect will sound more interesting than this looks through the effect of the different sounds and pitches of the drums. It is as though the two drums are holding an intricate conversation threading in and out between each other. The master drum then proceeds to lead the ensemble and the dancers through a series of variations and sections. The master drummer has to know both the drum and the dance parts as there are signals in the lead part which both the other drummers and the dancers must respond to. The first variation is a technique found in many drum pieces where the existing rhythm is made into a longer pattern by the substitution of one unit of the basic rhythm with alternative material which is often quite simple. In this case, the basic unit is the half-bar rhythm seen above (a) which is substituted by four quavers (b) with the sequence a a b a. This sequence is also very common.

Ex. 6



The next variation for the master drum is again a substitution for one unit. What is substituted are two slaps which suddenly reinforce the rhythm of the low support drum instead of interlocking with it. This can be used in either the sequence a b, or a a b as shown in example 7.

Ex. 7



After these variations the master drum needs to move to the next section. There is a signal for this to warn the dancers and drummers that this change will happen. A version of example 7 is played with only one slap. This rhythm is repeated and leads to the next section. The change signal needs to be a distinctive rhythm which is played only at this point.

Ex. 8



The main rhythm for the next section is this:-

Ex. 9



Initially this sounds and looks quite different from the first section, but on closer examination you can see clear links with the previous main rhythm. The sequence of sounds has been changed so that the bass and open sounds now fall at different points against the bell pattern, although still in the same relation to each other. The rhythm has had little changed other than the addition of two semiquavers for a quaver on the "upbeat." The minimal nature of the rhythmic change can be seen when the resultant pattern of the exchange between the master drum and the low support part is compared to the previous one, but the effect on the ensemble is considerable because of the changed sounds.

Ex. 10



The third section of *Siky*e continues to use some of these techniques and adds some new ones. It is introduced with a signal at the end of the rhythm shown in example 6. This new section has a rhythm pattern which is longer

than any so far, lasting 4 bars. It pulls strongly against the bell and rattle pulse so that the low support drum changes its pattern to reinforce the bell part. It is made up of three elements: slaps, open strokes and a link rhythm. The slaps and the open strokes alternate with one getting shorter as the other gets longer (the pattern completely ignores the barlines I have adopted). The sequence could be described as slap-3, open-1, slap-2, open-2, slap-1, open-3, link to repeat.

Ex. 11



The resultant rhythm between the master drum and the low support now looks like this. Again a family resemblance with the previous sections can be seen, but the changed sounds, especially the powerful slaps and open sounds on the "off" beat give a very different effect.

Ex. 12

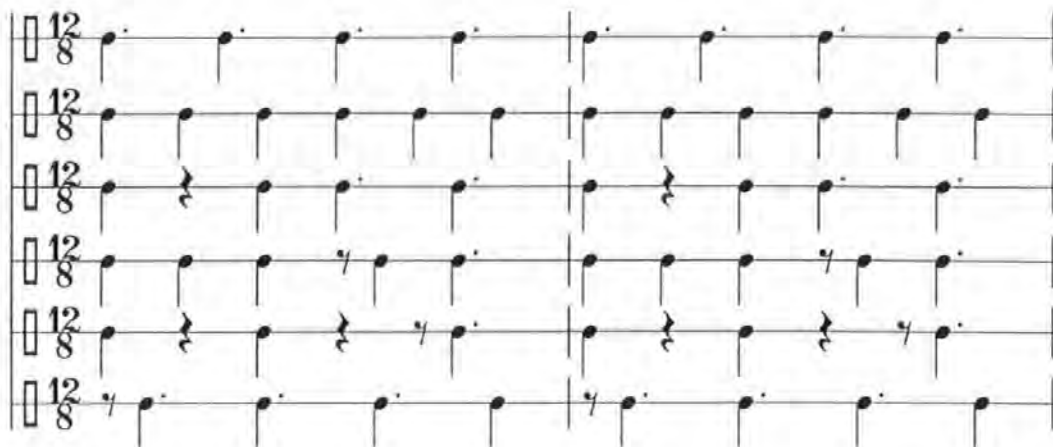


To summarise this first piece, the main techniques are the construction using interlocking parts with one part changing in response to another, the substitution of sounds, the extension of rhythmic ideas using a sequence, the composition of a rhythm sequence using additive elements, and the use of a rhythm signal to effect section changes. All the rhythms in this piece fell within a western rhythmic conception of a basic pulse (semibreve) which is divided into minims, crotchets, quavers and semiquavers (1, 2, 4, 8, 16), but for many pieces of Ghanaian music this is not the case.

To begin to explore other rhythmic ideas I want to begin not with a drum piece but one which uses only clapping. *Neporu* is a piece of music from the *Sisaala* people in the village of Lambussie in north-west Ghana. When it is known that someone has died the women will gather together to perform this music. It has a unison vocal part, which is not shown here, accompanied by clapping. Each woman will have her own rhythm (some are duplicated)

which is repeated throughout. The women claim that they always perform it the same way, but there are many small differences in each occasion. It will be lead by a different person each time. The leader begins and ends the piece. Since there has just been a death the spirits will be close by and if the leader makes a mistake they may take her as well, so there is a different leader each time, usually one of the oldest women. Notated, the clapping rhythms look like this:-

Ex. 13



The music is notated in twelve-eight as there is a cycle of 12 pulses before the pattern is repeated, but it is not an indication that there is always a dotted crotchet pulse. The parts and the singing are not absolutely fixed. Each woman may sing her part slightly differently, an effect known as heterophony. The same idea applies to the rhythms, but there is not a word for this idea. The first part I have notated is the dotted crotchet pulse. There are always some women clapping this, but it is not the first part to start - this is usually part four. The second part sets six against the four so there is a constant 3:2 rhythm. Parts two and four move between these pulses using ♪♪♪♪ as a basic idea although some notes are often left out. Another idea is found in part six: this is the first part using the dotted crotchet pulse but starting one quaver later (this contrasts with the vocal part which often anticipates the same pulse by a quaver). Part six also coincides with every third quaver of the crotchet pulse. The part which starts, part four, can now be seen as linking parts one, two and six together. Although this piece is comparatively simple (actually, its not when you try to sing and clap) it contains important ideas which are extended in many other drum pieces, especially the idea of 3:2 and the displacement of a pulse.

Both these ideas can be seen in a piece called *Asaadua*, again from the *Akan* region of central Ghana. This uses two bells: a single peapod shaped bell called *dawuro* and a double bell, with high and low pitches a fifth to an

octave apart, usually known as *gankogui*. The interplay of these two, together with the rattle, *trowa*, clearly shows the same ideas. (This piece is notated in six-four as the best compromise, but twelve-eight has an almost equal claim.)

Ex. 14

Ex. 14 shows three staves of music in 6/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'Dawuro' and contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff is labeled 'Gankogui' and contains a sequence of quarter notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Trowa' and contains a sequence of dotted quarter notes. The notation is in 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

The *trowa* maintains the dotted crotchet pulse while the *gankogui* has the crotchet, with the additional interest of two different pitches. The *dawuro* moves between these in the sequence $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$, but adds something else by subdividing the first part of the pattern to establish a quaver pulse. This first half also links between the *gankogui*, coinciding on the second crotchet, and the *trowa* part. The next part to enter is the *tamale* (frame drum). This has a simple dotted crotchet pulse alternating open and slap sounds, but displaced to anticipate the *trowa* part by a quaver. This part enters on the penultimate crotchet of the *dawuro* rhythm and also coincides with the quavers in the same part. The effect is to suddenly make the *dawuro* part sound as though it has become $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$.

Ex. 15

Ex. 15 shows two staves of music in 6/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'Dawuro' and contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Tamale' and contains a sequence of dotted quarter notes. The notation is in 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

The master drum, when it enters, reinforces the crotchet pulse of the *gankogui* and the barline I have adopted, but this simple part again has a fascinating interplay with the *tamale*.

Ex. 16

Ex. 16 shows two staves of music in 6/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'Tamale' and contains a sequence of dotted quarter notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Master' and contains a sequence of quarter notes. The notation is in 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.



When the master drum begins some variations, one of the things it does is to imitate the start of the *dawuro* part, but displaced back by a quaver, thus adding further to the conversation between the parts.

Ex. 17

Dawuro

Gankogui

Trowa

Tamale (Frame drum)

Master

The idea of parallel pulses within an overall time frame is also found in some complex rhythms played by the *Dagomba* people of northern Ghana. *Bamaya* (together with its related pieces *Damba* and *Takai*) uses just two types of drums, although there may be a number of players. The *Brekete* (also known as *Gon-gon*) is a cylinder up to 60cm across and deep. It has two heads cross laced to each other so that the drum can be tuned. Each head also has a gut snare to add a buzz to the sound. It is played slung under the left shoulder using a curved stick in the right hand and the left hand playing an open stroke at the top edge of the drum. The drum produces four sounds which are notated like this:-

Ex. 18

Brekete

Open Mute Stick fill LH fill

An **open** sound uses the stick in the centre of the drum to give a powerful sound, considerably louder than any of the other strokes. A **closed** stroke uses the stick with less force and the stick is pressed lightly into the head giving only a sonorous click. A **stick fill** sound is a quiet stroke with the stick, sometimes played towards the top edge of the drum. The other sound is the **left hand** stroke already mentioned. The muted and hand strokes are used to fill the gaps between the main notes, with the closed stroke being used to stop the sound as a sort of

punctuation. Again, it is difficult for the notation to give a sufficient image of the difference between the quality and volume of the sounds and thus, their effect. The other drum used in this music is the *donno* which has already been described.

One of the rhythms in *Bamaya* has the *brekete* playing a rhythm which we would clearly identify as twelve-eight time, although some of the variations also suggest a crotchet pulse. The *donno* rhythm against this is very complex. The first half of the bar uses a crotchet pulse with the first crotchet missing - clearly a similar technique to that observed in *Neporu*. The second half of the bar uses the dotted crotchet pulse, but makes it a duple, not a triple beat. So, on the third beat of the bar the *brekete* has three soft quavers which the *donno* has to play two against, missing out the first one. The fourth beat has equal duple notes between the *brekete* and *donno*.

Ex.19

The musical notation for Ex. 19 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Donno' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Brekete'. Both staves are in 12/8 time, indicated by the time signature. The Donno part has a complex rhythm with a first half of the bar using a crotchet pulse (starting with a missing first crotchet) and a second half using a dotted crotchet pulse. The Brekete part has a steady pulse, with the first half of the bar using a crotchet pulse and the second half using a dotted crotchet pulse. Brackets above the Donno staff indicate groups of four notes in the first and second halves of the bar.

The difficulty here is in holding the rhythmic difference between the *donno* part in the first and second half. This is even more true in one of the variations where the *donno* substitutes two semiquavers for one of the quavers, although this is in response to the straighter pulse that the *brekete* plays in this variation.

Ex. 20

The musical notation for Ex. 20 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Donno' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Brekete'. Both staves are in 12/8 time, indicated by the time signature. The Donno part has a complex rhythm with a first half of the bar using a crotchet pulse (starting with a missing first crotchet) and a second half using a dotted crotchet pulse. The Brekete part has a steady pulse, with the first half of the bar using a crotchet pulse and the second half using a dotted crotchet pulse. Brackets above the Donno staff indicate groups of four notes in the first and second halves of the bar.

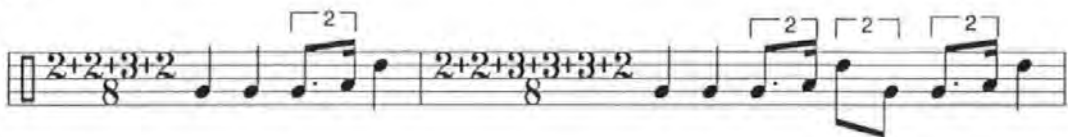
The combined effect of the two parts is that there is a steady pulse at the speed of the half bar in my notation, but this is divided first into three, then four | 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 |. Ultimately, this is another extension of the idea of 3:2 parallel pulses, but it makes it plain that each level of pulse can itself be subdivided into either two or three.

Ex. 21



Another rhythm from later in *Bamaya* shows the level of complexity that this music reaches in using these ideas. It is worth repeating that *Dagomba* musicians will not analyse or conceptualise the music in the ways I am describing but their sense of rhythm is so advanced that their compositions lead to description in these terms. When heard in isolation the rhythm sounds like this:-

Ex. 22




The three loud open strokes at the beginning establish a pulse and these same three notes are soon repeated, but the point at which they are repeated does not seem to relate to the pulse the first three had established. Each set of three loud notes is followed by a closing motif using a closed and a hand stroke and on the second occasion this closing motif is extended. This extension gives rise to another different pulse for a few beats, which is then promptly negated by the return of the beginning. A number of musicians (e.g. Prof. J.H. Kwabena Nketia) have written about the concept of additive rhythm in African music. This is the idea that many African rhythms, instead of being built up by the division of notes, is created by the addition of smaller units, typically two or three notes in length. This might be a good example of the idea. Counting in quavers, the time signature shows how the units are built up, giving one bar of nine and one of fifteen. It would not be a satisfactory explanation to view this as a dotted crotchet pulse with one bar of three, and one of five - the rhythm simply does not work in this way.

The accompanying *donno* part for this rhythm initially appears to be unconnected with the *brekete*, but this perception soon changes. The *donno* enters on the third of the opening loud notes from the *brekete* playing what we later understand is the pulse (this is also the dance step.)

Ex. 23



With the *donno* pulse, the *brekete* rhythm is still asymmetric but we are more able to perceive the alternation of duple and triple units within the pulse although these are still disguised by the fact that the first of the triplets is a quiet hand stroke. It also becomes clearer how 9+15 can fit into four.

To see a more extended version of 3:2 I want to look at the fast section of a dance called *Kundum* composed by the *Nzema* people of the Volta region in Ghana. There are five parts: bell, rattle, high support drum played with sticks, and a low support drum and a master drum which are both played with the left hand and a stick in the right hand. From the beginning the bell divides the rattle pulse into 3 + 4. This bell part is rhythmically very close to the standard claves pattern of South America, but that tends to be syncopated in the first part, whereas this is a very definite triplet. The high support drum takes the 4-pulse of the rattle and subdivides it in units of three. The low support drum picks this up and answers it on the last beat of the bar, creating a combined triplet rhythm  which echoes the first part of the bell rhythm. The first part of the low support drum goes with the bell, with the middle note missing. By now, the bell player has to concentrate to keep the sense of four in the second part of the pattern.

As you might by now expect, the master drum moves between these various possibilities. (The note written as a "B" in this piece is a forceful bounced stroke with the stick while pressing the head with the left hand. This sound cuts clearly through the ensemble.) At the beginning it keeps the sense of a quaver pulse both by sounding quavers and by anticipating the crotchet pulse by a quaver. The first three variations show standard techniques of substitution of sounds and pattern extension (each section written with repeat signs can be played as often as you like in whatever sequence). The patterns in bars 7-10 combine triple and duple pulses. Bars 11-12 are particularly interesting. There is a sequence of three sounds: two open hands sounds each with a stick "flam" for



Kundum

Bell

Rattle

Support 1 (sticks)

Support 2 (R-stick, L-hand)

Master (R-stick, L-hand)

The image shows two systems of musical notation, each consisting of five staves. The notation is complex, featuring various rhythmic patterns, including triplet crotchets and quavers. Some measures are marked with numbers 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. The notation is complex, showing multiple layers of rhythm.

emphasis, followed by a bass sound. This sequence is repeated three times but with a slight hesitation before the bass note on the third time. The notation shows quite clearly what is happening. Our ear is drawn to the repeated unit and each start of this seems to set up another almost unrelated pulse. However, the pattern is based on the triplet crotchet and the rhythm unit is slightly displaced each time. These two bars are usually played three times. (A parallel technique called a *tiha* can be found in North Indian music.) The next section is more predictable with continuous triplet crotchets. This moves to quavers in the last three bars which form the stop signal.

Finally, I want to look at a long and complex drum piece from the *Ewe* people of south-east Ghana. They occupy the coastal region of Ghana and its neighbour, Togo. My comments and analysis will be based on what I was taught by an *Ewe* master drummer, Johnson Kemeh.¹ The minimum set of instruments for this music is an iron bell which acts as a timekeeper, a rattle and three drums. The bell can be either the double bell *gankogui* or the single open peapod-shaped *atoke*. The rattle *axatse* also functions as a timekeeper, usually with a less complex

part. The three drums must be accurately tuned relative to each other, although the absolute pitch is not set. *Kagan* is the highest-pitched drum and generally has an unvarying part. *Kidi* is tuned a major third lower and usually has a part which responds to the changes played by the master drum, *Sogo*, which is tuned a perfect fourth lower than *kidi*. (In a larger ensemble *Atsimevu* or *Gboba* is the master drum with *Sogo* taking a supporting role.) The tuning of the drums is important, not only for the musical sound, but because the *Ewe* language is tonal and the drums can mimic the language, thereby "talking" to each other.

Agеше (the final e is short as in "egg") is a fast version of *Agbadza* the traditional *Ewe* war dance. The *gankogui* part is best conceived as being in twelve-eight time.

Ex. 24 (♩ = 120)



This pattern² when first heard by European musicians appears to have three pulses whereas African musicians hear four. The dance step uses the 4-pulse - it is interesting that this make the dance step more a part of the music as it "fills" some gaps in the pattern more than the 3-pulse. Twelve is also a very useful number in that it can be divided by two, three, four and six - although more of this later. The *axatse* plays either a version of the *gankogui* rhythm or the dance pulse. The *kagan* part also supports the perception of the dance pulse in that it fills in the gaps to maintain a constant quaver beat.

Ex. 25



At this point in the explanation, the time-line could support several interpretations, but the other parts reinforce the dance step.

The *kidi* part changes throughout the piece in response to the rhythms played by the master drum. The master drum part is in clearly delineated sections which each consist of variations around a central idea. The *kidi* part for the introduction uses the 3-pulse and a combination of open and closed strokes.³

Ex. 26

Key

LH Open RH Open LH Mute RH Mute

Kidi

This has added another level of possibilities for the listener, but these are still comparatively simple compared to the master drum (*sogo*) part.

At one level the *sogo* part uses the 3 pulse of the *kidi* part. I have beamed the notation to show the repeated unit. If we hear the start of the pattern with the bell it is likely that we will conceive the *kidi* part as beginning with the closed strokes. Another interpretation is to hear the *kidi* part beginning with the two louder open strokes which also coincide with the second dance step. The *sogo* part uses this second interpretation but generally has a softer stroke to coincide with the loud strokes of the *kidi* part so as not to obscure it. Notice the way that this pulse links between the *gankogui* part and the dance step.


Ex. 27

Gankogui

Dance step

Sogo left hand

kidi

This pulse is then filled in a way which shows a superb understanding of the rhythmic possibilities of the pattern - and all worked out without the aid of notation. If you subdivide the 4-pulse to get an 8-pulse you have a constant three against two (12 against 8). This is quite straightforward, except that it is not directly sounded. Different rhythms are based on either twelve or eight, leaving out some beats and sounding others so that the supporting pulses must be internalised to be understood. But even this level of sophistication is too simple for the master drum. It uses the 8-pulse (dotted quavers) in combination with the 12-pulse (quavers) to achieve three units each lasting for four quavers and thus matching the *kidi* part. However, the order of the elements is not constant in each unit. Whereas the first two units are , the third unit reverses the order so that the second note of the pattern coincides with the start of the *gankogui* pattern.



Ex. 28



There is an additional level of sonic complexity resulting from the sounds used. The second and third notes of each unit are generally louder sounding strokes than the first note. The distance between the two attacks for the second and third notes is also constant. The variation occurs between the first and second note or the third note to the first note of the next unit. This gives the effect of a slightly uneven waltz which at first hearing seems to have little to do with the *gankogui* part. After repeated hearings you realise that there are links and the parts are in a strict relationship to each other, but at the speed that this music is played it is virtually impossible to unravel the elements. As you get used to the sound you may also notice that the first four notes of the bar for *sogo* sound the 8-pulse, although this is somewhat disguised by the different sounds used.⁴

After playing variations around the introductory pattern, the *sogo* part proceeds through a number of sections. Each section has a basic idea which is then developed both rhythmically and sonically by using different sounds. The first section experiments with the 6-pulse and the 4-pulse. The paradigm might be expressed as:-

Ex. 29



Both the elements here can be directly repeated to fill a whole bar. The crotchet pattern is then extended:-

Ex. 30



This of course can, in its turn be extended in the same way as the paradigm, by the repetition of the unit:-

Ex. 31



Another variation of this idea changes the rhythm slightly and displaces it, using a similar sequence of sounds which supports the rhythm played by *kidi* at this point:-

Ex. 32



The effect of this on the listener (at least, this one) is to cause the whole rhythm to mentally “flip” to a different starting point, especially if the *atoke* is being used so that there is not a clear start to the timeline.⁵

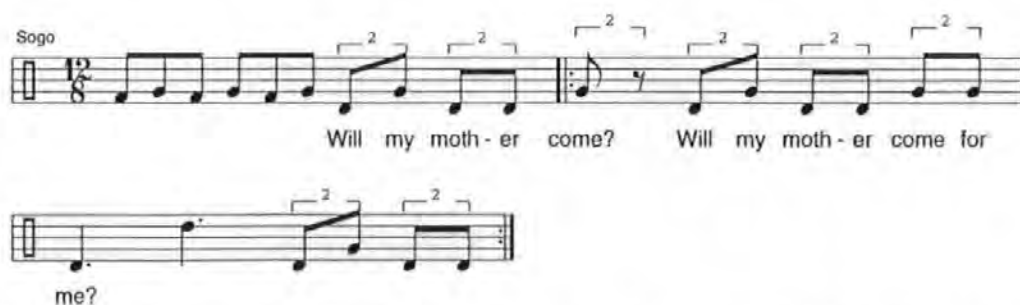
In the next two sections the *sogo* part continues to explore the possibilities of the 4, 6 and 8-pulse against the rest of the ensemble. The second section deals mainly with 4-pulse and 6-pulse. Again each element can be extended.

Ex. 33



The third section uses mainly the 4-pulse and 8-pulse in a pattern which starts at the half-bar compared with the timeline.

Ex. 34



This section also has a linguistic joke in the *sogo* part. The main pattern imitates a child at school asking in the Ewe language “Will my mother come, will my mother come for me?” Because of the tonal nature of most West African languages⁶ it is easy for a combination of pitch and rhythm to suggest a phrase in the language. This happens frequently in drumming. What is “said” is often a joke or a comment on a local event but is also used by drummers as a mnemonic as in this example from the latter part of *Ageshe*.

Ex. 35

Sogo

Al - i me-le ke - se To - yo - ta, To - yo - ta.

"The girl is wider than a Toyota bus." There is a close parallel between this and the starting point for the composition of new tunes in the *bɛwaa* xylophone songs of the *Dagaare* people.

To show some of these complex ideas in operation, here are all the parts for one variation of *Agеше* beginning with the signal to change. This is given by the *sogo*, but *kidi* immediately joins in with the same signal so that dancers and drummers all hear it.

Ex. 36

Gankogui

Axatse

Kagan

Kidi

Sogo

To change

Te-le - vi - sion le daa nye - si. El - ea - si woa?



The change signal is in fours (16-semiquavers) against the threes (12-quavers) of the *gankogui* and *kagan* parts. The bell player has to work really hard not to lose the rhythm at this point. The only part which helps both of them is the rattle. The *sogo* then plays the main rhythm for this section which is broadly in four time. (The notation here gives a fair idea of the sound except that the higher notes will tend to sound louder than the bass notes.) *Kidi* plays its own version of this same rhythm using open strokes (notes F & G) for the louder notes for the *sogo* part, and closed strokes to fill the rest of the rhythm and keep the semiquaver pulse going. You will realise that this means that the *kidi* player must know the music very well. *Kidi* must know all the master drum rhythms and what the *kidi* answer should be. This rhythm suggests the words, *Television le daa nyesi. Eleasi woa?* in the Ewe language, meaning, "My mother has television. Do you have it?" The complexity of the ideas show just how advanced is the rhythmic sense of the unknown composer.

Let me attempt to summarise what I conceive as some of the compositional techniques involved in this music. Some writers have conceived as an essential difference between Western rhythm and African rhythm as being divisive as opposed to additive. Western rhythm tends to start with the unit of the whole bar and then divide it into smaller fractions, usually by two, but occasionally by three. Much African music on the other hand is made up by the addition of a number of smaller units. Whilst this is a helpful concept in some ways, it doesn't satisfactorily express the awareness of multiple pulses and their relationships with each other.

In learning this music, the key to understanding for me has always been the dance pulse. This provides a generally stable reference point and often interlocks with the timeline. The timeline is usually the *gankogui* or *atoke* plus *axatse* part or the *kpagru* on the xylophone and uses either a 12-pulse, or an 4/8-pulse. The actual timeline is not a regular beat, but is often a combination of just two note lengths. These are often combined in such a way that if the pattern can be conceived as dividing into two sections, these sections will be of unequal length, thus supporting the concept of additive rhythm. Thus the timeline for *Ageshe* could be seen as five plus seven quavers. There is usually at least one other part, often *kagan*, which supports an unchanging pulse. The *kidi* and *sogo* parts interact with each other in several ways, with *sogo* taking the lead. The lead part has a number of techniques which can be used. There is usually one main idea to each section of the piece. This idea may take a complete cycle of the timeline or it may be repeated two or three times to each cycle. If it takes a complete cycle it will often make reference to more than one of the concurrent pulses. The pulses to which it relates will not usually be in a simple divisive relationship, but may relate by 3:2 or a compound of this (3:4, 6:8, 8:12, 12:16). The same technique may

still be employed if the unit is shorter, but it seems to be less common. The start point of the unit may not correspond with the start of the timeline or the perceived start of other parts. Recognisable rhythms may recur with their position changed relative to the other parts.

There are a variety of sounds available from the drum (at least five) which vary in pitch, volume and quality. These can be varied separate from the rhythm and may be used in such a way that they cause the listener's perception of the rhythm to change (for example, moving the position of a strong note). The lead part often interlocks with the supporting part i.e. the two have a conversation with each other in which it is rare for them both to be speaking at once. The alternative is that the two parts are very similar and often in this case, moving against the timeline to create a strong alternative pulse or perception. It is not impossible, of course for these two techniques to be mixed. There are many more variations in the lead part than the supporting part which has only one or two possibilities for each section. Each element of the lead part may be taken and repeated, extended or developed in the course of the section. There is a clear delineation between sections (this is often important for the dancers as well) which is indicated by a continuous "roll" from the lead and supporting drum lasting between one and two repetitions of the timeline.

If a final comment were needed on this wealth of percussion music, one could do no better than to look at the dancers who are performing at the same time. Their engagement with and enjoyment of the music is all any composer or performer could ask.

1 Johnson K. D. Kemeh was born in Dzodze in the Volta region of Ghana near the border with Togo. He is now based in Accra where he is the senior drumming instructor at the University. He also runs a superb dance/drumming cultural group for young people in Alajo, Accra.

2 When played on *gankogui* the first note of the pattern is sometimes played on the lower bell which helps the perception of the start of the pattern. When played on *atoke* or often on *gankogui* given the speed, it is all played at one pitch thus making more interpretations possible.)

3 The sticks are held flexibly in a matched grip. See the previous key for a description of the symbols used.

4 The earlier caveats about transcription, of course, apply here too. I have taken the *gankogui* part as indicating the basic barline structure. The reason for the beaming of the *sogo* part is because I was taught that the *sogo* part starts on the second dance step and because beaming it in units of three shows the structure.

5 For comparison and for a similar effect, listen to Steve Reich, "Music for Pieces of Wood".

6 A tonal language is one in which the pitch of the syllables changes the meaning, so the same two syllables spoken low-high, and high-low in pitch will have different meanings.

Further Reading

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The xylophone tradition of north-west Ghana

Trevor Wiggins

In this chapter I shall draw particularly on examples from the *Dagaba* people of northern Ghana and Burkina Faso.¹ The *Dagaba*, together with their close neighbours, the *Lobi* people, occupy a region of north-west Ghana and south-west Burkina Faso straddling the Black Volta river. The other neighbours of the *Dagaba* are the *Waale* people to the south in Ghana, particularly around the regional capital, Wa, and the *Sisaala* to the east. The boundaries between these groups of people is far from clear geographically. Individual villages in one area may be either *Dagaba* or *Sisaala*. The *Sisaala* men often take *Dagaba* wives but it is very unusual for a *Dagaba* man to have a *Sisaala* wife. *Dagaba* men think *Sisaala* women are "dirty" but their meaning is probably cultural rather than factual. *Lobi* and *Dagaare* languages are mutually intelligible, the differences being the equivalent of the dialect change between relatively remote regions of the UK. The *Dagaare* and *Sisaali* languages are not similarly related. Few *Dagaba* people speak *Sisaali* although they may understand some of the language. A fair number of *Sisaala* people, especially those with *Dagaba* wives in the family, understand and speak some *Dagaare*, at least sufficient for trading purposes.

The countryside in the *Dagaba* region is long grass savannah. The soil is not very fertile and is not deep having many rocky outcrops. There are some *baobab* trees which grow to tremendous girth, but most trees are comparatively small and, near to the villages, are regularly cut back in the search for firewood. There is one main rainy season which lasts roughly from May to October, with little rain outside these months. In the dry season temperatures often exceed 40°C with a hot dry wind called the *harmattan* blowing south from the Sahara. Food for the dry season must be stored and is supplemented by what can be grown in small walled gardens. The gardens must be watered by hand twice a day, so are usually close to a well or a reliable stream. The main town of the *Dagaba* area is Nandom. Nandom has a hospital and a substantial Catholic church but no made roads, mains electricity or telephones. The nearest any of these amenities come is Wa, 120km south, but they are progressing north and their arrival may have a considerable impact on life in Nandom.

The Nandom area is bounded by the Burkina border about 15km north and the Black Volta river 10km west. To the south and east are a number of villages owing allegiance either to Nandom or to other administrative centres such as Lawra (30km south) or Jirapa (40km south-east) neither of which are *Dagaba*. Work in Nandom centres mainly around the production of food and drink. The main foods are either rice or a traditional thick millet porridge

called TZ (from *Tuo Zali* which is probably a word from the *Hausa* language of Nigeria which was the language spoken by official messengers.) These staples are eaten with a mainly vegetable stew made from tomatoes and green leaves with processed seeds from the *dawadawa* tree added for flavour and protein. The main local drink is *pito* (local people claim this is an English word but, if it is, it has changed beyond recognition.) *Pito* is also made from millet which has been sprouted, boiled and fermented overnight. It is drunk very fresh so the alcohol content increases from a sweet drink with little alcohol in the morning, to a quite potent sour brew with a taste like cider and major headache potential by the evening. Other local occupations include the manufacture of a wide variety of pots and baskets, and the weaving and sewing of traditional cloth. Many of these trades are under threat from imports and mechanisation, with the traditional crafts being seen as old-fashioned. A high proportion of the young men either leave the area completely or travel to the south of Ghana outside the farming season to find paid work and a more comfortable lifestyle.

In *Dagaba* culture, as in many others in Africa, music is central to everyday life, orchestrating and accompanying all significant events from birth to death. The main instrument of the *Dagaba* people is a large 18-bar pentatonic xylophone called a *gyil* which leads and accompanies singing and dancing. A similar instrument is used by many of the neighbouring people. The *Sisaala* people have instruments which are often bought from *Dagaba* makers who are acknowledged to be experts. The *Lobi* xylophone makers are also well known but often make smaller instruments with fewer bars and a slightly different tuning. Even the *Dagaba* instrument is not consistent throughout the region. *Dagaba* musicians in Diebougou in Burkina Faso about 50km north-west from Nandom play a smaller 19-key instrument which is more closely related to the Mandinka *balafon* found in northern Burkina, Mali and across to the Gambia. Throughout the region the xylophone is used for a number of different types of music, particularly funeral music, fetish music for traditional religious ceremonies, and some forms of recreational music.

It is well known that there is no specific word for "music" in many African languages, as distinct and separate from "dance" and other aspects of live performance. For example, the *Dagaba* people have a type of recreational performance called *bEwaa*. The name itself comes from the word *bEwaare* - they are coming - thus suggesting the coming together of people with a common purpose. There is no audience: everyone participates, as musician, singer or dancer. *BEwaa* (sometimes also referred to as *bawaa*) takes place mainly in the harvest season (October-December) on nights when the moon is full. When it is clear that there will be a good harvest people will meet together to sing, dance, play, drink, meet friends, exchange gossip, arrange marriages. . . .

Bewaa is also closely related in style and content to *dalaari* which is for children, and *kari* and *nuru* which are performed by women and use only voices and clapping. All of these involve songs. The words of a song are often the first thing to be composed usually by the women. These may then be taken over and used in *bewaa*. The words often deal with local events. They may narrate a humorous incident, comment on someone's behaviour, or give advice about how one should behave. Although the references are often quite local the song will often be heard by visitors from the next village who will remember and repeat it, possibly with some alteration and addition, when they return to their own village.

Since most West African languages are tonal² the words of a song will begin to suggest a melodic outline which is developed often by repetition or phrase extension. A *gyil* (xylophone) player may become involved here. A good *gyil* player must be able to repeat on his instrument anything which is said, but *gyile* (plural) are pentatonic so he has to make a precise choice of notes, thus establishing the melody more clearly (within *Dagaba* culture *gyile* may only be played by men). The rhythm of the melody also has to fit with the rhythm for the dance step, so this further constrains the possibilities.

The *gyil* player of course, has two beaters. As well as playing the melody (and probably embellishing it) with the right hand, he will add some further accompaniment with the left hand. This additional part may vary according to the skill of the player between a simple "Alberti" type steady pattern, and a much more complex independent accompaniment with elements of imitation of parts of the melody. Inevitably, this too will be heard by another *gyil* player who will remember the contour of the song and take this back to his village. He will then reproduce the melody, but will make no attempt to copy the accompaniment style of the other player, preferring instead to add his own.

In each place where the song is performed people will dance. The basics of the dance step are fairly universal to fit with the rhythm, but again there will be different versions in different places. The net result is almost like an extended game of "Chinese Whispers", but with words, music, and dance all involved. There is not one single composer or creator, but many, each adding a part to the mosaic. There is not one piece which is subject to different interpretations as with western music, but an almost continuous variation based around a central paradigm.

If you try to ask someone how the music in one place is different from another you may get a reply which says that the song is the same, but the dance is different. Yet to our ears the music may sound very different. The

instruments used may have variations in tuning which make the song sound quite different even though relatively the same bars are played. Each player will perform in their own style which is distinctive and different. Each performance by the same person may involve playing variations in a different order or adding some changes. In the conception of the performer they may play a particular tune the same every time. By this they will mean that they perform the same song, in their own style with some standard variations. Western musicology, in contrast, may point to many areas in which each performance is not the same. There is no correct view here, what is interesting are the different ways that people perceive the music they are playing and hearing.

The instruments used in a typical performance are one or two *gyile*, and a drum, which can be either a *kuor* (calabash drum) or a *gangaar* (short cylindrical wooden drum). In addition, someone will play the *kpagru* (literally "beating") rhythm on the lowest bar of the *gyil* which is usually reserved for this purpose. When there are two *gyile* the one with the "sharper" sounding voice will be designated as female and used as the lead instrument. The *gyil* player will also have metal jingles attached to his wrists. The dancers will have similar jingles on their ankles and legs and will also play a regular pulse on a small metal idiophone. The standard *gyil* has 18 keys but is large and heavy. Some players will use a smaller 14-key instrument because it is easier to transport. The 18-key instrument is preferred to the 14-key because when a performer feels inspired the 14-key will restrict his imagination. The 14-key is a *Lobi* instrument which the *Dagaba* have adopted because you can play some of their music on it and it is lighter when transporting the instrument, but the tuning of the 14-key *Lobi* instrument and the 14-key *Dagaba* instrument is different. The 14-key *gyil* is usually referred to as *lo-gyil*.

The bass part of the xylophone is called *gyil nyaa* - xylophone chest (part of the body) - for funerals you play tunes here late in the afternoon between the time when the sun is hot and its setting. The middle is *gyil sog* - xylophone middle, played in the middle of the day. The top bars are *gyil pile* - xylophone low-down (because these bars are closer to the ground) and would be played in the morning. For recreational music where there is singing involved, these ideas are less important than finding a pitch which is comfortable for the singers. The xylophone is played with large heavy beaters traditionally made from raw latex and glue wrapped round the end of a stick about 30cm long and 2cm in diameter. The modern alternative replaces the latex with a disc cut from a lorry tyre. The beaters are often called *gyilbie* (lit. xylophone children) but the same term is also used in some places for the bars. Beaters are also called *gyilluore* - jumping from place to place, *gyilnee* - xylophone mouths, or *gyilduole* - xylophone stretching. The music of *bewaa* is often referred to as *bewaa gyile*.

Measures 10-12 of the musical score. The top staff contains a continuous eighth-note melody. The bottom staff features a bass line with eighth and quarter notes. Measure numbers 10, 11, and 12 are indicated above the first staff.

Measures 13-15 of the musical score. The top staff continues the eighth-note melody. The bottom staff continues the bass line. Measure numbers 13, 14, and 15 are indicated above the first staff.

Measures 16-18 of the musical score. The top staff includes a repeat sign and a double bar line. The bottom staff includes a repeat sign and a double bar line. Measure numbers 16, 17, and 18 are indicated above the first staff. The text "D.C." is written above the first staff between measures 17 and 18. Measure 18 is marked with a "2" indicating a second ending.

The *gyil* is pentatonic, but instruments vary widely between makers and the interval between adjacent notes can be between 202 and 283 cents. Each maker will normally be quite consistent, tuning each new instrument to an existing one or just to his memory. Thus, when a player is faced with a new instrument he will often play a pattern of alternating notes up and down the instrument, followed by a well known tune. The purpose of this is to establish “where its voice lies.” The player may be unhappy starting a tune on one note and begin again one bar higher or lower. The instrument is in tune when the performed tune sounds satisfactory. The tuning is not judged in isolation but is good when it performs the desired function.³ However, this certainly points towards a conception of the tuning as equipentatonic in many ways.

Given this performance context, what about the actual musical practice? (I am using western techniques and concepts of musical analysis in this discussion.) *Bewaa* begins with a song and, in its basic form, this is supported on the *gyil* with a simple accompaniment. The song, *Bobo Dioulasso tingenbarena* comes from the *Dagaba* area of south-west Burkina Faso (Bobo Dioulasso is the main town of the area) and dates from the 1970's. The basic melody and words are:

Ex. 1

Melody

Burki-na Fa-so tin-ge baa-re na Bobo Diou-las-so tin-ge baa-re na

Burkina Faso world is ending Bobo Dioulasso world is ending

Accompaniment

This has really only two ideas: the first bar is reworked in the third bar, and the second and fourth bars are identical. Rhythmically the first and third bars have all equal notes, only the order of the notes is slightly different. The rhythm of the second and fourth bars owes quite a lot to the dance rhythm (*kpagru*) which is usually played in the bottom bar of the instrument.

Ex. 2

The left hand of the *gyil* player adds a simple ostinato-like accompaniment,⁴ similar in form and function to an “Alberti” bass, but without the harmonic implications. Apart from the substitution of some notes in the first and third bars, this accompaniment continues without changing style or rhythm throughout the piece.

This simple beginning has many possibilities for small scale variations which explore the detail of the song without ever moving far away from it. At the most simple level, the first note of the right hand is delayed by one quaver adding momentum at the beginning of the bar. The same procedure is also applied to bars two and four, or the pitch of the first quaver of the bar is substituted by a different one.

Ex. 3

Example 3 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Accompaniment'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The melody consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and finally a quarter note. The accompaniment consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter note, followed by a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note. The first and third measures of the accompaniment have a quarter rest in the second measure.

The obvious(?) extension of this is to continue the idea, moving the first two notes of bars one and three back one quaver.

Ex. 4

Example 4 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Accompaniment'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The melody consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and finally a quarter note. The accompaniment consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter note, followed by a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note. The first and third measures of the accompaniment have a quarter rest in the second measure.

Then all of the notes in bars one and three, introducing the effect of a syncopation across the barline.⁵

Ex. 5

Example 5 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Accompaniment'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The melody consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note, then a half note, and finally a quarter note. The accompaniment consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter note, followed by a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note. The first and third measures of the accompaniment have a quarter rest in the second measure.

Ex. 6

The image shows the musical notation for the song 'The Rose Tree'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Accompaniment'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The accompaniment starts with a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3, and a quarter note A3.

And, of course, different notes can be substituted whilst keeping the general phrase shape:

Ex. 7

Melody



Accompaniment



The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Accompaniment'. Both staves are in 4/4 time. The melody consists of two measures, each starting with a quarter rest followed by a sequence of eighth and quarter notes. The accompaniment consists of two measures, each starting with a quarter note followed by a sequence of eighth and quarter notes, with a quarter rest at the end of each measure.

Although this is all at a simple level, by combining the different variations an interesting and appropriate piece of dance music can be created, at the same time remaining close to the original song.

The further extension of these techniques can be seen in another song, *Yaya kole zele*. Literally translated the words mean "Keep on begging, (repeated), If she is happy she will give you love." Meaning - If you want a woman but she is not interested you should pay her more attention, you may be rewarded with love.

Ex. 8

Ya ya ko - le ze - le Ya ya ko - le ze - le

Ya ya ko - le ze - le Ya ya o puo wa pe-li o i kob

This is a very well known and liked *bewaa* song first heard in 1986. It is performed by most *gyl* players and, therefore, exists in a great many differing versions. As can immediately be seen there are a number of elements

even within the nuclear melody which are derived from a single idea. The first three phrases of the melody are nearly identical. They have the characteristic repeated notes at the beginning of the phrase which means that this melody is quickly recognised even in complex variations. The third phrase is extended to balance the first two phrases and this extension draws on elements already heard and also continues the downward curve of the phrase which has been established.

It is also interesting to note that we are in no doubt as to where the metrical stress lies. Without there being the degree of emphasis of the resolution of the repeated notes created in a similar situation by for example, Beethoven, there is a clear stress on the note following the three repeated notes. From the interaction of the stress and the density referent established by the repeated notes, there is also a clear, unstated accent falling immediately before the start of the second phrase.

As it stands, the main interest in the tune lies in the phrase structure and the interaction between the simple note lengths and the metre. As such, it is an ideal vehicle for further elaboration and variation, having similar features to other themes such as the framework underlying the famous Paganini Caprice.

Of course, no self-respecting *gyil* player would perform the song with just the melody, so differing versions immediately begin to emerge from different performers. A version by Joseph Kobom Taale⁶ starts by emphasising the rhythmic impetus of the first three notes then disguising the end of the phrase. The left-hand additions in bar two have three effects: they mirror the opening falling interval of the melody, emphasising it by repetition, they further disguise the "barline" with a rhythm which hangs across it, and they adumbrate the repetition and pitch fall of the second phrase.

Ex. 9

The same idea is used at the end of the second phrase although the impact here will be slightly different due to its previous audition. The music so far has also alternated between two-part writing and single line, although it could be argued that, by its pitch structure, the single line implies the continuation of two parts. These features are all continued in the extension of the third phrase with the repeated use of the interval of a fourth (however approximate), the dualism of the part writing and the rhythmic idea which drags across the bar-line to the return of the first phrase. In the next variation it is the melody which is decorated while the left-hand accompaniment remains unchanged.

Ex. 10

Gyl



It is generally accepted that a good *gyl* player can be recognised by the speed of his left hand (and *gyl* players take special measures, such as eating food with the left hand instead of the right, to strengthen it). The next variation retains the expanded version of the right hand part whilst adding more independence and complexity in the left hand.

Ex. 11

Gyl



The development from the existing left hand part is clear and one could argue that only four notes have been added or changed, but the effect is more far-reaching than that would suggest. Whereas the left hand was previously primarily an accompaniment (this effect being reinforced by the gaps in its movement), it has now become an independent line with a wider range of notes. It also complements the rhythmic flow of the melody moving it on at significant places. The left hand part also now has a symmetrical line and contour, connecting the lower register in a broad sweep up to the high note at the beginning of the phrase.

In a performance of *bɛwaa* there will be a number of songs performed without a break, alternating with dance sections. Typically the *gyil* player will begin a song by playing the first phrase which will be recognised by the dancers who will begin singing. The player will then continue to play the tune ornamenting and playing variations around it. At a signal from the lead dancer (usually a whistle) the dance section will begin. The *gyil* player will play a simpler alternating pattern for this section until the return of the tune, or the start of a new tune. During the dance section the dancers will usually be performing a set sequence of steps. As they wear metal idiophones on their legs this will also contribute another rhythm to the overall sound.

On the following three pages is a typical song *Fra-fra woe kɔ simie yang baa, Fra-fra woe kɔ simie yang baa, Fra-fra woe kɔ simie yang baa. Kɔ simie yang baa, ɛ baa bɛ dune*. A literal translation of the words is: *The Fra-fra, joke, farms groundnuts, gives to the dog (repeated three times). Gives to the dog, now the dog doesn't bite*. This is a joke (*woe*) at the expense of the *Fra-fra* people who, in *Dagaba* opinion are so stupid they farm groundnuts to feed the dog, then they are surprised when the dog doesn't bite. The tempo is around ♩ = 240.

There is an alternating, one-bar pattern to the accompaniment which is also found in the vast majority of *bɛwaa* songs. This starts on adjacent notes and follows a sequence: - **1 1 2 1 2 2 1 2** (each number represents one bar). This sequence can also start at different points whilst maintaining the pattern e.g. **1 2 1 2 2 1 2 1**. If there are two *gyile* available then the second player will play variations around the support part as shown below, following the same sequence as the lead part accompaniment. This example starts with bar 1, followed by bar 2 of the sequence. Ex.12

Gyl 1 - accompaniment

Gyl 2

Fra-Fra woe

Kpagru

12/8

Gyil tune

1 2 3

Gyil accomp

Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie yangbaa, Fra - fra

4 5 6

woe kɔ si - mie yangbaa, Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie

7 8 9

yangbaa, kɔ si - mie yangbaa, ε baa be - dun - ε. Fra-fra

Fra-Fra woe

Kpagru

Gyl tune 1 2 3

Gyl accomp

Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie yang baa, Fra - fra

4 5 6

woe kɔ si - mie yang baa, Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie

7 8 9

yang baa, kɔ si-mie yangbaa, ɛ baa bɛ dun - ɛ. Fra-fra

The musical score is written for three parts: Kpagru, Gyl tune, and Gyl accomp. The Kpagru part is a single melodic line in 12/8 time. The Gyl tune part consists of three numbered phrases (1, 2, 3) that correspond to the lyrics. The Gyl accomp part provides a harmonic accompaniment for the Gyl tune. The lyrics are written in English and a phonetic transcription. The score is divided into three systems, each with a Kpagru line and a Gyl tune/Gyl accomp system. The first system contains measures 1-3, the second system contains measures 4-6, and the third system contains measures 7-9. The lyrics are: 'Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie yang baa, Fra - fra' (measures 1-3), 'woe kɔ si - mie yang baa, Fra-fra wo - e kɔ si - mie' (measures 4-6), and 'yang baa, kɔ si-mie yangbaa, ɛ baa bɛ dun - ɛ. Fra-fra' (measures 7-9).

10 11 12

13 14 15

16 17 D. C. 18 2

Measures 19-21 of the musical score. Measure 19 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody in the upper staff consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. Measure 20 continues the melody with quarter notes: D4, C4, Bb3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3. Measure 21 continues with quarter notes: C3, Bb2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2.

Measures 22-24 of the musical score. Measure 22 continues the melody with quarter notes: Bb1, A1, G1, F1, E1, D1, C1, Bb0. Measure 23 continues with quarter notes: A0, G0, F0, E0, D0, C0, Bb-1, A-1. Measure 24 continues with quarter notes: G-1, F-1, E-1, D-1, C-1, Bb-2, A-2, G-2.

Measures 25-28 of the musical score. Measure 25 continues the melody with quarter notes: F-2, E-2, D-2, C-2, Bb-3, A-3, G-3, F-3. Measure 26 continues with quarter notes: E-3, D-3, C-3, Bb-4, A-4, G-4, F-4, E-4. Measure 27 continues with quarter notes: D-4, C-4, Bb-4, A-4, G-4, F-4, E-4, D-4. Measure 28 continues with quarter notes: C-4, Bb-4, A-4, G-4, F-4, E-4, D-4, C-4. The piece concludes with the word "Etc." written above the final measure.

Of course, this again only represents the central idea of the second *gyil* part. A typical elaboration of the part is shown below. Although visually it is quite easy to see the relationship with the paradigm above the aural reality is more complex. The dotted crotchet pulse is maintained throughout, but it occurs in different parts, frequently with the other part anticipating or following the pulse so our sense of rhythm (but not the *Dagaba* sense of rhythm) is confused.

Ex. 13

Kpagru

Gyil 2

The tune itself is very simple, utilising only four notes. The word pattern of three lines the same followed by a consequent line is a common model. The melody for each of the first three lines is very similar really only changing to fit the accompaniment sequence. Most songs, like this one, have a 12-pulse (two bars) phrase length, with the *kpagru* being repeated three times against it. (There are also a significant number of songs which use a shorter 8-pulse, like *Bobo*, aligning with the *kpagru*.) The section from bars 10-17 shows a typical elaboration of the

The *gyil* 1 accompaniment pattern shown for *Fra-fra woe* is the most common but other rhythms and notes are possible although the sequence is unvarying. Other typical realisations are illustrated below:

Ex. 15



There are also more elements to the variations which cannot be shown here. Each *gyil* has a calabash resonator for each bar which has two or three mirlitons attached. It is not intended that these should buzz equally and evenly for each note. Some may sound more than others; some may sound scarcely at all, and some may have an interesting pulsation to the sound. Makers will tell you that if all the notes buzz evenly and loudly it will obscure the tone of the instrument. The presence of the mirlitons will add another dimension which will vary between each instrument. Some notes will be more prominent than others and the effective length that each note sounds will vary. The notation cannot show this but the effect on the sound is considerable.⁷

The other element which I have not yet mentioned in any detail is the calabash drum, the *kuɔr*. This is made from as calabash up to 60cm in diameter. A slice is cut off the calabash leaving a circular opening about 30cm across. The flesh of the calabash is scraped out and the shell dried. A skin is then fitted across the opening (traditionally crocodile skin for the best sound) and glued and nailed in place. The resulting drum when played with the hands is quite loud and very light to transport. It has a clear open sound and a distinctive "slap" sound but little bass. The head cannot be tuned directly but can be kept at the preferred pitch either by exposing it to heat (the sun or a fire) to raise the pitch, or putting water on the head to lower the pitch. The *kuɔr* part is mainly improvised but there are some typical phrases shown below. Rhythmically the *kuɔr* relates to the accompaniment of *gyil* 1 but also links with the *kpagru* rhythm. The notation here uses the note G for an open sound and D for a slap.

Ex. 16



An alternative version of the *kpagru* part is also shown. The addition of the extra quaver makes the part more open to alternative interpretations and can be heard more as a 2+3+3 quaver pattern. The *gyil* 2 player will sometimes reinforce this by playing on two bars with his right hand in this rhythm: ♩ ♩ ♩.

When all these elements are put together in an ensemble a complex texture emerges which to western ears can be quite confusing. The *kpagru* has a very obvious 4-beat repeated pattern but, although there are clearly notes in common with the rest of the ensemble, the precise relationship is not clear. The melody may, according to the song, sound like either twelve-eight or six-four time with either the dotted crotchet or the crotchet as the main pulse. The *gyil* 1 accompaniment often has a clear crotchet pulse and a clear repeated rhythmic unit lasting 6 crotchets, but the adherence of a player to the rhythm I have shown often varies so that it is precise in its relationship to the other parts at those points I have shown as barlines, but has a much freer feel between those points (some of this can also be seen in the melody of the next song). The *gyil* 2 part tends much more towards a dotted crotchet pulse and twelve-eight barring but this is frequently disguised by the anticipations and delays around the pulse. The *kuor* moves between different interpretations of its rhythms. The typical opening bar of the last example can be heard with either a crotchet or a dotted crotchet pulse and many of its other patterns exhibit a similar ambiguity in western terms.

It is useful to look at another song with all the parts notated to get some idea of the possible interactions. *Vielu daa na Nandomme mi nyu, akuraku* is printed on the next two pages. The words mean *Very good pito Nandom people drink, wonderful, The rainwater comes, comes, comes and turns to pito then we drink, wonderful*. The song

Kpagru

Kuor

Gyl 1

1 2 3

Vie - lu daa na Nan - dom - me mi nyu, Vie - lu daa na Nan - dom - me mi

Gyl 2

4 5 6 7

nyu, a - kur - a - ku, Vie - lu daa na Nan - dom - me mi nyu, Sa - bie - kuj war - war - war fie daa kari

nyu, a - kur - a - ku

D.C.

was not written in Nandom but was composed in the early 1960's by people from Tuoper (a village 8km south-west from Nandom) who always enjoyed the Nandom *pito* when they came to the town. Although *akuraku* does mean "wonderful" its precise meaning is also "I'm surprised it's so good!" The melody for this varies rhythmically between the crotchet-quaver feel of bar one and the duplet quavers shown in bar three. Much of the time it occupies a tantalisingly uncertain feel somewhere between the two. The tune also has some bars which use a crotchet beat (bars 6-7) and one bar (bar 8) which uses a typical *kuor* rhythm. Structurally the melody follows the common pattern also seen in *Fra-fra woe*. The first two bars are repeated twice more with virtually the only variation being the starting note in the pentatonic scale, with bars 7-8 being the consequence of the words and a melodic contrast. The actual pitch of the melody would be one where men and women could sing in the same register so the first note of the melody might be around middle C or D on the piano. A typical variation of the melody is shown in bars 9-16. The tempo would be around ♩ = 150.

What general principles for musical construction and continuation can be abstracted from these examples of *bewaa* music? Many of them can be expressed in ways which find close parallels in music of the European tradition. The presence of the *kpagru* and a dance step which is realised aurally means that there is a clear rhythmic periodicity which elaborations can negate or subvert to a fair extent. The phrase lengths themselves are comparatively short and controlled largely by the song text. These phrase lengths are adhered to in all the examples I have heard. At a micro-rhythmic level there is often a pulse (at the speed of the crotchet in the transcriptions) in the song which can be subdivided by the *gyil* player who can make faster attacks. This is, however, used with some subtlety. There is no point in going quickly to a continuous quaver pattern which has no sense of progression and loses rhythmic differentiation. The beginning of the bar is the preferred point for most of the initial subdivisions. This is often extended and may continue across the bar-line to the start of the next phrase or just beyond it.

Pitch variations are limited, but also enabled by the pentatonic tuning. There are fewer notes available but adjacent notes can be easily substituted without sounding like wrong notes and whilst maintaining the contour of the melody. There is some indication that there is a sense of an "octave" in the substitution and addition of notes from a different register - mainly the low notes of the left hand. The additional notes frequently reinforce part of the pitch content of the melody, either by direct or mirror imitation. There is a clear sense of part writing, almost always two-part because of the physical limitations, but, by implication, there is sometimes a third part present. This raises the question of a sense of harmony. This obviously does not exist in the sense of western syntactical

functional harmony. There is a sense, though, in which there is an alternation of two harmonies or harmonic centres.

Although this is usually dance music it is also used as a performance or to accompany songs. There is never a set pattern of variations although the performance generally begins with something close to the original song before becoming more complex. The player will also respond to the level of involvement and excitement communicated by the other performers. The usual form of a performance would be a gradual increase in complexity and density of sound events (although not tempo) taking one or two minutes. This would reach a sustainable plateau which could continue for 2 - 5 minutes, during which time the process of variation would be mainly concerned with quite small changes within a complex matrix. At the end of this time the performer might return to a simpler pattern allowing the music to become quieter before just stopping at a suitable point. There is not a sense of climax or of resolution of inherent or generated conflict as in most European classical music.

What I have presented are naturally rather coarse abstractions and an attempt to indicate some general principles. They are not a guarantee that, if you use these ideas you will write African music - there are many more subtleties than I can understand. Because of the process of composition and communication in West Africa we are often not aware of the names or identities of the excellent creative musicians whose output is often labelled "traditional". The music they create is appropriate for the occasion and valued by the listeners - a claim which all composers would like to be able to make.

1 I should make my own views clear. As the product of a European system of music education, I cannot write "African music." I can use some of the techniques as part of an extended vocabulary or palette. I can also pastiche African music - as a learning exercise, as a tribute, or as an exploration of the links between one style and another (rather in the manner of Sir Michael Tippett's use of music by Corelli).

2 A tonal language is one in which changing the pitch of syllables changes the meaning. However, the context is also very important. In the context of a song, the meaning would be understood which made sense even if some of the tones in the language were negated by the pitches used in the song.

3 My transcriptions indicate approximate pitch using the nearest equivalent notes from the western pitch system. The following figures relate to instruments I have measured. Since my sample is quite small there may be some instruments which would extend the range. Typical intervals in cents might be:-

Octave 1	274	224	275	237	242
Octave 2	249	232	225	245	228

4 Most performers play the melody with their right hand and the accompaniment with the left, but there are a significant number who reverse the instrument. One Ghanaian informant suggested that this came from Burkina Faso although no justification was offered. Playing the instrument in this way is even more dangerous spiritually than normal.

5 Again it is the transcription rather than necessarily the sound which leads to a description in these terms. However, without wishing to suggest that music itself uses the emphasis of a conceptual barline, I would argue that the mapping of pitch onto rhythm in the construction of the accompaniment leads to an interpretation which supports an understanding in these terms.

6 Joseph Kobom Taale was one of the leading *bewaa gyil* performers in Ghana. He was born in Nandom in the Upper West region and began performing nationally at the age of about 16. He taught *gyil* at the University of Ghana for some

20 years and until recently worked as a freelance musician based in Accra. He died in November 1995 after a short illness.

7 For comparison, listen to some of John Cage's pieces for prepared piano and, if possible, experiment with the technique. The mirlitons on the *gyil* are holes cut in the calabash covered with a thin membrane which is loose enough to buzz. Traditionally the material used for this is the egg case of a particular house spider. With the increasing number of concrete block houses being built rather than the traditional mudbrick, these spiders are now quite scarce. The preferred modern alternative is high density plastic carrier bags.

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TREVOR WIGGINS

Techniques of variation and concepts of musical understanding in Northern Ghana

This article examines one piece of music, Neporo, performed by women from the town of Lambussie in the Upper West region of Ghana. The piece, I was told, is "always the same". This article attempts to define what is meant by this statement through an examination of the techniques and apparent principles of performance. It is based on the detailed observation of a number of performances which were recorded over a period of about 30 months.

It is clear that, in attempting the enquiry outlined above, I could be applying my own western concepts of musical construction, function, and significant features to a completely different style of music, ignoring the understanding that the performers and creators have of their music. As Signell (1997) points out, issues of disclosure are key to an understanding of what the writer is attempting to communicate, so I will try to adhere to the standards he proposes. What I am setting out to do in this article is to undertake a process of analysis, examining the processes which may exist in the creation, transformation and performance of this musical material. As Björnberg observes, the academic disputes on the relevance of musical analysis in such settings revolve largely around a lack of clarity about the subject and point of the analysis; "... the terminology and concepts of most musical analysis, regardless of the musical style or genre analysed, displays a strong bias towards the production of music rather than its reception" (1998:27). Cook expresses a similar idea: "A composition ... exists on two quite distinct, and sometimes apparently unrelated, levels: the level of production and the level of reception" (1990:215). This article might then occupy a curious position, being an analysis largely of the process of production, deduced and perceived only through reception. Inevitably, though, I am not in a position to observe many facets of the production, such as the motivation for change and the judgements (aesthetic or functional) which might inform the process of change.

The recordings I used for the purpose of this study were not made at funerals, which is the functional location of the music. It would have been inexcusably intrusive at the most immediate time of family mourning to have arrived with my recording equipment. The recordings were, therefore, made on several other occasions which were set up in co-operation with the people of Lambussie. I had spoken to the paramount chief (Kuoro) for Lambussie, Kewe Baloroo Yessibie II,

and been offered his full assistance. (Kuoro Baloroo died on 31st October 1998 and will be greatly mourned by the people of Lambussie.) I have no reason to believe that what I recorded was materially different from the actual event. The following analysis is based on six performances which I was able to record on three different occasions between November 1994 and December 1996.

The women who are the performers do not consider themselves to be "musicians" in the way that there are men in Lambussie who are known for their expert playing of the *zense* (xylophone), or their singing with the *kyanna* (zither). It is evident from the performances, however, that there is a perception that some women are better as leaders of the singing than others. Some degree of concern was exhibited by the most expert women when someone perceived as less expert was leading, and there was group co-operation to make sure that signals, such as those to end a performance and other cues, were made very clear and picked up by everyone else. There was a distinctive element of performance here, not only engendered by the presence of my microphone. Normally the women perform this music for the men to mourn, so there is a listening audience who are actively engaged in the occasion, not merely passive recipients.

The town of Lambussie is in the Upper West region of Ghana in West Africa, about 15 km from the border with Burkina Faso and 10 km from the Black Volta river. The people who live in this area are mainly Sisaala and Dagara. Sisaala people inhabit quite a large area of land in northern Ghana from the central northern area across to the west. Lambussie lies at the western extreme; the nearest Dagara town, Nandom, is only 5 km away, but it is part of a different administrative area and the languages are not mutually intelligible. The countryside is mainly long grass savannah dotted with trees, many of which are frequently cut for firewood. Forty years ago there was abundant wildlife in the area, including lions, elephants and several species of antelope. Now, these have either completely died out, mainly as a result of hunting, or are found only in the game reserve 200 km to the south. The area has one rainy season between April and October and there is little rainfall outside this period. Farming millet, corn, yams, groundnuts and sweet potatoes provides the main source of food, with walled dry-season gardens, watered by hand, providing salad vegetables. Some farmers cultivate cotton as a cash crop; the Lambussie Kuoro Baloroo won several national awards for his farming. Many of the adult men live here only during the farming season, travelling to cities in the south to seek work during the rest of the year. The women remain all year, farming, carrying firewood and water, making pots and baskets, brewing *pito* (local millet beer), preparing food and caring for children.

Adherence to Muslim or Christian religions has grown considerably in this region, but they often seem to exist alongside the traditional beliefs. It is difficult to assess the impact this is having on musical practice. On the one hand, the Catholic Church has adopted and adapted local music (mostly recreational music rather than ceremonial), for use within the mass. On the other hand, Muslim beliefs might be expected to cause a decrease in musical activity. Mary Seavoy (cited in Djedje 1998:457) suggests that there has been a decline in music-making with xylophones

in the region. This may be the case, but musical activity in Lambussie, both religious and recreational seems to be strong. The dance group (with xylophones, and led by a Muslim man) has won the local cultural festival (*Kakube*) on more than one occasion recently, and the xylophones were also much in evidence at funerals I attended, although I was told that xylophones would not be used at a Muslim burial. It seems that in Lambussie there is a highly pragmatic attitude to such matters. One informant adhered strictly to the alimentary requirements of Ramadan throughout a long energetic day in the hot season, but also told me that he took a pint of gin when he needed to cure his constipation.

In many respects, men and women lead quite separate lives in the community. They each have clear roles and responsibilities and work co-operatively with other women or men. Thus, it is the responsibility of the women to prepare and cook food, to draw and carry water from the borehole, and to make beer. It is not surprising then that women and men make music and dance separately for most of the time, even during the same special occasion. Women have their own music which is based mainly around singing and dancing. Women, generally, do not play instruments, with two exceptions. Many of the songs and dances are accompanied by one drum which is played with a pair of sticks. It seems always to play the same rhythm; continuous, quite fast notes, not quite even but very slightly swung like jazz quavers, grouped in four with an accent on the first note of each group. This rhythm is sometimes very close to even notes, and at other times will be less even, although rarely approaching the 2:1 relationship common in jazz quavers. Examples (fairly even) can be heard on the CD (1998) tracks 5 and 6. The drum is frequently replaced now with a modern alternative: the plastic tank of a discarded back-pack cropsprayer, which makes a durable instrument with a good sound. The other instrument played by women is the *bugiloo*, metal jingles similar to cow bells sewn en masse onto a deep leather belt, played by dancing vigorously. Women take it in turns to play the *bugiloo* as it is very tiring. It accompanies the xylophones used for funeral music and other significant dances.

Neporo is women's music, combining clapping and singing. It is the first music to be played at a house when a death of a member of that household is announced. While the women sing, the men mourn and the body is prepared for burial. Funerals are major occasions which have a pattern of events governed by the age and seniority of the deceased. If it is a baby that has died, then *Neporo* will be performed for about 30 minutes, after which the burial takes place. For an older child, *Neporo* is sung for several hours, then the xylophone is played for a short time at the compound (the family's house). In the morning the corpse is brought outside and displayed, seated on a chair, on a raised platform of branches and cloth, so everyone can see the body. The xylophone too is brought out and continues playing funeral music, until the burial around 4.00 pm. For a very old person, that is someone who is too old to work in the fields and therefore stays in the compound to look after children, first the *tangpanne* drums (like Asante *atumpan*) are played during the night following the death, so that people all around, up to 5 km away, know there has been a death, and that the dead person was old. The drumming might contain some ritual phrases which could tell something about who had died. Messengers are

also sent out on foot and bicycle to surrounding villages. *Neporo* may be performed for several hours until the xylophones are brought to the entrance of the house to play funeral music, accompanied by the *benter bie* and *benter zeno* (small and large calabash drums), for the people to cry (mourn). For a very old person the burial may take place at this point with little ceremony. The subsequent funeral celebration may be delayed for several months while relatives are summoned and money is collected to meet the cost of a large event. The social pressure to attend funerals is such that everyone in the extended family must attend regardless of other pressing needs; even the harvest is interrupted. The pressure is only slightly less for non-related members of the community, as non-attendance could lead to a poor turnout at one's own funeral in the future. This would be a disaster, as there would not be enough financial contributions to pay for the costs. (Attending funerals can be a costly business, as mourners must give money to the corpse, widows, family elders, musicians, etc.)

At the later funeral celebration, the hat and sandals of the deceased, together with a cloth, are placed on and below the chair on the raised platform, to represent the dead body, for people to mourn. A round basketwork fish trap, wrapped in a cloth or smock, may be used to suggest the body, and, if it is a woman, her head tie is placed on the chair, and perhaps her pots at her "feet". There would also be photographs, if available. People who can "see twice" say that they have seen the spirit of a deceased person at their own funeral, enjoying the dancing. At this later funeral, *Neporo* is sung in the night in the compound, but at dawn the xylophones take over, playing funeral music as the cloths are brought out onto the chair or platform, as the people cry.

Neporo is led by one of the senior women present, with each one taking her turn to lead for one complete rendering. This is clearly a highly symbolic piece of music. The Sisaala people believe that the dead are still living, but in another world. Particularly when an elderly person dies, the spirits or souls of the ancestors are invited to come and usher the deceased person into the next world. Leading a performance of *Neporo* is a serious matter. The spirits are close by,

Figure 1 Recording session for *Neporo*



so if the leader makes a mistake the spirits may be offended and take her also. For this reason, only older women lead *Neporo*. Given that the Kuoro had given his support to the recordings, the women seemed fairly relaxed about performing this music out of context, although a representative of the Kuoro was present throughout. The women were evidently careful about their performance and concerned not to make mistakes, but it is impossible to attribute this specifically to the spiritual aspect of the music or the presence of the recording equipment. Later questions elicited the response that it was acceptable to perform the music out of context. I was told that the words are symbolic of crying (weeping) and have no specific meaning and concluded from this evidence and variations in performance that the "words" are vocables and will thus have no implications for pitch structure as might be the case in a tonal language.

The music begins with the leader beginning to clap and sing, with the rest of the women (usually around 10–20 in number) joining soon after. The leader thus sets the tempo and the pitch. The pitch is not constant. Different women will start singing at a higher or lower pitch to suit their voices, although once an appropriate compromise for everyone has emerged, it tends to stay fairly constant. The pitch can also vary during a performance. Often the early starts will be at a low pitch, which will rise steadily throughout the performance. The pitch range always stays in the chest voice register for the women, with the lowest note being around d/e (middle C is c'). Each performance consists of a short 12-unit repeated rhythmic pattern accompanying the repetition of a longer melody. This melody will be repeated about 5–10 times, to give a total performance length of 2–4 minutes. (A recording of one performance of *Neporo* is available on CD (1998): track 1.)

Given the statement that the performance of *Neporo* is "always the same", I was interested to enquire further into what this meant. I could hear a number of variants between different performances and wanted to try to understand how these were "the same". First, I will consider the clapping separately. This consists of a number of individual patterns within a 12-unit repeated structure with a density referent of around 360–400 bpm. The leader always claps the same part, on pulses 1, 6 and 9. (In designating pulse 1, I referred to the dancing I saw on one occasion. This had dance steps falling on pulses 1, 4, 7 and 10, providing a suitable reference point, but no other implications of assumed hierarchy should be attributed to the designation of "pulse 1".) The main recurrent patterns are then as shown in this transcription:

UNITS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Part 1	*			*		*			*		*	
Part 2	*					*			*			
Part 3			*			*			*			*
Part 4	*		*		*		*		*		*	
Part 5	*			*			*			*		

(The numbering of the parts is not significant – it is only for identification.)

As can be seen from the notation, most parts coincide on pulses 1 and 9, with only one part missing on each of these pulses. Parts 4 and 5 provide the rhythmic base with their constant "3 against 2" pattern, coinciding with each other on the main dance steps. Part 3 is another version of part 5, with a different start point. This initiates a second "3 against 2" pattern overlaying the first. The coincident points of parts 3 and 4 are also reflected in the dance step. The dance has continuous small jumps landing on both feet on pulses 1 and 7, on the left foot on pulse 4, and the right foot on pulse 10. The top point of each jump is in the same place as Part 3 of the clapping, as shown below:

Pulse	1	4	7	10
Arms	> <	< >	> <	< >
Body		^	^	^
Feet	L̄ R̄	L̄ ^ R̄	L̄ R̄	^ L̄ R̄

(> < = moving together, < > = moving apart, _ = on the ground, ^ = lifted, Left and Right refer to the dancer's feet)

- Part 1 then threads between parts 3, 4 and 5 to tie them together.
- The first two claps for part 1 coincide with part 5.
- Claps 3 and 4 for part 1 coincide with part 3 (pulses 6 & 9).
- Claps 4, 5 and 1 for part 1 coincide with part 4 (pulses 9, 11 & 1).

This leaves part 2, which is the part that the leader claps. It has a clear relationship with part 1 shown above. This relationship is clear for the performers also, as occasionally the 1, 6, 9 lead pattern will be substituted by the "full" version, 1, 4, 6, 9, 11. The relationship is also frequently seen in the way that the 1, 6, 9 pattern is clapped, with distinct movements of the hands on pulses 4 and 11. Usually the hands will be held together after clapping pulse 1, then separated with a downward motion on 4. After clapping pulse 9, the hands are separated and moved upwards, as though conducting an upbeat to pulse 1. The origins of this may be musical, but there is also a strongly physical dimension, possibly in terms of helping to keep time by using a movement which occupies the necessary time-space. The action is reminiscent of another part of daily life for the women of Lambussie; using a large mortar and pestle to pound food. This movement is similarly rhythmic and repetitive, although usually with a shorter period than the unit length of this pattern. It is sometimes carried out by a single woman, but also frequently by two or more. In this latter case, it would be common to find someone beating a pulse on the side of the mortar to keep the actions from interfering with each other.

In addition to the five clapping parts described above, which occurred in every performance, several other variants were observed. Some variants seemed to be the property of one particular participant; other variants were observed only in one performance. Most of these variations were a relocation of one clap to a

Figure 2 *Nɛporo* dance. This moment is pulse 3 in the notation opposite.



point one pulse earlier or later (with only 12 pulses available one would think there is almost bound to be some similarity between parts, but there are in fact a large number of distinctive patterns possible). For example, one participant clapped 1, 3, 6, 9 in each performance. One interpretation of this is as a version of part 3 above with the pulse-12 clap delayed, but the performer was clearly aware of another relationship with part 1 above, which was indicated through a movement on pulse 11. Other occasional variants were:

- 1, 5, 9 – which can be seen as an augmented version of part 5 above, with a clap falling every 4 pulses instead of every 2.
- 1, 4, 6, 8, 11 – which is closely related to part 1 above, but avoids the usual pulse-9 ensemble point. It also develops an interesting relationship with part 5, reinforcing it, then alternating with it. This impression and conceptual division of the part was supported by the performer nodding her head on pulses 4 and 11.

Other physical, non-sonic movements observed were:

- leaving out a beat (usually pulse 4 or 11), but replacing it with a hand movement;
- clapping with a definitive downward movement at particular points (usually pulses 1 and 9);
- rocking movement of body or head, either on 1 and 7, or 1, 4, 7, 10;
- showing a division of the pattern by hand direction in the clapping where the hands are moved down on pulses 1 and 6, and up on pulses 4, 9 and 11, for example:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
↓			↑		↓			↑		↑	

This last tends to indicate an additive rhythmic conception of the pattern, with the downward movements for the 3-units and upward movement for the 2-units, giving a typical 5+7 structure: 3+2+3+2+2 (Nketia 1974:129). This division of the pattern also conforms to the concept which Arom (1991:246-8) labelled rhythmic oddity. This is the division of an even number of pulsations into two units, such that the parts can be represented by the formula 'half - 1 / half + 1'. Arom shows that this is based on the principle of inserting binary units into the structure bounded by ternary units. Thus a cycle of 8 units = 3, 3+2; 12 units = 3+2, 3+2+2; 16 units = 3+2+2, 3+2+2+2. It can be seen that the *Neporo* pattern equates to Arom's cycle of 12. Another rhythm commonly used in this area can be heard as the drum part on the CD (1998), Track 14. It is mostly heard on the CD as $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$, but is also commonly performed $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$. Allowing for a realignment of where we hear the start of the pattern, this represents 3, 3+2; it would seem, therefore, that Arom's observations are also appropriate to this area of West Africa.

It was also interesting to monitor what each individual performer clapped in the 6 different performances:

Performer 1:	1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5) throughout
Performer 2:	1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5) throughout
Performer 3:	Performances 1, 2 & 6: 1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5) Performance 3: 1, 5, 9 (variant) Performance 4: 1, 6, 9 (part 2) – leader Performance 5: 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1)
Performer 4:	Performances 1–5: 1, 6, 9 (part 2) – leader for perf. 5 Performance 6: 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1) then 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 (part 4) then 1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5)
Performer 5:	Performance 1: 3, 6, 9, 12 (part 3) Performance 2: 1, 6, 9 (part 2) – leader Performance 3: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 (part 4) Performances 4 & 6: 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1) Performance 5: 1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5)
Performer 6:	Performance 1: starts 1, 6, 9 (part 2) then 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1) – leader Performances 2–6: 1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5)
Performer 7:	Performances 1, 2 & 6: 3, 6, 9, 12 (part 3) Performances 3–5: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 (part 4)
Performer 8:	Performances 1, 2, 4, 5: 3, 6, 9, 12 (part 3) Performance 3: 1, 4, 6, 8, 11 (variant) Performance 6: 1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1) – leader

Performer 9:	Performance 1:	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 (part 4)
	Performance 2:	1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5)
	Performance 3:	1, 6, 9 (part 2) – leader
	Performances 4 & 5:	1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1)
	Performance 6:	3, 6, 9, 12 (part 3)
Performer 10:	1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1) throughout	
Performer 11:	Performance 1–3:	1, 4, 6, 9, 11 (part 1)
	Performances 4–6:	1, 4, 7, 10 (part 5)
Performer 12:	1, 3, 6, 9 (variant) throughout	

Some of the women (performers 1, 2, 10, 12) clap the same rhythm throughout and never take the lead, perhaps feeling less confident about their ability (or their place in the hierarchy?). Performers 5 and 9 clap all the main parts, as well as taking a turn as leader. The other women come somewhere between these. Interestingly, the balance of the various parts does not change as much as one might expect from the list above. Parts 1 and 5 emerge as essential parts, always having 2–5 performers. The other parts never have more than 3 performers and each of them do not appear in one performance. There is little evidence of performers deciding that the balance is not good and, therefore, changing parts. There clearly are main parts which are generally present and vary little, but within the paradigm the women feel able to hold individual parts (performer 12) or to compose occasional variants.

So much for the rhythmic aspects. What about pitch organisation? It is worth repeating that I am well aware that to make such distinctions between pitch and rhythm is the application of reified concepts from western music to another musical genre and form.

This piece is nominally sung in unison. There is a central paradigm which controls the pitch but there is not a sense of a central theme which is varied. All the versions have equal validity. There are some sections which are generally solo or sung by a small group of women, followed by a response from the whole group. The nature of the response can change in relation to the call, but the influence is two-way and not absolutely preset. There are moments of heterophony, usually arising within the response when different performers choose a slightly different course. I will present a detailed description of each section using western pitch notation and a pentatonic western scale. The actual pitch of each performance is set by the leader who begins, but the whole group will gradually change the pitch during a performance if there is a consensus that the pitch has been set too high or low. The women sing an anhemipentatonic scale which is found also on the main melodic instrument of the area, the *zense* (xylophone). The average interval between adjacent notes is a large tone of around 230+ cents, although instruments vary considerably and the concept of tuning is dynamic; an instrument is in tune

Figure 3 *Nzoporo*

The musical score for *Nzoporo* is presented on ten staves. The first staff begins with a 'Clap' symbol. The subsequent four staves are grouped under the labels 'First time', 'Second time', 'Third time', and 'Fourth time' respectively. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, indicating a complex rhythmic structure. The score is written in a single system, with the staves arranged vertically.

The image displays ten staves of handwritten musical notation, arranged in two systems of five staves each. The notation is written in a style that appears to be a form of musical shorthand or a specific notation system used in the study. It includes various symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, but the specific notation is not standard Western musical notation. The first system (top) shows a sequence of notes and rests across five staves, with some notes beamed together. The second system (bottom) also shows a sequence of notes and rests across five staves, with some notes beamed together. The notation is written in a way that suggests it is a transcription of a specific musical piece or a set of exercises.

when the melody sounds good to the performer and any other listeners. Typical intervals¹ between notes on an instrument I measured were:

Octave 1	274	224	275	237	242 cents
Octave 2	249	232	225	245	228 cents

For the purposes of general orientation, Figure 3 (on pp.126–7) is a transcription of the performance of *Neporo* which appears on the Lambussie CD (1998). A number of comments need to be made about this. I have transcribed the pitch with a pentatonic scale starting on c' rather than trying to show the exact pitch, which is variable. As usual, when notating vocal music, a decision about the precise pitch is sometimes difficult (for example, in the second full time-span of the solo introduction, the note written as c" could also be rendered as a sharp b'). In any case, the use of western pentatonic notation does not imply western pitch. I have had to make similar decisions about representing the rhythm. The clapping patterns recur every 12 pulses, so, having adopted the quaver as a pulse, I have used dotted bar-lines every 12 quavers to delineate this time span, but the music is not "in twelve-eight time". The end of the "first time" line goes straight back to the beginning to the "second time" line. There are no rests or missed bars, but I have given up trying

Figure 4



¹ In a perfect equi-spaced pentatonic scale, each interval would be 240 cents. Octaves also vary from 1200 by around -15/+50, with the average stretched octave of around 1220 cents.

to persuade my notation software to do exactly what I want and have adopted a pragmatic solution. Crossed noteheads are used to denote solo sections as opposed to chorus. These are sometimes not absolutely clear and the "solo" can be one, two or occasionally three singers, but there is a clear contrast with the full chorus.

I will now move on to a more detailed analysis of the variants observed in the six performances. This necessitates presenting the music in sections. Identifying sections in the music by my perception of phrases is likely to be flawed and the phrases of solo and chorus sections quite frequently overlap. I have, therefore, adopted sections which attempt not to do too much violence to the music but provide convenient segmentation points showing limited variation. In numbering sections, there is no hierarchy implied by my top line. Thus the top line of the "A" paradigm derives only from the point at which I began this exercise. Figure 4 shows the particular performance with which I began and the points of segmentation I have adopted.

Figure 5 shows the variants of section A, which generally involves oscillation about two higher notes, with a suggestion of the lower pattern shown in A:2. A1

A

Figure 5 displays musical notation for section A and its variants. The notation is presented on eight staves, labeled A, A.1, A.2, A1, A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, and A1.4. The top staff (A) includes lyrics: "hey wo ye hey ye ya ye". The notation shows various musical variants, including note values, rests, and cross-noteheads, illustrating the oscillation about two higher notes mentioned in the text.

has the same pattern of oscillation, based this time around two lower notes relative to the start point and is the version heard on the CD (1998). A1:3 shows a reference to the higher version; these variants could arise through lack of clarity about which was to be followed on this occasion. The shape of both is mostly identical, giving rise to questions about harmonic equivalence to which I shall return later. Another variant, appearing in both high and low versions, concerns the insertion of a note into time span 3 (pulse 4), which can either be a repetition of the preceding note acting as an anacrusis, or an anticipation of the next note. Variant A1:2 occurred once as a solo voice in response to a particular anticipation of the repetition point by the leader (see F:6/F1:1 later). Other occurrences were with two to three solo voices.

Generally there is an increase in prolongations of notes, anticipations and other heterophonic devices as the general level of excitement and engagement by the participants increases. As the level of intensity rises it may provoke ululation from one or two of the women, although this is quite brief. Some leaders are more confident in introducing complex variants at places where they would not normally occur, such as in Figure 6. This uses ideas from the next section to place a solo line over my otherwise immutable note at the end of A/start of B.

Figure 6



The variants of the next section, B, are shown in Figure 7 (opposite). For the sake of clarity, the last note of the A section, beginning time span 4, is also shown, as this note is occasionally of variable length. Section B has an invariant start note (represented here by the note *a* in time span 4). It returns to this pitch whether the previous section has taken a higher or lower-pitched path. This section has a solo call section near the beginning which has a range of variants. Quite often the previous response section is extended by either two or three falling notes, or even further as in B:1. As in the previous section, there is a fairly immutable "collecting point" at the end of this section, but even this shows some variation in small detail. The solo section has many small variants of timing and pitch but maintains the same general phrase shape.

Figure 7

B

The musical score consists of nine staves, each with a label on the left: B, B:1, B:2, B:3, B1, B1:1, B2, B2:1, and B3. The notation is in a single system, with all staves sharing a common key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the staves: "ye eh eh wo ye wo ye ah ye ye ye" on staff B, "ye hey" on staff B1, and no lyrics on the remaining staves. The music features a variety of note values, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. A box labeled "B" is placed above the first staff. The staves are connected by a vertical line on the left.

ye eh eh wo ye wo ye ah ye ye ye

ye hey

Identifying paradigms (B1, B2 etc.) as opposed to variants of a paradigm (B1:1, B2:1 etc.) was a somewhat arbitrary decision based mainly on one particular feature. The labelling is as much for convenience of discussion as to indicate a major change in variations or similar feature. It is fairly likely that B3 is the result of some extra-musical influence – such as dust in the throat. There was no signal or reason I could determine for the changed approach note to the first note of time span 7 which occurs in B1. This did not happen regularly, but it is no surprise that such changes can be made with unanimity, given that this is quite a small group of women who know each other very well. The final note shown for this section is also the start of the next section, so it is shown as the same length in all parts even though there are variations which will be seen in the next section.

The next section, Figure 8 (opposite), has a similar pattern to the previous section. It begins with a sustained "collecting note" followed by a varied length response. The solo call has a definite generic shape, and the start of the response is varied but leads to an invariant collecting note at time span 10. Again there is a high degree of consensus about which course will be followed from the opening note. The C paradigm has an angular movement to the note e' with a return to g', while the C1 paradigm continues the downward movement. The alternative ending occurred only once. The leader on this occasion was quite weak. She had passed the point at which the end of the performance is signalled by the leader several times and the other women wanted to stop. At least one other woman with a strong voice joined the lead part and brought it to an unexpected conclusion. The phrase used is clearly related to the usual pattern but was sufficiently different and emphatic for the other women to join on the last two notes as usual, but at a pitch which was usually maintained only by the leader while the other voices came in above.

The woman who joined the lead part also made her clapping particularly demonstrative so that she had the group's attention and was able to make a definite ending gesture by raising then dropping her hands for the anacrusis and the first note of time span 10.

Figure 8

C

The musical score consists of ten staves. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "ye ye ye oh eh ya ya ye ye ye". Above the first measure of the vocal line is a boxed letter 'C'. Measures 7, 8, 9, and 10 are numbered above the staff. The remaining nine staves are instrumental parts, labeled C:1, C:2, C:3, C1, C1:1, C1:2, C1:3, C2, and an unlabeled staff at the bottom. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and accidentals. The bottom staff is labeled "Alternative ending".

ye ye ye oh eh ya ya ye ye ye

C:1

C:2

C:3

C1

C1:1

C1:2

C1:3

C2

Alternative ending

The next section, Figure 9, has far fewer variants, as it is mainly a group response section; the main difference is the presence of the upward leap in time span 12. This change gives rise to another version of the common descending phrase c-a-g-e-d. The solo lead in time span 14 is identified mainly by its rhythm, with a variable drop on the syllable "yow".

Figure 9

Figure 9 is a musical score for a group response section. It consists of four staves labeled D, D:1, D1, and D1:1. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers time spans 10 through 12, and the second system covers time spans 13 through 15. A box labeled 'D' is positioned above the first staff at time span 10. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words appearing on multiple staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Time span 10: ye ye ye ye ye eh ye hey

Time span 11: ye ye ye ye ye eh ye hey

Time span 12: ye ye ye ye ye eh ye hey

Time span 13: eh eh eh wa ya yow ye

Time span 14: eh eh eh wa ya yow ye

Time span 15: eh eh eh wa ya yow ye

There is also not so much variation in the next section, Figure 10 (opposite). There are only two versions of the start (time span 15) which can be used with any of the succeeding variants. (The lines in the transcription are to emphasise this point.) This section generally moves the melodic rhythm closer to Part 3 of the clapping, pulling more strongly against the dance step pulse. Possibly the clear sequence of this section, with its strongly rhythmic downward movement, tends to restrict the possibilities for variation.

Figure 10

The musical score for Figure 10 consists of four staves labeled E, E:1, E:2, and E:3. The top staff (E) contains the lyrics 'ye' and 'eh' and is marked with time spans 15, 16, and 17. A boxed 'E' is placed above measure 15, and a boxed 'F' is placed above measure 17. The other staves (E:1, E:2, E:3) show corresponding musical notation. Dashed lines connect notes across the staves, indicating variations or relationships. A bracket with a '2' is placed above the final measure of the E:3 staff.

The final section, Figure 11 (overleaf), shows the link back to the beginning and the ways of ending the performance. Because the move to end the piece is signalled by the note the leader sings, the solo call section in time spans 17 and 18 tends to be fairly fixed, although there is some variation in the extent to which this is overlapped by the extension of the previous chorus response. The anacrusis at the end of time span 18 is an invariant gathering point, with the exception of one complex variation, F6/F1:1, which links back to a similarly unusual version of section A, as already noted. There is a tendency, seen in F:4 and F:7, for there to be longer note extensions when the ending is about to follow. F:5 shows a note, b' in time span 17, which is outside the pentatonic scale. This was definitely the note which is closest to the pitch sounded, but it was an isolated figure and was probably viewed by the other participants as being an inflection and functionally no different from the note usual at this point.

Figure 11

Figure 11 is a musical score for a piece of music. It consists of a vocal melody (F) and seven instrumental parts (F:1, F:2, F:3, F:4, F:5, F:1, F:6/F:1:1, F:7). The vocal part (F) includes lyrics: "eh wo ye hey ah ya ye ye ah ya ye ye". The instrumental parts (F:1-F:7) are arranged in a single system, with F:1-F:5 and F:7 having lyrics "ah ye hey" at the end. The score is written in a single system with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.

Another view of this music

Seavoy (1982:395–409) also discusses at some length what must be essentially the same music. Her research was based in Tumu in the centre of the Sisaala area, some distance from Lambussie. She visited Lambussie for a few days but did not observe *Neporo* there. Seavoy discusses the music for "*Na-poro*". (This slight difference in terminology would be typical across the region; for example, xylophones in Tumu are *jengsi*, whereas in Lambussie, they are *zense*.) The music Seavoy describes fulfils the same function as *Neporo*, and is one of two related genres of women's wailing in the Tumu area. *Na-poro* is a more formalised version of *Wile*. Of *Wile*, Seavoy observes: "Motifs may be vocalized with any number of vocables ("Yaa," "Ah," "Ng," "Mm," "Yee"),

each wailer to her own liking." Seavoy derives much of the material from a "dominant motif" which is articulated in long-short-short-long rhythms and one common rendering of this is the text "Aa, wu yee ah" ("We are crying"). Whilst both Seavoy and I were told that the "words" did not have meaning (so were classified as vocables), the close links with at least one meaningful linguistic phrase can be seen, although this does not seem to have any influence on the pitch structure, contrary to what might be expected in a tonal language.

Seavoy goes on to note that "In *Na-poro* ... the time span is always articulated with interlocking clap and rattle patterns that establish a division of the time span into nine fast pulses". Assuming that the time spans in both our observations are equivalent, being defined by repetition of the rhythmic phrases, the clapping patterns and rhythmic basis of *Na-poro* and *Neporo* would seem to be quite different, being based on 9 and 12 pulses respectively. For *Na-poro*, the clap/rattle rhythms are given as:

X - - - - X - X -
X - - X - - X - -

Although the pattern length is different, there would seem to be a similarity between the top part here and part 2 of *Neporo* in my transcription, and the interaction between the two parts of *Na-poro* has some similarities with parts 2 and 5 of *Neporo*. In *Na-poro*, Seavoy describes a "conceptual performance model", which is the length of the vocal line before it is repeated. This consists of 24 time spans, each of 9 pulses, a total of 216 pulses. My transcription of *Neporo* has 18 time spans, each of 12 pulses, again a total of 216, so the length of the model is the same in each case. In *Na-poro*, Seavoy identifies a binary structure of 2 equal units of 12 time spans, each one consisting of 4 time spans of solo/individual lamentations (which are also described as time markers for the choral sections), followed by 8 time spans of choral motifs. She describes that the "Time Markers are usually contributed by individuals, but being short and simple figures, tend to become standardised. Thus they may be stated by several wailers in unison, but almost never by the entire wailing chorus." In *Neporo*, the relationship of the solo sections and chorus is similar, with the solos being taken by one or a few women, but instead of 2 sections there are 4, each consisting of a solo section with a chorus response. The length of each solo section in *Neporo* is fairly constant, but the chorus sections are more variable (individually as well as compared with others), as shown below:

Time spans	1	2	3	4	5
Phrase 1	solo	chorus	_____		
Phrase 2	solo	chorus	_____		
Phrase 3	solo	chorus	_____		
Phrase 4	solo	chorus	_____		

Seavoy's conceptual performance model for *Na-poro* draws on Wile, identifying a series of descending phrases, a shape commonly found in African vocal music. She then goes on to say: "... wailers take considerably more

musical liberty in interpreting Motifs in *na-poro* than they do in *Wile*. There are more pitch level options at the beginning of Motifs, and less constraints as to precise contour". *Neporo*, by comparison, would seem to be quite structured, with a limited range of options available at any one moment. Phrases in *Neporo* tend to descend, but this is far from always the case, and often descents are observed only at the end of the phrase (for example, section D, chorus part). *Neporo* tends to prolong particular notes with an oscillation between two pitches, or a (pentatonic) neighbour-note movement, whilst the melodic rhythm interacts more with the clapping patterns. In *na-poro*, Seavoy notes "strong structural tones" which occur halfway through each of the 12 time span units. "These points are also regularly observed with unison statements, a constraint which even the most creative variants and interpolations observe". In *Neporo* my units D and E appear to contain the least variants, with a strong collecting point on the invariant note at the start of time span 14, and little variety in time span 18 when performers are listening for the direction in which to go.

There are close connections between many aspects of *Na-poro* and *Neporo*, as one might expect, but also clear differences. In the information I was given about funerals in Lambussie, there was no mention of *Wile* or any other form of wailing associated with funerals. Seavoy's research was conducted around 1970. It is impossible to estimate to what extent the differences between the versions can be attributed to time or to distance.

Summary

Looking at the whole melody, it is contained within the compass of an octave, with the exception of the final note. There are four main types of motion (or not): the sustained note (time spans 1, 2-3, 7, 10); the oscillation between two notes (time spans 2-4, 8-10, 11); the downward step sequence, sometimes with a neighbour-note delay en route (time spans 4-6, 12-14, 15-16); and the upward leap, usually to C (time spans 5, 6, 18). The lower C is only sounded once and is immediately followed by the largest leap upward. In reductive terms, it is quite easy to see this as a series of descents from the high C, gradually pushing lower towards to octave. The section from time spans 1-4 explores the C-A interval; in time spans 6-8, A-G are more prominent; from time span 9 onward it is A-G-E, gradually gathering more weight to explore low D and, eventually, to low C. Other than time span 18, all movements are either one or two steps only in the pentatonic scale.

Looking at the combination of clapping and singing, one is aware of the melody moving between the metric pulsation suggested by part 5 (the dance step), and the alternative pulsation of part 3 (seen in the melodic transcription as a quaver anticipation of a beat). The "lead" rhythm (Part 2: pulses 1, 6, 9) can also be seen directly in a number of time spans of the melodic rhythm (e.g. time spans 4, 8, 11, 14, 17) and in a modified form, stressing mainly pulse 6, in time spans

2, 3, 6, 12, 15. Whereas the clapping parts have to be very accurate in order to sustain the hocket rhythm, there is a far greater individual variation in the performance of the melodic rhythm, probably due to a combination of the performative effect on the singer of clapping different rhythms and the need to listen to other performers to check the particular melodic path being taken by general consent.

One of the recurrent questions in this piece is the extent of freedom of choice and the "rules" which govern it. The total rhythmic effect seems fairly constant, other than variations in the balance of the parts. There is evidence for performers occasionally changing their clapping rhythm in the course of a single performance, but the motivation for this was not clear. For the individual performer, it is possible to clap different rhythms from the standard vocabulary and even invent small variations within the framework, and this generally seems to be a matter for individual choice. Given the comparatively simple basis of the rhythmic part, with 12 pulses which are not subdivided, it is difficult to imagine how this pattern could be varied more than it is without changing its fundamental quality and accents. With the dire consequences for mistakes in this music, I could not ask the performers to demonstrate what might constitute a mistake. I would assume that it would have to be a fairly gross error; losing your pattern completely, for instance, since the paradigm will admit the creation of a new rhythm within the frame.

The melodic rhythm also seems quite stable, with most variation (not surprisingly) being in the solo sections and relating to the timing of entries. It is in the area of pitch that there is more variation. Blacking (1967) described the principle of "harmonic equivalence" that he observed in Venda children's songs. Blacking found that (generally) pitches two pentatonic steps away, above or below, could be substituted for a given note and perceived as being "the same". This gives rise to a series of relationships of a western perfect fourth, with one major third. These alternatives could be used to adapt to the demands of the text or the vocal range of the performer. Similar concepts, although sometimes with a different intervallic basis, have been reported in Zambia (Kenuchi 1998) and Uganda (Cooke 1994).

What pitch substitutions are found in *Neporo*? There is an entire section (end of time span 1 to the start of time span 4) which has two distinct versions: an upper one (for example, in A), and a lower one (A1 and variants of it), both having exactly the same rhythm and internal pitch relationships. This would seem to suggest a parallel of Blacking's "harmonic equivalence", where pitches a pentatonic third apart are the same, but it can also be seen that there are some other small variants (end of time span 1 – start of time span 2 in A:1 and A:2) which lie outside this. In the mostly solo section between the end of time span 4 and the start of time span 6 (section B), there is a typical mix of alternatives which might or might not be seen as equivalents. The note a' which occurs sometimes at the end of time span 4 could be seen as an equivalent of the alternative e', but is, in any case, always followed by the e', so it makes more sense as a neighbour-note decoration around g' delaying the descent to e'. In the

middle of time span 5 the *a'* is varied in timing and length but always descends to *g'* in time span 6, and the one occasion when the *a'* is missing (B2) suggests that the *a'* has been omitted rather than substituted. The next moment with a number of alternatives is between the end of time span 7 and the start of time span 9 (section C). Across time spans 8 and 9 there is mostly (except C1:2) a descending sequence of notes *a-g-e-d*, but the timing and length of the first two notes varies. In C1:2 it could be that the notes *c-a-g* could be seen as substituting for *a-g-e*, one (pentatonic) note higher, but the sequence is incomplete. The higher version also occurs in C1:3, but this time the *c* is a prelude to the standard *a-g-e-d* sequence. Before this sequence, *e'* and *g'* substitute for each other (last note of time span 7), but the choice is dependent on the following note(s). The start of time span 8 has *g* or *e-d(-c)* as alternatives; the substitution here seems to have more to do with a sense of melodic direction than anything else. It is possible to go through the rest of the piece finding some moments (for example, time spans 12-13) which might suggest a concept of "harmonic equivalence" at a distance of a pentatonic third. As a counterbalance to this, there are other moments (middle of time span 17) which might suggest that possible equivalents are: a flat *c*" (written *b'*), *a'*, *e'* or *c'*. There is the possibility that there is a concept of "harmonic equivalence" underlying some of the note changes, but there is also enough evidence that it either does not exist, is not always applied, or is more complex than the analysis I have made.

To summarise, melodically, there are a limited number of possibilities, given the pitches available. Individual variations are fine provided they do not disturb the main focus and direction of the piece. Commonly, individual contributions to the chorus sections are quite limited and consist mainly of prolonging a note, or sometimes anticipating an entry. This is done with some care for the result and increases in frequency as the performers become excited. Parallel motion resulting in harmony arises from heterophony and is sustained for only a short time. Harmony in any other sense does not appear in this piece. Note substitutions and the omission or addition of short (two to four note) phrases are all permitted.

In this area of Ghana, most pitch-based music relates to the xylophone. It is usual to find players changing the pitch at which they begin a tune according to the time of day, the performer's voices or other criteria (Seavoy 1982 also reports this). Given the pentatonic nature of the instrument, even though not western tuned, the change of starting note will often result in quite a difference in the pitch relationships, for example *a-d-c* becomes *c-e-d* when started a note higher. These are accepted as "the same". This concept, of course, does not apply in quite the same way to *Neporo*. *Neporo* may change its absolute pitch but, without fixed pitch instruments playing an accompaniment, it does not change the internal relationship of those pitches. Seavoy (1982) also reports a concept of transposition in playing the xylophone where outlying notes may be changed around an invariant centre note. Thus *c-e-g* may be rendered as *d-e-a*. This seems to have some relevance to *Neporo* at some points, for example, time

spans 4–6. There are invariant points which can be approached in several different ways but this is still rather vague and unspecific.

The variation technique in *Neporo* reminds me most closely of the process of learning I have observed in xylophone players in this region. Players will deny that they have ever been taught, frequently explaining their skill with the phrase "I came out with it". It is not clear if by this they mean that they were born with it, that it is something they have created, or a combination of the two. In learning a new piece they will base their playing on what they remember from previous hearings. The words, if any, may give an idea of the rhythm and some indication of a likely contour for the melody. With some fixed points of rhythm, phrase shapes, phrase relationships and key notes in mind, the player will then construct the tune, in the process creating different alternatives which match the model in the significant areas. What emerges will be the performer's version of the tune, complete with possible variants which may be used in performance. The degree of individuality will be greater than performances of the same western tune might be between different performers, but will be recognised as the appropriate tune by people by reference to the key features, much as we recognise a wide variation of attributes in our concept of "dog". I am not yet at a stage to be able to describe exactly the key features of recognition for *Neporo*; however, it is clear that the highly co-operative musical processes at work in this music also parallel closely the nature of this society, and this is an interesting and challenging area for future work.

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The Biggest Shock - Education?

Abstract

The Naa Polkuu effect

This paper will examine some of the possibilities in the relationship between micro-changes in musical style and macro-transformation driven by social factors. These will be exemplified by an examination of the changes in recreational music in the Upper-West region of Ghana during the period 1945-1995.

In 1947 *Naa Polkuu* opened the first primary school in Nandom. He wanted to promote and develop the traditional music of the area and to ensure that it was passed on to the children. Because of his position he was able to effect large-scale social changes, many of which drew on his personal development through formal education. In particular he was instrumental in the development of a new musical form, *Bewaa*. However, the musical evolution of the style was accomplished through the accretion of micro-changes. The paper will argue that a major factor in musical change is the concept of formal education and its requirements.

The paper will be illustrated with video (VHS) and sound recordings (cassette), based on fieldwork carried out in Ghana in 1994-5. (15 mins)

Paper

Video clip of *Bewaa*. This is *bewaa* as danced today by a competitive group from the Nandom area of Ghana. In this paper I shall examine the development of this form and draw some conclusions about the main motivation for change in this example.

Geographically the town of Nandom is situated in the Upper-West region of Ghana, about 800 km from the coast. The area is bounded to the west by the Black Volta river and to the north by the Burkina Faso border, both a few kilometres away. The direct impact of European culture in the area is comparatively recent. Until 1880-1890 the area was frequently raided by the slave trader, Babatu, and colonial administration was not established until around 1908. The area contains a mix of peoples; *Dagaare* and *Sisaala* mainly with *Waale* to the south. Nandom itself is *Dagaare*, but the dialect here is different (although mutually intelligible) from that of Lawra 30 km south. The nearest *Sisaala* village, Lambussie, is only 5 km away. The *Dagaare* people are proud of what they regard as their heritage and view the intentions of most of their neighbours with deep suspicion bordering on xenophobia. This is illustrated well in the words of some songs:-

The Waala man is lazy and tells his father to go and farm in his place.

The Fra-fra are so stupid they farm groundnuts to feed the dog, then they are surprised when the dog doesn't bite.

The Fra-fra man is stupid. He has staked only one number in the lotto and thinks he has won, but you only win with two or more numbers.

The Sisaala people have seen a dead donkey and are calling the children to come and eat it.

The first unknowing step in the development of *bɛwaa* was that Polkuu Paul, a young man from the house of the Nandom Naa (Chief) Imoro, was sent to the capital, Accra, for education. On his return in 1946 he worked to build and open the first primary school in Nandom. As a result of his education he was aware of the potential of cultural activities in establishing a strong feeling of community, so wanted to teach local dance and music in his new school. He called together the elders from the area including the surrounding villages and asked what was their original dance. The old men demonstrated how they danced *Kpaa ngmaa*, *Sebkper*, *Dalaari*, *Bagrbine*, and other dances. He told them they must let their grandsons know the dances so that they would not be lost. As a result of this meeting the Nandom *Sebkpere* group was formed. The group originally danced just the dances which the old men had shown them. One of the main dances of the time was *Kpaa ngmaa*. This was danced by the old men dressed in sheepskin and using cow tails in their hands. illustrate

musically. D4 13

Having formed the group Polkuu worked with them to establish their own style and identity. His experience of education had convinced him of the importance of cultural heritage. He wanted not only to preserve the existing songs and dances but to develop a local style which could identify and promote the town of Nandom. Polkuu also wanted local songs and dances to be part of the education in his new school and this was a valued and popular element of the teaching.

Bɛwaa was developed from a related dance from called *bawa*. *Bawa* historically was a loosely organised social dance for all Dagao (Dagaare people and land are inseperable in this term.) The idea of an organised choreographed *Bawa* group was originally brought to

Nandom by the people of Jirapa (a town about 50 km south and a local administrative centre). There was a large durbar organised in Nandom to which all the chiefs of the area were invited. They all brought groups of dancers with them and the group from Jirapa performed *Bawa*. The Jirapa style of *Bawa* was quite similar to the *Bagrbine* and *Sebkper* style of Nandom so people took to it quickly. The Nandom group formed by Polkuu was beginning to develop its reputation and was always looking for new ideas to "modernise" its dances and add new ones, so copied *Bawa*, changing the name slightly to *Bewaa* in the process. *Bewaa* at this time was still quite different from the modern style which developed much more during the early 1960's. There are no recordings that I know of from the early 1950's. The best way I can illustrate early *Bewaa* is by playing a recent recording of one of the early xylophonists with the group. Komkpe Jangban comes from Nandom and is about 65 years old. In the 1950's Jangban was a bicycle repairer. He is now a farmer who owns quite an amount of land around Nandom and has his own tractors, 4 wives and more than 20 children. 04/15

In 1957 Naa Imoro died and was succeeded by Polkuu. The succession was somewhat fraught and the dispute continues even until today (see Lentz, C. (1993) *Histories and political conflict: a case study of chieftaincy in Nandom, Northern Ghana. Paideuma* 39, 177-215.) After his accession to the skin (northern chiefs are seated on a skin rather than a throne or stool) Polkuu continued to be actively involved with the Nandom *Sebkpere* group. He encouraged the development of a distinctive style which the group could perform in the various cultural competitions which were becoming popular. He selected new players, singers and dancers for the group and also removed any who did not agree with his own political opinions. All new *Bewaa* songs had first to be performed and approved at the palace.

By Nkrumah's time [late 1950's] the *Sebkpere* group were well known. Nkrumah was very impressed with them and invited the group to his home town, Nkrumfol in the Western region, to perform, where they remained for about 2 weeks. At this competition there were about 7

different groups and the Nandom *Sebkpere* group won the first position. Although *Bewaa* had originated in Jirapa, it was the Nandom group which always won the competitions. This, according to Nandom informants, was because, at the instigation of Polkuu, they included the fetish dances such as *Sebkper*, *Dalaari*, *Sebre* and *Bagrbine* in their performance as well as *Bewaa* and people liked the variety of *Bewaa* and fetish music. The Jirapa *Bawa* was also slower. Nandom people say that the speed of their *Bewaa* shows how happy and proud they are of their music. Polkuu was also responsible for the greater role of girls in the dancing. Previously the men danced alone with the women dancing separately at one side, or joining in for a short time when they wanted, but Polkuu included a girl between each pair of boys for most of the dances. *Bewaa* dances in Polkuu's time often took place on a Sunday afternoon. Many people, especially young people would attend to watch and participate informally. There was plenty of opportunity for general dancing as well as a demonstration by the *Sebkpere* group. It was known to be a good time to meet people of the opposite sex who were potential marriage partners. If there was to be a *Bewaa* dance, a flag would be hung in the market as a signal to everyone.

The current situation shows continuing change in a number of areas. Naa Polkuu died in 1984 and was succeeded, after another bitter dispute, by the present Naa Puoure Puobe Chiir VII. He is an international banker and member of the Council of State. His predecessor, Naa Polkuu, knew the local dance and music intimately and would instantly correct any errors of dance or music by practical demonstration. Naa Puoure is energetic in his efforts to support and promote the local arts but his involvement has a very different emphasis. With the death of Polkuu it became evident that it was his force of personality which had held the Nandom *Sebkpere* group together. Members of different clans within the group now supported opposing contenders for the skin and the Nandom group disintegrated. From time to time there have been some attempts to revive the group. At the *Kobina* festival in Lawra last year there were entries in the competition from two groups both claiming to be the Nandom *Sebkpere* group. These were duly entered by the organisers as *Sebkpere* No. 1 and *Sebkpere* No. 2 - which caused further dispute about who was number one.

Nandom now has its own cultural festival, *Kakube*, (gleanings) which takes place in late November. This follows the standard Ghanaian pattern for "cultural" events with a *durbar* of chiefs on the first day which includes a large number of speeches and music and dance demonstrations by invited groups. On the second day the dance competition takes place with, in 1994, some 45 groups competing. The judges have the usual impossible task and usually elect a group from outside the Nandom area as winners, thus avoiding further conflict in the area. Many of the groups competing at *Kakube* come from the villages surrounding Nandom. Most of them dance *Bewaa* and usually include another local dance style in their performance. The stylistic differences between groups are quite small but cherished and promoted.

At present, within the villages, and within Nandom itself, it seems that everyone can dance *Bewaa* with a fair degree of skill. If someone starts playing *Bewaa* xylophone music there will quickly be a small gathering of passers-by who will dance with great enjoyment, but there are no organised dances as there were in Polkuu's day. It is also the case in the Nandom area that people, other than those in the performing group, are discouraged from joining in. The group meets only to rehearse or perform. This contrasts with the situation in two neighbouring *Sisaala* villages where it seemed as though the whole village including frail old women and toddlers joined in their recreational dancing.

Bewaa like most of the other forms of recreational music in the area, has always been based around songs. The words of the songs seem to fall into two main categories: local gossip and giving good advice. There are still quite large numbers of songs being composed. Many of the songs are composed by women and sung as part of other recreational events for women such as *kari* or *nuru* dancing at harvest time. These songs are subsequently borrowed for inclusion in *Bewaa*. The usual pattern for the composition of most songs seems to be to find an existing song which you like, then modify the tune slightly and compose some new verses. Anything is available for copying in this way (illustrate with *Bon ça va* on cassette).

The young people now seem to learn *Bewaa* by osmosis. Schools, whilst expressing a wish

and intention to promote local culture, in fact do little about it. There is a xylophone in the playground of a few schools but the local music and dance forms no part of the curriculum. In the Nandom schools cultural competition only one school performed *Bewaa*. (they won). The dance had not been taught in the school but in the village. The teachers in the school were genuinely interested in supporting local culture, but many of them knew little about it as they came from other areas of Ghana.

Reviewing the situation during the last 50 years, it could be argued that a major change in musical style took place when *Bewaa* developed from *Bawa*. Polkuu, as a result of his education, abstracted the needs for community and education as formal concepts. His desire to find forms of music and dance which would fulfil these requirements led to both the formalisation of some traditional dances and the development of a new style. However, the inclusion of social dances in formal education contained the seeds of its own change. I consider that the structure of western influenced formal education with its need to conceive ideas in ways which can be expressed verbally is frequently the antithesis of an aural musical culture. Across the whole of Ghana the development of formal education has often meant the end of many other social rituals e.g. nubility rites which cannot take place in the traditional way if a child is attending school every day (Sarpong, P. (1977) *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation). Schools now tend to teach about rituals and social events - it is not thought useful to teach the event directly.

Bewaa initially functioned in parallel with other social dances without anyone ever conceiving of a need to define its function, style, purpose etc. But formal education demands that there are clear aims, objectives, rationale etc. and this can affect or inhibit the development of the genre. The development of the competitive cultural competition from the traditional *durbar* of chiefs I would also link with the formalisation of education. It is difficult to say now whether *Bewaa* is an active form or exists in a state of preservation. New songs are being written and are widely disseminated, but the *Bewaa* group is now something each village has, like a football team.

How fast do things have to change to constitute a "major" change? The changes in *Bewaa*

can in many ways be seen as an accretion of micro changes entirely in the manner which would be expected in an aural tradition. Although the rate of change has been faster at some periods than others, oral evidence from early members of the Nandom group suggests that there was not a major change in direction, emphasis or style. Songs were written, often collaboratively, introducing a single small change (which might be one different dance step). The kaleidoscope effect of aural cultures would then distribute this change and modify it further until it came back to Nandom as another new idea. However, the identification of a different form of music and dance, once given a name clearly marks a significant change in their minds. I would argue that the change was accomplished by micro-change, and the more rapid accretion of these gave an effect of macro-change. In this particular case, from one perspective there was a macro-change in the development of a new and different style driven by the demands and concepts derived from education. From a different view, there was no macro-change but a constant micro-change at different speeds driven by extra musical factors. Ironically, Polkuu, in his pioneering effort to preserve and promote a form of indigenous music, removed it from its context and its social function, but which of us would not be moved to try? Polkuu is certainly remembered with pride by the people of Nandom and many songs which he inspired are well known today:

*Nandomme Naa yela ye maali, maali, maali Nandomme Naa yela ye maali, maali, maali Nandomme Naa yela
ye maali, maali, maali Be maali a viele za belop kpankpaare yang taa*
The Nandom Naa is saying come together, come together, come together It is good to unite together and
contribute to build up the place

**Philosophies and Practicalities: world musics in
education and the role of the teacher.**

by Trevor Wiggins

What sort of music do we want to be used for the teaching of music in education? I would certainly argue strongly for the inclusion of as wide a range of styles and genres as possible, *not* because we are something loosely called a 'multiracial society' and there might be some pupils within the school who would appear to have a different ethnic background, but because all musics are equally important as part of the way of life of different people. Music is part of a wider education which aims to teach children to value all of the world we share and its people.

However, there are a number of obvious barriers to the achievement of this ideal situation. Most of the ways in which music is understood, it is impossible to teach. We can expose pupils to it, but have no control over the outcome - does this sound like something we want in schools? The reaction the music provokes may be nothing whatsoever to do with the actual *sound* but rather with the other social and cultural meanings.

Music is a cultural and social phenomenon which expresses many different meanings. These meanings are of different natures and may be considered as a series of non-hierarchical layers, beginning with the actual sound. Other than the physical sound, there is nothing we can guarantee to share with any other person, and it is, in fact, only an assumption on our part that they hear the physical sound in the same way that we do. As soon as we move away from discussion of *only* the sound we are in the realm of cultural considerations, such as the temporal and spatial elements of the performance - if you do not consider these to be important, try listening to a blues performance in a bright and sunny room in the morning! Other meanings might relate to the person performing and how we perceive them, and they will undoubtedly alter their performance in subtle, but meaningful ways according to how they perceive us, the audience.

The influential ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl has referred to the function of music as the validation of ritual, meaning that the music provides a reason for a social or community event to take place. Is there any culture in which music does not have a role in the essential rites of passage? The music on such occasions fulfils many functions, some of which are purely personal and cannot be shared - a particular piece of music may remind you of another occasion which was not shared with the people now present.

Other functions of the music will relate to the shared experience of that community - you may be part of the occasion, but still not be part of the community and therefore you cannot share their understanding of the meaning of this music. There are obviously differing degrees of understanding according to your familiarity with that culture, but this is surprisingly limited, even within what you might consider to be *your* culture. Which of the musical styles associated with your country do you feel you understand? Would you feel equally confident about knowing which song has strong meanings for a particular football club and which pieces of music might be associated with a political party or a religious denomination?

The reactions engendered by the performance of any music may have *nothing* at all to do with the actual sound - an example from the U.K. might be *Nessun Dorma* from *Turandot* by Puccini. Operatic tenor arias normally have cultural images linking them to middle/upper class values rejected by popular culture, but this particular aria was used by the BBC to introduce all broadcasts from the recent Football World Cup, and therefore might be greeted with cries of goal by UK football supporters.

Culturally defined meanings of music do not remain static and fixed. The range of music generally considered as the Western European tradition is large and has few common elements. It is interesting to try to assess how much the meaning of a piece of music by an 18th century German composer has changed since it was written; the meanings which have been totally forgotten and the others which have been acquired through continued performance.

Then what about the area of the sound which I haven't so far considered; the internal structure and logic, the structural taxonomy. It might at first sight appear that this is an ideal way of considering different musics; it is not culturally defined and does not involve extra-musical meanings.

Unfortunately it isn't quite that simple. The role of the musical structure *is* culturally defined and valued. Western classical music places great emphasis on musical structure *per se*, and we must beware of the temptation to look at other styles of music in the same way. 'Heavy Metal' as a popular style of music might seem to have a comparatively simple structure in some senses, but there are other elements to the sound which convey meaning, and we have to be aware that we will be doing the music a grave injustice if we attempt to evaluate and understand it using criteria from other musical styles.

Similarly, a piece of drum music from Africa may have an apparently simple construction, but cannot be considered separately from the dance which is part of the performance - the complexity lies elsewhere than in the musical structure, and elements of the structure may be altered according to the cultural situation in which the performance is taking place. In any case, it is a curious notion of the essence of music which suggests that real experience and understanding of unfamiliar musics can arise only through listening to a recording rather than being a part of a live performance. Sadly, it is the recording which is the only available medium for schools most of the time.

So far, this would all appear to be extremely negative for music education, but the fact is that people are always learning new instruments, new musics, and borrowing ideas from other musics, so progress is possible. It is, however, important that we have a clear conceptual framework of the nature of music and what we are trying to achieve. As I implied earlier, no music which is alive and has meaning for a community stays static and unchanging. Some styles of music seem to be in a state of suspended animation or museumisation - one could even argue that this is the case with Western European music of the last few centuries which has been preserved, maybe beyond its natural existence.

Composers across the world who are writing music now are doing what composers have always done, which is to borrow ideas, sounds and techniques from other musics. It is certainly much easier for this to happen now with the resources of mass media than used to be the case, but Bach certainly felt no qualms about borrowing from Vivaldi or any other composer.

The important point here is that it is musical techniques which were appropriated, and that this process had nothing to do with the meaning of those musics and techniques within their own culture. Thus, when Gershwin used stylistic elements drawn from the blues and other Afro-American styles, he could have no possible understanding of the culturally based meaning of those musics for their creators.

The people who listened to Gershwin's music were mainly middle-class white Americans. What they enjoyed was the innovative element of Gershwin's music within a firmly established and familiar style. They too could have no concept of the true meaning of the music for its community, and if they even thought about it, it was probably within some idealised romantic framework of the free and easy lifestyle of the Afro-American. Was Gershwin guilty therefore of cultural theft, of taking something of meaning and debasing it? The answer to that is highly political and centres around ideas of ownership and respect for other peoples; certainly money, and therefore power, are involved and we must be aware that this continues to be an important issue.

Where does this leave music, and especially world musics within education? Music is a powerful cultural identifier and we can find even quite young children responding negatively or positively to its cultural messages. It might be argued that music teachers have an important role in passing on the traditional music of their culture, but what is meant by this is often a musical style which is the province of a small section of the community, usually those in power, or something which is to do with the history of the community. These may be perfectly valid subjects of study, but we should ask more about the justification for insisting that this music is so important that it *must* be studied.

We also may find ourselves in a rather ambivalent role. At the University of Ghana much of the teaching is centred around Western classical music and is taught by lecturers who have studied in Europe or the USA. Traditional Ghanaian music is taught by instructors who are paid less, and have much poorer facilities. African musics are studied as ethnomusicology, which is taught by the lecturers. We, as outsiders, would probably have some forceful opinions about this situation, but are they at all valid given the sorts of hierarchies we have set up within *our* education system?

All these considerations focus our attention more narrowly on what it is we are able to teach as music in education, and this area could be further narrowed by external pressures to consider as valuable that information associated with music which can be conveniently examined in an objective manner. So what are we going to do in the classroom? First, I think we should be very clear that what we are trying to achieve is a positive and enjoyable experience of music for every child - this is probably self-evident, but it is important to repeat it since it establishes that we need to respect the musical preferences of the child more than those of the teacher. Equally, we are *not* setting out to teach Indian music, Western Classical music, pop music or any other specific genre.

As the highest priority, we have to give children the opportunity to experience and learn through the creation and performance of their own music. However, any composer needs ideas and these are usually acquired through hearing other musics, borrowing ideas more or less directly, then synthesising a new creation. This must mean that there should be the widest possible range of musics heard in the classroom and, whenever possible, they should be heard live rather than from a recording. It can be more meaningful for a child to hear a fellow pupil who is learning to play an instrument perform at quite an elementary level than to be presented with the recorded performance of an acknowledged expert.

How, then, should the range of musics used in the classroom be structured? How much should we try to inform pupils about the historical and social context of the music? How do we present a wide range of musics without doing a

gross injustice to them in presenting such a fleeting glimpse as to be misleading and distorted? How do we avoid accusations of 'cultural snacking', of dipping into different musics and extracting only the most exciting elements from our perspective and neglecting the real inner meaning of the music?

In the first place it is worth repeating that we are not teaching any genre of music, we are teaching children. It would be a great insult to any music if pupils were given the impression that after a project lasting a few weeks they knew much at all about Caribbean music, or Chinese music etc. There may be some pupils who have a particular interest in one genre of music and they may want to learn to play more of it and to acquire the necessary instrumental skills. This is something which needs to go on outside the classroom, although not outside the curriculum.

Music in the classroom cannot move outside the social and cultural frame of the country in which it is situated - it is always going to be a Chinese take-away meal rather than a meal in China. We therefore have to focus on techniques for creating musics; on the ways in which different musics begin, continue, explore their material, move towards or avoid a climax, end. We do not to subscribe to hierarchies which might, for example, insist that Hindustani classical music is more worthy of study than Indian film music, or that traditional African drumming is a more appropriate study than Highlife music.

Pupils need to understand as much as possible about different musics through practical experience, using the skills and physical resources they have available. This may mean that on some occasions they will be playing things which an expert in a particular genre would reject out of hand as having little or nothing to do with the real essence of that music.

However, I am a firm believer in a slightly misquoted adage which says, If a thing is worth doing, its worth doing badly. This is not to say that we should set out to do things badly, but there is much merit in the attempt and we may learn a great deal from the process and the effort even though the end result may be less than completely satisfactory.

How much should the teacher attempt to inform pupils about the cultural significance of the music? About all the other important functions and meanings of the music? This must depend on the judgment of the teacher. There is no point in boring pupils and putting them off with unnecessary information, although some people would want to argue that it is necessary information if you are to understand the music - I happen to think that this is impossible. On the other hand, if it is possible to give pupils some understanding of the role of this music, when it is performed, for whom, by whom, and to establish this as a methodology for examining *any* music, then it does have a useful function.

Two important elements here might be the use of audio-visual materials, especially video, and linking with other teachers to present a more comprehensive picture of life within a particular community. The possibilities here are fascinating: look at the physical environment in which people live, what the available resources of food are, transport, materials for making instruments, entertainment. All these will also relate to the type of music which is made, when it is performed etc. *but* the most important element for the music teacher must be the sound and the positive practical experience of it.



Does it then ultimately matter what genres of music are studied in the classroom? Probably not. I do not think there is anything so inherently valuable in a particular music as to insist that it must be studied as part of the music education of every child. The choice of musics would be those in which the pupils showed an interest, those in which the teacher felt sufficiently competent, and those for which there were adequate resources, although this should not be an argument for restricting study to a narrow range of musics. Much of the time could be structured around the sort of musical problems mentioned earlier across many different musics. How do you stop or end a piece of music? Quietly? When you have finished? With a massive summative climax? Repeat til fade? When the dance has finished?

What are the implications of these proposals for the training of teachers? In the first place, many teachers have a comparatively short period of 'teacher-training' at the end of a degree program. I would not want to suggest that all degrees should be orientated towards the requirements of teaching, but perhaps it would not be such a bad thing for all music degrees to include some understanding of music as a cultural phenomenon so that Western classical music can be properly placed in context. In many places degree programs are becoming wider in scope, with opportunities for more study in breadth across different musics rather than the exclusive immersion in the European tradition, and this can only benefit teacher training.

In the UK, the government has recently announced that post degree-teacher training will now take place almost exclusively in the classroom, supervised by the teachers in that school, with only a few weeks in a college or similar institution. This is not good news for world musics in the classroom as the intending teacher will be able to draw only on the range of experience of the one teacher with whom they are placed, rather than the wider range available within a teacher training institution. What sort of skills and understanding should intending teachers acquire? In the first instance, it should be remembered that the course can only be a preparation for teaching. It cannot prepare teachers to be fully equipped with all the knowledge they will need. In any case, the day you stop learning is the day you should stop trying to teach.

The teacher training course, like music in the classroom, has to begin with the learners: getting them to assess their existing abilities and to see where they would like to improve their understanding and skills. This must be done with care - it is very easy at this stage to give the impression that the teacher trainers are rejecting the skills that the student has laboured so long to acquire as inappropriate for the classroom. The intending teacher then needs to understand the philosophical framework within which they will be working.

This was certainly missing from my training as a teacher and resulted in my spending too much time as a teacher trying to teach those skills I possessed, or looking for something which might just interest pupils. After teaching for some time I had to re-assess my aims and why I was doing certain things. This in fact made it easier to teach (at least for me) because the philosophy dictated the methodology and approach. Student teachers, similarly, find this quite hard until they have some experience and can relate philosophy to practice.

The teacher training course needs to offer some experience of different musics although this cannot be in any great depth given the other demands of the course, so it is important that intending teachers are encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional development in this area. They know themselves best, their areas of interest and ability, and will teach best when they are interested and motivated. On the other hand, they must recognise and acknowledge youth culture and be able to use this positively whilst accepting that they cannot be part of it. We must also make sure that the opportunity to learn other musics is as widely available as possible for both pupils and teachers - I know of many good teachers who are constantly learning alongside their pupils.

Above all, the intending teacher must have an open mind to acknowledge that Western classical music is not the greatest music ever; that it is an expression of one, or more, cultures; that if you attempt to prove how great it is you can only do this by choosing criteria which value those things which it does. It is true that Western music of all types has been widely copied, but this might have more to do with

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Words About Music

A Response to Some of the Points Raised by Other Speakers

Trevor Wiggins

Joep Bor in his paper argued cogently against "ethnomusicology" as a discipline. He seemed almost to imply that the only way of studying another music was by practical experience without what he saw as an illogical attempt at analysis and explanation. There is much good sense in the points he makes, but I was struck by the extent to which we end up arguing about words to do with music - the words become more of a problem than the music. Joep's view of the ethnomusicologist as the detached observer with no practical understanding would apply to very few people in my experience.

It is certainly true that the playing of any music brings practical understandings which it may not be possible to express in words. At the same time we cannot play without thinking, and we think in ways which we know. All training in performance skills in every context I know emphasises the thoughtful approach to the process. In the case of a music from outside our own culture, we may wish to know more about the performance context and about how the music functions for the people who created it. We should also be aware that any performance is an analysis; in playing you show your understanding of the music, its structures, its use of sound and many other elements. You may not be able to (or wish to) express this in an abstract sense, but it is nevertheless an analysis. Equally, if you are trying to learn, you may wish to use the tools you already have at your disposal; these might include transcription and analysis of elements such as pitch. It is important that you do not view the music through these tools. They are not the music, they are merely ways of trying to represent some aspects of it. They should be left behind as soon as possible, but they may still have a function in trying to communicate with others.

Joep also attacked the notion of "ethnomusicology" as "comparative musicology", asking what such comparisons can possibly tell us other than the most obvious surface functions of the music. It is certainly true that the type of comparison which says "Here they do this, and here they don't" is fairly pointless, but the fact is that we cannot escape comparison. In the context of teaching world music the

assumption is that many of us will have some training in European music, and as soon as we begin to study another music we will be struck by points of similarity and difference. We cannot just leave all our existing experience behind. It is often true also that an outsider will ask questions which might not occur to the indigenous musician. This has its good and bad sides: it may cause the latter to examine a particular aspect of the music anew resulting in a complementary and, perhaps, enlightening view. It can equally cause the unnecessary focus on a particular relatively minor aspect of the music and, in the worst case, might cause the indigenous musician to invent a speculative "explanation", because s/he feels this is what is expected.

I also think that the methodology we may learn from the process of studying more than one music is useful. We become more aware of the range of issues and understandings we are likely to encounter. An understanding of how, why, where and when people make music and of the processes of transmission, including pedagogy, is valuable. Although this understanding cannot stand on its own without the direct practical experience of the music, it does provide important insights.

A number of speakers have emphasised the importance of the pedagogic process and knowledge of the culture in gaining greater understanding of a music. If we accept this to be the case, it raises questions about the way we are setting up European and American institutions to teach world music. Are these not best taught in their country of origin? We are already being somewhat hypocritical in identifying some aspects of the teaching of another music as positive but wanting to leave some others behind. Should a European course of study in Indian classical music begin with the student living with a *guru* and carrying out menial tasks until the *guru* believes the student is ready to be taught?

We must recognise that we acquire the habits of a method of study quite early in our childhood, and we can never completely lose or change these. Thus, certainly the earlier stages of learning a new music may need a teacher who is able to adapt to the method of learning we can use most efficiently, and this learning can probably take place in a familiar institutionalised context in any country. However, there comes a point when it is important to learn the music in its traditional context, and we should be exploring ways of enabling this to happen. If we remove the music from its context, we are no different from the eurocentric explorers of the past who acquired precious artifacts and took them back to museums in their own country.

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If a Thing's Worth Doing, it's Worth Doing Badly

Trevor Wiggins

This paper sets out to elaborate some of the issues which I needed to address in the production of my publications, *Xylophone Music from Ghana* (Crown Point: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992) and *Music of West Africa* (London: WOMAD/Heinemann, 1993). *Xylophone Music from Ghana* is a fairly short book about the *gyil*, the xylophone of the Dagati people of Ghana. The book contains a brief background to the instrument and transcriptions of a number of pieces in Western staff notation and TUBS (Time Unit Box System). A cassette tape with recordings of the pieces accompanies the book. *Music of West Africa* presents traditional and popular music from the region with a brief background, analytic transcriptions and recordings. Both publications are aimed at people with a basic understanding of Western music and with an interest in widening their understanding of music different from their own. The books might typically be used by a teacher with adolescent pupils.

I have always used the term "world musics" to describe an inclusive view of all music. Prof. Robert Brown in his opening address questioned the term in its plural form as tending to imply something unnecessarily separatist, emphasising differences between styles and genres of music. He considered that the term in the singular would imply much more the open mind in trying to understand music. I use the term in the plural so that people are (hopefully) made aware that they cannot simply approach every style or genre of music in the same way using exactly the same (analytic?) tools unthinkingly. I will be very pleased when I think I can use the term "world music" as an inclusive term (including such exotics as the European art music tradition) without people assuming that I am referring to only syncretic popular music drawing on an "exotic" source.

An important question is "Who is this material aimed at and what experience do they have?" Most of the material I have written has been aimed at teachers and at teenage pupils to use with teacher guidance. Most of them will have little or no practical experience of the music I am presenting. This has obvious dangers in that the material takes on an unintended authority, because it is the sole source of

knowledge for those using it. There can be little dialogue, because there is only one point of view which the teacher/students must accept. Moreover, the music is also being approached through the written word and recordings, and I am sure we are all aware of the dangers this has in misrepresenting the music in both musical detail and appropriate pedagogical process.

Although the teachers and students may know little about this music, their motivation to learn about it contributes enormously to the success of the teaching materials. The teachers may lack the knowledge of the genre, but they are experienced in communicating with the students, and we need to remember that we are teaching people, not just music. The teacher is an important mediator with specific skills to complement the content of the teaching materials. There is no point in having material which is authentic in every detail if the students find it terminally boring. I am involved in writing material because I enjoy the music and want to try to pass on this enjoyment to others. The aim is completely lost if absolute fidelity to the tradition results in tedium.¹

A frequent criticism of the study of world musics in the classroom is that it results in a simplistic misrepresentation of the genres. Even if this is partly true (we all have simplistic understandings when we are young), I would still argue that this is valuable. It promotes an open minded approach to music at an early age and encourages inter-racial understanding.

An important consideration of any study is that pupils should engage with music in a practical way. There are many types of understanding of another music which can only be acquired through practical experience. I would rather that students tried to play a different music by using available if not authentic instruments than that they failed to play anything because they didn't have the "right" instrument. This is where the teaching material comes in, providing a recording which makes the students aware of what the sound should be. Trying to teach world music without this practical work would be like trying to teach people to drive a car by telling them exactly how it is done, showing

¹ There is a corollary to this which is a little less than comfortable. Most existing teachers of music were trained within the European classical tradition and would certainly claim to enjoy this style of music. How successful have they been thus far in communicating this enjoyment to all their pupils? I think, in fact, this question reinforces the point that what the teacher is trying to achieve is properly "education" - the drawing out of the student's own interests and enthusiasms, not the model of teaching which sees the student as an empty vessel to be filled with facts the teacher thinks important.

them copious illustrations and even playing them a recording of what it sounds like to be inside a car...

The function of music as a cultural and social identifier is an insuperable problem. We know from our study of music that it has particular meanings and resonances for the group of people by whom and for whom it was created. The more we study a music the more we are aware of these meanings and how important they are to a holistic view of the music. We want to try to make sure that the music is not "devalued" or "misrepresented" when it is taught. However, even within the group of people who would consider it to be "their" music there will be a variety of "meanings" which the music bears for different people. No one person, not even an "insider", can have a definitive understanding of something which is socially constructed. Therefore, we should not try to insist that everyone shares one understanding. Students will always have a narrow understanding at the early stages, but that will broaden as their study progresses. No pedagogic material can give a full understanding, but it can provide the important first opportunity to begin to explore another music. In any case, there is no way that I can pass my understanding on to another person; I can only guide them to come to their own understanding. Equally I do not think that the music will be damaged by a partial understanding. Musical traditions are robust and constantly changing. If they are not, then they are dead and of archaeological interest only.

What I would want students to understand well is the process of investigation of another music, the sorts of questions which should be asked and an awareness of the assumptions they are bringing with them. This can be quite difficult and, as students, we may well find ourselves looking in the wrong place for the answer. I have been told that I am playing something wrongly and have subsequently spent some time listening and comparing my playing with others, only to realise that what was wrong was the movement I was making, not the sound I was producing.

Notations are another area of frequent problems. The ability to notate appropriately is a powerful tool which we have learned to use. Because of its wide acceptance we will frequently need to make use of it in pedagogic materials. We would be foolish not to use the existing skills which the student has. At the same time we are all aware of the problems it brings in misrepresenting the music.

There is also the whole problem of pedagogical methodology. Most musicians would agree that the methods by which you learn a music are an integral part of that music. If then, for example, Indian

classical music is traditionally studied through a long "apprenticeship" with a master, is this the only way it can properly be studied? It would be nonsensical to suggest that if there is an element of a music which cannot be studied in the traditional way we should, therefore, not study that genre of music. The same might also apply to instruments; should you only study *gamelan* if you have an Indonesian set of instruments? In the U.K. there are a number of *gamelans* which have been constructed using available materials and technology. These bring great enjoyment and, I would suggest, considerable understanding of the ways in which *gamelan* music works. The important point, though, is that people are aware of the ways in which what they are doing is different from the "original". Students should be able to understand, at a level appropriate to their age, that what they are doing is investigating only some of the elements of a different music, and that they are not playing exactly that music.

The final problem here is probably the most insidious. We reify the concepts we use to understand Western music. Thus we abstract rhythm, pitch and form at a distance from it. This is so common that it is easily carried over into the study of other music, and we go in search of the elements we know. This would particularly apply when studying the music without the practical experience of the whole music to inform our attempts at understanding.

In conclusion, I would like to misquote an adage, "If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly." My point is not that we should set out to do it badly, but that but there is much understanding to be gained from the endeavour, regardless of the level of skill attained.

Trevor Wiggins on his experiences learning Ghanaian drumming

It goes like this...

It is a truism that when you stop learning you stop being a teacher. Yet maybe regular occasions of being faced with completely unfamiliar material and having to try to understand it should be a requirement for all teachers. I am currently having lessons in Ghana from a master drummer who is teaching me some of the traditional music. Although I have some previous experience, the rhythms are unfamiliar; I must acquire new playing techniques and I must put everything I have learned into practice at some speed. During most lessons there will be one or two teenage boys who help by playing some of the other parts of the piece I am learning. They have heard this music since (before?) they were born and "know" how it goes. It is the nature of this knowledge and my attempts to acquire it which particularly interests me.

For most Ghanaians, their traditional music is something they hear very frequently. In the same way that they have acquired ability in one or usually more languages, they know how the music should sound. They are also familiar with the dance which is integral with the music. Just as we recognise regional accents in language as not changing the meaning of the words, they will know what are the essentials of a particular piece. There will be a number of different versions of the same piece which are proudly cherished because they are different. In fact, one group of performers will be quite offended if you comment that their version is like the one you recently heard somewhere else. However, the essentials of the piece remain the same. The problem is that I have no knowledge of which are the essential elements, nor a vocabulary of experience on which to draw.

A typical scenario would find me learning a particular pattern on one day. The next, while waiting for the master drummer to arrive, I will be practising quietly and, inevitably, making some mistakes. I will try to correct my mistakes by playing more slowly, or taking a particular passage and repeating it. The boys who also arrive early, will be frustrated by my efforts and will try to show me how it should be. This will always be at full speed and will probably be a variant of what I am trying to do. It may also start from a different point. They are most surprised when I am not able to copy their actions immediately. - "Don't I know this piece?"

A parallel situation occurs in my lesson later. My teacher is expert and used to teaching people from the USA and Europe. He is quite happy to play things much more slowly and to break sections down into smaller fragments that I can assimilate. In my mind I can identify at least three elements to what I must learn. I must memorise the rhythm and which sounds are used; I must acquire any necessary new techniques which the sounds require; and I must rehearse the sequence of events so that I can proceed beyond the snail's pace necessary when you have consciously to think of every action. I make frequent mistakes. This is a necessary part of the process. I may have memorised the rhythm, but I am unable to demonstrate my knowledge because I have not developed the skill. In my vocabulary, "I know how it goes." For my teacher, I don't know it. He slowly and patiently explains again the sequence of sounds and demonstrates them for me to copy. I think I can do this but in his perception, I can't.

Without entering the sphere of philosophy, at what point do you "know" a piece of music? How does a teacher assess what a pupil knows? Because of my training I could probably demonstrate what I know by writing a transcription on a piece of paper. But when it comes to where the music really lives, in performance, I can't say "It goes like this" - yet!

This whole experience reinforces the importance of placing teachers into the role of the learner on a regular basis. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for a teacher in possession of knowledge, to empathise truly with the student's point of view. We as teachers often lose sight of this simple fact. Perhaps we should reflect on the difference between "knowing" something well enough to teach it theoretically, and being intimately familiar with it to performance standard. Does this difference have a significant bearing on the quality of the information imparted? If so, do we place too little emphasis on practical ability in many aspects of teaching? The trouble with truisms is that we know them without thinking about them.

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