

**THE USE OF PERFORMANCE COMPOSITION ON
AFRICAN MUSIC INSTRUMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE
CLASSROOM MUSIC EDUCATION IN AFRICA.**

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my lovely wife Ebere and my three wonderful boys, Enyinna and Ekechi and Kosisonna. For the love, patience and support they gave to me during the course of this program. Thanks guys I really love and appreciate you all.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Modern music education in Africa has suffered a great set back as a result of its very high content of western music in the studies curricula. In most cases, the schools do not have adequate materials and equipment for effective study of western music. The learners also might not be able to culturally identify with the music examples, composers and compositional structure of the western music types. An example is the teaching of a very popular western nursery rhyme “Baa baa black sheep” to African children. The African child’s knowledge of the sheep is an animal raised specifically for meat. A typical African child cannot relate the animal “sheep” to wool, as the sheep in Africa do not produce wool. So the child sings the song, “have you any wool?” without being able to relate the text of the song to his direct environment. Unless the aim is to get the child to exercise his ‘faith’, it is unfair to subject the child to information that is alien and confusing to his cultural environment. In higher levels of education, the students may learn about some classical music composers, without any facility to hear the compositions or even see what the instruments they composed for look like. There is often the problem of inadequate western instruments for classroom music education. On the other hand, a learner who is introduced to music using examples and materials from his direct cultural environment would better understand and relate to these. They would be able to experience the music live, know the practitioners of such music and even participate in the music making situations in question.

Performance Composition is the creative performance principle found in indigenous African music practices. It is the re-composition of a known piece, being sensitive to the contingencies of every performance occasion. This means that what happens at every re-performance of a piece, goes beyond improvisation. Improvisation, as found in Jazz music, is a purely music specific developmental process, while performance composition is

contextually rationalized and deals with the exigencies of every performance situation: audience, event, atmosphere, mood etc.

My main interest in this study is the sensitization of the principles of performance composition in learners, from the primary to the tertiary levels of education. Performance composition as a creative process in the indigenous African performance rationalization has strong educational perspectives; to engineer pulse sense, rhythm perception and security and to instil spontaneous creativity framed by content as much as intuition.

It is therefore my argument that if music can be taught in African schools from an African philosophical point of view using indigenous instrumental music and dance practices, the learners would better imbibe the compositional/performance elements that will enhance and excite inborn creative talents. They would be able to participate in music making activities in their community, and experience the theoretical implications in the practice.

This study will include experimental workshop experiences, and will discuss the strategies used to inculcate pulse sense, rhythm perception and spontaneous creativity into learners in Africa and Europe.

1.2 Purpose of study

This study will discuss the application of African indigenous musical arts practices to modern music education. The discussion will approach the study of African indigenous music from an African philosophical point of view, taking into consideration the effects and affects of the musical arts in the life of the average indigenous African. The study will also highlight the principles of indigenous music education and how its effective adaptation to modern music education could help develop creative thinking in the minds of young African learners, which they will consequently apply to any field of endeavour/enterprise they will specialise in later in their lives and careers.

The study will look at creativity as critical in child development in Africa. It will also discuss ways in which exploring the creative talent of young African learners can guide and focus them in their educational and life pursuit. It is necessary to note that once the latent creative potentials in children are harnessed, they are able to apply that creativity to any given educational field of study.

The study will also aim to establish “performance composition” as a creativity process. Performance composition is the ability to re-create a known musical piece spontaneously in order to capture the exigencies of an extra musical intention or a non-musical context. The difference between performance composition and improvisation is that whereas improvisation involves the absolute exploration of the musical possibilities of a known music theme or format, performance composition should transact a non-musical intention that could be just palpable human emotions, even in a modern concert situation (Nzewi. M, 1997: 68).

Finally the study will aim to show that there is enough material in African indigenous music practices needed to teach music to learners of music at any level of music education. It will also discuss the need to use what is available locally, and what the people can identify with to transmit knowledge in music. Music is art, music is science, music is health and most importantly, music is life.

1.3 Statement of problem

As has been mentioned earlier, modern music education in Africa has always had very high western music content, irrespective of the level of education. The argument in most cases has been the unavailability of teaching materials from Africa. So basically, people who have to learn music in Africa approach musical illustrations, instruments, compositions, performance practice and history all from the western music perspective. In most cases, the average music learner in Africa does not have access to, or imagination about most of the music materials that the music teachers who might have studied in Europe

probably did have. And the limited availability and maintenance of western music instruments such as the piano, has caused a huge setback in modern music education in Africa driven by exogenous mentality.

The inability of most trained music teachers to effectively engage in classroom music education in primary and secondary levels of education is blamed on the unavailability of western music instruments such as the piano. This has given rise to most teachers who have specialized in music, being compelled by the head of the schools where they are employed to teach other subjects such as local languages in place of music.

What is needed in Africa is a music curriculum that will derive from the indigenous musical practices in traditional Africa, which the learners can identify and relate with. There is a wide range of keyboard instruments in different parts of Africa that can be effectively used in place of the piano, where it is not available. There are string instruments, wind instruments, and reed instruments etc that are of African origin, which can be the focus of instrumental music education in Africa.

At the tertiary level, with regards to my present research, problem is encountered when music students attempt to play or sing compositions that have very strong African compositional idioms, in terms of rhythm and melody. One reason always given is that the pieces are not composed in any of the more conventional classical styles. Another factor is the fact that most music students have become so used to performing works in the European classical music idioms, that they find it extremely difficult to understand and interpret the African compositional idioms that include ¹syncopations, shock rhythm, vocalic lilt (Nzewi. M and Nzewi. O, 2007:236) etc. this research project aims to determine the problems that the students of music who wish to play and sing pieces that are idiomatically African, encounter, and how to help them understand and interpret African compositional peculiarities.

¹ In music, syncopation includes a variety of rhythms which are in some way unexpected in that they deviate from the strict succession of regularly spaced strong and weak beats in a meter (pulse). (Wikipedia)

1.4 Need for study

The choice of the membrane drum as an instrument of focus in indigenous music theory and practice derives from the dynamic tonal nature of the instrument. The single membrane drum is a melo-rhythmic instrument, which implicates deriving a rhythmic thought tonally - melodic essence. The membrane drum is not pitch sensitive, and can accompany any instrument or voice, irrespective of the key or pitch the instrument or voice plays or sings in.

There is a need to develop a creative continuum for indigenous musical arts practices. Hence the imperative for composing African classical drum pieces with adequate notation that retains the conventional note value system. Drum music notation then uses symbols to represent the different tonal levels on the single membrane drum, and other sonic effects realized on the drum.

The instrument deals with two basic tonal levels, which are used in combination to produce tunes that can be sung. This makes playing on the instrument a process that demands exploring one's innate creativity to produce musical statements that become melodic when transferred to the voice. It also enhances acuity in rhythmic perception and understanding, which marks African music.

1.5 Rationale of study

My concern for the use of indigenous music instruments in classroom music education and professional music practices motivates my interest in promoting the theory and performance practice on the African single membrane drum as a modern classical genre. Furthermore, with respect to performance composition, what is crucial is enabling the performer as a creative personality capable of spontaneously re-creating aspects of a written genre differently on the contingency of every performance occasion as indicated on the composition.

1.6 Aim of study

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that it is possible to use indigenous music instruments in classroom music education as well as modern concert presentation, and to discuss aspects of spontaneous creative interpretation of a known (written) composition from an African compositional philosophy and theory. This will include discussing rudiments, composition and performance practices with music examples from indigenous creative and performance matrix. The study also aims to show that with the right type of motivation and guidance, every child is a creative personality; learners can explore their creativity in music and dance from the musical arts repertory available in their immediate environment.

1.7 Methodology

The research into African classical drumming style has already been carried out at the Ama Dialog Foundation². The task here is to identify music students with the ability to read music from score, who will take up the challenge of performing the peculiarities of pieces that emphasize African creative idioms and performance practices. As already argued the performance composition style is not conventional, as per metropolitan classical music models. Hence there is a strong need to orientate the mindset of music students in Africa who wish to engage with its context-sensitive demands. I have had to constantly monitor and guide performers who have taken interest in the African classical drumming style on how to properly interpret unique aspects of the music scores.

Available literature was consulted in the course of this project (as would be seen in the literature review) and there is not much cognitive study already undertaken on this subject. Personal performance experiences on both

² The Ama Dialog Foundation is a centre for the re-orientation of Africa's viable cultural heritage, situated in Nigeria. It was established in 1993.

classical drum teaching and playing, as well as the ensemble performance composition style will also be discussed in this study.

1.8 Scope of study

This project covers different indigenous music teaching experiences, including the teaching of the theory, philosophy and creative principle behind African music performance and the rehearsing and production of various African music concert pieces.

It covers the research experiences I have had working with a professional African instrumental ensemble group, the Soccajasco Kids, workshop experiences with the CIIMDA project in 5 countries in the SADC region, and workshop experiences with high school pupils in eight different gymnasiums in Germany.

In preparing for the recitals, I worked with the Soccajasco kids for three weeks prior to each recital. I was working with them for two hours everyday except on Sundays.

The project with CIIMDA has been on going since 2004. I joined the project in 2005. During that year, I was involved with training teachers at the centre in Pretoria. In 2006, the strategy was changed, to reach more people in the participating countries. The new strategy was to train the teachers in their respective countries, this time reaching as many teachers and learners as possible. This is where I draw my CIIMDA workshop experience from.

The project with the gymnasiums in Germany lasted a total of three weeks, working with each school for two days. I worked from the first period till the last, with different classes.

All these practical experiences entailed applying the creative philosophy of African indigenous musical practices, both from a theoretical as well as practical perspective. These various experiences will be discussed further in this paper.

Chapter 2 Contextualizing Performance Composition

2.1 Music in indigenous Africa

It is necessary in this study, to discuss briefly the theory and practice of music in traditional Africa. This will enable the appreciation of the modern literacy position of performance composition, which is being advocated through research workshop and performance activities in Africa and beyond.

Music has been an integral part of the life of the indigenous African. Invariably, every activity that the African engaged in had a music aspect to it. This ranged from the daily subsistence occupation to the evening relaxation. Music was never played just for entertainment in the old African culture, there was an extra musical purpose for each and every occasion in which music was made. This could range from religious intentions to social functions and recreation. Thus in traditional Africa, music was always functional i.e., it had to fulfil the objective it was created for.

The life of the indigenous African was encompassed with social events like title taking, marriages, initiations, religious worships etc. Basically, the African availed himself of every opportunity to transact music. Thus, mass music education was a norm in old Africa. There were of course, experts and people who had exceptional skill in certain specialized areas of the musical arts such as choreography, singing and the playing of certain instruments. Otherwise the average African participated in musical arts activities in tradition as an actor, a dancer, an instrumentalist or an active audience.

The first exposure to music for the African child starts from when he is born. The mothers would usually sing to the child either to get him to sleep or to stop him from crying. This singing would usually go with some gentle body movements. In most cases, the mother would carry the child on her back while she engaged in her daily household activities, and as was the practice then, would sing and make dance movements while she worked. The child

thus starts to imbibe the musical attributes and sonic cultural sensibility at that very tender age. As the child grows older and is exposed to more practical communal musical activities, he starts trying to imitate the adult members of the community with regards to music making. The children are allowed to hang around the adults during musical arts activities in the community; they have direct access to music environment that the adults operate in. They [Children] would then build their own musical instruments to play on, and these were usually an imitation of the instruments used by the adult members of the community, but would always avail themselves the opportunity to play on the original adult instrument, should such an opportunity arise. Children are always encouraged by the adults to engage in these musical arts activities, and special interest is paid to those children that exhibit exceptional musical talents.

The next stage in the indigenous music education in Africa comes at the point the child is initiated into an age grade or age group. At this point, every child is deemed a responsible member of the community and is then accepted as such. The process of initiation for both the male and female African is transacted in music. The young adults are taught about life, what is expected of them, how to be good and useful members of the community, some life skills like hunting, fishing, cooking etc. They go through a process of formal indigenous music education, as it is expected that the final stage of their initiation process and presentation to the community as adults will be done with a dance performance, in which every initiate is expected to participate. It is usually at this point that the community begins to identify those with specialized musical skills, who will eventually be encouraged to become choreographers, singers and mother musicians on various instruments.

Musical activities in traditional Africa are categorized into four main areas namely, religious activities, therapy and healing, social musical activities and recreational activities.

2.2 Religious musical activities.

Before the advent of Christianity, the African had a belief system that was based on the worship of deities; there is the Supreme deity and then other minor deities. For every deity, there was usually a place of worship, a particular time in the year when the deity is honoured and a specific music type that went with the worship of the deity. In some cases, there were sacred instruments that were used for these worships and which were only brought out at the occasion of these worships. The music for such religious activities was specifically created for the occasion in question, and would only be publicly performed in the context of the worship. In some cases, participation in these events was selective, usually for initiates, and was not open to every member of the community.

There were also religious festivals, in which participation was mandatory. One of such examples is the Ajana Ukwu Omor festival, which is a socio-religious festival practiced by the Omor cultural group, a farming community in the southeastern part of Nigeria (Nzewi. O, 2005). This festival is observed every year, to honour the earth deity “Ana”. The music, dance, theatrical displays and instruments used, are specific to the festival. It is a period in which members of the community come to thank the Earth deity for good harvests, and to make pledges for the next farming season. It is also a period when the communal land is cleansed and purged of the evils of the past year. Every adult member of the community is expected to participate in this ceremony, as abstention would imply that one was not upright and as such could bring supernatural reproach to the community. In these music events, performance composition is the developmental norm for the music pieces used. For a festival that takes place once a year, the music is usually the same, but the re-composition on each occasion would depend on the mood, audience and general atmosphere.

There are also religious institutions that have specific music types that go with their respective activities. In a traditional African situation, these music types have a recognizable theme and the members of that community would

immediately know that the members of the religious group are about to get into the religious observance once they hear the musical theme being played. The case is the same for some societies that have exclusive membership. In most cases these societies have their activities late at night. Only members of such societies are allowed to be present when they have their ceremonies. Non-members would usually keep away from the scene of these ceremonies when they hear that particular type of music.

Dance is an integral part of most religious worships. The dances most times are choreographed, some times to reflect activities synonymous with the Deity being worshiped. These dances of course would not be performed in another music event occasion, likewise the music. The dance is context specific, just as the music used for it. Musicians and dancers rehearse the music and dances over a period of time before they are performed in public; before the whole community or only members of the society as the case may be. One such example is the Sangoma healing theatre. According to Meki Nzewi, “The Sangoma healing theatre is a unique African concept of dance as visual music”. (Nzewi, 2005: 3). He goes further to state that “ the Sangoma dance is then a spiritual danced drama aesthetic, and every known individualized dance is spontaneously re-choreographed” (ibid 3). This last statement goes to explain the concept of performance composition, with regards to dance. In a dance situation as mentioned above, there is a thematic statement that is played by the drum and danced to by the Sangoma actor. Both the actor/dancer and the drummer engage in the development of the theme spontaneously during public performances. There is a close inter-relationship between the drummer, the dancer and the audience. This inter-relationship is what in most cases determines the nature of the thematic development in a performance composition situation. The concept of performance composition is one of the unique features of African music.

2.3 Therapy and healing.

Music plays a very significant role in Africa with respect to healing. Most African traditional healers make use of music in healing processes. In the Sangoma healing theatre of the Southern African sub-region, “the healing process takes place in the both private clinic and public space where the healing theatre of music, dance and spiritual drama command active communal participation” (Nzewi. M, 2005:3). In other cultures of Africa the practice is the same for traditional healers. In the Igbo culture of South-Eastern Nigeria, traditional orthopaedic surgeons make use of the metal bell to sedate their patients before they start their job of fixing a broken bone. It must be noted here that with regards to administering anaesthesia locally, performance composition is not practiced. The reason being that the aim of the music is to get the patient sedated; therefore the same theme is played over and over again in a circle till the patient is in an unconscious state. The rhythmic theme is played continuously till the surgery is finished.

Both the construction and materials used for the metal bell are not refined, and as such the bell produces a tonal quality rich in cluster harmonics and overtones. The bell is also used in traditional mental institutions, where it is employed in therapy sessions for the patients. In some traditional institutions for the mentally ill in Nigeria, groups of mental patients move about in the streets, and each group carries a metal bell. They play coordinated rhythmic structures as they move. This keeps them together and pretty much well behaved. One important factor of note is the science that goes into the construction of African indigenous music instruments. Music instrument technology in traditional Africa allows for the instruments to have therapeutic or healing qualities. The African membrane drum is employed for therapeutic purposes; hence in many parts of world, the membrane drum is used for stress management and team building. The inside shell of the African membrane drum is finished with a rough textural surface. The rough texture is deliberate, to make the instrument give out raw overtones instead of a pure pitch. These rough overtones help to massage the nerves and are therapeutic both to the player and the listener.

2.4 Social musical activities.

Social musical activities constitute a large percentage of communal musical events in traditional Africa. These include events such as title taking/coronation ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, ceremonies to mark annual harvests and to usher in new farming seasons, funerals and other music events that are particular to different communities. These events in most cases would require the participation of every member of the community. There would be different music groups that could be gender specific, age group specific or occupation specific (such as hunter's guild). The period and timing for some of these events could last from one day to two weeks. The music category used for these activities are specific event-music types each of which is peculiar to its event. The dances could be choreographed, free medley or mass participatory. In these social event situations, performance composition is the norm. The context of each performance will determine the nature of the re-composition of each of the pieces. As is found in the *Ese* funeral music type of the Ngwa of south eastern Nigeria, adult members of the community who understand the language of the drum, would on coming into the compound of the deceased, engage in dialogue with the mother drummer of the *Ese* ensemble. These dialogues are spontaneous and don't have a fixed length or content. This constitutes performance composition, because there is a known theme, but the content and development will be determined by the context and audience participation.

These music events give the members of the community opportunities to come together and interact with one another in dance and music. It creates opportunity for somatic relationships, compelled by mass dancing. It is the occasion for the community to come together and share the spirituality that the music offers and to bond as one entity. It is also a time for mending bridges and reconciliation within the community. During such events, new musical talents are discovered and are encouraged towards attaining or harnessing the full potentials of such innate creative personality. In most

situations such as mentioned above, the music is recognizable, although each performance situation is a different musical experience.

2.5 Recreational music activities.

These events include wrestling music events, hunting, fishing and other traditional recreational sporting events. The music is also event specific, and is only employed during these sporting activities. Usually, these recreational activities take place in the evenings, when the members of the community come back from the days work. The music starts as people get back from their different places of work and gradually move to the village arena where the event is to take place. There is mass dancing and the children play games while the older persons engage in more advanced sports such as wrestling. At the end of the physical exercises, the people disperse to their different homes to rest for the night, psycho-physically recreated for the next day's work.

2.6 Indigenous knowledge system and general music education in Africa.

The indigenous knowledge system of Africa implicates advanced scientific process that dealt with all aspects of life in old Africa. With regards to music, it addressed issues such as the science behind the construction and tuning of indigenous musical instruments, and it also dealt with a theorized creative process for indigenous instrumental music and dance practices.

Every indigenous music instrument in Africa is constructed with a replicable music instrument technology that is both scientific and has a human rationalization. The indigenous knowledge system behind instrument technology was such that researched the musical qualities as well as the therapeutic possibilities of the materials for each instrument that is built. The rather rough textured finishing of the instruments was not random, but deliberate. For each instrument type consideration was given to the health implications of the sound of the instrument, making sure that the sound

produced is not harmful to health. This required researching the best possible building materials, the designing of the instruments, and the actual construction as well as the finishing of the instrument. The instruments were constructed to retain as much as possible a natural sound quality that was usually rough textured with cluster harmonics and overtones. One example is the membrane drum, which is made from animal skin spread over a clay or wooden shell/resonator. Certain types of wood and skin were deemed to be better than others for making instruments. In most cases, the skins from wild animals were preferred over domesticated animals. The preference has to do with the way the animals live and what they ate. These factors were scientifically researched for durability and good sound quality.

The membrane drum can accompany any other instrument or voice irrespective of the pitch or sonic attributes of such other instrument or voice. The cluster harmonics and rough overtones produced by the drum constantly massage and soothe the nerves when the instrument is played. The drum produces music as well as administers therapy to both the listener and players. These drum types were also researched to produce a tonal range compatible to the vocal parameters of each homogeneous culture group. Some attempts to produce drums in Europe with very smooth textural finish, results in drums that have a sound quality that lack the soothing timbre when played.

The indigenous musical arts knowledge system of Africa is marked by compositional principles and philosophy. These principles and philosophy addressed the issues of harmony, melody/melodic range, rhythmic and formal configurations, part relationship, pulse and pitch.

In this section, most of the theoretical principles that are being discussed have been discussed in a specific publication¹. My intention here is to outline them as relevant to discussing my topic.

¹ A contemporary study of musical arts by Meki Nzewi is in five volumes. The theoretical principles discussed here have been discussed in these volumes.

The harmonizing of a melody in African music is not conceptualized note by note in a vertical chordal axis as found in European classical music; rather it has a dualistic manifestation. There is the harmony of pitches, and the harmony of tones; this could be in either a vertical or lineal axis of simultaneous sounding parts. “Parts are harmonized phrase-gestalts, which requires perceiving the harmonic sense of melodic/melo-rhythmic phrase or sentence and then deriving a complementary phrase to match it” (Nzewi M, 2007: 113). This then means that each matching melody is a complete independent musical statement which when played along side the principal melody becomes a complementary harmonic melody to the principal theme. “This harmonic thought derives from a communal principle of complementation or inter-dependence rather than subordination or dependence” (Nzewi. M, 2007: 113). With regards to African instrumental ensembles, harmony also has a dualistic conception: the harmony of instrumental timbres i.e. the harmony of the tone colour of different instruments, and the harmony of the same instruments but of different sizes or species. When picking music instruments for an instrumental ensemble, one has to consider the tone colour of the different instruments, and select the ones that would most complement each other. The picking or choosing of instruments is not random and must adhere to the cultural idioms of concordance. It must be noted at this juncture that members of any given music culture in the world, Africa included, do critique improper harmonization. Therefore care is taken while picking instruments, and this requires the testing of different instruments of the same specie to find the one that best suits the holistic sonic conceptualization of an ensemble.

The harmony of melodic/melorhythmic themes. As has been mentioned earlier, African harmonic thoughts are not conceptualized in a vertical chordal axis, but rather there is a practice of harmonizing phrase-gestalt. This means that in instrumental ensembles, each music instrument has an independent melodic or melorhythmic theme, which is a complete musical statement. These different independent themes sound simultaneously, complementing each other to create harmony. The length of themes played by the various instruments/voices in an ensemble could vary. “Homophony and polyphony

are both found in African music cultures, although polyphony is more common” (Nzewi M, 2007: 113).

The melodic conceptualization in African musical practice is dualistic. There is the melody of pitches and the melody of tone levels on an instrument (melorhythm). A melorhythmic theme automatically transforms into a melodic statement upon being vocalized by the human voice. In most instances, melorhythmic tunes derive from the tonal structure of text in tonal languages. Melodic range is rationalized and informed by humanistic virtues; performance is usually within the vocal ability of every member of the community. This allows for unrestricted participation in mass music events and encourages every member of the community to participate without prejudice. Worthy of note is the fact that there are still people in the community who are recognized as specialists or experts, and are thus given special roles in mass music performances.

Rhythm in African music is recognized as being African due to the configuration of certain rhythmic elements and motifs. The same motifs and elements are used in practically every music culture of the world; it is then the “idiomatic conformation of conventional rhythmic elements and motifs in lineal and vertical dimensions that typify music cultures” (Nzewi M, 2007: 112). In African music, peculiar musical motifs such as hemiola, inter-rhythm² and shock rhythm characterize African conceptualization.

Form: In African music, we encounter two types of form namely *thematic form* and *performance form*.

Thematic form deals with the construction of melodies, which is usually in balancing phrases. This could be in form of any structures of the question and answer form or the responsorial forms. The development of a theme could be music specific, dictated by language or context recommended. One common feature of thematic development is the internal variation technique, which

² The concept and nature of inter-rhythm derives from the principle and human-musical meaning of the long triplet. The inter-rhythm arrangement of the two-with-three concept is a unique configuration in African part organisation; this has often been misinterpreted as cross-rhythm.

could be rhythm specific, pitch/tone specific or both. In traditional African music, sequential treatment of phrases, figures and themes are also among the various developmental idioms. (Nzewi M, 2007: 114). In African music performance, form fixed performance content is not practiced; rather the concept of performance composition³ that makes every performance situation a different musical experience is more widely practiced.

In African ensemble music, the basic performance form is the *ensemble thematic cycle*, “which is the aggregate musicological content (durational and harmonic implications) of the lowest common multiple of the various length of the primary themes constituting the texture of an ensemble sound” (Nzewi M, 2007: 114). Also found in African music is *Contextual form*, which is found primarily in event-music performances. “It is the durational as well as structural outcome of the music outlining and/or signifying the scenario of an event” (Nzewi M, 2007: 114). The event would usually have a known framework of content and procedure, which the music interprets or marshals.

Finally, under performance form, there is the mood form, which basically deals with the concept of *the cool* and *the hot*. This is a psychological rationalization of musical presentation. In this form, the same recognizable musical presentation can be played at different speeds, or the two formal moods can have different musical contents.

A cadence deals with how a piece of music naturally moves to a psychological end.

“There are certain properties or natural energies of musical notes, or certain sound effects or performance behaviour that occur during a performance, and which signal the end of a piece or presentation. The peculiar phonic movement could be intrinsic in the logic of relationships between successive musical notes or tones in a culture. It could be achieved by manipulating the elements of a music event against natural tendencies of sound energy. Thus the first is natural, inherent in the musical character, while the second is an artificial cadential

³ Performance composition is the re-composition of a known piece, being sensitive to the contingencies of every performance occasion. This means that every performance situation is a different musical experience.

contrivance. In either case the definition of a *cadence* recommends that there has to be a preparation, phonic or mechanical, leading to the terminal sound/s". (Nzewi M, 2007: 25-26))

The cadence could be melodic, in which case the cadential movement will be contained in the last two or three movements of the notes of a melody. The quality of the interval of the progression in the last two or three essential and different notes of a melody are its strongest cadential feature, and equally important is the direction of approach from the penultimate note to the last.

"The more common cadential progression found in the traditional music of African cultures include

- i. three steps from below, often the value of a classical minor third
- ii. one step from above, often the value of a classical minor second
- iii. one step from below, often the value of a classical minor second
- iv. four steps from below, often the value of a classical perfect fourth"

(Nzewi M, 2007: 26)

Other indications that a melody has come to a final rest, include, an emphatic repetition of the last note, the last note of a piece being held for a couple of beats, or a final shout. One or more of the above mentioned, could be combined to achieve a melodic cadence.

Ensemble Cadence: Most traditional performance presentations are based on the concept of performance composition. In that case, there is a recognizable framework within which the thematic content and duration vary according to the contextual sensitization at every different performance occasion. Therefore it is necessary to devise a cadential formula to signal the end of every performance situation. This is essential as every traditional music performance is ended neatly. The mother musician in a performance then has to be in a position to end the performance at any point should the need arise. Every member of the ensemble (and some times members of the audience) knows what the cadential cue is, and will always respond to it should it even come up in the middle of a performance. The nature of African indigenous performances is such that it is possible to end a piece without altering the recognizable thematic framework of the composition.

Chapter 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant materials in the area of African indigenous drum music were consulted for this paper. The paper would therefore look at issues that have some bearing on the theoretical content of indigenous African music. These will include issues on transcription, repetition, and pulse in African music, the effective use of musical space, performance composition, and thematic construction and development in African music.

Most of these issues have been discussed in literature at different levels, my aim in this chapter would be to take a look at the discussions and attempt a comparative study from the experiences I have gained from my workshops.

3.1 Transcription

Senghor extols the virtues of the oral transmission of culture in Africa:

Black Africa has had the good fortune to ignore writing, even when it was not aware of its existence...for writing impoverishes reality. It crystallizes it into fixed categories and freezes it, when reality is properly alive, fluid and shapeless (1958, 1964: 238-9)

The reliance on oral tradition for the transmission of Africa's indigenous knowledge system from generation to generation served its purpose for old Africa, when it did not know of any other means of knowledge transmission. It probably would have served Africa up till date if Africa was not colonized by the Western nations and forced to adopt their way of life and traditions. It can be argued that certain aspects of the indigenous knowledge system might have been lost through oral transmission, that notwithstanding, the very crucial aspects of Africa's cultural heritage have been preserved. Africa has been forced now to rely on the western method of documentation and knowledge preservation for its viable cultural heritage. That notwithstanding, in the world today there are still special people who have been endowed with the mandate of upholding the virtues of the old indigenous knowledge system of Africa. These voices still try to use the modern day medium of knowledge transmission to inform and educate the world on the values and merits of the old indigenous knowledge system. It is because of this fact that is has

become inevitable that we adopt the modern way of documentation in order to preserve these age old knowledge of Africa for posterity.

With regards to the musical arts heritage of Africa, it is extremely important that we as Africans are able to discuss and document the theory, which in most cases remain an integral part of our livelihood. The indigenous musical arts practitioners in this present dispensation retain an indigenous theoretical understanding of their musical arts practices, and are always in a position to discuss and explain aspects of their musical art practices. They might not be able to put these down in writing in a way to suit the modern world trend of intellectual discuss. Therefore it is left for literate Africans to translate this knowledge, without altering any aspect of it and at the same time acknowledge the source of the knowledge. That way, people that share the same cultural heritage can have access to information that discusses their cultural practices and are able to understand and subsequently discuss it in a wider global circle. Africans have come to a stage where they should be able to say exactly what they mean or what their intention is when they indulge in certain indigenous musical arts practices.

Challey in discussing transcription further states that:

Until very recently, it was never expected to represent every detail of music. It was only intended to transmit a fleshless but indispensable skeleton of 'noted music'. The recipients were then to make use of their own sensitivity and intelligence to bring it alive again according to their own lights. This is why, from generation to generation, music has always remained a living being, despite being on paper. The "written" skeleton has been filled out with one kind of skin after another, as man passes on to men the only message in music that counts: the one that sets the limit beyond which machines, even the most wonderful of machines, can no longer rule. (Challey, 1967: 118)

I very much agree with this statement, since one is only able to reproduce the notes of a musical piece as it is written on paper, but is not able to transmit the mood and emotional disposition of the composer at the time of composition. It is even more difficult to do this with African indigenous ensemble music. Due to the issue of performance composition, it would be almost impossible to say that a recorded or transcribed piece of music

captures the mood and emotions of the performers. This might be the reason why old Africa was never interested in capturing its music for preservation as a fixed product. Since each musical experience was context determined, it would not make sense to preserve a particular presentation, as the atmosphere in that particular event might not suit the atmosphere at the next playing of the piece. That is the main difference between music making in traditional Africa and Western classical music. Performers of written western music are required to reproduce the pieces as written. If the piece is played in twenty different occasions, it is expected to sound the same, except in matters of interpretation. This is the exact opposite with the issue of performance composition. Although the framework is recognizable, there are internal variations and thematic development going on each time the piece is re-played. To a large extent, I believe that the idea of reproducing a written piece exactly the way it is written could limit the creativity of the performer. The piece in this case, could be void of the performer's personality or individuality and may only be a reflection of the composer. There is limited originality in playing written pieces since you have to reproduce it the way it was written, and as much as possible try to retain the mood and emotional disposition of the composer. It is my belief that music instrumentalists should be given the opportunity to discover their own original creative abilities on their instruments of choice, and this is possible through approaching music from an African performance point of view.

With regards to the procedure involved in writing music by western composers, Challey notes "The western composer... starts with a mental idea of their works and then commits them to a written notation, from which they can come to life again in performance". This is of course different from the procedure in notating indigenous African music performances, as Arom notes:

As we have seen, the opposite procedure is followed in ethnomusicology: the investigator starts with a living musical reality produced by the traditional performer. Through his notation, he tries to reveal the structural principles on which the reality is based. (Arom 1991, 170)

These statements clearly point to the fact that the idea behind the transcription of indigenous African music pieces, is not to be able to recreate the piece in a performance situation, but rather to document key elements of the musical piece, which is only intended to give a generic idea of what the actual performance is like, for intellectual discourse.

The notation that was developed at the Ama Dialog Foundation for the classical drumming genre was created out of an effort to try to capture the performance nuances of an African performance situation. The main difference between this notational style, and what had been developed previously is that the previous notational styles like the TUBS that was fully developed by Koetting (Koetting, 1970: 125) were developed strictly for transcription purposes in a field situation, whereas the notation we developed is conceived for compositional purposes.

Negotiating advancement in scholarship and performance on the drum and related instrumental music mandates a written repertory and therefore, the rationalization of devices for notation...we have rationalized notation symbols for modern classical drumming, within the ambit of representing rhythmic constructions in conventional music writing. (Nzewi M and Nzewi O, 2007: 6)

This notation system has made it possible to put down thematic ideas on paper in form of scores for a wide range of indigenous African instruments, and it is also very convenient in transcribing field recordings and teaching drum music. The convenience of this notation system has made possible the playing of the classical drumming style in any part of the world given the availability of a single membrane drum, and the ability to read and interpret written symbols.

Simha Arom (1991:172) puts forward a question:

“...It may be reasonably asked whether it is not improper to notate music so different from our own with the same signs?”

His following statement or answer actually takes care of that problem:

“...Experience quickly shows however, that the parameters we have mentioned as relevant (pitch, duration, period) can be easily expressed by conventional notation.

We had asked ourselves the same question as we created a notation for the classical drumming. It became obvious that if one could interpret written

rhythm, then all that was needed would be symbols to represent the different tonal and extra musical possibilities on the drum. All that would be left was to provide a key to the symbols in use.

In closing this section, I would once again quote Simha Arom, who while comparing fieldwork notation or transcription with a conventional composition states:

“A score in this case, is a reduction to writing of an acoustic event which has already occurred. While the score of a work of cultured music is the link between the abstract thought of the composer and it’s materialization. The score of music from an oral tradition is the link between living musical reality and an abstraction” (Arom, 1991: 173)

It can then be said that traditional Africa’s reliance on oral tradition worked perfectly for the preservation and transmission of knowledge over the years, and is still working in most parts of Africa. That notwithstanding, there is also a need to be able to put musical ideas and inspirations down on paper, whether it be as a new composition for indigenous African instruments or as a recording or transcription of existent music pieces. But as much as possible, in written compositions for African indigenous instruments, provisions should be made for performance-composition as is practiced in tradition. This could be in form of sections in the composition, where the performers are given the liberty to improvise, extemporise or re-compose sections of the pieces as determined by the performance context.

3.2 Repetition in African music

Repetition is found commonly in African music. This could either occur as the repetition of a phrase or a theme. Each time there is repetition in African music, it is deliberate and could have been employed to achieve a musical or extra-musical objective. The essence and use of repetition in African music is not exactly the same in Western classical music.

According to Meki Nzewi, “some African musical features which are often dismissed as repetition from the Western classical sensibility do not constitute repetition. Those are rather unique processes of musical growth, a re-cycling, not re-circling”. (Nzewi 1997:59)

Here, re-cycling would mean a continuous process of minute delicate changes internally, which would give an overall feeling of the same thing happening over again, but at a closer observation, those subtle changes are what excites the mind of a listener. Re-circling on the other hand would mean exactly the same thing happening over and over again without any changes. Both the re-cycling and re-circling of themes are found in African music.

There are deliberate occasions when repetition is found in African music. These are usually found in the ensemble roles of certain indigenous African instruments. Nzewi states, "When repetition occurs as a strict re-circling of a musical figure or statement, it serves a crucial musical intention of harnessing the time consciousness of other performers". (Nzewi, M. 1997: 59) In this case, the ensemble role that is being discussed is the pulse instrument. It is usually assigned to a deep toned instrument. In discussing another ensemble instrument that plays a repetitive phrase, he further states, "Repetition or re-circling also occurs in the Phrasing Referent Instrument which acts as a phrasing beacon for the other ensemble instruments which have the freedom to develop their themes..." (ibid 59). The phrasing referent instrument is usually an instrument with a high distinct sound like the bell or wooden knocker. The theme is usually about one or two bars long, and is consistently repeated through out the piece.

Christopher James in discussing melodic features in African music starts by noting

A Westerners initial response to African music may be 'it is so repetitive'. Repetition is an important formal characteristic to the design and structure of African music. However, the type of repetitious patterns used by Africans can be extremely complex... what is important is how the African musician achieves variety and maintains interest within a cyclical framework, not the mere fact that the music is repetitive. (James, 1997: 8)

It should be observed here that he makes use of 'cyclical', and this already implies that there are modifications in the repetition during each thematic cycle. One question one may ask where he talks about the type of repetitious patterns in African music being 'extremely complex', is what is responsible for that complexity? It is the nature of the internal variations that makes it seem

that the “patterns” are being repeated, but in a complex form. It therefore requires an understanding of the “music culture” to perceive such subtle internal development while the music is being played.

Repetition or re-circling also occurs in music therapy. The music that is used to anesthetize patients, who are undergoing orthopaedic surgery in traditional medical practices in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria in West Africa, is played as a strict re-circling of a thematic statement. The reason for this is to capture the mind of the patient in a groove. When played consistently without any changes, repetition induces the patient to fall into a hypnotic state. The theme is constantly re-circled until the surgery is complete.

Apart from the above-mentioned occasions where repetition is deliberately employed, it is not ideal to engage in the re-circling’ of a theme or phrase in African music. According to Nzewi, “this apart, repetition as unrelieved re-circling is a mark of mediocre artistry in African critical evaluation of a performer or the overall musical interest of a piece” (Nzewi, 1997: 59).

Berliner writes that:

Mbira pieces often have fixed musical structures, and do not generally have a specific beginning or end. Mbira compositions contain characteristic patterns that provide a framework for elaboration and variation supporting the creative expression of the performer. (Berliner, 1978: 52).

Most of the mbira pieces that I have come across in the course of my work, could have a fixed musical structure, but definitely do have a specific beginning or end. African music does not occur randomly, it is quite deliberate. The structure of an African music piece is such that it has a recognizable framework, and that includes a definite beginning and an end. Except one is discussing solo works that an individual plays for himself (like a cattle boy in the wilderness playing his flute while he tends the cattle), whenever music is created or composed in indigenous Africa, the creation process is not complete until the community has sampled it or there has been a presentation to the community or group for which the music was composed. Therefore there has to be a structure that is not random. In most instances,

there are cadential movements and structures that are employed for ending musical pieces. More often than not, the members of the community to which the music type belongs are familiar with these cadential forms, and as such one immediately knows that a particular piece is coming to an end, or a presentation is being terminated. This becomes necessary due to the fact that in indigenous African music, the audience is an active participant in a music event, and thus is as important as the performer and actors in that given music scenario and one cannot function satisfactorily without the other.

3.3 Pulse in African music

There is a definite pulse to life. We have the changing of seasons, sunrise to sunset, sleeping, waking up etc. There is a pulse to life and music, which if shifted or moved, could incur dire consequences to the life of humans. Meki Nzewi (Nzewi, 2007: 50) writes, “The contradiction of the natural sense of functional pulse generates conflict, stress tension, anxiety and chaos, which could be the intention of a music composition”. He further goes on to state “there could be need for resolution, composure or restoration of normalcy”. He sums it up by adding, “When pulse trips, becomes irregular, uncoordinated, slow or races indiscriminately, other activities and sensations anchored on it are affected and could be in jeopardy”. This means that in all music making situation as is related to life, the coordinated pulse sense, has to be consistent and all participants in the music making process will have to collectively adhere to the pulse in order to maintain uniformity. Pulse in African music is one of the most fundamental factors, especially in indigenous ensemble music practices. “It is the foundation of the energy and flow of African musical arts” (Nzewi, 2007: 49). The ensemble role of the pulse line is crucial in any music event where more than one person is engaged in the act of music making. “In African music ensembles, pulse coordinates the peculiarities, structures and qualities of distinctive relating parts” (Nzewi, 2007: 51). With the establishment of the pulse line, it is possible to create and build up a dance sequence strictly on the beat of the pulse instrument. The dance steps and body movements conveying the rhythm of dance patterns as visual music. (Nzewi, 2007: 51).

Discussing free rhythm, Paul Kavyu in his book “Drum Music of Akamba” writes

Songs with metric pulse but without natural rhythmic text can lose the rhythm of the style, after a certain period, if they are not performed within their context...through singing and stamping with a stick or the feet the performing rhythm can be reconstructed at different sections of the song (Kavyu, 1986: 157).

In the first part of the above quotation, Kavyu talks about a “metric pulse” which would immediately connote a pulse sense, which is expected, should guide the singing in that style, the next question is the issue of ‘context’. It should be assumed that singing the song outside its designated context means that there are certain contextual elements that are missing. These missing contextual elements could be anything from the contingencies of performance to audience participation. He further goes on to talk about ‘stamping with sticks or the feet’. The stamping already suggests that the feet keep the pulse line. To play any African instrument, one needs to develop the habit of establishing and keeping the pulse with the tapping of the foot; this becomes very necessary especially when one has to play together with other people in an ensemble. Kavyu then talks about the ability of the ‘performing rhythm’ to be ‘reconstructed’ at different sections of the song. This then means that with the stamping with sticks or feet, which invariably keeps the pulse, allows the singers the freedom to fully develop their themes. The actual term used in the book to describe what happens with the performing rhythm when the feet stamping is introduced, is “reconstructed”. That is more or less the same thing as re-composing. It suggests that there is already a known theme or format, which is reworked to suit the contingencies of the performance context.

In closing this issue of Pulse in African music, it is necessary to point out one notable difference between Indigenous African ensembles and certain Western music ensembles (vocal and instrumental). Whereas in some Western classical music ensembles, a conductor could be needed to coordinate and guide the entire ensemble while at the same time keeping the pulse line of the entire ensemble, in indigenous African ensemble music, there is no such conductor per se. There is however a mother musician, whose role

it is to keep the ensemble and participating audience together and to marshal the activities of the music event through the use of his instrument. But before the commencement of any piece in their repertoire, the pulse is first established either on his instrument or with the tapping of the feet or nodding of the head. In cases where the musicians are professionals and have had a lot of experience playing together, the pulse becomes internalized and the pulse sense felt collectively amongst the performers. According to Meki Nzewi “ Sometimes, and with experience, it then becomes internalized [Pulse], taken for granted as a subtle regulator in the course of executing musical and other actions as well as the elaboration of action/theme/relationships” (Nzewi, 2007: 50).

3.4 Musical space in African music

The issue of space is quite crucial in African indigenous ensemble music. In African music, Space deals with the ability to share in a given theme, accommodating and respecting the input of other musicians in the ensemble. Sharing in music has a strong bearing with the African philosophy for communal living, where the input of even the smallest member of the community is crucial to the general survival and well being of the entire community. Meki Nzewi writes, “Textural space is where participants in musical arts activities interact and inter-stimulate one another, so that self identity is performed within group identity”. (Nzewi M, 2007: 42)

When there is mutual understanding in an ensemble situation, every individual member of the ensemble is fully aware of the fact that their input in the musical arts activity is a part that is required to make up the whole. This whole, although it could be achieved with minimal part input, engenders trust and co-dependence amongst the members of the group when shared. Meki Nzewi further states, “Temporal space in the musical arts builds trust in others. A performer is given an opportunity in performance to perform self (improvisation space) in the confidence of solid ensemble or group support” (Nzewi M, 2007: 42-43).

A musical theme that can be played by one individual, when shared among two or three others will be enriched in sound texture. This is due to the fact that when each person in the group has played his specific given part, a

creative person would add fill up patterns as he waits for his turn to re-make his input in the original theme.

3.5 Performance composition.

Performance composition is the re-composition of a known piece at every given public presentation. It is context determined and factors like mood, audience participation and environment are part determinants of the nature and extent of the re-composition.

Meki Nzewi Identifies that:

The Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) constitutes the significant sound block of a piece of music, which gets multiplied differently for the duration of the situational performance of the piece it identifies. It is the significant sub structural framework for fresh super structural re-creation of a known but variable piece of music as per traditional compositional prescriptions. (Nzewi M, 1997: 67)

The above quote from Meki Nzewi's publication explains the re-composition that happens within the over-laying ensemble sound of a given piece. The Ensemble Thematic Cycle¹, which is more or less the overall sound of an ensemble (with regards to the sound input of the different instruments) undergoes internal variations and development, which is not only as a result of the individual structural re-creation of their given themes, but also as a result of the different lengths of the individual themes, which when played in the cycle gives the feeling of a continuously changing overall theme.

There is a significant difference between improvisation and performance composition. Whereas improvisation is a jazz music concept, in which the thematic development is purely musical, performance composition deals with the spontaneous re-creation of a known piece or format which takes into

¹ “This is the span of ensemble gestalt (gross durational content of differentiated instrumental thematic gestalts) which recurs in essentially the same shape and time but with continually changing sound quality” (Nzewi M, 1997: 44)

consideration the exigencies of each performance situation; audience, event, atmosphere etc.

On the issue of improvisation and performance composition, Meki Nzewi writes that,

In improvisation one creates with a theme spontaneously. Developmental creativity is guided by the conventions of the music culture and type, the recommendations of a piece and, also, group/audience sensitization. In performance composition one re-creates a piece spontaneously in order to fulfil the demands of an extra musical intention or a non-musical context. (Nzewi M, 1997: 67)

3.6 Thematic construction and development

The construction and development of a theme or tune will depend on certain factors, which will include the end objective of the composition, the inherent cultural phonic elements at the disposal of the composer and the context of performance (in the case of performance composition as an aspect of thematic development).

“ A music theme/tune contains an inherent logic that recommends how its fundamental shape – breadth and structure – could be extended or developed into a full piece” (Nzewi M, 2007: 35).

There are a number of techniques employed for the development of a theme, two of which will be discussed in this section.

Internal variation technique. This is a developmental technique in which the musical elements (melody, rhythm and pitch) are manipulated within the structure of the set theme or tune to prolong the tune and create variations for the listening pleasure of the audience. According to Meki Nzewi “A complete melodic statement of two or more bars is made and reiterated consistently with internal melodic and rhythmic restructuring in a performance session”. (Nzewi M, 2007: 35). The developmental process occurs within the already established thematic structure, without necessarily expanding or extending the set theme. “There is no expansive growth, but rather intensive, internalized, dynamic manipulation of a theme” (ibid). It generates energy within itself by the manipulation of the musical components that are inside the super structure of the theme. Meki Nzewi again notes that

The internal variation technique regenerates energy within a confined space...this can be compared to water boiling in a closed pot and building up thermal energy that begins to lift the lid. (Nzewi M, 2007:35)

In discussing a variation technique on the mbira, Berliner notes that “ a variation on the standard kushaura part of the “Nhemamusasa” in which the mbira player deletes every third pitch in the bass melody while performing the complete melodic patterns in the upper part of the piece...”(Berliner, 1993: 101). This technique is an example of the internal variation of a theme, but in this case, the performer removes from within the thematic structure of the piece.

Expansion of a theme. In the expansion process, the development of the theme is in stretching of the thematic statement outwardly, sometimes introducing new musical elements. “In this technique of melodic development a theme or figure is given an externalized elasticity that is expansion” (Nzewi M, 2007: 36). The important factors involved in external variation or expansion of a theme is that first, the theme must be clearly stated and established and after the extemporization, the original theme is revisited before the piece comes to an end. Musical elements of the original theme are employed in the expansion process.

Expansion of a theme becomes a very convenient developmental tool for extremely long musical performances. Berliner in his book, reported one of the mbira performers (Ephat Mujuru) as saying “ Listen to what I am playing and then come back in half an hour and I will be playing altogether differently [on the same piece]” (Berliner, 1993: 53).

Repetition is yet another technique of thematic development in indigenous African music practices. Repetition occurs mostly in event music that is created to marshal the proceedings of the event or to accompany the actions in a communal dramatic display. As is noted by Meki Nzewi “When music is accompanying other visual displays, artistic or otherwise, repetition also becomes a device that defocuses attention on the music as an artistic

attraction...” (Nzewi, M 2007: 38). Another instance where repetition is employed in indigenous Africa is for anaesthetic and therapeutic purposes such as sedating the mind of a patient by traditional orthopaedics who mend broken bones (Nzewi M and Nzewi O, 2007: 3), or for coordinating people who are mentally unbalanced². “Repetition is also applied to psychological or therapeutic goals when it becomes necessary to agitate or, as the thematic material may recommend, calm the state of mind of the listener” (Nzewi M, 2007: 38).

² Some mental institutions use the bell music to coordinate their patients when they move outside the institutions in groups. Three or four members of the group would carry and play different coordinated and complementing patterns on the bells. This keeps them organized and moving in an orderly fashion.

Chapter 4 PRACTICAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE

My involvement with the Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Musical and Dance practices (CIIMDA), between 2005 till present, has exposed me to educating school music teachers on teaching music from an African philosophical perspective in 5 different countries in the SADC. The CIIMDA project is concerned with the use of African indigenous instrumental music and dance practices for classroom music education in Africa. Apart from the CIIMDA project, I have also been involved in teaching the theory and practice of African drum music in Europe since 1994. These experiences will form a part of this dissertation, and will take a look at the problems and breakthroughs encountered with teaching music with African models and indigenous musical practices.

Every individual is a creative personality, and this creativity is not only exhibited through musical arts practices. The fact that a person wakes up and decides on a combination of clothing to wear is an evidence of creativity in that individual. This creativity also extends to cooking, gardening, interior decoration etc. so invariably every individual is a creative personality, except that in some cases that part of the individual may be suppressed if the individual is not consciously aware of that innate creative ability, or does not make effort to explore it. We believe both in the CIIMDA project and my other creative music workshop activities, that the ability to excite and explore innate creativity and get the individual to discover that he possesses such creative abilities, would boost the individual's personality and self confidence, and will in turn guide the person in his professional life. With regards to young children, one of the most effective ways of engineering personal experiencing of creativity is to get them to participate in musical arts activities. This helps with self-discovery and overcomes individualism. For as long as a child engages in group musical activities, he or she learns to share and to accommodate others.

In the Windhoek Music College, 45 diploma students at the College, mostly first year Diploma students who offered African music, attended the workshop on the 29th of May 2006. The first step usually is to establish a strong sense of pulse in the students. This is necessary for basic coordination. To achieve this objective, the students were started with movement and clapping exercises, and were required to move their feet to a basic pulse and then clap simple rhythmic patterns in musical time (Ex. 1).

That basic coordination of stepping to the pulse and clapping simple rhythmic patterns, posed a problem for a few of the students. The reason for this I believe was that they were trying to rationalize it as a mathematical problem rather than trying to feel the pulse and clap the rhythm. Time was taken to help the students with the coordination problem. They were made to walk to the pulse slowly, while the clapped rhythm pattern was broken down to take each portion of it at a time. When they started to feel the pulse and clap the complete rhythmic phrase, the tempo was increased. After the initial clap pattern had settled in, the issue of the relationship between pulse and African music making was then discussed. They were made to understand that the pulse was fundamental to ensemble music making in African music, and that for there to be coordination in the ensemble, every instrumentalist in the ensemble has to keep the pulse in unison. This explained, more clapping exercises were undertaken. This time syncopation and shock rhythm were introduced, (ex. 2)

and the same coordination problem came up. It was necessary at this point to get the students to understand that syncopation and shock rhythm were rhythmic structures that they encounter in day-to-day musical experience in their various communities as Africans. It is then necessary as literary

musicians that they are able to understand and discuss African musical idioms, which they use in their every day music making. A secure feeling for pulse as well as a secure sense of rhythm is imperative for contemporary oral and literary performance composition, which is marked by spontaneous creativity. The students were then divided into three groups and each group was given a different rhythmic pattern. The three patterns were then clapped together. This was basically to get them to listen to the different parts as they play together as an ensemble. A keen listening habit is needed for logical performance composition, in order to understand the interrelationship between different components of an ensemble.

The single membrane drum, which is the main instructional instrument in CIIMDA courses, was introduced. The method of sound production, tonal possibilities, sitting and holding positions were explained. When the students started playing the single membrane drum, other literary aspects of African ensemble music making were discussed as follows.

Balance: There is need to always maintain balance in African music and dance. A dance movement that takes the dancer three steps to the right should be complemented with three steps to the left, to maintain a balance. The philosophy behind African music creation is closely linked to the African philosophy of life. The balance in nature is also reflected in musical creation. There is a consistency in the nature cycle of the seasons for instance, which if disrupted would shake the rhythm of life. Likewise in African music, there is an expected sequence of development that is acceptable, and if it is disrupted would create an imbalance in the music.

Use of Space: In African ensemble music making, the effective use of space is very necessary. When playing as a group, there is need to play and give a chance to other members of the ensemble to make their input. In other words creating and making use of crated space is essential in African ensemble music making. This also allows for effective listening when playing as an ensemble. This is closely linked to the next issue, the concept of sharing.

Ensemble music making is about sharing. In the African philosophy of life, sharing is a very important aspect of communal living. Every child is encouraged at a very tender age to share what ever is given to him or her with

her siblings or friends, no matter how small. Likewise in ensemble playing, a musical theme is shared by two or more people, each musician making his own input while respecting the input of other members of the ensemble. So this goes to inculcate the humanly principle of life, that every member of an ensemble is as important as the next. In traditional music ensembles, there is no concept of “super star” as is observed today in the modern popular music scene, where an individual overshadows every other member of the musical group and adopts this larger than life disposition at the expense of other members of the group, without whom he/she would not attain the height in fame he/she operates on.

One problem that always comes up during the ensemble playing exercise is the inability of some of the participants to reproduce a given theme on their own drums, while paying particular attention to the two principal tone levels on the single membrane drum. The drum generates two basic tonal levels: the deep and the high tones. It is with these two primary tones that the drum sings. One could play a given rhythm right, but get the melo-rhythmic essence wrong. This is mostly as a result of poor listening ability while playing as a group. One way of overcoming this problem is through drum singing. Getting the students to vocalize the deep tone on the drum as “du” and the high tone as “ke” helped in solving this problem. They were made to sing repeatedly the melo-rhythmic tunes given to them before playing on the drum. This way, they were able to properly interpret what they sang on the drum, using the right tone levels. The next step was to break them into groups for ensemble music practice. The bell was introduced as a phrasing referent instrument, and a bass drum as a pulse instrument. The rest of the students that were divided into two different groups were given two complementing rhythm structures to play to complete the ensemble.

Having established a theoretical base for the playing of the single membrane drum as a solo instrument in a classical drum ensemble situation, the students were asked individually to run interactive thematic workshops, using the rest of the class. They were particularly required to be conscious of the concept of space, balance and sharing. This exercise went well, with the rest

of the students being quick to remind themselves to create space and to share the theme when any one of them seemed to forget these aspects. The last part of the workshop discussed taking solos, and the concept of individuality within conformity. This is a major factor when discussing performance composition. Every member of an ensemble is encouraged to reinterpret his given theme within the general recognizable framework of the musical piece, as determined by the contingencies of each performance situation. The students took turns to express themselves on the drum, while the rest of the group maintained a simple rhythmic background with musical space that triggered spontaneous interplay by feeling the space.

The workshop was concluded with the class divided into three groups and each group asked to produce a musical presentation in fifteen minutes. The end product established the fact that in the context of performance composition, spontaneous creativity, particularly [spontaneous] group creativity was possible if the students had the right creative tools, mind set and encouragement.

One challenging experience was the CIIMDA workshop at the Blantyre Teachers Training College in Malawi from the 20th to the 22nd of June 2007. The challenge lay in having to run an interactive workshop for 578 student teachers. This was way above any number that we had handled at any one time. The problem with the number was that it would be difficult to get every participant involved in the practical aspect of the workshop. Nevertheless, the workshop had to go on. The strategy that was then adopted was to have all the participants come together to form a large circle, then we started with movement and clapping exercises. After they had overcome the problems of stepping to the pulse and clapping syncopations and inter rhythms, they were given a three-part rhythm structure to clap (ex. 3).

I then kept changing each of the three different rhythm structures without stopping the flow of the music. One of the students introduced a song, which was picked up by the rest of the students, and they sang and clapped while moving around in a circle. This exercise, which was quite successful, fosters rhythm consciousness, interactive rhythmic interplay, pulse/time sensitization and most especially group bonding and psycho sensitive interaction. The exercise having lasted longer than in normal workshops, still proved a very effective way of getting a very large group of participants to play around with rhythm as a unit. What we had to do next was to interpret rhythmic themes that were given on the membrane drum, so that they could hear how it sounded on the drum. They simulated the drum by clapping and pounding the chest in this exercise. To get the participants introduced to the single membrane drum, how to create on it and the nature of ensemble practice, I had to divide the participants into their different classes of about 50 pupils per class. Each class came in turns for the actual drum music practical exercise. Those without instruments clapped or played on their thighs, such that they were all involved in the ensemble practice. One interesting experience was working with a blind student in one of the classes. She was given a drum, and guided as to where and how the deep tone and high tone was realized on the drum. Then with the singing of “du” for the deep tone and “ke” for the high tone, I sang the rhythm structures while they played it on the drum. This exercise went well even for the blind student, because all she needed was to hear the rhythm sung, and reproduce it on the drum.

In July 2007, I was invited to run drum workshops in eight Gymnasiums in the Bavarian region of Germany. The aim was to introduce the students to the theory of African music ensemble practice and the single membrane drum. The workshop suffered a set back, as the drums ordered for the workshop didn't arrive until the end of the workshops. Some of the Gymnasiums already had drums, which were used for the workshops. For the schools with no membrane drums, I had to adopt a strategy of working with drum singing and body percussion.



Movement and clapping exercise with students in Germany

Movement and clapping posed a problem as a result of the fact that the students weren't exposed to rhythm intensive music playing. It required slowing the tempo to a crawling pace and taking the clap patterns a short segment at a time to get them to start feeling the pulse and to understand the relationship between the pulse and the rhythmic patterns clapped. They played on their thighs for the deep tone "du" and clapped for the high tone "ke". To help the students, develop a keen listening habit, I sang different melorhythmic patterns (ex. 4),

using the "du" and "ke" and they played back the patterns on their body instruments in musical time. The length of the patterns was usually one bar long, and they answered by repeating the patterns on their bodies in the following bar. This exercise I discovered generated spontaneous reaction with regards to their ability to re-interpreting the rhythm on the right part of the body. It turned into an interesting interactive playing exercise that excited spontaneous creativity in the students. While they kept time in unison, each

student was expected to create a rhythmic theme at least one bar long, while another student produced a complementary theme spontaneously, to give a two bar statement. Others then joined once the theme was established such that they played the two bar rhythm structure in a question and answer form. It was discovered at the end of the workshops that the students reacted better and created interesting rhythmic patterns when they did so spontaneously, without having to think about what rhythm to play. They were also able to engage in ensemble playing with the body percussion, paying close attention to the issues of space sharing and the pulse. They were able to listen to a given theme and find complementing themes, making use of the space created in the first theme.

The body drumming exercise was also employed even at the schools where they had drums. Having introduced the students to certain key elements of African music practices such as pulse, meter, space, spontaneous creativity, attentive listening etc, we went into interactive drumming and ensemble playing.



Interactive drumming and ensemble playing

Some of the students, who had problems with concentrating during music classes, seemed to have a very different attitude working with African drums and music. Their teachers at a point had to comment on the fact. The said students didn't pay attention during music lessons, and were never willing to make any input during music exercises. The general group playing exercise seemed to break down inhibitions and boost their self-confidence such that they were quite eager to make their input in the music making exercise.



Showing students how to play the deep tone on the drum

The last practical work experience to be discussed in this chapter, is my musical experience with the Soccajasco kids, who I worked with to produce the ensemble pieces for my recitals. The Soccajasco kids are a professional performing group, whose performances are based on indigenous African instrumental music and dance practices. They assist in the CIIMDA project as instructors on African drumming practice. They have had some experience in the playing of various African instruments among which are the single membrane drum, the wooden slit drum, the gourd shaker and the bell. I worked with them on two different occasions for the two recitals I had to present for the award of an MMUS degree in Performance composition. Performing with them was the most essential aspect of the recitals, which is prove me as an African mother musician with regards to performance composition.

For the two recitals, I performed a total of six ensemble pieces, three for each of the two recitals. The pieces were all composed and scored by me, although the final product was as a result of the collective input from the Soccajasco kids and I.

The pieces that were played in the first recital were *Nkwa Egede*, *Ekene Ututu*, and *Egwu Ufie*, while those played in the second recital were *Mkpo n'na*, *Nwa nga n'ga* and *Yom Yom* (which was a danced piece). Three distinct pieces in the repertoire will be discussed in this chapter, to explain the procedure taken to prepare and rehearse the Soccajasco kids for these recitals.

Nkwa Egede. This is an instrumental piece in 4/4 time signature. It is played by an ensemble of seven instruments comprising of three single membrane drums, one double bell, one gourd rattle and one bass drum. The bell took up the phrasing referent role, the bass drum played the pulse line, and the shaker was employed as an action motivation instrument. One of the drums played the mother/solo instrument role, while the other three drums played the rhythm of dance role¹.

The Soccajasco kids already had instruments that each person was quite good at, and that took care of the issue of assigning instruments. The piece in question has an A, B, C, and A form. I had to sing the theme of each of the parts out for the instrumentalists to pick and play on their instruments. It was easier for them to understand it that way, since they had learnt the art of drum singing. They had problems with some syncopated rhythm, especially in the part of the bell, which plays the phrasing referent role. Each of the different instruments has a different thematic statement for each of the sections.

In the first section “A”, the bell has a four bar theme, which is played repetitiously. The shaker has a two bar theme, the bass drum has a one bar theme, while the membrane drums have a four bar theme (ex. 5).

¹ In as much as this piece is not conceived as dance music, the two drums take up the rhythm of dance role, because there is already a solo instrument. (Nzewi M, 2007:86)

The bell part has a three and a half crotchet beat rest from the fourth note of the first bar. During that period of musical silence, on the part of the bell, the second drum part becomes prominent for the three and half crotchet beat duration before the bell re-enters with the rest of its musical statement (ex. 6).

The interaction between the bell and the membrane drum at that point is in the call and response form. Explaining this to the Soccajasco kids helped, as the two people responsible for the bell and the drums, started feeling the interaction between the two instruments. After they had played together for three days, they all started hearing and understanding the relationship between the two instruments, and it became a part of them. The theme for the shaker was not complicated and there was no problem with that part. The bass drum likewise had a straightforward theme, in which the drum sounded mostly on the strong beat. We repeated the first part with everybody playing together over and over again, until they had a mental sonic image of the ensemble sound and their various parts.

In the second section “B”, the bell, the bass drum and the shaker all have one bar themes, while the single membrane drums have a two bar theme. Of all the parts, the shaker has the most complicated rhythm, the reason being that

the instrument was only played on the pick up beat and not on the strong beat; it was highly syncopated (ex. 7).

Initially, the person on the shaker would tend to veer of her rhythm, and start sounding on the strong beat. I made out time to play with her each time she veered of, and after a few days she started being consistent and became comfortable with the rhythm. The interaction between the bell and the shaker, gave an overall feel of the call and response form in this second section (ex. 8).

The third section has all the instruments on a one bar theme (ex. 9).

Each of the instruments has a busy theme; one of the more common phrasing referent themes was assigned to the bell. The children and I worked two hours a day, five days a week for three weeks before the recital. At that point, they were sounding together and confident.

The single membrane drums took turns in taking solos along side the solo drummer, in the course of the performance on each of the sections. As the piece ends, and goes back to the “A” part, only the solo instrumentalist takes a short solo, based on the same theme used for the opening solo, and then gives the call on the drum for the final cadence.

The mother instrument, which was played by me, has no fixed theme in the whole piece. Rather there is an opening statement (ex.10),

which is established and then developed using the external variation technique? The original theme is always restated before the end of the solo. The mother instrumentalist is responsible for giving the calls for the change of the different sections, using a one bar theme (ex. 11),

guiding the solo taking on the other single membrane drums, and ending the piece.

This was the procedure followed for the learning of all the pieces. It became necessary at some points to change the instruments that were played amongst the children. This was due to the fact that one of them would have a stronger sense of rhythmic perception, and as such was able to understand and pick up certain rhythmic structures faster than the others. This problem often occurred in the rhythmic pattern of the bell or shaker.

Egwu Ufie: One of such cases was the piece ‘Egwu Ufie’. This is the only piece in the repertoire that is in 12/8 time (ex. 12).

Egwu Ufie employs the wooden slit drum pair (Ufie²) as the mother instrument. The other instruments in this piece are the bell, shaker and single membrane drums (the rest of the instrumentalists were on drums). The membrane drum pattern starts on a pickup beat the musical value of a dotted crotchet, and is two bars long while the bell has a one bar theme. The pattern played by the shaker is actually a one bar theme, which starts with a crotchet beat rest in the first bar and while it is being repeated in the second bar, fills up the rest with a crotchet beat (ex. 13).

This rhythmic pattern took a while to settle down with the girl that eventually played it, despite the fact that she was one of the strongest rhythmically. The reason being that they were used to the common time of 4/4, and the long triplets (ex. 14)

found in the 12/8 time created some difficulty in playing. The membrane drum pattern starts on an anacrusis, on the last dotted crotchet beat of the first bar. The entry of each instrument is deliberate, as any random entry of parts would distort the structure of the piece.

² Ufie is a pair of slit drums played together. And is named after the tree from which the instrument is built

The mother instrument (the Ufie), starts with a two bar theme (ex. 15),

this is developed internally in the first section. In the second section, all the other instruments stop playing except the Ufie and the shaker. The shaker keeps the same rhythm going, but at a faster tempo, as the Ufie starts its solo section. The solo starts with encoded texts, and then moves on to short melo-rhythmic statements, then finally going back to the opening theme. When the Ufie goes back to the original opening theme, the other instrumentalists know that the solo section has come to an end, and that after two bars of the original Ufie theme, the mother instrument plays the transition pattern (ex. 16)

that ushers them back in. When this happens, the music goes back to the original tempo as the membrane drum starts its pattern, which overlaps the transition theme (ex. 17).

The other instruments join in and the mother instrumentalist revisits his solo theme and ends the piece with all other instruments on a strong cadence.

In some of the pieces, the slit drum is used. In all the pieces, both the bell and shaker have fixed thematic patterns for the different sections, while the

membrane drums and the slit drum take solos in the different pieces. Each individual soloist determines the nature and length of their solos. Eye contact is used between the mother instrumentalist and the individual soloist to communicate the end of a solo rendition.

Mkpo n'ana: The third distinct piece is *Mkpo n' ana*. The piece is in 4/4 time, and the instruments used are the bass drum, the bell, the slit drum and two membrane drums. The form is A, B, C (vocal section), D (coda), and A. There is a strong call and response interaction between the bass drum, the slit drum and the bell in the “A” section (ex. 18).

In the “B” section, the bass drum and the bell engage in a one bar call and response discourse, while the membrane drum and the slit drum each have running one bar theme. The “C” section is the vocal section, where all the instruments stop playing, except the bell and the mother drum. The bell retains its pattern from the “B” section, while the mother drum plays a one bar pattern that converses with the bell pattern (ex. 19).

The “D” section, which is a five bar coda (ex. 20),

is played by the entire ensemble, at the end of which all the instruments goes back to the “A” section without any break. The “A” section is played once more, before the piece ends.

The mother instruments like in previous pieces has a solo theme for each of the sections. But the nature of the communication between the mother instrumentalist and other members of the ensemble is different in this particular piece. In the “A” section, the bass drum has three different thematic variations, and the mother instrumentalist uses a vocal call to get the drummer to change patterns. In the same section, the slit drum has two variations, and both eye contact and a vocal call is used to get the instrumentalist to change patterns also. There is a basic pattern for change from one section to another (ex. 21), except at the end of the “B” section where a vocal call is used, and the “D” section where all instrumentalists move to the “A” section without a break.

These practical workshop experiences have given me an opportunity to assess the impact of this approach of classroom music education in Africa. The ability to harness creativity in the school children through their active participation in indigenous musical activities gives the participants a strong sense of self-presence, and imbues self-confidence as well. This self-confidence they would carry on to whatever field of study they may choose to pursue. Once the child is aware of his creative abilities and is given the opportunity to exploit them he has a positive out look about him self and would achieve a level of self-actualization. Also the possibility for the child to engage in indigenous musical practices with other people, in stills discipline and positive human values in the child. When the child understands the concept of sharing, and knows that if he is working with a theme, he has to share it with other members of the ensemble, it would be eventually instinctive for him to transfer this positive attitude to his daily life endeavours. This would help towards making him conscious of other persons in society, and curtail selfishness and envy.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

The whole issue of the use of performance composition on African instruments for classroom music education is crucial to the sustenance and preservation of Africa's indigenous musical arts practices. There is a lot to be gained by letting young children discover the creative personalities that are inherent in them. Creativity should be considered as one of the greatest tools for child development in Africa.

The CIIMDA project has opened my eyes to the vast talent that is hidden among young children at the primary and secondary school levels of education. My experience in the project has shown me that these children are often at their best when they are allowed to explore and harness the creativity in them. In one of the joint out-reach programme's we had in Malawi, the level of performance activities we experienced was so high on the part of the participating school children. The performances from the different schools in the different regions were a showcase of unbelievable talent. One could visibly see that the children were genuinely excited and happy to engage in these performance practices. It was a very hot day, and the performances took place in an open-air theatre. During the lunch break, the children continued to play music and dance without showing any signs of fatigue. They went on up until they were actually forced to stop, so they could have lunch. The joy and happiness that lights up the faces of these children as they make music and dance, is something that they should not be denied for any reason. In fact, I would advocate that African music and dance practices be made a core part of the curriculum right from the early childhood education. All that needs to be done is to give the children the enabling environment to explore their creativity and they would carry on from there. There is a lot to be gained from active participation in cultural arts activities. It builds ones self-esteem, engenders fellowship and strengthens friendship. Further more, it creates an enabling environment for children to excel in their educational pursuits because when a child has learnt how to harness the creativity in him, he applies this creative talent to the study of other subjects in school. Besides

when one engages in these indigenous African music and dance practices, the whole body is recreated and the mind re-invigorated.

It is also crucial that in engaging in these cultural arts practices, that the children are given a theoretical backing for the activities. They should not wait till they get to a particular level of education to get involved in the theory and philosophy behind African music.

My experience with the workshops I ran in Germany has also proved to me that there is a strong desire out there to know about and participate in Africa's indigenous musical arts practice. There are a lot of African drum music practitioners in Europe and America. African indigenous musical art practices are quite popular in these western countries. There are African music festivals where they showcase the African music and culture. There is a strong desire out in the world to know more about Africa. The problem is that there are very few African musical arts practitioners out there in Europe and America, who understand the philosophy behind these indigenous musical arts practices. As a result of this, most Europeans and Americans get the wrong orientation about African musical arts practices and there by cant harness the full health and therapeutic benefits of engaging in these practices.

There is need to produce Africans who will have strong cultural education background that is based on the indigenous knowledge system of Africa. African minds who will understand the theory and philosophy behind Africa's abundant cultural arts heritage. In a culturally diverse world like ours today, there is need for the African to uphold his cultural identity, understand what his moral values are and be able stand up strong to uphold the virtues that are embedded in the African philosophy of life. All this is possible, through constant and consistent active participation in indigenous African musical arts practices from childhood, like was practiced in old Africa.

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