

## Chapter Four

### Analysis of Malawian Indigenous Music

#### 4.1 Introduction

It has been observed in the previous chapters that the use of Western music only in classrooms contradicts the policy aims and goals of music in the Malawian education system. Consequently, for the past forty years, there have been misconceptions about the meaning, value and practice of indigenous music in schools. Such misconceptions have put music in classrooms in a crisis. This chapter offers a remedy to the crisis by showing the significance of indigenous music to the lives of Malawians and its adequacy in theory, composition and practice in classroom education.

Modern music education in Malawi should include the indigenous music knowledge systems. The foundation and resources for modern music education should be based on Malawian traditional musical thoughts in the meaning, value and creative practice; and on the theoretical and practical content, models, modes and methods of indigenous music.

#### 4.2 Approach to Analysis of Malawian Indigenous Music

Western music terminologies are used in studying indigenous music to avoid confusion because they have already won acceptance among researchers and students of this music in Malawi. The approach used in examining indigenous music theory is a synthesis of the known musicological techniques for analysing compositional structures, and ethnomusicological methods for explaining music performance practice. Discussions of the societal principles which inform the theory and creative practice of indigenous music are presented in the course of the analysis.

Original ethnic melodies have been preferred for analysis, although in some cases new lyrics have been substituted for old text in order to reflect contemporary experiences. Original melodies are preferred because they represent the Malawian traditional theories of life. They also exhibit characteristics common to other music types within the Malawian geographical area. The process of sampling the melodies has been discussed in Chapter One, pages 1-9 to 1-10.

Songs have been transcribed as heard and perceived from my direct participation in singing them in their contexts, and from the audio/visual recordings. The approach to transcriptions accommodates the indigenous performance practice observed among the traditional singers who begin music at any convenient starting pitch at an occasion. The practice of shifting the starting pitch of a known song to any convenient pitch does not change the melodic sense, and as such the issue of the key of music or transposition as in Western classical music study does not arise. Therefore, the chapter uses C as an arbitrary key for all the transcriptions of vocal music.

A rhythmic structure of a song may change as a result of lyrics being added to, subtracted from or substituting the original texts during performance. In this respect, the use of the Western staff notation system to transcribe indigenous music only serves to show the basic compositional structures and relationships of inherent properties of the music. The transcription of hand clap patterns is not included in most songs to facilitate clarity.

In the analysis, a distinction is made between the ‘form in music’ and the ‘form of music’. The ‘form in music’ refers to matters of tone relationships, melodic and harmonic intervals, compositional techniques, scales, melodic and rhythmic motifs, phrases and other intrinsic properties of indigenous music. The analysis seeks to explore the theoretical concepts of indigenous music that have been taken for granted in past studies and in music classroom activities. The ‘form of music’ denotes the indigenous schemes that the traditional composers use to frame the

inherent properties of music or the ‘form in music’. The analysis extends to discuss indigenous compositional techniques that represent the traditional creative imagination of Malawians. The interplay of the compositional structures which generate tension and repose and prompt the listener’s response to music is discussed too.

#### 4.3 Philosophical Propositions for Modern Malawian Music Education

The traditional responses of Malawians to the issues of their cultural existence are informed and guided by indigenous wisdoms some of which are encoded in proverbs. The wisdoms are sensitive to people’s needs, and promote the values and virtues of creative cultural practices. Proverbs reinforce the cultural wisdoms and virtues implicit in cultural activities.

According to this thesis, the philosophy that should anchor modern music education in Malawi is embedded in two proverbs. The proverbs are: *Kwanu n’kwanu nthengo munalaka njoka* (Yours is yours, snakes stay in bushes) and *Fodya wako ndi uyo ali pa mphuno, wa pachala ndi wa mphepo* (The snuff on your nose is yours, that on your finger is for the wind). *Fodya* in this proverb refers to powdered tobacco that is taken by sniffing up the nostrils. In the former proverb, the bushes represent the snake’s home. Normally, when the snake has ventured into the home environment of the people it returns to its habitation, the bush. The reasoning in the proverb is that the home of origin is the best and this serves to persuade Malawians living in foreign lands to return to Malawi, their country of origin.

In the latter proverb, the *fodya* on the nose symbolises things of the immediate environment as more significant to the person than the *fodya* on the finger which represents things of distant environment. The *fodya* (snuff) in the nose is secure while the snuff in the hand could be lost easily. The rationalization in the proverb

is that the person should appreciate and value the immediate environment because it is secure and it is where he/she begins to make sense of the world.

To cherish one's roots, cultural practices and values are the lessons in the proverbs. Applied to modern music education in Malawi, these lessons urge and advocate the study of indigenous music. A good background in indigenous music enhances the understanding, appreciation and respect of this music and later other people's music. This should be a philosophy that should inform and guide modern music education in Malawi.

#### 4.4 Indigenous Music Theory

As observed earlier, studies on Malawi music have been done but none of them formulated a written theory of indigenous music comprehensively. This section provides the fundamentals of indigenous music theory that could be considered for integrating into modern music education. Figure 4.4.1 is a transcription of the song, *Kadyakolo*, for nine bars in quadruple metre, and it represents significant musicological content. It is an old traditional song practised by the Nyanja of Nkhuzi Bay in Mangochi district in southern Malawi. The analysis focuses upon the compositional devices, melodic structure and characteristics such as pitch range.

Figure 4.4.1

Kadyakolo

♩ = 160

Solo (Sliding voice) Fishing song

Ka dya ko lo\_ Chorus Ka dya ko lo

Nso mba yo ko ma eh! Nso mba

4  
I ma ko ma  
yo ko ma eh! I ma ko ma ku mu tu eh!

7  
Ku mi mba Ah! Eh!  
Ku mi mba ku wa wa eh! Ah! Eh!

In Figure 4.4.1, tone C recurs 23 times and is the arbitrary tonic. The musical statements could be observed by connecting the melodic lines of the solo and chorus to form one melodic line. Figure 4.4.2 are the first four bars of the melodic line and the two distinct musical statements designated period **a** and period **b**.

Figure 4.4.2

Period a  
Period b

1  
Antecedent phrase (Solo part) Consequent phrase (Chorus part)  
Antecedent phrase (Solo part) Consequent phrase (Chorus part)

As noted in Figure 4.4.2, each period has two different thematic segments labelled antecedent and consequent phrases which could also be discussed as solo and chorus parts. These thematic segments complement each other and they make a two bar musical statement. The set-up of the solo and chorus parts serves as the basis of organizing the structure of the melody and the scheme of framing the melodic content. The thematic segments of the solo parts demonstrate the basic

compositional techniques that could be discussed as melodic direction and thematic variation. Figure 4.4.3 shows these thematic segments marked **x** and **y** respectively.

Figure 4.4.3

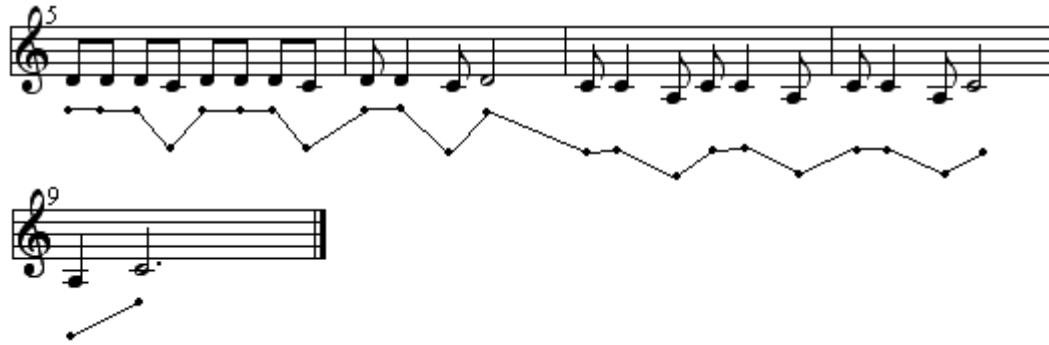


In bar 1, **x** is accomplished by the descending motion that ends on G, the tone which lies a perfect 4th below the tonic. In singing, G is heard as a destination towards which the melodic line moves and rests temporarily before continuing with the new motion at C. The thematic content of this solo part is a progression that starts from tonic to dominant (I-V) and it leaves the listener with the impression that more is to come. The melodic line slides from D down to G, a vocal feature that coincides with the melody's coming to the rest on the dominant.

In bar 3, **y** is achieved by ascending motion which ends on C, the tonic. The melodic cadence progresses from A to C. Theoretically, this cadence is a motion which progresses from subdominant to tonic (IV-I). In singing, the cadence is heard as a place of temporary rest. This is explained by the theory that holds the melody as a geometrical design of upward and downward steps, and as a physical phenomenon of a moving body subject to forces that regulate its motion. Through the concept of musical gravity, the theory informs that an ascending motion of a melodic line generates energy and tension.

As observed, **x** and **y** are antecedent phrases that are accomplished by the use of melodic direction technique. Also, **x** and **y** are examples of the use of thematic variation device. Figure 4.4.3 is shown again, below, to facilitate the analysis of thematic variation as observed in this figure.





In Figure 4.4.5, the melody's lowest tone is G and the highest is E. As such, the range is the 6-tone span which the Nyanja consider normal because in singing the voices are not strained. As the melody moves upward, downward or remains static, it takes a wavelike shape which coincides with the water waves, the context in which the melody is usually sung. This melodic shape demonstrates that an indigenous song can start with a low attack followed by a descending motion. A contrast to *Kadyakolo's* demonstration could be observed in the song *Malembo*. Figure 4.4.6 is this song, which begins with a high attack followed by a descending motion.

Figure 4.4.6

Malembo

♩=73

Solo

Girls' Song from the Sena

Ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo i ne.

Chorus

A el

A el\_ A el\_ A el\_

Ma le mbo i ne. A el\_ A el\_

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Malembo'. It is in 6/8 time with a tempo of 73 beats per minute. The score is for a solo voice and is identified as a 'Girls' Song from the Sena'. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are 'Ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo ma le mbo i ne.' The score includes a 'Solo' section and a 'Chorus' section. The chorus consists of the phrase 'A el' repeated three times. The melody is characterized by a high attack followed by a descending motion.





In the Sena language, *Malembo ine* is an incomplete sentence, the meaning of which is expressed in the English translation. This verbal phrase does not state anything that places a person at a better stage than another. However, it is perceived to reflect a tendency of humans to compare their status to one another. The text of *Malembo* is used to capture a general experience, comparison, which is shared by humans across cultures. *Malembo* is an old Sena traditional song which is sung by young women at social functions such as political rallies.

While singing, two girls enter the dancing ground at a time. They stand still in front of the players of music instruments waiting for the main drum to give a dancing signal. On hearing the signal, the dancers hold their palms forward and they twist as well as wriggle their bodies. When the dancers twist their bodies, they move a step backward or sideward. The dancers wear a knotted cloth around the waist to accentuate body movements.

The instruments used for the dance are four drums and one rattle. The rattle is made of a tin, the substitute for the gourd, filled with seeds and it is shaken to an eighth note triplet figure (♩♩♩) throughout the song. The use of the tin rattle instead of a traditional gourd rattle is a deliberate attempt to blend the metallic buzzing sounds to the indigenous drum sounds. This type of blend is the outcome of improvising the musical resources that are readily available. A medium drum replicates the tin rattle by being played to the eighth note triplet figure continuously. The small drum is beaten to the same triplet figure but changes to a duple figure (♩ ♩) when the performers start dancing. Two main drums are used and the first coordinates the dance movements while the other improvises by filling in the spaces of the rhythmic themes of the first drum. When music instruments are played, a contrast in sound volume is heard and its effect felt. The volume of sound ‘swells’ when all instruments are played and diminishes when a few instruments are played. When the performers dance vigorously the sound volume is increased and when they stand still the sound volume is diminished.

*Malembo* uses seven tones (six natural tones and one accidental tone) which are arranged and transcribed in a scale pattern as shown in Figure 4.4.8 below. The pattern is: whole, whole, half, half, half, skip of major 3rd, half.

Figure 4.4.8



As observed in Figure 4.4.8, the scale pattern shows that *Malembo* uses a distinctive scale pattern. This scale pattern challenges Zanten (1980:107-125) when he asserts that Sena music uses the equidistant heptatonic scale.

Returning to Kadyakolo, Table 4.I is a summary of the frequency of conjunct and disjunct motions that illustrate tone relationships in this song.

Table 4.I

Conjunct and Disjunct Motion

Melodic Part	Frequency							Total Number Per Melodic Part
	Repetition	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	
Leader	7	4	5	-	1	-	-	17
Chorus	8	6	14	-	-	-	-	28
Overall Total	15	10	19	-	1	-	-	45

From Table 4.I, conjunct motion occurs 10 times and disjunct motion 20 times. As such, the melody moves principally by leaps or jagged voice leading. The chorus part is shown to have a larger part of the melodic movement than the solo.

The melody of *Kadyakolo* is characterized by offbeat accents. The chorus accentuates two different beat positions which represent an important theoretical study. Figure 4.4.9 shows two accented tones labelled **q** in bar 1 and **r** in bar 6 and they are sung by the chorus part in the song.

Figure 4.4.9



The accented tones, **q** and **r**, are divided into halves to display their subdivisions respectively. Figure 4.4.10 is a display of these subdivisions.

Figure 4.4.10



Theoretically, accented tones are discussed based on the notion that quadruple metre divides the measure into two strong pulses (1 and 3, although 3 is a lighter accent than 1) and two weak pulses on beats 2 and 4. In Figure 4.4.10, **q** occurs on the second half of beat 3 and is tied to a division of a weak pulse. In bar 6, **r** is on the second half of beat 1 and is tied to a division of a weak pulse. As analysed, the offbeat effects such as surprise are derived from tying the divisions of the pulses.

The offbeat 'punches' on the minds of the listeners including the singers. The outcome of the 'punch' is a stimulation of certain energy that is manifested in the physical responses of both the listeners and singers to the song. During performance, some listeners responded by singing spontaneously along with the

singers or by moving their bodies impulsively to the rhythm of *Kadyakolo*. The singers (fishermen) responded by singing continuously while repairing their fishing nets. The motivation to join in singing or to work hard seems to be facilitated by the blend of the normal accentuation and offbeat felt in the song. With C as an arbitrary key, the melody of *Kadyakolo* progresses within a series of natural tones. A scale pattern could be arranged as shown in Figure 4.4.11.

Figure 4.4.11



As noted in Figure 4.4.11, the scale pattern is: whole tone, whole tone, minor 3rd, whole tone, minor 3rd. As such *Kadyakolo* is characterized by the use of a five-tone scale without half steps or semitones.

The set-up of the solo and chorus in *Kadyakolo* mirrors the social principles of the Nyanja. As observed in Figure 4.4.5, *Kadyakolo* employs a single-voice texture from which the music is heard as one melody, but performed by a group. The melody is distributed between the solo and chorus, reflecting sharing which is a moral value in Nyanja culture.

The value of the song is associated with the utility attached to the singing of it. Chimkono (2004), a soloist of the song and a fisherman, explained that the singing of *Kadyakolo* is useful to fishermen when they row the canoe and pull the fishing nets. The singing urges on the fishermen to fresh efforts in these fishing tasks and helps them to lighten their work. Chimkono also noted that his fishing team uses this song to build up a spirit of bravery to control the canoe when strong winds find them on the lake.

*Kadyakolo* as a work song reflects a thought that is prevalent among the Nyanja that good and wholesome things are achieved when people work together. This

relates to the Malawian proverb: *Mutu umodzi susenza denga* (One head cannot carry the roof, implying that two heads are better than one). Also, the song expresses a value in Nyanja culture of the concept of utilitarianism which is reflected in the use of the song to inspire the fishermen with the spirit of courage, perseverance and hard work in accomplishing their tasks. The use of music to accomplish a task could be noted in a Ngoni hunting song, *Chitewe*.

There are hunters in some parts of Malawi who assess such use as the value of music. People hunt small animals such as hares and large animals like buffaloes. Singing frightens animals and it makes them ‘splash’ out of their hiding places. The animals on the run become vulnerable and this gives an opportunity to hunters to select, chase and kill some of them using weapons such arrows, poisoned spears, traps and licensed guns. Figure 4.4.12 is a song, *Chitewe*, which is sung by hunters in the process of tracking and trapping animals in the forests of the Mzimba district in northern Malawi. The song is also sung after a hunt for recreational purposes.

Figure 4.4.12

Chitewe

♩=93

Solo

Hunting Song from the Ngoni

Chi te wemwata ya.

Chorus

A ye e!\_ A ye

Chi te wemwata ya.

e!\_ Ta ya, ta ya mdambo ta ya.



The words of the song are:

*Chitewe mwataya*

You have lost 'Chitewe' (cloth)

*Aye e!*

Vocables

*Taya taya mdambo taya*

You have lost it in green grassland

The words reflect a situation in which a hunter loses his *Chitewe* as a result of running away from an angry animal. *Chitewe* is a cloth made from bark of a tree or an animal hide and it is worn around the waist. At times, the hunters run away when they meet furious animals. *Chitewe* may get hooked to a shrub and left behind as a hunter runs away. Thus, besides using the song to frighten animals, the song serves to remind the hunters of the laughter aroused by the loss of the *Chitewe* of a hunter.

Returning to Kadyakolo, a communal approach to an activity could be observed in singing this song. Every fisherman on the canoe subordinates his personality for the sake of the team by coordinating his action with others while singing. Fishermen bend their bodies forward and backward in rhythm to the rowing of the canoe or the pulling of the nets. The rowing and pulling of nets act as cues for starting the singing of the song. The rhythmic act of paddling, body movement or pulling of fishing nets supplies the basic beat of the song.

As discussed, the values of the song and of the Nyanja society are identical and could be described as team spirit, hard work, endurance and bravery. I recorded *Kadyakolo* at Nkhuzi Bay in Mangochi district from a singing group of fishermen

on January 21, 2004. This bay is part of the southern area of Lake Malawi which is heavily fished both for subsistence and commercial purposes.

The lyrics of the song describe the taste of the fish, *Kadyakolo*, when people eat it. The fish is regarded as a delicacy, especially the head. The song uses Chichewa language and the words are:

<i>Kadyakolo</i>	Name of fish
<i>Nsomba yokoma</i>	Delicious fish
<i>Imakoma kumutu</i>	It is delicious in the head
<i>Kumimba kuwawa</i>	It is bitter in the stomach
<i>Ah! Eh!</i>	Vocables

Another kind of musical experience which represents a substantial musicological content is *nsasi*, an old traditional music instrument of the lamellaphone family found among the Lomwe of the Mulanje district in southern Malawi. I visited Mark Fannell Naweha, a 32-year-old *nsasi* player and maker of the instrument, on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004, to study his *nsasi* in terms of construction, performance and history. Naweha lives in Chipoka village in the traditional authority Mabuka.

The construction of *nsasi* requires both plant and metal materials which are gathered from the locally available resources. The materials are: dry gourd known as *mphonda* of about 20 centimetres long, softwood and hardwood, small and big nails, metal and *utomoni* (a traditional paste obtained from a sap of a certain kind of cassava tree called *mpila*). The use of metal materials such as nails instead of the plant materials such as the traditional bamboo is the results of improvising the contemporary musical resources that are easily found.

*Mphonda* is a type of edible gourd which is grown in most gardens in the Mabuka area. When it dries, its shell hardens and it becomes a suitable plant material for constructing *nsasi*. The tools needed to make *nsasi* are: hammer, axe, knife,

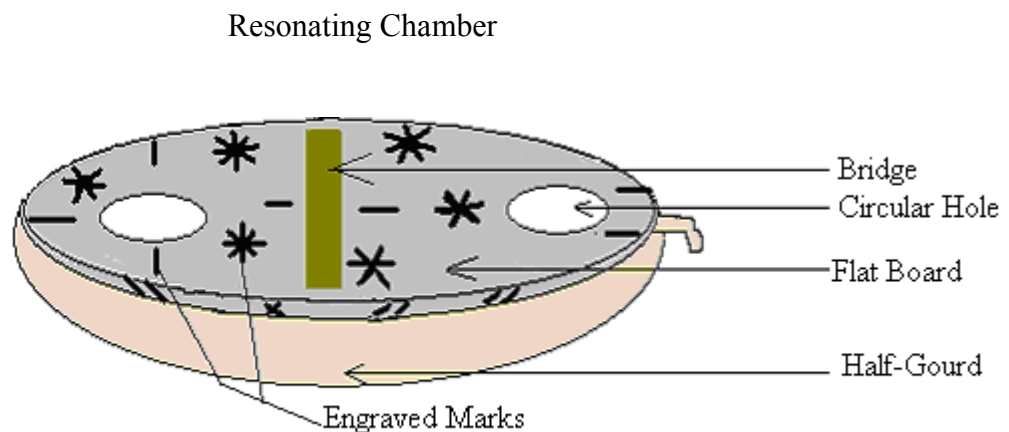


pliers, stones, sandpaper and heavy metal such as a piece of railway line that is not used and thrown away by the Railways Company.

The gourd is bisected longitudinally and one half of the gourd is selected and cleaned by removing the seeds and other internal material. Softwood from *bwabwa* tree is chopped to make a flat board 20 millimetres thick, and shaped to fit the length and size of the cleaned half-gourd. This thickness is necessary for the flat board to withstand the tension caused by tightening the bridge to it.

A circular hole is made near both ends of the flat board. The underneath of the flat board, especially along its edges, is soaked with paste, *utomoni*, and it is fixed on top of the half-gourd to create a resonating chamber. Figure 4.4.13 is a drawing of the resonating chamber.

Figure 4.4.13



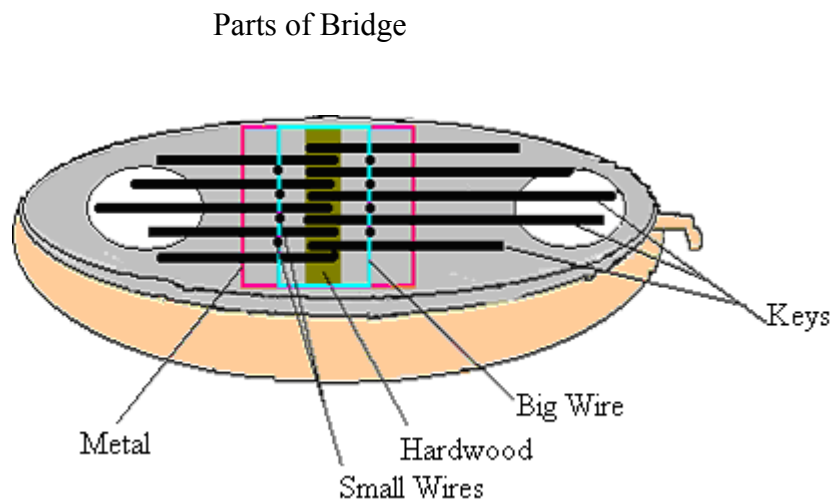
The half-gourd serves as a resonator and reflector to amplify sound and rebound it through the circular holes. The shape and size of the resonating chamber is determined by the materials, technology and concepts of acoustics of the culture in which it is constructed and used. Short single lines, pairs of lines and symbols of stars are engraved on the flat board by using a burnt wire. These lines and symbols are identical to decorations found on the walls of some traditional huts in the Mabuka area. As such, the cultural aesthetic principles of ornamentation of the

Lomwe are applied on *nsasi* which could be described as a work of art and manifestation of beauty.

Nails are flattened by beating them with a hammer on heavy metal to shape them into the keys of *nsasi*. The surface of every key is rubbed with sandpaper to make it smooth and ready for the generation of the desired sound. The sharp edges of the key are smoothed too to protect the thumbs from being hurt when playing it. One end of every key is held tight to the bridge and the other end is left to hang freely over the circular hole of the flat board.

Figure 4.4.14 is a drawing of the parts of the bridge which is made of a piece of hardwood and is erected at the centre of the flat board. The hardwood, made from *muwanga* (*pericopsis angolensis*) tree, is placed at the centre of the flat board to accommodate the two different sets of the keys as will be noted in the figure.

Figure 4.4.14



In Figure 4.4.14, the metal (red line) is shaped into a rectangle and is fixed to hold the hardwood's breadths and support the keys which run over it. The big wire (blue line) is run over the keys and the metal to hold their positions tightly. The wire is nailed into the flat board on the outer edges of the metal. The small wires

are used to strengthen the big wire by looping tight over it between the keys (see the black dots).

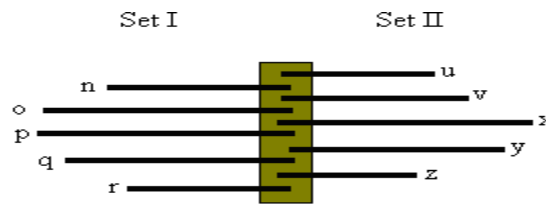
Acoustically, sound is generated by the vibration of the key when plucked with a thumb. Inherently, the keys produce soft sound. The circular holes on the flat board permit the depressed air caused by the vibrating keys to enter into the resonating chamber. Naweha (2004) explained the nature and role of the resonating chamber: “*Mphonda wabwino akhale pafupifupi masetimitala makumi awiri chifukwa mphanga yake imabweza mau mwa nsanga ndipo mauwa amakhala a mphamvu*”. (A good gourd should be about 20 centimetres long because its chamber bounces back the sound quickly and the sound is energetic). The resonating chamber is perceived to serve two fundamental functions and these are: to amplify sound and to ricochet it. When the plucked keys vibrate, the air inside the resonating chamber vibrates too while hitting the walls and bouncing back. In this way, the chamber helps to amplify the sound of the keys.

The human palm is used as a conceptual model for tuning *nsasi*. That is, different lengths of the fingers are related to the different vibrating lengths of the keys and perceived as distinct pitches. The tuning of *nsasi* begins with the middle key whose sound is described as *mau akulu* (big sound) or technically the bass. When this key is held firmly to the bridge and the desired bass sound is obtained, the other keys are tuned one after another in relationship with each other. The key is made to sound higher or lower by making its vibrating length shorter or longer. Critical listening is important for the tuner to obtain the wanted sound for every key without the help of another musical instrument. The keys are tuned in accordance with the concept of sound that fulfils the social requirements for which *nsasi* is constructed.

Figure 4.4.15 is a drawing of Naweha’s *nsasi* which has two sets of five keys each that could be labelled and discussed as Set I and Set II. In each set, every key is designated by a small letter to facilitate clarity in analysing tone relationships.

Figure 4.4.15

Naweha's Nsasi



In Figure 4.4.15, **p** and **x** are middle keys which serve as the bass tones or fundamental tones for tuning. When every key was plucked, it was observed that their tones were identical to the tones of the Optimus MD-1600 keyboard. This led to a comparison of the pitches of Naweha's *nsasi* and keyboard. Tone relationships in terms of intervals were determined by relating every tone to its fundamental tuning tone. In Set I: **p** = F<sup>#</sup> tone, **o** = E tone, **n** = B tone, **q** = F tone and **r** = C tone. Tone relationships are: **o** minor 7th above **p**; **n** compound perfect 4th above **p**; **q** 8ve<sup>0</sup> above **p**; and **r** compound 5th<sup>0</sup> above **p**.

In Set II: **x** = G<sup>#</sup> tone, **v** = A<sup>#</sup> tone, **y** = G tone, **u** = A<sup>#</sup> tone and **z** = C<sup>#</sup> tone. Tone relationships are: **v** major 2nd above **x**; **u** major 9th above **x**; **y** 8ve<sup>0</sup> above **x**; and **z** compound perfect 4th above **x**. Figure 4.4.16 is a transcription of the tones of sets I and II on the staff notation system as tuned on Naweha's *nsasi*.

Figure 4.4.16



As seen in Figure 4.4.16, Set I consists of F<sup>#</sup> (fundamental tuning tone) E F B C and Set II G<sup>#</sup> (fundamental tuning tone) A<sup>#</sup> G A<sup>#</sup> C<sup>#</sup>. In Set II, there is an octave tuning of the A<sup>#</sup> tone. According to Naweha, this octave tuning is desirable to provide pitch contrast (high versus low) of the same tone to meet the melodic

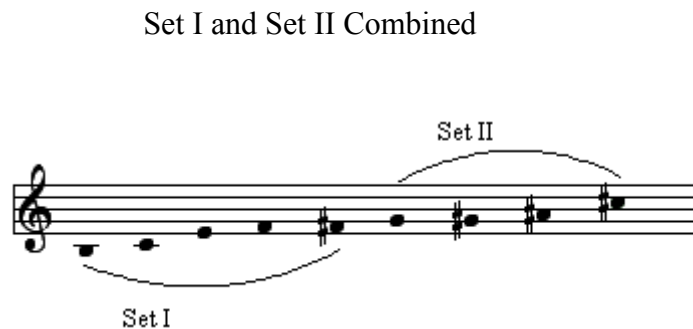
demands of certain music. The scale pattern of every set could be noted when the tones are arranged in a pattern with small intervals between them. Figure 4.4.17 is a transcription of the scale patterns.

Figure 4.4.17



In Set I the pattern is: whole tone, major 3rd, half tone, half tone, perfect 4th and in Set II: half tone, whole tone, whole tone, diminished 5th. The two scale patterns shows that set II is a continuation of Set I as shown in Figure 4.4.18.

Figure 4.4.18



In Figure 4.4.18, the tones B C C<sup>#</sup> E F F<sup>#</sup> G G<sup>#</sup> A<sup>#</sup> illustrate that the tonality of Naweha's *nsasi* uses the basic element of a chromatic scale namely, the half step motion. Naweha's tuning is an example of a traditional musician who has reached a level of competence by producing his own tuning system which is accepted in his society. He is able to make instrumental music by using any set of the keys. Figure 4.4.19 is a transcription of the basic thematic structure of *nsasi* instrumental music which Naweha played using Set I.

Figure 4.4.19



*Nsasi* is used to create instrumental repertory which could be either the adaptation of vocal music or original composition. Also, *nsasi* provides the accompaniment to the songs. The basic aesthetic elements expressed by Naweha in singing consisted of playfulness and emotiveness. He varied the tone of his voice and this variation included the humour of deliberately pronouncing the words inappropriately. Children and adults who came from the neighbouring houses to listen to his music laughed whenever such humour was demonstrated. He stated, “Ine ndimakhutula za mumtima mu nyimbo pa mowa” (I express what is in my heart through music at a beer drinking place).

Oftentimes, Naweha plays his *nsasi* at social occasions such as beer drinking places to accompany songs that comment on social issues affecting the lives of people. During performance, Naweha could change from one set of keys to another according to the melodic or scale demands of the music. Sometimes, he plays the *nsasi* with his wife and as such the two sets of the keys are used simultaneously. In this context, the playing of *nsasi* gives a sense of polytonality because it uses two distinct sets of keys. When *nsasi* is played simultaneously by two people it becomes a symbol of partnership.

Historically, *nsasi* has been known in the Mulanje district since the pre-colonial period and it was introduced in Mulanje by the Sena of the Nsanje district. In this period, the Sena brought their *mbira* to the Lomwe where it was named *nsasi* because it produced a metallic sound. According to Naweha, *nsasi* and its music have been handed on from one generation to the next of his family. He observes that there is a practice of handing down *nsasi* from father to son. This has led the *nsasi* to be perceived as a male instrument up to date and it is a property of an

individual music player. The principles governing the construction of *nsasi* and its use as well as the accounts relating to its origin show the importance attributed to *nsasi*.

From the study, the values of *nsasi* in classroom education could be noted. Children would study the acoustics of this lamellophone instrument and perform music using it. Technologically, children would learn about the tools and techniques used in metalwork and woodwork as they apply to the construction of *nsasi*. The engraved designs contained in *nsasi* would help children to grasp the concept of ornamentation that underlies the principles of life among the Lomwe. The basic idea of musical aesthetics in *nsasi* is the notion of beauty, which is reflected in the decoration of the music instrument and in the way it accompanies the singing as well as humour.

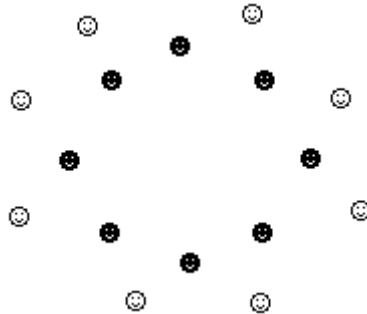
#### 4.5 Indigenous Music Performance Practice

Changes in performance practice correspond to changes in societal life which could be influenced by the prevailing ideologies as well as social, political and economic conditions. In the pre-colonial period, wars between ethnic groups over wealth and best lands occurred in Malawi. The Ngoni, who emigrated to Malawi from South Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, used certain kinds of song and dance to inspire men into battle or to mark a celebration for winning a war.

Diagram I on page 4-24 is an arrangement of a presentation of a war dance, *ngoma*, which represents significant principles of performance practice and societal theories of the Ngoni life. The term *ngoma* means both the song and dance. As war music, *ngoma* was performed by men (soldiers) and women to rejoice after a war victory. In this discussion the word Ngoni is limited to the Maseko Ngoni of Ntcheu district of central Malawi.

Diagram I

Ngoma Dance Presentation Set-Up



Key

- ☺ Women
- Men

As noted in Diagram I, men danced inside the circle of women. This arrangement is based on a spiritual and social ritual that provides men with protection, comfort, praise and support for going to war for the good of the society. The Ngoni do not separate their spiritual beliefs from politics, economy, natural disaster, war or creative practices. They believe that any activity is directed or dictated to by a spiritual cause. At war, the Ngoni warriors experienced hardship and some of their friends were killed by the enemies. As such, the dance formation permitted the women to complete the war ritual process, and to circumscribe the men to protective spiritual forces for returning home undefeated.

In performance, the women moved in a stylish manner (*kubambatira*) around the men to show that they were proud of them for standing up against the enemies. Also, the women inspired the men and the audience with the spirit of celebration through singing of praise words, ululating (*mkulungwani*), hand clapping and calling of the men's clan names such as 'sorry' phiri or 'sorry' ngozo (*pepa phiri* or *pepa ngozo*). The elders such as Chilinjala (2004) of Makwangwala village



could not remember the words of war praise songs because these songs are no longer sung.

Furthermore, the women wiped sweat from the men's foreheads and picked up the parts of the men's costumes if they fell down during dancing. The wiping and picking was done by the wives of the men and in cases where the men had no wives, they were served by the widows or unmarried women. This social requirement reflected the Ngoni spiritual concept of moral that no woman would touch somebody else's husband and it showed that a family was treated with respect. In addition, *ngoma* expressed a value in the Ngoni culture of moral equivalence which was reflected in the equal numbers of men and women dancers. It could be noted that *ngoma* was also a representation of family dancing.

In their dance classification, the Ngoni considered *ngoma* as a dance for serious purpose as it related to war. The dance was characteristic of forceful rhythmic activities generated by the heavy stamping of the feet and the knocking of the shields with spears or against the knees. The tempo of the dance and song was fast. To be fast and forceful was necessary for success and this fitted the demand of the Ngoni society which was characterized by aggressive life for survival through wars.

The men put on their full war dress during the dance presentation. They wore skirts (*zibiya*) made of wild animal skins of lions and leopards around the waist, band (*nyoni*) woven with sisal around the head, and strips (*matchowa* or *zipote*) crafted using animal skin around the elbows. The wearing of wild animal skins was a symbol of a conqueror; of power, strength and bravery. Also, they tied metal rattles (*manjereza*) to their ankles and legs to generate a buzzing sound. The basic rhythmic theme, ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩, of *manjereza* is simultaneously duplicated by the women's hand clapping. In dancing, the men bent their trunks forward, backward and sideways (right and left), squatted, shuffled their feet, walked in different directions in rhythm, shook heads and made various facial expressions. The

audience would ululate when the dancers appealed to their aesthetics of forceful and stylish stamping, other body movements or gestures and vocables. The music and dance maintained the South African Zulu music practice of not using drums.

*Ligubo*, the traditional dance, was a form of *ngoma* and served as an introduction to *ngoma*. It was performed by the men only at *Mkosini* (the chief's compound). The purpose of *ligubo* was for the men to demonstrate how they defended themselves and killed the enemies while singing and dancing. The demonstration was characterized by the holding of their war weapons: *lihawo* (shield), *mkondo* (spear), *mbema* (big knife with a hook at one end) and *mpeni* (ordinary knife). The intensity of foot stamping and the percussive sound generated by the knocking of the shields with spears resembled the tensions and aggression that were experienced at war. Later, the women joined the men to start *ngoma*.

In Malawi, between 1891 and 1896, the British colonial forces succeeded in ending the Ngoni wars and most of the Ngoni soldiers then abandoned their armies and raiding. Their traditional lifestyle was replaced by civil life as they began working on the shire highland plantations for income. This civil life influenced *ngoma* to embody leisurely rhythmic activities and slow tempos intended to entertain the audience.

To date, *ngoma* is used to celebrate weddings and serve funeral as well as political party functions. The military praise texts of *ngoma* got lost as a result of substituting them with new lyrics to reflect contemporary social issues. Figure 4.5.1 on pages 4-27 to 4-28 is a transcription of the *ngoma* song, *Kumanda*, in quadruple metre for thirteen bars and it represents significant ethnomusicological content. *Kumanda* is an old traditional war tune which has been sustained, but with new lyrics that reflect contemporary incidents.

Figure 4.5.1

Kumanda

$\text{♩} = 90$  Solo Ngoma music and dance from the Ngoni

1  $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$   $\overbrace{\text{3}}$

Ku ma ndakwa ba mbowanga. Ku ma ndakwa ba mbo wa nga ku ma li ra

Foot Stamping  
Right Left Right

3 Chorus 1

chi ya ni? Ku ma li ra ngwe nya.

2 Solo Chorus Solo Chorus

nya. E a e! Ku ma li ra ngwe nya. E a e! Ku ma li ra ngwe

8 Solo

nya. Ku ma li ra ni ka ngo, ku ma li ra ngwe nya. E a e!

10 Chorus Solo Chorus

Ku ma li ra ngwenya, E a e! ku ma li ra ngwe nya ku ma li ra



As noticed in Figure 4.5.1, the pattern of foot stamping provides the basic pulse to the singing and space for the percussive sound of the shields and spears. Foot stamping and the percussive sound serve as accompaniments to the singing. The song and dance were performed in lines with men in the front row and women in the back row.

The words of *Kumanda* are:

<i>Kumanda kwa bambo wanga</i>	At my father's grave
<i>Kumalira chiyani?</i>	What groans there?
<i>Kumalira ngwenya.</i>	The lion.

The above words reflect the thought prevailing among the Ngoni that a warrior continues to live in spirit when dead. The groaning of *ngwenya* (the lion) at the grave symbolises the power of the spirits of the dead and buried Ngoni warriors. The song shows that the natural rhythmic structure of the Chichewa language commands the contour of the melody. This is observed from the words such as *kumanda* (at the grave) in bars 1 and 2; *kumalira* (groaning) in bars 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12; *chiyani?* (what?) in bar 3 and *mikango* (lions) in bars 8 and 12. Figure 4.5.2 is a visual presentation of the natural relative tone levels: high and low of these Chichewa words.

Figure 4.5.2

$\bar{k}u\bar{-}m\bar{a}\bar{-}n\bar{d}\bar{a}$      $\bar{k}u\bar{-}m\bar{a}\bar{-}l\bar{i}\bar{-}r\bar{a}$      $\bar{c}h\bar{i}\bar{-}y\bar{a}\bar{-}n\bar{i}$      $\bar{m}\bar{i}\bar{-}k\bar{a}\bar{-}n\bar{g}\bar{o}$

As seen in Figure 4.5.2, the relative tone levels of these Chichewa words are identical to their pitch patterns in the song (see Figure 4.5.1). As such, the melody of *Kumanda* follows the rise and fall of the Chichewa speech tonality. Photograph I is a picture of *ngoma* dancers performing *Kumanda* at a social gathering at chief Makwangwala's compound in Ntcheu district. The photograph was taken on September 12, 2003.

Photograph I



The history of *ngoma* of the Ngoni could be divided into two periods corresponding to the two major periods of social, political and economic changes. As observed earlier, *ngoma* of the pre-colonial era marked a celebration of a war victory and the social context within which it was performed reflected a war setting. But since the colonial era, *ngoma* is used at weddings, funerals, installation of chiefs and political rallies. As such the basic differences between the old *ngoma* and the modern *ngoma* in performance practice and aesthetics reflect the changes of social conditions at different periods of history.

To date, the value and role of music in society are not as easily understood by most professionals in policy making positions as they are by the musically informed Malawians. It is not understood because the absence of music

instruction in classroom education has misdirected many Malawians to think that only what is taught and learnt in classroom education matters in society. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is reflected in the lack of action by the education authorities to implement the teaching and learning of music in schools and to integrate indigenous music in the curriculum, despite recommendations to do so. *Gundete*, the traditional masked dance of the Chewa of Lilongwe district of central Malawi, represents considerable ethnographic content which signifies the value and role of music in Chewa society. The designs on the masks, patterns of movement and ideas about dance aesthetics of the *Gundete* masked dance relate to the Chewa's principles of life. The Chewa society in this discussion is limited to the Chewa of Matapila village found in the Lilongwe district.

*Gundete* refers to the masked dancer that belongs to an exclusive cult of men who dance at ritual, funeral and recreational functions. Also, the word *Gundete* is the name of a wild animal which, according to the Chewa, has a character of a caring spirit and is associated with the light of the spirit world. The spirit world is thought to include ancestral spirits, *mizimu*, which dwell at graves and in bushes, mountains as well as rivers. The *Gundete* masked dancer incarnates the spirit of the wild animal, *Gundete*, to represent the habits of the living people and the values in Chewa society.

The *Gundete* masked dancer I observed, between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at Matapila village during the masked dance festival known as *chizambala*, wore a wooden carved face mask identical to the face of the wild animal, *Gundete*. The face mask's top edge was covered with a yellow cloth to symbolise the presence of the benevolent spirit. The round eyes on the face mask were marked with white and black colours while the teeth and lips had white and red colours. The edges of the face mask were fitted with chicken feathers that protruded as the headgear. In addition, the masked dancer wore old, torn and dirty cloths to represent the idea that the ancestral spirit had risen from the grave in tattered clothes in order to serve the welfare of the living people. The yellow shirt that covered the upper

body was tucked in the pair of trousers to add another layer of cloth for protecting the buttocks from injuries when the dancer drops on the ground. The dressing enlarged the movements of the masked dancer and made them outstanding and impressive. The arms and legs were painted with ashes which are thought to be the spiritual food of the spirits. Also, the ashes are used to conceal body marks such as scars that would help the audience to identify the man wearing the masks. The entire dress of the *Gundete* masked dancer is intended to symbolise the transition from the living person to the animal spirit. This reflects the Chewa's spiritual relationship to the animal world.

According to oral tradition, the prehistoric creation myth of the Chewa states that humans, nature and animals originally lived together in harmony. To date, men dress as ancestral animals using natural materials to mark the presence of the animal spirits in the affairs of the living people through dance. As such the *Gundete* masked dancer in animal state re-enacts the harmony that originally existed among humans, nature and animals in the prehistoric era. The use of the animal masks also reflects the old lifestyle of the Chewa where survival depended on hunting and gathering.

The *Gundete* masked dancer imitated the movements of the wild animal, *Gundete*, while following the special rhythms of the main drum, *mbalule*. The masked dancer moved in a circle both clockwise and anti-clockwise while jumping, falling down and sitting on the ground. While sitting, the masked dancer crossed his legs and made some movements. In Chewa society, the act of crossing legs is a moral habit for women when they sit down. As such the *Gundete* masked dance expresses a value in Chewa society of moral behaviour for women. In the course of the dance, the dancer climbed a long slippery and branchless bluegum tree to other special rhythms of the main drum. The climbing of the tree by the *Gundete* masked dancer represented a lesson to married men. Traditionally, bathrooms are made without roofs in Chewa society. Married men are not expected to climb up trees lest they see their father-in-law and mother-in-law washing their bodies. In

this way, the *Gundete* masked dancer reflects another value in Chewa society of moral conduct for married men in the *chikamwini* system (matrilineal system). Photograph I is a picture of the *Gundete* masked dancer.

Photograph I



In the animal state, the *Gundete* masked dancer also created basic movements and these were: purposeful running, walking, falling down, rising up, swinging, turning, bending, stretching, wiggling and standing. These basic movements were aimed at entertaining the audience and they illustrated the Chewa ideas of dance aesthetics. The running and walking provided fast and slow tempos that were perceived as time contrast. Space contrast was represented by the falling down and rising up while energy contrast was represented by the wiggling and standing still. The wiggling and standing still reflected the concept of tension and relaxation. The audience's applause was induced whenever these contrasts occurred.

Chakwawa (2004), a 44-year-old *Gundete* masked dancer, notes that traditionally the masked dances start in the afternoon and end at dawn. The morning time is



used to prepare for the masked dancers and the evening increases the disguise of the identities of the men wearing the masks. Before the dance, the *Gundete* masked dancer started the song to accompany the dance through mimicking and humming of the tune. Figure 4.5.3 is a transcription of the song, *Gundete*, an example of old traditional music for three bars in quadruple metre.

Figure 4.5.3

Gundete

♩=70 Solo Gule wankulu from the Chewa

1  
U na muwo na na kwera mwa mba? Na kwera mwa mba  
Chorus  
Gu nde tel! Gu

2  
na kwera mwa mba? U na muwo na na kwera mwa mba?  
nde tel! Gu nde tel!

3  
Gu nde tel!

Falsetto and nasal singing techniques were used in singing by the *Gundete* masked dancer to mark the presence of the ancestral spirit and to disguise his

identity as a human being. These singing techniques are taught and learnt orally at *dambwe* (the masked dancers' camp), which is situated near the graveyard in the bush. A female solo would sing in her ordinary voice along with the dancer at the start of singing the song. The solo is later joined by the chorus of women in singing, clapping hands and ululating. Only women who are *womwera* (the 'drinkers' implying the members of the secret cult) form the chorus and stand near the masked dancer. The words of the song are:

<i>Unamuwona nakwera mwamba?</i>	Have you seen it climbing up?
<i>Gundete!</i>	Name of a masked dancer


Chilembwe (2004), a 52-year-old woman and the soloist in this song, explained that the words of the song are figurative. The symbolic meaning of *Unamuwona nakwera mwamba* (Have you seen it climbing up?) is "Have you seen a wise man misbehaving in society?"


Two basic patterns of *mang'ombe* (hand clapping) done by the chorus were noted. Figure 4.5.4 shows the patterns.

Figure 4.5.4



In clapping hands, the sounds of **x** and **y** were generated simultaneously when the dancer's movements or drumming intensified. The ensuing sound of **x** and **y** is characteristic of this song.

Three drums were used and they generated independent rhythmic structures. *Gunda* drum produced four sixteenth tones, , per pulse and this pattern

was repeated throughout the dance presentation. *Gunda* drum had a deep low tone. The other drum played eighth tones, , per beat and this rhythm was interspersed by other creative rhythmic themes.

*Mbalule* drum generated its own rhythmic figures which coordinated the movements of the dancer. It dictated the tempo of the dance and accommodated the dancer to express a rhythmic structure by moving the body with the drum's rhythmic theme. *Mbalule* drum is characteristic of high pitched sound generated from beating a special drum skin obtained from *ng'azi* (alligator skin) or *insa* (antelope skin). The skins of *ng'azi* and *insa* are preferred because they are strong and are treated into a thin skin that generates a high pitched sound which is heard from far distances.

*Salamba*, a shaker made of gourd with seeds inside, was first used to signal the coming of the animal spirit to the dancing arena. Also, it was used to direct *Gundete* to the dancing ground and to guide the dancer within the perimeter of the dancing arena or away from dangerous things such as holes or tree stumps. The masked dancers do not see properly and as such *salamba* serves as additional 'eyes' of the dancers.

From the above observation, the physical abilities of *Gundete* as the ancestral spirit in the animal state to dance, the singing and the attire illustrate the integration of four art forms: dance, music, drama, and visual art. The *Gundete* masked dancer is an actor, singer, dancer and designer of costumes. *Gundete* is an actor in the sense that he uses his voice and body to interpret and perform the role of an ancestral spirit. The singing of the chorus, hand clapping, shaking of the rattle and drumming give a sense of a dense texture, a characteristic and aesthetic feature of *Gundete* as a creative practice.

## 4.6 Children's Music

Studies of children's music in Malawi have so far emphasized its recreational and moral functions. Such orientation implies that the studies have little bearing on the principles of musical structures, compositions and performance practice. This is reflected in the brief, unspecialised and scanty Malawian literature on children's music. Nkosi (1978:135-140) analysed one play song, *Mwezi Uwale* (Let the moon shine), to illustrate that children at an early stage learn to associate song and poetry. He noted antiphon and alliteration as poetic elements found in *Mwezi Uwale*. Abdallah (1973:17-18) discussed in general about Yao children's dance, songs and the playing of the drums.

Some aspects of indigenous music teaching devices have been the subject of short and general studies by Kubik et al (1984:22-35), as observed in Chapter Two. However, substantial information on children's music derives from a study I did among the Yao of the Mpili area in the Machinga district between 1997 and 1998. The study discusses how Yao children learn music; the indigenous teaching and learning processes as well as the music creation processes. But none of the above studies shows the analysis of the basic organizing principles underlying children's musical compositions and performance practice. In an attempt to fill this void, Figure 4.6.1 is a transcription of a song, *Aliyale*, in quadruple metre for four bars. It is sung by Yao children of the Mpili area.

Figure 4.6.1

Aliyale

Solo 1 Yao Children Song

Solo 2

2  
Ku ja mbu chi la, e! E! Kwa mnza nu, e! E!

E! E!

3  
E!

(Chorus)  
Ku li li ra mwa na che. Ku li li ra mwa na che.

In Figure 4.6.1, a structural feature of the song is the repetition of thematic sections which occurs both in the solo parts and the chorus part. Figure 4.6.2 shows the rhythmic pattern of the thematic section for solo 1 marked **x** and for solo 2 labelled **y**.

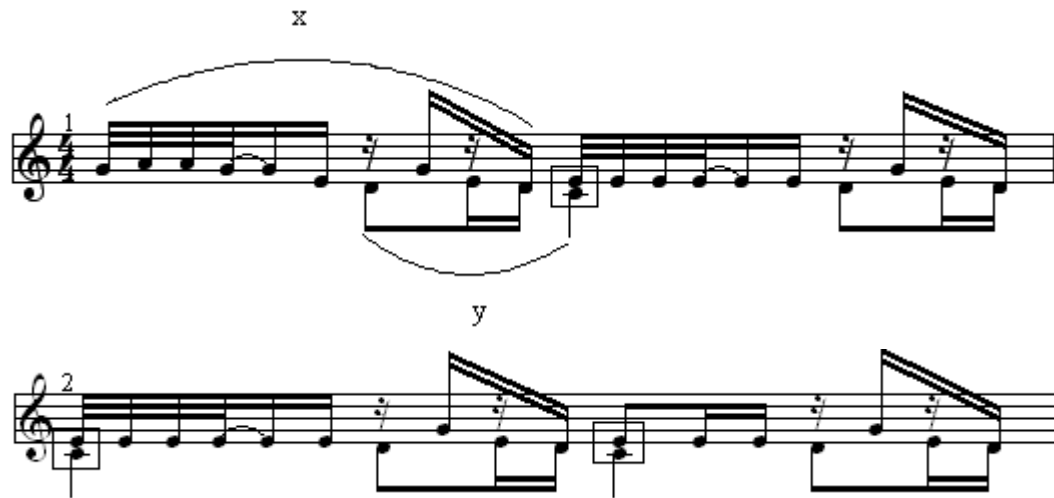
Figure 4.6.2

**x**

**y**

In the song, **x** is repeated four times with some intervallic and rhythmic variations while **y** is repeated four times without modifications. The first rest in **x** provides space where **y** comes in and this structural organization recurs four times before the chorus joins in singing. The melodic motion of **x** consists of an element of sequence which occurs the second time it is repeated in bar 1. While **y** complements **x** to give a complete musical sense, it also provides balance to **x** in singing. Significantly, the musical statement of bars 1 and 2 are derived from the sharing of the thematic sections of the two solo parts as shown in Figure 4.6.3. In this figure, the two solo parts are transcribed on one staff to facilitate clarity of their structural relationship.

Figure 4.6.3



As seen in Figure 4.6.3, the sharing of thematic sections results in musical statements and this reflects a structural organization observed in most indigenous music. In this song, the sharing also generates a harmonic outcome of a major 3rd marked by the rectangle. This musical sharing represents the Yao habit of sharing things such as poultry as a value in Yao communal society. Such a habit is reflected in the text of a pounding song called *Elizabethi*. Figure 4.6.4 is a transcription of the song.

Figure 4.6.4

Elizabethi

$\text{♩} = 104$  Solo 1 Yao Pounding Song

Na- we-ni E - li - za - be - ti. Na- we-ni E - li - za - be - ti.

Solo 2

Gul Ku kul Gul Ku Kul

Chorus

Nda-ta - ya. Nda-ta - ya.

Pounding Sound

$\frac{4}{4}$  \* \* \* \* | \* \* \* \*

A-ji - ge - le ngu-ku ja - wo. Ngu-ku ja - kwe ja ji - swe - la.

Gu! Ku ku! Gu! Ku ku!

Nda-ta - ya. Nda-ta - ya.

Pa - ku - li - ra ku\_ ku ku ku\_ ku ku.

Gu! Ku ku! Gu! Ku ku!

Nda - ta - ya. Nda - ta - ya.

The words of the song are:

*Naweni Elizabeti*

See Elizabeth

*Ajigele nguku jawo*

She has taken her chicken

*Nguku jakwe jajiswela*

The white chicken

*Pakulira kukuku*

It cries 'kukuku' (sound of crying chicken)

*Gu! Kuku!*

Vocables for crying chicken

*Ndataya*

I have lost

The text is about *Elizabeti* who has taken her white chicken which coos 'kukuku'. *Elizabeti* represents a person who does not want to share things with the family.

Among the Yao, it is a tradition that a member of a family should share his/her things with other family members. If the sharing does not happen, then the tradition is ‘lost’ as symbolised in the song, *Elizabethi*. The women sing this song when they pound maize, millet, rice and other types of cereals to prepare food. I recorded the song at Kamkwamba village in the Machinga district on December 28, 1998.

Turning back to *Aliyale*, in its chorus, the thematic section designated **n** is repeated twice to achieve an emphatic closure of the song. Figure 4.6.5 shows the chorus part of *Aliyale*.

Figure 4.6.5



In Figure 4.6.5, the repetition of the thematic section causes the repetition of the text assigned to it. This consolidates the text and imprints it in the minds of the listeners so that they would remember it. As such, reception and retention are taken care of in the song. As noted earlier, C is the arbitrary tonic and the scale pattern of *Aliyale* could be arranged as shown in Figure 4.6.6. The pattern is: whole tone, whole tone, minor 3rd, whole tone, minor 3rd.

Figure 4.6.6



*Aliyale* is exclusively performed by girls during their playtime at an open ground or in their home compounds. Girls sing and move in a circle anti-clockwise. Any pair of singers commences the singing as solo 1 and solo 2, as noted in Figure 4.6.1. As they sing, they enter the centre circle, each moving her body in



distinctive styles to the rhythm of the song. Individual dancing style is executed with a purpose to induce the audience's aesthetic appeal, which is manifested in applause. When the chorus joins in the singing in bar 3, the first pair returns to its place in the circle and the adjacent pair takes up the role of the solos and the dancing routine.

The organization of the dance and of the singing of the solo parts reveals how the performance practice of *Aliyale* engages every child present to participate in all aspects of the music. This reflects another Yao habit of collective participation in societal activities. I recorded the song and dance of *Aliyale* at Mosiya village in the Machinga district on December 27, 1998. It is a type of modern indigenous music which was created by children, accepted by the Yao of Mosiya village and is now in the common repertoire of Yao ethnic music. The words of the song are:

<i>M'we Aliyale</i>	You Aliyale
<i>Kola usawi</i>	You have witchcraft
<i>Kujambuchila</i>	Do not spread
<i>Kwa mnzanu</i>	To your friend
<i>Kulilila mwanache</i>	Who is crying for a child
<i>E!</i>	Vocable vowel

The words caution about evil people in the society and how they are socially denigrated. Most of the words are in Chiyao, the language of the Yao. The word *mnzanu* is not Chiyao but Chichewa. The Chiyao word would have been *djenu*, giving the same semantics as *mnzanu*. This suggests that the song consists of mixed codes of Chichewa and Chiyao. The setting of text in the song shows that every syllable is assigned to one musical tone. *Aliyale* is thus a syllabic song.

On moon lit nights or during day playtime, parents allow their children to leave the houses and play outside with other children. During playtime, children may organise singing, dancing and playing of music instruments on their own. The

elders present during the playtime either give advice on or correction of children's music performance. Playtime allows children to actively participate in music practices. In turn, children learn the techniques of composing and performing music through observing and participating. The learning process produces traditional music specialists who sustain and extend standards of music of their cultures. Figure 4.6.7 is a transcription of a modern indigenous song, *Ata tuweje m'we*, in quadruple metre for eight bars. Gawani (2004), a traditional singer, composed the song when he was nine years old.

Figure 4.6.7

Ata tuweje m'we

$\text{♩} = 120$  All Jagiya Gawani

Hand clap

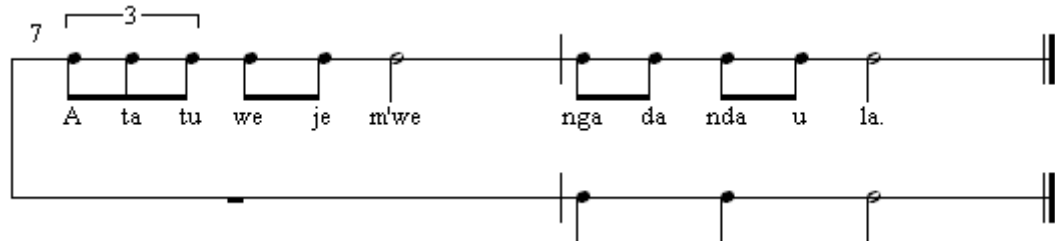
1 A ta tu we je m'we nga da nda u la.

3 A ta tu we je m'we nga da nda u la.

Speaking

5 A ta tu we je m'we nga da nda u la.

Detailed description: The figure shows a musical score for the song 'Ata tuweje m'we' in 4/4 time. It consists of three systems. The first system is labeled 'All' and 'Hand clap', with a tempo of 120. It features a vocal line starting on a treble clef with a first measure rest, and a hand clap line on a bass clef. The second system is labeled '3' and features a vocal line and a hand clap line. The third system is labeled 'Speaking' and features a vocal line and a hand clap line. All vocal lines include lyrics: 'A ta tu we je m'we nga da nda u la.' and include triplet markings over the first three notes of each line.



In Figure 4.6.7, two distinctive thematic segments that give a complete musical thought could be observed as antecedent and consequent phrases. Figure 4.6.8 shows these phrases designated **x** and **y** respectively.

Figure 4.6.8



In Figure 4.6.8, **x** is the antecedent phrase and **y** the consequent phrase. In singing, C in bar 1 is heard as a point of temporary rest while A in bar 2 is a point of complete rest. The temporary rest is approached by the ascending motion of B to C by step and the complete rest by the descending motion of B to A by step. These phrases constitute a structural organization that accomplishes the musical sentence. The musical statement noted in Figure 4.6.8 is exactly repeated before the speaking part comes in from bar 5. The speaking part uses the same rhythmic material of the musical statement.

In singing, children alternated the singing and the speaking of the words to the same rhythmic structures of the song. The song is performed loudly and forcefully. The singers habitually varied the speed of the melody and this variation occurred after the song was repeated for the first time. Speed variation was a characteristic feature of the singing style. In addition, the practice of shifting from singing to speaking created tone colour effect from the timbres of singing and speaking. Children clapped hands as they sang, except for measures

five and seven where they made gestures with the hands as they stamped the ground. The singing and the clapping were heard as two distinct tone colours.

In dancing, the heavy stamping matched the accented syllables of the words *ngá-da-ndá-u-lá* (We do not care). Below is a symbolic key to dance transcriptions followed by a transcription of the dance:

W = Walk anti-clockwise

P = Pulse

X = Clap

R = Right foot stamps on ground

\* = No Clap

L = Left foot stamps on ground

SS= Stand Still

W	R	L	R	SS	W	SS	R	L	R	SS	W	SS
16 P	1P	1P	1P	1P	3P	1P	1P	1P	1P	1P	3P	1P
16 X	*	*	*	*	3 X	*	*	*	*	*	3 X	*

The dancers entered the dancing ground where they made a circle, standing back to back. The dancers walked clockwise rhythmically for sixteen pulses starting with the right foot. On the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth pulses, the dancers produced one foot stamp with the right, the left and the right feet in that order. On the twentieth pulse the dancers stood still and, thereafter, they walked clockwise for the next three pulses and stood still on the twenty fourth pulse. One foot stamp occurred on the twenty fifth, twenty sixth and twenty seventh pulses using the left, the right and left feet, in that order. On the twenty eighth pulse, the dancers stood still and later walked clockwise for the next three pulses before coming to a standstill on pulse thirty two. After this, the leader of the dance

whistled and the entire dance was either repeated or stopped. The words of the song are:

*Ata tuweje m'we ngadandaula* Even if we die we do not care

According to Gawani, these words are a response to the bad feelings which other children had towards him and his friends as they herded cattle in September 1998. Till today children sing the song for enjoyment during playtime. The playful spirit of the song is accompanied by a dance. *Ata tuweje m'we* integrates the elements of music art (singing), language art (speaking), dance art (body movements) and visual art (shapes and spaces in the dance).

Also, story-telling songs incorporate the elements of drama. Children participate in story-telling by singing songs or by telling stories in their homes. Figure 4.6.9 is a transcription of a story-telling song, *Lololo*, which is told by the Lomwe of the Zomba district. The word *Lololo* refers to a talkative person.

Figure 4.6.9

Lololo

Lomwe Story Telling Song

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a tempo marking of ♩=80. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is labeled 'Solo' and contains the lyrics 'Nda dya si\_ ne\_ lo lo lo. Nda dya'. The second system is labeled 'Chorus' and contains the lyrics 'Na ma te tu le. si\_ ne\_ lo lo lo. Wa dya mu lomo\_ lo lo lo. Nama te tu le.' The melody is simple and repetitive, with a consistent rhythm throughout.

Mulo mo su le pa\_ lo lo lo. Lo lo lo.  
Nama te tu le. Nama te tu le.  
Lo lo lo. Lo lo lo.  
Na ma te tu le. Na ma te tu le. Na ma te tu le.

The words of the song are:

<i>Ndadya sine</i>	It is not me I have eaten
<i>Wadya mulomo</i>	It is the mouth that has eaten
<i>Mulomo sulepa</i>	You cannot stop the mouth
<i>Lololo</i>	‘Lololo’ (talkative person)

The words consist of mixed code: Chichewa and Chilomwe. They reflect a story about a woman who sat down under a mango tree. While she was winnowing millet, she heard the singing of a small bird. The bird perched itself in a low lying branch of the same mango tree. The woman mimed throwing stones at the bird to chase it, but the bird did not fly away. She asked, “Bird, why are you not afraid? Do you want to eat and finish my millet?” The bird looked down at her and replied, “You are a talkative woman, but I am hungry. I am not the one who eats your millet; it is the mouth”.

The moral in this story telling song is that people should take care of others by sharing with them things such as food. The teaching of this moral through story telling song reflects the Lomwe’s assessment of the value of music.

#### 4.7 Educational Implications

The analysis of indigenous music in this chapter demonstrates that this music has a wide range of theoretical and performance principles. This suggests several approaches to music teaching and learning. One of them is the theoretical approach to the study of the music. The characteristics of indigenous songs are repetition and variation of musical structures. The tune is either repeated several times with the same words or varied with different lyrics. Repetition establishes a sense of familiarity within a song and this enables the audience to follow and understand. It aids memory and identification of its listeners to a point of involvement with the art. When the text of the song changes, the melody structure is varied. This variation is a developmental device in indigenous music and it portrays imagination and creative enterprise. It is a basic organizing principle of many indigenous songs.

The melodies exhibit ascending and descending motions, conjunct and disjunct motions, half and full cadences, sound patterns of different durations, patterns of changing pitch levels and different kinds of textures and tonal systems. These are normal with any music, but children may learn the Malawian theories of life that command musical compositions and performance practice by theoretically analysing indigenous music. This may help children to understand and appreciate indigenous music as an art in its own right. It may also inform children on how to compose and harmonize using indigenous principles.

Another approach is the historical study of indigenous music. Some of the examined music shows that new texts are substituted for old lyrics, to reflect the contemporary experiences. This demonstrates that social, political and economic changes produce a characteristic music repertoire which in time is assimilated into a common treasury of cultural music. This suggests that discourses of music could be studied in the light of their history.

The use of language, imagery and choice of words suggests that the poetic approach may be employed in the study of indigenous music. The use of imagery in *Gundete* induces the listeners individually to wonder about the semantics of the text. The choice of words in *Kumanda* inspires the audience to an experience that does not end with the text. Music teachers may focus on arrangement of words and the manner of expressing them, such as voice sliding, as noted in *Kadyakolo*.

On a basic level, discussions of performance practice reveal that singing and dancing lie at the centre of indigenous music practices. This suggests the performance approach to the study of the music to help children perceive the music and to respond to it intensely through a variety of activities that make the music come alive for them. Among these are singing, listening and moving.

In Chapter One, it is indicated that the content of the thesis is aimed at providing guidance to music teachers, curriculum planners and professionals in their search for content and practice of music education that integrates and values indigenous music. The thesis is also intended to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Malawian Institute of Education, the University of Malawi and the Primary Education Advisors, all of which and whom recommend the preservation of Malawian culture such as indigenous music.

The findings in this chapter provide resources of theoretical and practical ideas about the ways in which the purposes, content and method of music education could be in harmony with the expectations of Malawians. The adequacy of indigenous music should encourage music teachers and other professionals to try in imaginative and different ways to break down the inaccurate notion that the use of the music in classroom education would lack “serious business” (Steytler 1939:203-204).



#### 4.8 Summary

In Malawi, societal principles command musical compositional techniques, structures and performance practice which in return reflect the people's environment and ways of life. The compositional techniques, musical structures and performance practice analysed in this chapter are by no means exhaustive but they do represent substantial musicological and ethnomusicological contents of indigenous music. For this reason, the analysis should be regarded as an introduction to indigenous Malawian music theory, composition and creative practice. Indigenous music is characterized by thematic structures, phrases, tonal systems, harmony and aesthetic systems in its organization and in its own right. This alone suggests that the activities of music classrooms in primary, secondary and teachers' training college education could be broadened from the current practice of mere singing to analysis of concepts and their application in music arts. The art of indigenous music composition and practice provides considerable samples of the kind of resources that music educators and curriculum planners require in teaching and developing music curricula, content, purposes and outcome. The resources could be used in comparative cross-cultural studies.

The thesis argues that children who are engaged in learning music in modern education milieu should be educated with resources that will be in harmony with the policy aims and goals of music in education in Malawi. This would be an important contribution to the understanding of home music and the people who practice it. The philosophical propositions discussed in this chapter acknowledge indigenous knowledge systems in music arts as requisite foundations for music in classroom education. Employing these knowledge systems would make the learning and teaching of music culturally meaningful and this may encourage children to opt for music as a subject of special interest in higher education. Consequently, children can preserve, maintain and extend standards of music arts of Malawian cultures.