

BIGOTRY AND THE AFROCENTRIC “JAZZ” EVOLUTION

By Karlton E. Hester, Ph.D.

Included in this preview:

- Copyright Page
- Table of Contents
- Excerpt of Chapter 1

For additional information on adopting this book for your class, please contact us at 800.200.3908 x71 or via e-mail at info@cognella.com

Bigotry and the Afrocentric “Jazz” Evolution

By Karlton E. Hester

University of California-Santa Cruz



Copyright © 2010 by Karlton E. Hester. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted, reproduced, transmitted, or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying, microfilming, and recording, or in any information retrieval system without the written permission of University Readers, Inc.

First published in the United States of America in 2010 by Cognella, a division of University Readers, Inc.

Trademark Notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Image credits:

India Cooke 2003 Vancouver International Jazz Festival

© Josephine Ochej, photographer

(Josephine Ochej: roma@vancouverjazz.com)

14 12 11 10

1 2 3 4 5

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-935551-15-7

To learn more please access the following weblink supplements available with this text. This weblink below contains an Encyclopedia of Music, Musicians and Recordings: Discographies, Biographies, Chapter Supplements, Lesson Plans for Teachers, Classroom Materials, and Images to accompany the 12 chapters of the textbook. This weblink can be accessed at:

http://digital.universityreaders.com/resources/Hester_70058-1_supplements.zip



www.cognella.com 800.200.3908

Contents

I.	Traditional African Music	1
II.	The Sociocultural Context in Which African-American Music Emerged	63
III.	Traditional African-American Music	91
IV.	Innovators Emerging Between 1900 and 1910	137
V.	Innovators Emerging Between 1910 and 1920	189
VI.	Innovators Emerging Between 1920 and 1930	223
VII.	Innovators Emerging Between 1930 and 1940	275
VIII.	Innovators Emerging Between 1940 and 1950	329
IX.	Innovators Emerging Between 1950 and 1960	393
X.	Innovators Emerging Between 1960 and 1970	439
XI.	Innovators Emerging Between 1970 and 1980	491
XII.	Innovators Emerging Between 1980 and 2000	535
	<i>Index</i>	587

I. Traditional African Music

Brothers and sisters, the white man has brainwashed us black people to fasten our gaze upon a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus!

—Malcolm X

EUROPEAN AND EUROPEAN-AMERICAN art galleries display African art, but they usually fail to name the artists. They credit tribes or regions with the production of works of art, but rarely did more than one person create these artifacts. Similarly, they pay scant attention to the history of the regions from which African art emerges. This suggests that museums, like zoos, are interested primarily with the ownership of African art (and the profit that can be made) and hold less concern for the African people who produced the art.

Although we know the names of a significant number of modern African-American innovators, the music business remains conspicuously more concerned with profit than with the welfare of their artists. The legacy of exploitation and bigotry that the slave era ushered forth left indelible imprints on the entire history of Global African music. Relatively few readers interested in “jazz” have a general knowledge of African history. So it is important to shed at least a bit of light on what Europeans long considered the “Dark Continent.” Exploring the complex history of a continent as large and diverse as Africa within a few introductory pages is an impossible task. But it is possible to explore the origins of African people and to raise relevant questions regarding the contexts and circumstances within which “jazz” emerged and evolved.

FORMULATING AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN MUSIC

African Studies in the United States today have moved beyond dispassionate inquiry, and the history of Africa's music is evolving beyond the antiquated perspective that considered it largely a subject fit only for speculation by idle minds traveling through strange exotic lands. Sweeping assertions of this kind can be made at the end of the twentieth century. This is because, for Westerners, Africa no longer seems remote; that is, if distance can be measured by levels of scholarly inquiry or the intensity of emotional involvement. For millions of Americans an African heritage exists to be acknowledged and claimed, and this is true of numerous other cultures too, wherever the African Diaspora has reached.¹

Considering the vast nature of African cultures, with its tremendous diversity of topography, people, dialects, and traditions, the music of Africa is scarcely known abroad. Whereas the uninitiated might tend to regard African music as homogeneous, it is essential that any such notion be rejected.

Since a large portion of African music has been transmitted from one generation to another through an oral tradition, the composers and performers of African music evolved in a fashion that places much less emphasis upon written traditions than European "art music" composers. Many non-African musicologists have attempted to notate, classify, analyze, and document African melodies and rhythms, but the methods and procedures employed remains a matter of experimentation and controversy. A study of African structures must pay direct attention to a broad range of components (including dance, instrumentation, history, metaphysics, etc.) if a meaningful perspective is to be maintained. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a perspective that keeps indigenous African music within proximity of appropriate sociocultural contexts.

Traditional societies that were eventually established in time throughout regions of Africa favored a mutual dependence between the social and physical universe. It was felt, within many such societies, that disharmony in one realm of existence would definitely affect the other. The duty of the king or chief was to preside over the assembly, drawn from the community on the basis of individual experience and merit, and to maintain equilibrium between the two realms. Likewise, the monarch would serve as the link and mediator between the living and the dead, would encourage members of the community to voice their grievances without fear of retribution, and would preside over the political and ritual functions.

Traditional African cultures did not fragment the components of daily life from one another. Music accompanies all aspects of an individual's life, and the community



participates freely in almost all musical celebrations. Such events generally involve kinetic and visual arts as equal multimedia partners in performances. Traditionally, there was no separate notion of art from spiritual celebration or social entertainment in Africa. Music has always been a mixture of sacred and secular ingredients. While one person may be enjoying music, dance, and colorful masks from an aesthetic perspective, another may become filled with the “holy spirit,” while yet a third might experience the event purely as a festive occasion.

In tribal Africa, regional differences were often a result of differences in languages and customs. Limited travel and restricted modes of communication could serve to exasperate tense or highly volatile relationships between strangers or perhaps even distant relatives. In ancient Africa, therefore, both Africans and foreigners often found fertile soil for misinformation, mistrust, and fabrication in situations involving both local and foreign affairs. These vast traditional differences make the African convergence that took place within the “New World” all the more remarkable.

Throughout world cultures, the more secretive, insular and closed a society has remained, the more conflicts and feuds have resulted between families, tribes, fiefdoms, religious sects, etc. Likewise, the abundance of mystery schools, secret codes, and cryptic symbols we find during the Dark Ages in Europe is indicative of the limitations placed upon people’s expression and education during that era, despite the presence of a relatively homogeneous and uniform culture. Similar trends can be found in other parts of the world of antiquity as well as within the modern era. The Africans would later develop codes of secrecy that would enable traditional customs and ideas to be perpetuated in the “New World” during the slave era. The path from traditional African music to the various forms of Diasporic African music reflects a cultural struggle in the Western Hemisphere.

AFRICA BEFORE THE EUROPEAN SLAVE TRADE

Who were the ancestors of the African people who created “jazz” in America? What was the nature of African society before the slave trade disrupted African culture? How did the relationship between Europeans and Africans develop into the adversarial condition that created racism and slave mentality? How much effect did this tense relationship have on the African people who eventually created and developed modern African-American music?

As African contributions to the evolution of humanity gradually became undeniable, European scholars began denying that Egyptians and Ethiopians were “black” African people. The parallel between this controversy and arguments over whether “jazz” is an African-American invention is intriguing. Yet, in addition to evidence contained within the Mosaic records, the Ethiopians² are always referred to as “black” people in the annals of all the great early nations of Asia Minor.³ Today, some scholars who insist upon maintaining theories of “European” supremacy find themselves refuting evidence presented by early historians they previously supported. Molefi Kete Asante discusses this contemporary dilemma:

Lefkowitz and others who once considered Herodotus to be the “Father of History” now find fault with Herodotus because, as Afrocentrists read

Book II of *The History of Herodotus*, we find that Herodotus glorifies the achievements of Egypt in relationship to Greece. But Herodotus is not the only ancient Greek writer to be dismissed by classicists who accept what Bernal rightly calls an Aryan interpretation of the ancient world.

Aristotle reported that the Egyptians gave the world the study of geometry and mathematics, and the Aryanists argue that Aristotle made mistakes in what he observed. Lefkowitz carries the denial of the Greeks to a new level, saying essentially that you cannot trust Homer, Diogenes, Laertius, Plutarch or Strabo. Her position is that Strabo, like Herodotus, depended too much on what the Egyptian priests told him. Greeks who wrote on the overwhelming impact of Egypt (Africa) on Greece (Europe) are discredited or set up to be discredited by the Aryanists. The idea to abandon the Greek authors rests on the belief that these ancient Greek writers cannot be counted upon to support the theories of White supremacy.

. . . Lefkowitz could have admitted that Egypt during the times of the Pharaohs—whatever interpretation you have of that ancient society, for example, as ornamented with mystery schools or simply filled with keepers of mysteries at the temples of Ipet sut, Edfu, Kom Ombo, Philae, Esna, Abydos, and other cities—was the source of much of Greek knowledge.⁴

Why is it important to glance at the achievements of an ancient African music and its sociocultural past to understand the evolution of African-American music? We are left with perplexing historical inconsistencies if we fail to provide some historical background to offset the racist propaganda that perpetuates the politics and mentality of the slavery era. Understanding that important ancient kingdoms existed throughout Africa, not only in Egypt and Nubia, but also in Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem-Bornu, Benin, and other regions of the African continent, challenges the stereotypical notions depicting Africans as “savages”—a notion that fails to explain how “socially inferior” African Americans invented one of the world’s most sophisticated, intriguing, and beautiful genres of twentieth-century music.

EARLY AFRICAN CONTACT WITH EUROPE

The music of Africa must have had some effect on ancient and medieval European music. Donald Jay Grout, claiming that music was an inseparable aspect of European religious ceremonies, traced the early origins of Western art music back to ancient Greek heritage. The cult of Apollo used the lyre as its characteristic instrument,

while the aulos (a double-piped reed instrument) was associated with the cult of Dionysus. Grout proposed that both instruments entered Greece from Asia Minor. Greek drama presumably developed from these ancient rituals.⁵ Grout fails to factor any Moorish influence into his evaluation of European music history. Just as the influence of European music must enter into any discussion of the development of African-American music, African influence, due to the dominant presence of the Moors in Spain, had some impact on the cultural evolution in Europe until the middle of the fifteenth century.

The Moors are one of the Moslem people of mixed Arab and Berber descent who lived in northern Africa. In Europe, Tarik the Moor expanded the Moorish empire to include the Visigoths' kingdoms subdued by the Moslems twelve hundred years ago. Spain prospered in art, literature, and science for nearly eight centuries under Mohammedan rulers from Northern Africa, at a level and in a fashion not reflected elsewhere in Europe. The knowledge and influence of Moorish conquerors led to advancements in industry and engineering. New cities flourished in the rich valleys of the Guadalquivir and the Guadiana, whose names still commemorate the vanished glories of the past.⁶ European fear and hatred of the Moors lasted many years beyond their European conquest. Mozart's two-act opera *The Magic Flute* is an example of the negative perception of Moors in the late 18th century. *The Magic Flute*, a work filled with Freemason symbolism and other archetypes, makes the Moorish character Monostatos the most insensitive and despicable character in the story.

French, German, and English students came to study in the schools and libraries established by the Moors in Spain. Moorish theoretical tendencies perhaps influenced the gradual abandoning of quartal harmony (used in Medieval harmony) in favor of North African tertian harmony (harmony in thirds), eventually contributing to the development of French fauxbourdon and English gymell styles in later periods of European music.

The ancient histories of Egypt and Nubia reveal continual cultural exchange between northern regions of the African continent and Africa south of the Sahara. Within the complex network of African and European cultural exchange in the region of the Mediterranean and elsewhere, therefore, it is unlikely that the music of the Moors escaped the influence of music from their southern African neighbors. Traditional African music preserved by its contemporary practitioners display shared characteristics. For example, a remarkable comparison can be noticed between the "whispered singing" of numerous regions of Burundi (where a male singer accompanies himself on the *inanga*, a type of trough-zither) and the singing of *bägänna* performers in Ethiopia. According to legend, the *bägänna* (a very large ten-string lyre) is the descendant of one Ethiopia's oldest instruments, the harp, "which the future King David played 3000 years ago."⁷

Heavy European intervention began in the mid-fifteenth century when European merchants, possessing charters from their monarchs, raided the African coastal areas for slaves, ivory, gold, and hides. The technical advantage they held over the Africans (in weapons of destruction) changed the Africans' relationship from trade to dependency, which became the pattern for all future contacts.⁸ Some reports from European explorations and raiding expeditions make bewildered mention of African music and dance.

From the middle of the seventeenth century, a new factor entered the African societies south of the Sahara. European traders interested in the raw materials came to bargain with African people, but apparently took little interest in African music and culture. European expansion exploited African resources and societies to such an extent that many of these societies finally collapsed. Complete transformation of human relations resulted, though traditional African society offered tremendous sustained resistance. Territorial annexation and forced acculturation were accomplished through merciless military aggression and intimidation.

European colonization led to inevitable conflict between the colonizers and the indigenous people. Colonists usually attempted to confiscate lands used for grazing and cultivation. Efforts were also directed toward turning aborigines into servants and dependents. In southern Africa, as the influx of European settlements accelerated and spread outward from the Cape, the indigenous Khoisans were displaced, dispersed, or integrated into the colonial economy. In time, trade (in the form of skins or ivory) was established with the Bantu-speaking peoples further inland. At that point Europeans began attempting to establish a trade monopoly both internally and with the outside world. Colonists wanted ivory, cattle, hides, and servants. The Africans wanted metal, beads, horses, and, later, manufactured goods such as blankets, knives, guns, and brandy. Trade was difficult to maintain, however, due to the tremendous distance between the administrative capital and the colonies. Due to increasing hostilities, European and African societies remained relatively separate despite active trading, and this mutual detachment prevented cultural understanding.

Economic concerns are generally the prime motivators for the development of slavery in any region. When a project requires a quantity of labor that exceeds the human resources available in a given region, either slave labor must be imported to augment the labor force or new labor-saving devices must be invented. Both Africans (who sold their prisoners of war) and Europeans made profits on the Western slave trade.

Slavery of the particular types found later in Greece and Italy was practiced in ancient Africa. Even in Egypt, where pharaohs such as Khufu and others are often erroneously depicted as despots exploiting slave labor to erect colossal pyramids and other labor-intensive structures, the serfs were never permanently placed in an underclass; nor were they systematically oppressed spiritually, physically, and

psychologically, as they were under most European slave systems. Although exploitation certainly existed, the construction of the pyramids was highly organized and did not require the debilitating circumstances similar to those found on southern plantations in America.⁹

In the early days of European colonization, Christian missionaries became an important factor in encouraging interaction between the colonists and the African peoples. Their influence tended to favor settler communities at the expense of traditional African society. Africans often mistook the preachers for seers, rainmakers, diviners, or other bearers of positive information, identifying them with their counterparts within African society. Once invited and established in the African communities, missionaries would proceed to “win the souls”¹⁰ of African people through attempting to teach the gospels and the values of European society (hard work, thrift, temperance, and respect for authority).¹¹

Being accustomed to only usufructuary¹² right to the environment, Africans knew nothing of “legal” boundaries, fences, and symbols of private ownership. Consequently, clashes occurred over the interpretation of boundary agreements, taxation of the land, and the use of resources. White settlers, displaying arrogant authority, became notorious among African people as “a people who lacked common humanity, who were opposed to peace, and who were extremely quarrelsome (*makgowa*) and always ready to despoil their neighbors’ flocks (*amadlagusha*).”¹³ Clashes escalated into wars, and following each war the settlers annexed new land. Again adaptation, at the expense of traditional society, often became the only real alternative.

WOMEN, MUSIC, AND RELIGION IN AFRICA

People often look to natural forces surrounding them for clues to aid in their understanding of the universe. Perhaps the most persuasive aspects of the world our early ancestors encountered were the dynamic and rhythmic sounds of nature. The roll of thunder, the rare explosion of a volcano, the song of a bird, the murmur of a stream, the roar of a lion—all these aural elements of daily life must have been alternately terrifying, soothing, and inspiring.

Since rhythm is formed when any series of sounds occur in nature, the patterns formed by such movement over time must have been compared to the lunar cycles, the human heartbeat, falling raindrops, and other sounds that can be grouped into logical patterns. One basic meaning of religion is “to bind together.” The history of humanity’s spiritual development demonstrates a primordial inclination toward organizing various rhythms of life cycles into some form of logical order. Totem poles, calendars, sundials, signs of the zodiac, and other tools of measurement that humankind has developed all measure the rhythms we encounter in daily life.

Africans were generally not inclined to separate rhythm, spiritual dimensions, and the order of the universe into compartments. Traditional African societies acknowledged that the drum had a spirit and character that was clearly observable. The gift of the voices of the Great Ancestors had been hidden inside the wood of trees so they could be accessed whenever men and women needed them. Stories associated with African history were maintained through an oral tradition. African vehicles for the transmission of history and knowledge have a value equivalent to that of the written word in European tradition. One traditional African story tells how the bullroarer was created:

One day an old woman was out cutting firewood when suddenly the splinters from the tree she was felling began to fly around her in the air, crying “Bigu-bigu-bigu-bigu.” It frightened the old woman very much. When she told her husband what had happened he said that whatever the thing was it would come to her that night in a dream. And sure enough, it did. That night, as the old woman slept, one of the wood chips came to her and said: “Mother, listen to me. Bigu is my name. That’s my name, Bigu! Now I want you to go into the bush and cut a long skin from a tree and make a rope. Then I want you to make a hole close to my nose, and fasten the rope there. Then, mother, plant yams. Then I want you to sling me over your head. The noise will make your garden grow. It will make the wind and rain come. It will wake up the ground.”

Well, the old woman did as Bigu commanded. She found a tree, she made a rope, she hitched it to the splinter, she planted yams, and then she began to swing Bigu over her head. It sounded like a great monster had come to eat them all up. The people first ran and hid under the bushes, screaming, “Dhuramoolan has come to eat us.” The old woman called to the people, “Come back! You feel the rain fall? This water is for us to drink. You see the yams grow? Now we have food!”

The people gathered around her, their eyes wide with fear and wonder. Everywhere the yams were growing and the rain was falling. Oh, the people were happy.

But not the husband of the woman. Angrily he snatched the bullroarer from his wife and killed her. Then he painted himself with white clay as if he were about to kill a strong enemy. He picked up his spear and called the men to him and said, “All you men, this Bigu gives us power. No longer will women and children be allowed to see it. Only men. Not boys, not girls, not

women. This magic is too strong, If any man tells the women and children about this, I will kill him.”¹⁴

The bullroarer story provides insight on several levels. Natural and spiritual forces manifesting through the medium of sound, the story seems to say, provide solutions to problems associated with daily life. This example also shows that once these forces have been harnessed, the power of musical instruments has the capacity to unleash them, a capacity similar to that of virulent nature. Similar folktales also typically demonstrate early society’s tendency to be extremely sexist, insecure, and paranoid—in a manner still existent throughout the world. Because of fear, jealousy, and avarice for power, men cordoned off the most potent musical force in the village.

Generalizing about sexism or anything else in African society is no simple matter. Over a thousand languages and cultures can be isolated within the distinct social organizations and diverse kinship systems on the African continent. Nevertheless, common threads can be found within the overwhelming variability of this huge, rich continent. Despite the chauvinist inferences of the bullroarer fable, for example, a consistent factor throughout African cultures has been the prominent role of women.

Throughout the world women have been denied access to many instruments, especially those considered instruments associated with power or assertiveness. In



Bullroarer (*Photo by Alissa Roedig*).

Europe, even within the vocal arena, a tradition that is generally more acceptable as an outlet for female musicianship, the *castrati* (men who were castrated to artificially preserve their high voices) substituted for the female soprano in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian liturgical music. Women were banned from participation in such musical genres.¹⁵

It is often erroneously reported that African women, while well represented as vocalists, are denied the privilege of playing musical instruments. Because some “jazz” scholars have apparently not found reason to visit Africa, and because they tend to forget the size of the continent, we often find misinformation generated such as this comment in Frank Tirro’s *Jazz: A History*: “African women sing and dance, but only African men play the instruments.”¹⁶ A quick glance at the cover of Francis Bebey’s well-known book *African Music: A People’s Art*¹⁷ should have caused curious scholars to investigate the matter further. This is not to deny that women are severely restricted in music making in certain parts of Africa in ways similar to the sexist limitations they have encountered as musicians in Western society. Nevertheless, in evaluating African music many scholars have relied almost entirely on European reporters rather than on direct contacts with African musicians and historians. If our European musical and cultural values are not tempered by an informed knowledge of the culture under examination, we risk politicizing and polarizing our perspective. The dominant role of the woman in African-American culture is often discussed in American social studies, but rarely is a parallel drawn between this role and related social positions in African culture.

In Africa, with its vast array of cultures and tribes, women have a long history as players of diverse musical instruments. Obviously any discussion of this topic presents a formidable challenge; even today there is an estimated fifteen hundred to two thousand different African tribal groups, and much research remains to be done.

Throughout Africa we find a wide variety of music for the events of everyday life. The music repertoire of a single village generally includes over a hundred songs for various occasions. Secular dance songs and songs of entertainment, like popular music in other cultures, decline in popularity within a relatively short period. Popular songs usually enjoy a longer life span in rural areas than in urban communities. Music for entertainment usually ranges from highly informal performances to more theatrical presentations, such as the *chikona* of the Venda of South Africa. A circle of men playing vertical flutes perform music in hocket while dancing counterclockwise around drummers, who are mostly women. This custom challenges the claim made in some Western sources that women do not play drums in Africa.

Musicologist John Rublowsky did a detailed study of music making in the highly organized and stratified West African kingdom of Dahomey, which by the eighteenth century had become one of the principal suppliers of the flourishing slave trade.¹⁸

The obscurity of African women musicians in historical documents written by European men can be misleading, however. Undoubtedly there were many professional music guilds in many highly stratified West African kingdoms that excluded women. Nevertheless, Linda Dahl challenges some of Rublow's conclusions regarding the participation of women in the early guilds in Dahomey society. In her book *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* she writes:

The Dahomans had established guilds to train professional musicians as well as other craftsmen. Such guilds tended to be family affairs that apprenticed the aspiring player in preparation for a series of tough examinations on a variety of instruments, including flutes, trumpets, stringed instruments, xylophones and drums. Just possibly there were women musicians in these musical guilds, for eighteenth-century Dahoman women, unlike their European and American counterparts, were chiefly responsible for conducting the central economic affairs of the society, and they could vote, own property, serve as priestesses and fight as warriors. More probably, though, women were excluded from the music guilds as well as from the craft guilds. "Sculpture and music were arts open to anyone," Rublow observes, but his evidence suggests that "anyone" was a male child. The probability of patrilineal musical instruction is supported by African musicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia: "The transmission of roles from father to son is quite common . . . specialization in musical instruments tends to run through families or households."

However, female musicianship seems to have flourished in the large number of less stratified, more egalitarian African societies. According to Nketia, women in these simpler societies historically formed their own permanent associations specifically to make music. In many places they still do so; a recent documentary on Moslem women in Morocco, made by an all-woman crew, included footage of religious and social gatherings attended only by women and featuring all-female musical groups. Women's dance bands and clubs usually performed for specific occasions such as female puberty rites, the healing of the sick, funerals and wakes, and sometimes court entertainments. Indeed, in most of rural Africa, music making was and is part of the fabric of everyday life rather than a specialized activity.

Though we can cite examples of women instrumentalists in various African societies—professional harp virtuosi in Uganda, fiddlers in Mali, the friction drummers of the Tuareg tribe, water drummers in East Africa, idiophone players in Ghana and Nigeria—it is not clear whether they constitute

exceptions to the rule. It may be that in Africa, as in Europe, women musicians were more culturally acceptable as vocalists than as instrumentalists, but on the basis of existing research it is impossible to be sure.¹⁹

The inherently musical and rhythmic nature of most traditional African cooperative and individual work may account for the link between music and economic life. A smith's pounding hammer or bellows are used to create musical effects. Women sharing a mortar (for pounding) touch pestles between strokes to create syncopation and complex cross rhythms; or fishermen may take the natural rhythm of their paddles and develop rhythmic and tonal variety by tapping the sides of their canoes to accompany their songs. Every available material is used (ivory, bamboo, wood, skin, metal, gourds, horn, vines, grass, stone, etc.) to make a variety of beautiful music. The most primary instrument, the human body (dancing, stamping, clapping, and singing), is frequently exploited. Stamping with feet serves to supply dance rhythms when drums are not used.

The distortion we find in the history of women musicians is common throughout the modern world. Women have always made music (instrumental and vocal) and formed their own guilds when no other opportunities were available. During the days of the American minstrelsy, African-American and European-American women, restricted from the main stage, formed their own independent guilds. Women troubadors had done likewise in medieval Europe. They composed their own verses and often accompanied themselves on the lute. Dahl adds: "The most richly inventive period of female music-making in Europe began during the Renaissance, when, particularly in Italy, women in convents and orphanages established and directed their own ensembles (the convent provided a safe and intellectually enriching haven for women during these centuries). Eighteenth century Venice boasted a number of fine women orchestras, with players drawn from the city's four music conservatories for orphaned girls."²⁰

The history of African and African-American women musicians bears evidence of both racism and sexism. The roles of women musicians in all societies reflect a history of sexism. Although music often reflects society, the complex messages contained within art forms are not easily deciphered. Yet it is possible that the roles and status of women musicians declined as women were forced into patriarchal rule. The interconnections between ancient tribal music, social customs, economics, religious ideas, and other traditions may hold clues to the historical and culture place of women in African society.

Today the majority culture often separates "jazz" from its African origins through a number of systematic sociopolitical means, including control over the dissemination, documentation, and definition of the art form. Once redefined, it becomes difficult to reverse the resulting misinformation. Artists are affected by such conditions. Likewise, the classification of musical instruments along sexual lines has sociocultural

implications. Thus, the diminishing of social status and power associated with women through the years has a related history.

According to the Old Testament, the first human group was a married couple, Adam and Eve. This family and their children formed a patriarchal family. From this supposition the idea of the primacy of the patriarchy, with its male leader and subordinate females, has been established by most Western cultures to be the very foundation of human society. Today many people assert that the first type of family was likely to have been matriarchal, since the role of the father in procreation was uncertain to ancient people. Although, I am told, the whole concept of a matriarchy preceding patriarchy is considered outdated and largely a fantasy of feminists and Marxists by many anthropologists, other professional researchers support such a theory. According to proponents of the matriarchal theory, women, with their power to give birth, would have been naturally worshipped as possessors of the extraordinary power of creating life. In most cases, however, evidence suggests that most often early societies were matrilineal where men remained in control. Communities organized in a matrilineal fashion (where descent was traced through women, but men remained in charge) can still be found among tribes in Central Australia and the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands.

Attitudes adopted regarding the music people produce within a region and period of time reflect other social dynamics. Establishing dominance over sectors of a population to facilitate economic supremacy is likewise one of the basic premises upon which sexism and racism are grounded. When European warriors began to claim southern lands for themselves, both sex and skin color became factors belying “religious” concerns. In her book *When God Was a Woman*, Merlin Stone writes:

Mythological and archeological evidence suggests that it was these northern people [Indo-Europeans bearing the name *maryannu*] who brought with them the concept of light as good and dark as evil (very possibly the symbolism of their racial attitudes toward the darker people of the southern areas) and of a supreme male deity. The emergence of the male deity in their subsequent literature, which repeatedly described and explained his supremacy, and the extremely high position of their priestly caste may perhaps allow these invasions to be viewed as religious crusade wars as much as territorial conquests.²¹

The suppression of Goddess worship that followed as a consequence of the arrival of Indo-Aryan tribes, therefore, began with the emergence of a new mythology that included blending two sets of theological concepts (male and female; dark and light). Ultimately the female deity was completely supplanted.²² The suppression of religion, music, tribal continuity, and other essential sociocultural dimensions during the European slave trade was engineered for related reasons. Total domination

requires that subjects become totally disoriented, docile, and reprogrammed. The early Christian attached the label “pagan” to all African, Oriental, and non-European religions, regardless of its history or contents. Most religions condemned as such paid earnest and dutiful homage to a God of the universe.

It’s more difficult to establish dominance over women or other conquered people when, to strengthen their resolve, these oppressed people start to construct deities in their own image. The conqueror’s primary goals must ultimately include forcing the enslaved people to adopt his gods, languages, and traditions. Denying Africans their families, traditions, instruments, and religions was designed to strip them of all vestiges of personal power. Wherever prominent elements of African tradition survived, the music of that region retained stronger African characteristics.

When religious zealots spoke of destroying “false idols” in many ancient places of worship, many of those idols were female. Archeologists have discovered some of these female deities with musical instruments. Sheila Collins proposes that “theology is ultimately political. The way human communities deify the transcendent and determine the categories of good and evil have more to do with the power dynamics of social systems which create the theologies than with the spontaneous revelation of truth from another quarter.”²³

STYLISTIC REGIONS OF AFRICAN MUSIC

To facilitate our examination, musical cultures of Africa are classified as that of North Africa (which is essentially Islamic) and Sub-Saharan Africa (alternately referred to as Africa south of the Sahara). Both North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa contain music that has undergone constant evolution as performers modify traditional elements of musical performance to keep their own presentations unique and contemporary. Since most of the Africans who came to America during the European slave era were from Sub-Saharan Africa, the music from that region will serve as the focal point of our examination. Although most of African music was initially exposed only to regional influences, eventually other outside cultures also contributed to the overall development of the music. It is, however, the elements of traditional African music that will be our concern as we establish the basis of African-American music.

The North Africa stylistic region includes Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania (which overlaps the Sudan region), Morocco, Tunisia, and Western Sahara. The area of Northern Africa extends over many miles. In addition to native cultures, the music produced by musicians from the regions are influenced by three outside musical cultures, the Persian, Arab, and Turkish. Islam is a prominent language spoken. Arab-Andalusian music from Morocco is based on heptatonic scales, and does not contain micro-intervals. Much North African music has many elemental properties in common

with Middle-Eastern style. During the 19th century, military orchestras adapted to prevailing musical styles and offered traditional influence in exchange. This musical stylistic cross-fertilization extends from the borders of the Himalayas to the Atlantic Ocean. A prominent segment of the population of musicians within Northern Africa consists of the Berbers, and the Kurds. Due to a high circulation of migrant people in the region, musical practices in the area are quite diverse and dynamic.

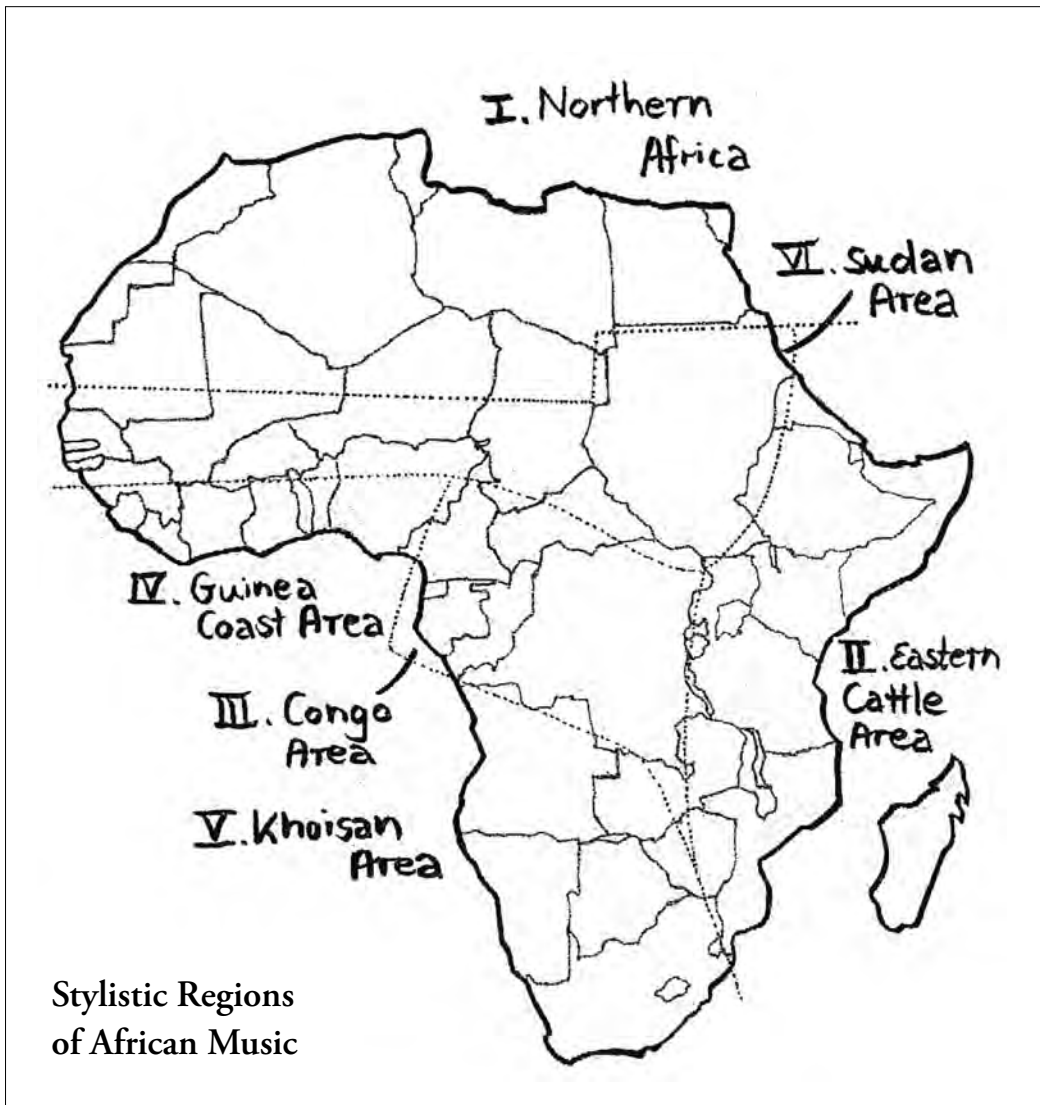
Cultural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa are grouped into geographical regions (e.g., Khoisan, Guinea Coast, Congo, Sudan, Eastern Cattle areas, and the Pygmy areas) to provide a basic framework for observation of musical style. As a variety of regional and tribal terms are found for closely related musical instruments throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., the thumb piano is alternately referred to as a *kalimba*, *mbira*, *likembe*, *limba*, *sanza*, etc.) traditional African terms occur profusely throughout this chapter to facilitate positive identification.

As we become familiarized with African culture and music the degree of influence that African retentions have on “jazz” and other African-American music becomes increasingly clear. Throughout the history of the African’s experience in America, interdisciplinary dynamics, performance styles, and cultural attitudes are found within the music of many African-American church services (although coerced conformity to European musical value systems caused many African-based elements to become more diluted or subdued in most Protestant churches).

Colorful Sunday attire and uninhibited body language observed at Southern Baptist church services in African-American communities throughout America suggest certain characteristics of traditional African traditions. This is particularly evident in the lyrical presentation of the sermon delivered in most churches. The songlike delivery of the pastor, the spontaneous actions of congregation members moved emotionally by the music and sermon, typical call-and-response patterning that permeates all aspects of the service, and other aspects of African-American religious worship are decidedly African in origin.

The element of collective participation is generally characteristic of African music and arts. Without such participation, particularly as related to music and dance, African cultural transmissions to America would have been seriously attenuated under the oppression of the slave era. By engaging oral, aural, and kinetic social tools, the seeds of culture germinated, developed, and prospered, allowing the Africans to sustain traditional elements despite efforts to counter such progress on the part of the oppressors.

Communal African-American musical performance thus functioned as an educational and political sociocultural means of preserving art and heritage while concurrently boosting morale. The role of the African-American church and its music is particularly noteworthy in this regard, since it has been the most stable pillar in the African-American community from its beginning. Children in most African-



American church environments received early musical training as participants in (rather than passive consumers of) the musical process.²⁴ This had also been the case with the younger citizens in traditional African societies.

I. Northern Africa

Ancient Egyptian Music

Anthropologists generally agree that the early Nubians and Egyptians share cultural features. Genetic studies of early human remains from both Egypt and Nubia suggest

that little physical variation could be detected among the inhabitants of these regions. Karl Butzer has noted that over time, however, physical distinctions became more pronounced. This was perhaps due to an infusion of a new population into Upper Egypt in the Neolithic era (after 7,000 b.c.). Butzer asserts that the Upper Egyptians of the Neolithic and Predynastic eras were not the descendants of the earlier palaeolithic inhabitants, but were immigrants to Upper Egypt. The more recent inhabitants may have arrived probably from the northern Libyan Desert and its oases, which were in a slow process of desiccation at that time.

Egypt dominated parts of Nubia from about 1950 to 1000 b.c. Egyptian colonization resulted in the disappearance of a particular Nubian C-Group, including the Nubian elite who adopted both the worship of Egyptian gods and the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system. During the reign of Tutankhamen (who was the son of a Nubian woman) colonization was especially bitter. Nubia's gold, ebony, and ivory contributed to the material wealth of Egypt. Nubian products were used in the creation of a significant number of the famed treasures of the Egyptian kings. Forts, pyramids, trading posts, and Egyptian-style temples were built in Kush.

Old Kingdom Egyptian Music has been classified as secular, sacred, and military, though the categories clearly overlap. Surprisingly, the history of Egyptian music presents little evidence of the use of drums prior to 2000 b.c.²⁵ Egyptian music was apparently melodically driven during early periods. There are exceptions, however. Curt Sachs points out that "a fragment from Ne-user-re's temple of the Sun (about 2700 b.c.) near Abusir, now in the Munich museum, shows the top of a large drum . . . supposed to be identical with the instrument *a-lal*. As the instrument is unique in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, we suppose its existence is due to an importation from Sumer."²⁶

Later, the most common iconography and descriptions depict military trumpets and drums with the processions of the gods. Cylindrical and barrel drums appear prominently during the Middle and New Kingdoms. Sachs continues: "The Cairo museum owns a cylindrical drum which probably was made during the twelfth dynasty, 2000–1788 b.c; it is seventy-five centimeters long and twenty-nine centimeters wide, and has a network of thongs with a tightening tourniquet to stretch the leather skins. A similar drum is still in use on the Congo."²⁷

Drums and trumpets were played together and separately. Although drums were often omitted from representations of military campaigns, at the Temple at Kawa (25th Dynasty) the drummer Emhab is shown following his king to war.²⁸ Trumpeters and drummers would join other instrumentalists at various musical functions during times of peace.

Religious rituals and (occasionally) funerals involved priestesses shaking the cult rattles called *sistra*. The sound of the *sistrum* was at times accompanied by the rattling of a heavy necklace made of rows of faience beads (*menat*). *Menats* were usually carried

by women in their free hand rather than worn. Some ensembles, such as the “the musicians of the funeral estate,” had specific names that matched their functions. Feasts and other secular social functions involved instrumental music, song, and dance.²⁹

The instrumental core of Old Kingdom ensembles, according to ancient paintings, included the harp, an end-blown flute, and a simple clarinet. Although it was common to have more than one harp in an ensemble, only a single flute and a clarinet were generally involved. Nonetheless, the ensemble apparently was far from standardized:

One provincial tomb shows seven harps; in another a second flute and clarinet have been added, and in a third we have four flutes, while one scene has no clarinets but two flutes. The recently discovered 5th Dynasty tomb of Niankhknum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara near the ancient capital of Memphis has an eleven-man ensemble, consisting of two harpists, two flautists, a man playing an unusually long clarinet, and six chironomists [instructors]. . . . A wooden model of an ensemble dating from the Middle Kingdom has a harpist sitting on either side of the tomb owner and his wife, while three girls sit facing one another at his feet clapping and singing.³⁰

Men and women apparently played most instruments. Arched, angular harps were played by both sexes in Ancient Egypt. The tomb of the Middle Kingdom vizier Antefoker contains four excellent representations in which a man and woman are shown performing side by side. Although male musicians generally played the flute, a 12th Dynasty female flautist and chironomist are also depicted in a Theban tomb of Antefoker. Another later scene from the Graeco-Roman temple at Medamud (just north of Thebes) shows three women playing the angular harp, a minute barrel-shaped drum, and a lute, while a fourth woman sings.³¹

Egyptian women of the Nile Valley from mortal women, such as Queen Hatshepsut (who wore men’s clothes and ruled as king), to the goddess (Sekhmet) held leading roles in family life, religion, and government. In earlier times, Egyptian women owned and managed property, made business contracts, represented themselves in litigation, ran businesses, and could divorce their husbands. Married women were held in higher regard in domestic life than those who were single and mothers were respected most of all. Although marriages were usually arranged, ancient love songs suggest that women and men also married for love. Queens Merneith, Nitokret, Sobeknefru, and Tausret were among the female sole rulers. Other women more often reigned Egypt as regent.

Vocal music was important in Egypt. The variety of forms referred to as the “Harper’s Song” is a genre in Egyptian literature. In *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt*, Lise Manniche says, “One of its two main themes concerns reflection on life on earth as opposed to life in the hereafter. . . . These songs invite us to spend a happy

day, don our best garments, perfume our bodies, and enjoy music and dance with our nearest and dearest at our side.”

Ancient Nubian Written Music

The Late Palaeolithic Age in Lower Nubia produced the Qada Culture, which thrived ca. 15,000–10,500 B.C. The Qada inhabited numerous sites in an area sprawling from the Second Cataract northward to Toshka. The earliest extant evidence of human remains in the entire Nile Valley has been discovered within this region.

During periods perhaps even earlier than that of the first pharaohs of Egypt, a line of kings lived in Qustul in northern “Kush” (as Nubia was then called). The people of these early cultures buried their dead in stone-lined pit graves, accompanied by pottery and cosmetic articles. The Egyptians referred to these Nubian people as “Ta Sety” (the “Land of the Bow”) because of the fame of Nubian archers. By 1550 B.C. kings at Kerma were ruling Nubia during a time of increased contact between Egypt and “Kush.” People of the Kerma culture were accomplished metalworkers and also turned thin-walled pottery on a wheel.

Most people who think of traditional African music assume that oral and aural traditions were used exclusively throughout the African continent. A sixth-century Ethiopian composer evolved a sophisticated music writing system and was so highly revered that he became a Catholic saint. Saint Yaréd, the son of a wealthy Christian family who lived between the reigns of Emperor Kaleb and his son Emperor Gabre Masqual, was originally a professor of theology. He composed all the Old Testament oriented music for the Ethiopian church’s chants. Yaréd acquired his knowledge of theology, natural history, and music from his uncle, Gedewon. Gedewon introduced Yaréd to songs used for praying and singing by Ethiopian churchmen inherited from the creative works of the ancient Nubian Empire.

In later years numerous works accredited to Saint Yaréd were found throughout Ethiopia. Ayele Bekerie explains this incredible number of compositions by saying that Ethiopian epics create “fragments for historiography” that are transformed “to insure perpetual dynamism.”³² Thus, when it is implied that St. Yaréd wrote all the traditional Ethiopian classical music compositions, Ethiopian tradition must be factored into the statement. Early Ethiopian composers (especially Yaréd’s students), as a gesture of humility, considered all their inspiration a result of St. Yaréd’s influence. Thus, many credited St. Yaréd with their compositions. Music, nonetheless, was not Nubia’s oldest writing system.

According to the Ethiopian tradition, poetry composition predates St. Yaréd’s musical composition. According to Ato Alemayehu Moges, the musical

composition of *Digguwa* by St. Yaréd would not have been possible, if it did not rely on the already existing tradition of writing or composing poetry. Poetry is believed to have started around 1500 b.c.e. The originator of *Qiné* is identified as Tewanay, who used to live on the island of Deqe Estefa, which is located in Lake Tana, the source of the river Abbay or Blue Nile.³³

Moroccan Music

In the markets of Morocco's traditional cities, between the afternoon and sunset prayers, food vendors, dentists, fortunetellers, and storytellers congregate with musicians and singers. Street cries and songs combine to create a constant evolution of cultural expression. At times, performances by some of Morocco's greatest musician are heard featured on traditional instruments including the *oud*, *derbouka*, *tarija*, *bendir* and *tar* drums.

At times rhapsodic music is expressed around daily life or work. Moroccan songs can relate the joys and pains of either carnal or spiritual love. The musical culture of the Houara women (Houariyat) is closely tied to the economic and social role played by Moroccan women. Women are fundamental to the culture and economy, so they do a fair share of the community's work. During breaks in fieldwork the women traditionally sit in a circle and sing, accompanying themselves with hand clapping and percussion instruments. The textile industry (producing rugs and blankets) is the second largest industry in the region and workers are exclusively women. This working environment is once again ideal for practicing music within the Moroccan oral tradition.

The Houari musical style reflects the influence of SubSaharan and ancient Northern African music. Polyrhythms (overlapping of different rhythmic cycles mixed with the colorful application of cross accents), use of call and response patterns, embellished pentatonic scales and the typically cyclical structure of Moroccan music (based on repetition and thematic microvariation) are features that mirror those of Sub-Saharan Africa. The persistence of hemiola (the superimposition of binary and ternary rhythmic figures) is also a shared feature of Sub-Saharan and Moroccan music. The *ferda* (fire arms) is an "explosion" of drums that incorporates polyrhythms often composed of overlapping complex meters (7/8 and 5/4, 5/8 and 3/4, etc.) creating rhythmic ambiguity.

A closer look at Moroccan music reveals a compositional construction based on constantly varying permutations of a relatively limited set of rhythmic motives that are connected in a variety of ways reminiscent of African textile weaving patterns. The musical form is enhanced and highlighted by dynamics and fluctuations in tempo that suggest organic expansion.

Percussion is the only set musical instruments played in Houara music. Traditional instruments typically include several types of membranophones and one idiophone. The *tara* is a large, single-membrane drum on a round wooden frame (with gut snares inside the frame of the drum). It marks the bass pattern that conducts the dancers and the other percussion in performances. The *tara* is played vertically and held between the thumb and first finger. The other fingers strike the membrane head or, alternately, stop its vibrations. The other hand beats either in the center of the drum, producing a deep muted sound, or strikes the edge for a higher pitch that makes the snares vibrate.

The second drum is the *bendir*; a smaller version of the *tara* that is often fitted with a skinhead. The *bendir* is played horizontally during the *ferda*. By resting the instrument on her knees, the musician can play rapid drum rolls with both hands. The *tarija* is a small pot drum with a single membrane head fitted with a snare, stretched over a goblet-shaped clay frame. Two or more *tara* drums are tuned at intervals that allow musicians to play a single rhythmic phrase by alternating notes (in *hocket*).

The *derbouka* is a goblet-shaped lead drum (now fairly common in the West). This single-headed drum produces a piercing sound suitable for solo drum figures that form the upper strata of some percussion ensembles. The *dâwdâw*, a medium-sized drum similar to the *derbouka*, has snares affixed to its head and produces a rhythmic counterpoint to the low frequency tones of the *tara* and *tarija*. Contrapuntal lines emerge through producing two types of sound; *ticka* (high pitch, articulated on the edge) and *dununa* (deep note, articulated at the center). The latter tone is modulated in the *ferda* by placing the hand and part of the arm inside the clay chassis.

The *naqqus* (bell) is typical of the Houara: a tin basin (often replaced by a hubcap today) is struck with two metal sticks, each shaped differently. The very fast beat of the *naqqus* marks the sub-division of metrical time.

One of the dominant traits of all Moroccan music is its complete integration of religion and entertainment. Music is considered a spiritual essence in Morocco, so each concert, whether in a traditional or modern context, begins by calling on the divine spirit, by soliciting the help of the *marabout* (those who belong to the cult of initiated musician), and praising the Prophet.³⁴

North African Women Musicians

A socio-historical observation of women musicians in Northern Africa reveals some of the attitudes and practices that shaped the cultural perspectives in the world. The Maghreb of North Africa was a region where the plight of female African musicians can be studied historically. It is a geographical region composed of modern Tunisia,

Algeria and Morocco. These countries also developed notable civilizations during ancient times and established links with their African neighbors to the south. It is a rich cultural mosaic that witnessed dominant Mediterranean and western Asian civilizations that date back two millennia to the founding of Carthage. Inhabitants of the region retained Arabic as the predominant language and Islam as the official religion. The population is comprised of an interesting mixture of Black Africans, Berbers, and Arabs.

Tracing the history of professional women musicians in the Maghreb is difficult because of the paucity of documentation. The *qayna* (pl. *qiyān*), however, is one variety of female musicians from Tunisia's earlier centuries that has been discussed more readily. The *qiyān* or, as more frequently designated in Tunisian sources, *jariya* (pl. *jawari*), are terms that can be loosely translated "slave girl" or "singing slave girl." The term *qayna* could be related to the image of "Cain" of northern Semitic religious tradition and early mid-eastern associations of music with slavery. Consequently, these images could also lead to a number of diverse prejudices.³⁵

Qiyān of Tunisia and other Arab kingdoms were imported female slaves from both southern African and non-Arab centers of musical culture. These Arab women were also trained (usually by famous men musicians) for the express purpose of singing and playing the *'ud* (traditional Arab lute). Slave women musicians served as gifts between the wealthy and powerful, or were sold for high prices. *Qiyān* could also be found in taverns and other public houses of amusement. Subjected to such vulnerable circumstances, they suffered more than their share of abuse.

Qiyān were kept in the households of the sultan, his high officials, the nobility, and the wealthy people in Kairouan, Mahdia, Damascus, Baghdad, and other places in the region. Like the African griots, who resided further south on the continent, they served an important function in transmitting musical traditions across the expanse of the Arab empire. Some were "promoted" to the legal status of concubine in the houses of their "masters." The steady importation of women musicians provided a steady influx of new musical materials from outside the Islamic world. Shopping expeditions were frequently sent to Baghdad to purchase "singing girls" and other cultural artifacts by early Tunisian rulers.

Historical documents show that, on one occasion, a mission returned to Kairouan in A.D. 905 with 30,000 dinars worth of *jawari* for the sultan's pleasure-town of ar-Raqqada.³⁶ 'Abd al-Wahhab concludes that the *jawari* who went to Spain after the fall of the Aghlabide sultanate (of Kairouan) made significant contributions to the cultural development and brilliance of Cordoba in the tenth century.³⁷ Therefore, North African rhythms, melodies, and other musical elements clearly left their imprint on the music of Spain more than several hundred years ago. Musically trained slave women and girls later became a lucrative export in Seville where prices

up to 10,000 gold dinars were paid for the most accomplished female musicians.³⁸ However ill-fated the lives of the *qiyān* may seem, it is important to realize the status of free women in the Islamic countries at this time. The so-called “free” women were confined to quarters, and shielded from the outside world:

. . . and spared the burdens of literacy and education except later in life, if they sought spiritual edification. The slaves, on the other hand, were frequently women of exotic race or religion, educated and acculturated in their native climes, who brought cultural treasures from the older Asian, African, and European civilizations into the empire of Islam. Much effort was lavished on their education, for their purpose was to provide aesthetic and intellectual entertainment, as well, perhaps, as more basic pleasures. Being bought and sold, presented as gifts, and called upon to perform before their owners’ guests, they enjoyed a freedom unthinkable for legitimate wives and daughters. Thus, Bouhdiba maintains, these slave girls were the true vanguards of female liberation in the Arab world, and it is their prototype that is waiting, ready-made, for the modern Tunisian women to step into as she leaves the sequestration of the traditional family and assumes her role in public life.³⁹

The records that remain of the *qiyān* who performed in taverns and public houses survived generally due to the “anathema hurled at them by orthodox moralists.”⁴⁰ In Fatimid times there seems to have been self-employed female singers as well, who lived more independent lives in respectable districts. These women sang at private parties and weddings, and reportedly kept the neighbors up at night.⁴¹

STYLISTIC REGIONS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MUSIC

Beyond the African continent, astonishingly little is known about the origins of African people in spite of skilled and persistent investigations during the last few decades. The diverse stylistic regions of Sub-Sahara Africa are therefore as difficult to study thoroughly as the various African dialects. Nevertheless, an abridged examination of stylistic traits of representative sections of the Guinea Coast, the Khoisan area, Sudan, the Congo, the Eastern Cattle area, and the Pygmies will indicate some of the similarities and differences among the cultures of the communities within this vast zone. A conscientious historical study of African music should not be restricted to the development of forms and style, as this music is very much a part of social and cultural life. Thus, factors that link African society with the outside world are included to widen the investigation of the stylistic regions.

II. Eastern Cattle Area

Documentary history for much of this region begins in the early second century with *The Circumnavigation of the Indian Ocean*, a commercial handbook written in Greek. Early sailors along the shores of what is now Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania describe the markets as part of the efficient network of Indian Ocean trade.⁴² The majority of ships entering the area were from Egypt and western India. Fragments of these early cultures have been found along the East African coastline, where trade routes from the interior meet the Indian Ocean traffic.

Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania (the latter formed by the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964),⁴³ form the 618,934-square-mile area of East Africa. The music, customs, creeds, languages, and general ways of living are so diverse that it is difficult to draw general conclusions regarding style. It is clear, though, that the music is extremely rich in rhythm. Rhythms serve a vital function in all dancing and as a means of communication in daily life.

Tribes of East Africa (e.g., Sogo, Ganda, and Acholi) prefer quick and “hot” rhythms in dancing. Slow and graceful rhythms are popular among the Tusi (Watusi), Kiga, and Karamojang dancers. These rhythms are rich enough to sustain dancing without instrumental or vocal accompaniment.

The chief dancing instrument is the drum. In addition to tuned drums of the Ganda people, large drum ensembles are common but never comprise more than four to six drums. The drumming among the Ganda in Nankasa involves the use of such drums of varying sizes. Expanded ensembles would merely double these standard instruments. Each dancer in Bwola dances of the Acholi carries a small drum in the left hand and a beating stick in the right hand (each dancer playing the same unison rhythms).

In nearly all areas of East Africa clapping is very common, though it is not always used to accompany dances. In the *bwola*, *dingi-dingi*, and *laraka oraka* dances of the Achoi, clapping is not used at all. Possibly because of the highly organized nature of Agwara dances (which leaves little room for improvisation), clapping is likewise omitted from the *bwola* and *dingi-dingi* dance styles. In various other dances, however, clapping helps singers and drummers to keep steady time. This also enables musicologists to determine accents when transcribing traditional African rhythms.

In Bugunda, drums are sounded to call people to do communal work, such as the building of village roads or footbridges across swamps (*bulungi bwansi*). Drums warn people of approaching danger and call them to defend their village. The use of drums for calling people to worship came with the introduction of Christianity. Shouting while beating the lips rhythmically is also used to signal villagers of approaching individuals.

III. Congo Area

The Old Kingdom of Congo had extended as far as today's Stanley Pool along the banks of the Zaire and Congo Rivers. The king of Congo lost his authority in the area to the north of the Congo River when the Portuguese discovered it in 1482. A new capital was established at Mbanza Congo, situated approximately in the center of the region, creating new geographical boundaries. The king continued to rule the Bantu-speaking tribes, who were skilled in various arts and crafts such as metal works (including iron and copper) and weaving. These people had little or no contact with the more advanced people of the Niger area, where, as early as the fifteenth century, a flourishing university was established at Timbuktu.⁴⁴ The Congolese, nonetheless, were later enthusiastic about adopting some of the ways of Western civilization.

Central African Republic

In the center of the African continent lies the region known as the Central African Republic. This area, bordered by Oubangui in the south and Chari in the north, is comprised of numerous ethnic groups that are unevenly distributed throughout the 280,454 square miles of landmass.

Bagandou music of the M'baika region of the Central African Republic employs a thirteen-keyed *sanza*, *manza*, and other xylophones of various sizes. Linda music (Bambari region), uses nose whistles and *ingoma* drums in some situations, as well as *kalangha* xylophones and wicker rattles to accompany songs and dances. The *ingoma* drums are considered among the most traditional African instruments and were used solely at the king's court in the past.

Cameroon

Immediately west of the Central African Republic is Cameroon and the music of the Bakweri, Bamileke, Bamoun and Beti. A diverse representation of musical forms and instruments are found within this area. Dance music for youth (e.g., *mendou* and *mbgwana*) and ritual music for the passage of youths into adult society are types of Bamoun music (*nekian*, performed every two years is an example).

The Bamoun court has been noted for the invention of new dances, and for its general artistic vitality. Nboemboe (called the "Giant-King") removed the cloak of secrecy from the *banzie* dance in order to win a war against the Fula.⁴⁵ From that point on dance has expanded and developed to a point where today as many as thirty or more dancers may be used for a dance formerly danced in private by two or three members of the court. The *mvét* (imported from Southern Cameroun) is popular at



Ugandan musician Samite Mulondo.

the Bamoun court. The *fok* horn (made from bamboo) is also popular in Bamoun and is generally played by women.

The *kufo*, a secret funeral dance of the Bamileke performed for a princess and other distinguished persons, is danced once a year at the most. The instrumental ensemble for this occasion includes three double bells with external clappers, scapulary bells carried on the shoulders of three men, large tubular drums, and a large funnel-shaped skin drum. Another dance, *lali* (a secret war dance), is performed with the musicians concealed while playing. This dance is reserved exclusively for members of the secret society.

Republic of the Congo

Most of the inhabitants of the Congo Republic (formerly the Belgian Congo) have lived for many centuries in a manner that still exists today. Though most of its inhabitants have never united themselves in states, there has been some degree of social exchange (particularly in more current times) between the various peoples.

In the northeast lies the Ituri Rain Forest, inhabited by Pygmy tribes as well as tribes driven from the east by stronger warring tribes and slave traders. From the north came the Bangbetu, from the east the BaLese, and from the south the BaBira and BaNdaka. These migrations brought Sudanic, Bantu, and Arabic influences to the region, which combined with indigenous Pygmoid traditions.

The music of the non-Pygmy tribes is highly instrumental and includes harps, lyres, zithers, the musical bow, sacred makata sticks, gongs, and numerous other instruments. The music of the Pygmy tribes, on the other hand, is vocal in emphasis. A harp, thumb piano (*sanza*), or a stick-zither often accompanies non-Pygmy vocal songs. A vocal music tradition is strong among the Balese (of Sudanic origin) who settled near the Pygmies after being driven into the forest and who adopted many Pygmy traditions and customs. The BaBira and several other tribes settled in the narrow strip of eastern grassland. Consequently, their music is freer of Pygmy influence and relies heavily on instrumental accompaniment.

The Pygmy

Though many aspects of their lives are inaccessible (knowledge of religious practices, for example), it is known that the forest is the source of all good and for spiritual and practical manifestations for the Pygmy. Other communities consider it a place filled with danger. Music is essential to their culture and traditions and can be roughly divided into at least three categories: *molimo* and *elima* are religious songs; hunting and gathering songs are recreational music; and play songs are the only secular. Because of the extremely high regard the Pygmies hold for the forest, all other songs, which deal with daily life, are considered sacred. The *Nkumbi* initiation, a circumcision rite brought to the region by non-Pygmies, is the only formal ceremony in their tradition for which music has been imported from another tribe.

Much exchange and intermarriage has transpired recently between the Mbuti Pygmies and the neighboring tribes living on the edge of the forest. The Balese relied heavily upon the nomadic Mbuti for help and exchange of forest products for farm products. The BaBenzele and Babinga Pygmies in the Central Congo engage in limited exchange with neighboring tribes at the edge of the forest, causing some Pygmies to settle near their neighbors. This contact has unfortunately resulted in a state of semi-slavery, a condition under which “patrons” take Babinga wives and force



Double bell (*gankogui*) and other metal bells (*dodompe* and *toke*)
(Photo by Alissa Roedig).

other Pygmies to convert to their own customs. On the other hand, the BaBenzele live in the dense forest of the Sangha watershed (a tributary of the Congo), where non-Pygmy tribes are reluctant to enter. They spend most of the year hunting buffalo, gorilla, warthog, gazelle, elephant, and other wild game. For a few weeks during the dry season the BaBenzele barter with the villagers, when they may adopt some of the villagers' customs and language (Sango), only to abandon them completely once entering the forest.

BaBenzele possessions are often made from plants and animals so as not to hamper their nomadism and freedom. Their sense of independence is contained in their music,

as is true of other Pygmy traditions. The themes are often centered around the pursuit of game, with drums and clapping often accompanying the music and dancing.

Vocal music is generally polyphonic, so that Pygmy group singing predominates while unison singing is rare. Songs are often binary and symmetrical, providing a basic structure for soloists to respond with a chorus or to improvise (always in a coherent fashion). Polyphonic devices include parallel fifth movement, improvised melismas, melodic imitation, decorated pedal-notes, persistent motifs, and contrapuntal variations.⁴⁶ Words are not of significance in BaBenzele and other Pygmy music. Vocal articulation is often limited to a few syllables and onomatopoeic repetition.⁴⁷

Again, due to the nomadic tendencies of the Pygmy, the music utilizes few musical instruments to accompany the vocal songs. Besides the *hindewhu* (whistle), only percussion instruments are used. Three drums are of primary importance: the *motopae* (symbolizing male energy), the *maitu* (symbolizing female energy), and the *mona* (symbolizing the energy of the male child).⁴⁸ Ovoid rattles (*awoka*) and dry seeds strung on a vegetable fiber fitted around dancers' ankles (*mangaze*) are among the few other instruments used to accompany Pygmy songs and dances.

IV. Guinea Coast Area

The stretch of land from Senegal to Lake Chad is referred to as West Africa. It includes the countries (from west to east) Mauretania, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, and Cameroun. The coastal belt of this area is often referred to as the Guinea Coast. Two points are significant in regard to the Guinea Coast area. First, the majority of slaves were taken from this area during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It is generally believed that fifteen to twenty million Africans were transported to America alone during the period from circa 1640 onward.⁴⁹ Second, during this same period, somewhat paradoxically, Guinea Black kingdoms flourished (in a fashion similar to the earlier great empires of western Sudan) in spite of the fact that a great portion of the young and healthy population was subjugated. Slaves sent to the southern part of the Western Hemisphere, unlike those sent to North America, were able to maintain much of their culture through *batouques* (displays of tribal dancing and drumming). These displays were encouraged by Portuguese slave traders in an effort to create divisiveness and animosity among the slaves.⁵⁰ The numerous tribal rivalries that existed prior to the coming of the Europeans to Africa facilitated the efforts of foreigners to divide and conquer Africans throughout the continent. Liberia and Nigeria, located on opposite ends of the Guinea Coast area, will serve as representative regions for the examination of this cultural area of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Liberia

Liberia has three distinct regions: a coastal belt, a highland belt of dense unexplored forest, and an inland belt of rich farmland and numerous towns and villages. Over twenty distinct tribes speak many different languages including Bassa, Kru, Lowa, Grebo, Kpelle, Vai, Der, and Kralin. Each tribe tends to maintain its own unique customs and traditions.

Music holds a prominent position in tribal life, serving in marriage ceremonies, funerals, rituals, and other tribal traditions. Traditional folk songs are usually performed by large ensembles and include a variety of drums; these are distinguished according to tone, rhythm, or by their pairing with an assortment of idiophones. The most common of these instruments are the *tanga* drums (pressure drums) and the wooden *zlet*-drums.

Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, Africa's largest country, is divided into twelve regions with the south eastern region covering an area of 13,166 miles and has a population of over three and a half million. The Efik, Ibibio, and Annang to the south, and the Ejagham, Ekoi, Hausa and Yoruba in the remainder of the country, are among the major ethnic groups.

It is difficult to separate the vocal and instrumental music of the Ibibios. Their dialect is inflectionary in character, producing speech rhythms that have influenced both the drumming and dancing styles. Since they were cut off from the effects of colonialism for a long period, their culture has remained much more intact than that of other Nigerian peoples. The *ekpo* masquerade, therefore, is quite different than any other musical tradition of Nigeria. It is interesting to observe that parallels exist between traditional



**Nigerian artist and musician Prince
Twins Seven-Seven.**

music of the Ibibios and certain modern Western music, such as the harmonies found in Bartok string quartets that are the result of the individual movement of the independent parts. Likewise, a use of vocal patterns analogous to *Sprechstimme* commonly associated with Schoenberg and other Western classical composers, is also characteristic of Ibibio style.

The Yoruba and the Hausa are two other societies found within Nigeria. The Yoruba hunter's association (*ijala*) uses a form of chanting characterized by a large



Kora-player and *jeli* Mamadou Diabate from Mali performing with Hesterian Musicism at Cornell University in October 1999 (*Photo by Nicola Kountoupes*).



“Untitled” (left) and “The Spirit of Percussion” (right) – artwork by Nigerian artist Twins Seven-Seven.

variety of texts or verses which are performed at rituals and ceremonial occasions. The Hausa live in a stratified society. Consequently, their music making is left to the lower class while the upper class is content with being entertained.

V. Khoisan Area

Before Portuguese sailors landed in this southern region of Africa in the late fifteenth century, little was known about the Khoisan area. In fact, European settlers in its extreme southwestern corner did not encounter the Bantu-speaking tribesmen until 1702 in an area west of Port Elizabeth. Although most of this area (which includes the Kalahari Desert) is comprised of arid regions with sparse populations, many South African historians claim that the areas inhabited by indigenous tribes have the most favorable natural conditions.



Ghanaian master-drummer Obo Addy.

Bushmen may be the oldest inhabitants of the African continent, but their prehistory is obscure. Their anatomy, language, and culture are unique among indigenous African peoples. The characteristic clicks gurgles and guttural sounds of their language have influenced the Bantu and other tribes in the Khoisan area.

Bushmen are divided into three main tribes: the Kaikoum, the Auen and the !Kung. The Auen live in the southern Kalahari; a few Kaikoum live in eastern Ovamboland (South-West Africa); and the largest group, the !Kung, live in the north, west, and central Kalahari.

The !Kung make music on all occasions all day long. The *sanza*, the most common instrument, is used to accompany dancing and singing and is played only by men. The one-stringed fiddle, however, is played by both sexes. The fiddle is made from bamboo with animal sinew for the vibrating string, and a dried calabash, ostrich egg shell, or the mouth provides the resonating chamber. Though the music of the Bushmen has not been studied extensively by musicologists, they have a reputation as being Southern Africa's most proficient musicians.

Other traditional music can be found in all regions of Southern Africa. Much of the music in other portions of the region has assumed a more contemporary form. In Angola, in particular, freedom songs have continued to evolve since the rebellion

against Portuguese rule began in March 1961. These songs are concerned with the many villages destroyed by Portuguese bombs, the inhumane living situations to which aboriginal people have been subjected, and other injustices.

VI. Sudan

To the south of the Sahara and the Libyan Desert (one of the hottest and driest desert areas in the world) lies a belt of vegetation that is economically rich and which provides a favorable route for travelers across the continent. Across from the southern Egyptian border was the channel through which Egyptian influence passed southwards to the rest of Africa. Its inhabitants, Cushite tribesmen, ruled northern Sudan for the best part of a thousand years.

Many world cultures have influenced other portions of Sudan as well. During earlier times, the dominant cultures (Kingdoms of Nubia, Merewetiks, etc.) were located in the north. Sudan, touching on nine other countries, has seen the migrations of many small independent ethnic groups bringing such instruments as the Arab *rebec* (a pear-shaped two-or three-stringed instrument) and the *alkaita* (a reed instrument found in Central Africa and northern Nigeria).

Northern Sudan

Northern Sudan is comprised of four main cultures: the Nubians (the most ancient), the Mahass, the Galien, and the Shaigai, all living on the Nile River. The Nubians use the lyre and the duff (a single-headed drum) to accompany songs and dances. The music is sometimes melancholy with a single melody being performed in a variety of social situations. The tradition of the Mahass is similar.

The rich musical culture of the Shaigai is cheerful and often satirical. The melodies are brief love songs; exotic dances accompanied by the lyre or two *daluka* drums (a clay sounding-box covered with goatskin).

Galien people are noted for having a wealth of songs including *dobeit*, which was introduced by Arabian nomads. *Dobeit* is an elegy which nomads sang at night during early journeys.

Western Sudan

Western Sudan is divided into the provinces of Kordufan and Darfur. Cattle-breeding nomadic people form a large portion of the population. These people exchange cultural traditions continuously. Songs are closely related to dances, and the names of their presentations (*bassies*, *garuri*, *agako*, etc.) are applicable to both songs and dances.

A wide assortment of traditional dance styles exist in western Sudan. *Akako* is a lively dance in compound triple time (also referred to as *mardom*) in which, traditionally, boys stamp their feet while girls clap their hands to accompany the singing. Dance is also a vital part of the musical traditions of the Funy tribe, other Biji people, and the Gumuz tribe. The Gumuz practice the *moshembe da*, where three dancers, including the *kujur* (witch doctor), perform to the rhythms of the *bangia* (lyre) and four *penah* (wind instruments). Many of the numerous dances of the Shilluka in southern Sudan also utilize the lyre.

THE FUNCTION OF AFRICAN MUSIC IN AFRICAN CULTURE

Music plays an integral part in rituals of birth and puberty, at marriage and death, in secret-society initiations, and in rituals of livelihood (e.g., hunting, farming, gathering, etc.). Parties often set out singing and dancing their way from one village to another, or a dance may be held to cement good relations with a neighboring village. Costumes, masks, and musical instruments usually attain an “aura of sacredness” in ceremonies and rituals.⁵¹ The Watusi royal drums, for example, are thought to represent a soul (symbolized by a pebble inside) that can do away with evil spirits.

Audience participation, a type of communal sharing, has greater importance in African music than in most Western music. Interaction is closely related to ceremony and ritual. In the West, a symphonic concert is a one-way process where an ensemble performs while the audience waits quietly and patiently for the prescribed moments where it is permissible to applaud. This too is a ritual, but the behavior is generally restricted to a stylized expression of appreciation at the conclusion of a performance, and a spontaneous response at other times is prohibited by tacit agreement. The collective participation characteristic of African music is retained in African-American music when it is performed in African or African-American communities. This emotional freedom attracts listeners from all over the world. Hand clapping, finger popping, vocal prompting, and foot tapping during performances are not considered offensive but are viewed as signs of ardent approval that help to motivate the performing artist.

Music is learned as part of one’s cultural and practical education, the birthright of all African children, which provides not only musical education but also a comprehensive preparation for all of life. Young children are often merely listeners at first, but as they get older they soon take an active part in the musical functions of the community. It is not uncommon for three- or four-year-old children to make their own musical instruments such as the frame drum (made from a window frame and animal hide) and then immediately begin to imitate their elders. Musical games have an extremely important educational function among the young.

African children acquire the fundamental principles of music at an early age because musical training is an intrinsic part of their mutual aesthetic and linguistic education. The seminal influence that music exerts on African people is a result of such early stimulation and instruction. The shared knowledge of music explains the communal nature of African (and subsequently African-American) art forms, where high degrees of participation provide outlets for individual musical expression.

Musical sensibilities are actuated, developed, and reinforced through the widespread use of tonal languages, where a single word can have several meanings depending on the pitch or inflection applied. In many areas of Africa, children thus learn to distinguish differences in musical pitch through language. African languages acquire an inherent musicality as pitch acuity and melodic differentials are combined with the rhythmic accents inherent in all languages. Words spoken for reasons of communication take on a musical aesthetic; a conversation between two individuals easily develops the rhythmic pacing and pattern of a quasi-musical performance. One Nigerian musicologist reports that “Yoruba folksongs are, without exception, sung to the tonal inflection of words. . . . So much is this the case that when they listened to simple melodies like the bugle call, the Alberti Bass, or ‘La Paloma,’ they readily found words to them. . . . Yoruba music is entirely governed by the tonal inflection of words.”⁵²

The blending of African tonal language, eidetic knowledge, and music education with rhythmic pitch value (associated with lyrics governed by the tonal inflection of words) results in heightened musical sensibility. This vocally grounded process transfers readily to African instrumental music. The “talking” drums found in Ghana, Nigeria, and other African countries provide clear examples of such transference.

The West African *dundun* is perhaps the best known of African talking drums. This hourglass-shaped drum is fashioned with heads that are capable of modulating melodically through a wide range of pitches when the leather cords connecting the top and bottom heads receive pressure from squeezing and relaxing them with arm motion. The sound produced is capable of closely representing the tones and subtle inflections of the languages. With the forced inculcation of Western languages and methods of education, the drum script has been grossly diminished. Some master drummers still pass this tradition on to their children. Official drummers were considered sacred and were chosen carefully for their work in African communities. European missionaries and other invaders later discouraged practitioners of such ilk from practicing their art. Many European youth learn to connect optical phonetic signs with their symbolic musical meanings during their course of training, just as young Africans formerly learned the art of understanding the acoustical phonetic signs of the drums in Africa.⁵³

Elements of texture, rhythms, melody as well as linguistic influences were preserved in both African and African-American music despite efforts to destroy African culture



Talking drum (Photo by Alissa Roedig).

in the West. Europeans knew the power of such spiritually based aesthetic forces and, consequently, drums (in particular) and other traditional African instruments were forbidden in America during the slave era.

Adult status within many African cultures began when the adolescent was initiated into adult society, and a variety of music was used to accompany the celebration of this transition. Similar traditions still survive in many regions on the African continent. Among the Adiuiku of the Guinea Coast Area (Ivory Coast) tom-toms are ascribed attributes of human beings and are thought to converse with the young initiates. During these graduation ceremonies (*Iobu*) adolescents dance from one age class to

another. The young men allowed their hair to grow and dressed as women until the end of the rite of passage, when their hair was cut and they were allowed to dress in men's clothes. The new members then proceeded to careen wildly around the village until the ceremony ended (with music and dancing).

Music also serves a functional purpose in legal, political, and historical capacities. In some areas it played a prominent role in the maintenance of law and order in earlier times. Traditionally, a plaintiff would often sing his or her case and was judged in terms of the quality of his performance, without referring to guilt or innocence. The most important ideas were to maintain order or, perhaps, to reprimand the wrongdoer without branding him a criminal (particularly for a first offense). Being judged a poor singer could usually be sufficient punishment, and, since the hearing was public, the ridicule was immediate and the offender knew to watch his or her step in the future. Far more important than punishment was prevention in traditional African society, and music was used (particularly in royal courts) as a way of perpetuating the traditional guidelines and ways of the ancestors by singing of those ways. Minstrels wandering the countryside still sing the news of the day and sing of the things pleasing to the ancestors (the good life that all people are expected to lead).⁵⁴

As with most traditional, preliterate societies, the music was socially controlled. Traditional musical activities occurred in private and recreational spheres. The traditional roles were often rigidly prescribed regarding the general framework, responsibilities, and performance of the music. Spontaneous instrumental and vocal songs, on the other hand, continue to enjoy great freedom of expression.

The primary function of music in Africa is communication. It enables participants to "speak with God." In such communication, words are inadequate and without power. When combined with performance and various instruments, music contains the power to convey feelings or emotions rather than naked words.⁵⁵ In traditional African society, with its emphasis on community experience and involvement, music has remained essential to institutional life.

AN OVERVIEW OF MUSICAL STYLE

Music traditions may be observed in every community within the African continent. In most cases, these traditions are both long-standing and complex. Anthropologists and linguists have been able to map the important culture and language areas, although there is much overlapping: the Bantu language, for example, is spoken in both the pastoral and agricultural areas of the region. A similar delineation of musical style, however, has not proven quite as practical thus far. Though earlier observations revealed the predominance of polyphony in parallel fourths and fifths in eastern and southern regions and parallel thirds in central and western regions,

further investigations found much more intermingling of intervals than previously suspected.⁵⁶ It is interesting that the interval of the tritone (augmented fourth or diminished fifth) is a salient feature in both vocal and instrumental music throughout Africa. It is also an important interval in African-American blues and “jazz” music.

Africans have developed systems of classification of songs. The Bahutu of Ruanda (Burundi) have at least twenty-four different types of social songs. There are songs played by professional musicians for entertainment, songs for harvesting and other work songs, war songs, beer drinking songs, songs commemorating the birth of children, songs admonishing erring members of the society, songs deriding Europeans, vulgar songs, etc. Social songs are separated from ceremonial or religious songs. The Bahutus have other songs associated with paddling against a strong current, paddling with the current, etc.

Examples of music for political purposes include the elaborate fanfares of the Hausa of Nigeria and the elaborate classification of musical genres (according to levels of political leadership) among the Venda of South Africa. Songs are likewise used to spread information on current events of interest, to diffuse gossip, and to perpetuate knowledge. The accompanying rhythms of work songs coordinate tedious group work, making the task easier. The Watusi, also of Ruanda (Burundi), whose lives are centered on their cattle, have songs for herding cattle home in the evening, songs of praise of cows, songs for drawing water for cattle, etc.

A vivid cultural dichotomy has resulted from the intermingling of Sub-Saharan Africans with Western and Eastern civilizations. The result has been, on the one hand, a vanishing of traditional music and, on the other, the appearance of a nucleus of art and “city” music. Notated examples and recorded evidence of traditional music collected before 1950 are relatively sparse, which greatly limits any historical overview of African music. Some interpretive evidence begins with recorded examples such as those supplied by the Czekanowski Central African Expedition of 1907–8. Other historical portraits may be reconstructed through the early musical legacies supplied by the highly biased records of early contacts with other musical cultures. Such evidence mentions several instruments of Malagasy, including an idiochordic tube zither tuned in thirds (*valiha*) and a free-log thigh-supported xylophone of Malayan origin, dated from the Malayo-Polynesian migrations (circa 2000 b.c. to circa a.d. 500) to Malagasy and the African mainland. Central African xylophone tuning strongly resembles (but is not necessarily derived from) some “ideal” isotonic tuning of the Far East (e.g., the five-step Indonesian *slendro* and the seven-step isotonic scale of Thailand).⁵⁷

In particular, African rhythmic ties with the Middle East and India may be even stronger than those with the Far East. Such ties may have eventually been defined through early migrations and invasions of ancient Egypt south of the Sudan, through the South Indian trade on the East African coast during the third and second centuries

b.c., and through the spread of Islam in Africa. A great deal of exchange occurred between the North Africans and the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa. Both musical instruments and formal types of certain techniques are held in common (harps, drums and responsorial singing are examples).

Prior to the advent of contemporary musicological documentation and Western appreciation of African music, African music may not have seemed “pleasing to the ear” of the non-African listener. Nevertheless, the aim of African musicians has been to express life through the medium of sound; not in a fashion that imitates nature, but one that takes natural sounds and incorporates them into music. To those unaccustomed to hearing and understanding this particular aesthetic perspective, the result may seem cacophonous. Nevertheless, each sound has a particular meaning that renders emotions and desires as naturally and directly as possible.⁵⁸

It is difficult to catalogue the many uses of music in Sub-Saharan Africa. In ways the music runs parallel to the uses of folk music in both the African-American and the European tradition. Religious and ceremonial music remains an important category, and a vast amount of music exists for entertainment (such as the performances of musicians at the marketplaces). There is also a larger category of social songs in Africa than is typical of music relegated to folk culture and nonliterate societies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN MUSIC

By Western standards, African music is characteristically complex; it is often polyrhythmic, heterophonic, and polyphonic. African musicians do not actively conceptualize the abstract principles of their music, however. It is apparent from the unhesitating participation of all members of the African community in musical performance that there are complex yet un verbalized principles underlying music making.⁵⁹ One of the characteristics that gives African music its distinctiveness is the large number of colorful instruments used both individually (as accompaniment to singing) and in large and small ensembles. Two or more events tend to occur simultaneously within a musical context. Even players of simple solo instruments (such as the musical bow or the flute) manage to manipulate the instrument in such a way to produce simultaneous sounds by playing overtones with the bow, by humming while bowing, and the like. A percussive quality of sound is always desirable (even on wind instruments). This particular preference is evident from the predominance of plucked string instruments (as opposed to bowed strings).

Melodies often consist of two balanced phrases. There is often a leader/chorus relationship in performance, and polyphonic performances are generally structured so that two parts or two groups of vocalists or instrumentalists often perform in antiphony. This binary musical form often occurs with variations or improvisations

on short melodic motifs. Much of traditional African music is associated with dance, which adds to the multidimensional effect of the presentation.

Density and motion are broad characteristics of performance style in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dense orchestral timbres combine with staccato articulation and high degrees of amplitude. High degrees of amplitude may be due to the fact that African music is generally performed outdoors. Musical and kinetic motion is constant, hurried, and complex; dancers and musicians attempt to create as much action as possible in a short time. Of course, there are exceptions; an evening story-singer in a performance on the musical bow, for instance, may be quite different. The range of musical approaches in Africa has always been extremely broad.

Overlapping choral antiphony and responsorial singing are principal types of African polyphony. Various combinations of ostinato and drone-ostinato, polymelody (mainly two-part), and parallel intervals are additional polyphonic techniques frequently employed. Several types may intermingle within one vocal or instrumental piece, with the resulting choral or orchestral tendency being the stacking of parts or voices. Consequently three- or four-part density is not an uncommon African musical feature. Such densities are constantly fluctuating so that continuous triads throughout an entire piece are uncommon. Canonic imitation may occur in responsorial or antiphonal sections of African music as a result of the repetition of the first phrase or the introduction of new melodic material in the form of a refrain. The latter may involve a contrasting section or a completion of the original melody. African ostinato is generally restricted to a relatively small pitch range and is usually short in length. It can occur intermittently or form a continuous pattern situated either above or below the principle melodic line.

Hocket is an important instrumental and vocal device, and is frequently paired with multi-ostinato. Several horns or flutes, each producing a single pitch, may execute both melodic and harmonic hocket derived from two or more ostinato lines. Accompanying dance styles can often include long, broad, outflowing (often convulsive) motion usually presented within an abstract or symbolic context.⁶⁰

Chordal relationships in African music that result from polyphonic combinations are not consonant with the major-minor Western harmonic system. Though these vertical concepts cannot be gauged precisely with Western musical tools, their functions include tension-release, dissonance-consonance, formal balance, varieties of chord combinations and clusters, as well as levels of harmonic patterning.⁶¹

There is no one African scale that is more common throughout the continent than others among the tremendous variety of scale forms. Certain elements that were retained in the African-American blues have obvious models in the musical variety of numerous African regions. Scales and melodies encompass a narrow range, and tetrachordal and pentachordal spans are common (though larger spans can certainly

be found in abundance). The embellishment of these basic scales with an infinite number of graduated pitches of both tempered and non-tempered microtonal varieties are related to the development that occurred with the evolution of the blues melody. The unique micro-tonic pitch system makes African melody subtle and can be disorienting to those accustomed to hearing performances of tempered scales that are fixed and standardized. Both conjunct and disjunct scale patterns are utilized, as are scales composed of equal intervallic relationships (isotonic). It must be noted that these African scales, pitch sets, etc., should not be hastily linked with similar European theoretical notions.

We find, therefore, that traditional African scales involve a diverse set of horizontal arrangements, varying in range and in number of units. Certain musical elements and styles are unique to a given district or village. Hugh Tracey in his study *Chopi Musicians* delineates five such scales corresponding to four villages within the Zavala district of Kenya: Chisiko, Mavila, Banguza, and Zandemela.⁶² Of course, Africans developed many of these scales, patterns, and traditions long before the Greek era. Dr. A. N. Tucker remarked that his work was complicated “by the Nilotic intervals not being quite the same as those of our pentatonic.”⁶³ While making recordings of music of the Nilo-Hamitic people, he realized that “the scale intervals of the native’s singing voice should be truer than those on the piano.”⁶⁴ This implies that Nilo-Hamitic tuning may involve just-intonation (in accordance with the natural overtone series) rather than based upon even temperament (originally a Western concept of tuning).

Form, in some varieties of African music, is often based on the immediate repetition of a musical phrase sustained throughout a piece (litany type) or on strophic forms (such as the verse forms found in Ghana). Two or more melodies may be combined to form larger sectional formations, with formal contrast being achieved through a series of musical movements or “acts,” each consisting of a section repeated several times.⁶⁵

Musical Instruments

African instruments may be classified as chordophones (stringed instruments), idiophones (instruments that are struck or shaken), membranophones (instruments covered with skin), aerophones (wind instruments), and electrophones (electrical instruments). The latter category includes amplified instruments (such as the electric guitar) found in urban cafes, night clubs, ballrooms, and other places of entertainment where the “highlife” of West Africa, the *kwella* of South Africa, and the popular music of the Congo use Western musical concepts and instrumentation to create new forms of art music. Musical instruments can also be classified as instruments with melodic functions and instruments with rhythmic functions.



Balafon (Photo by Alissa Roedig).

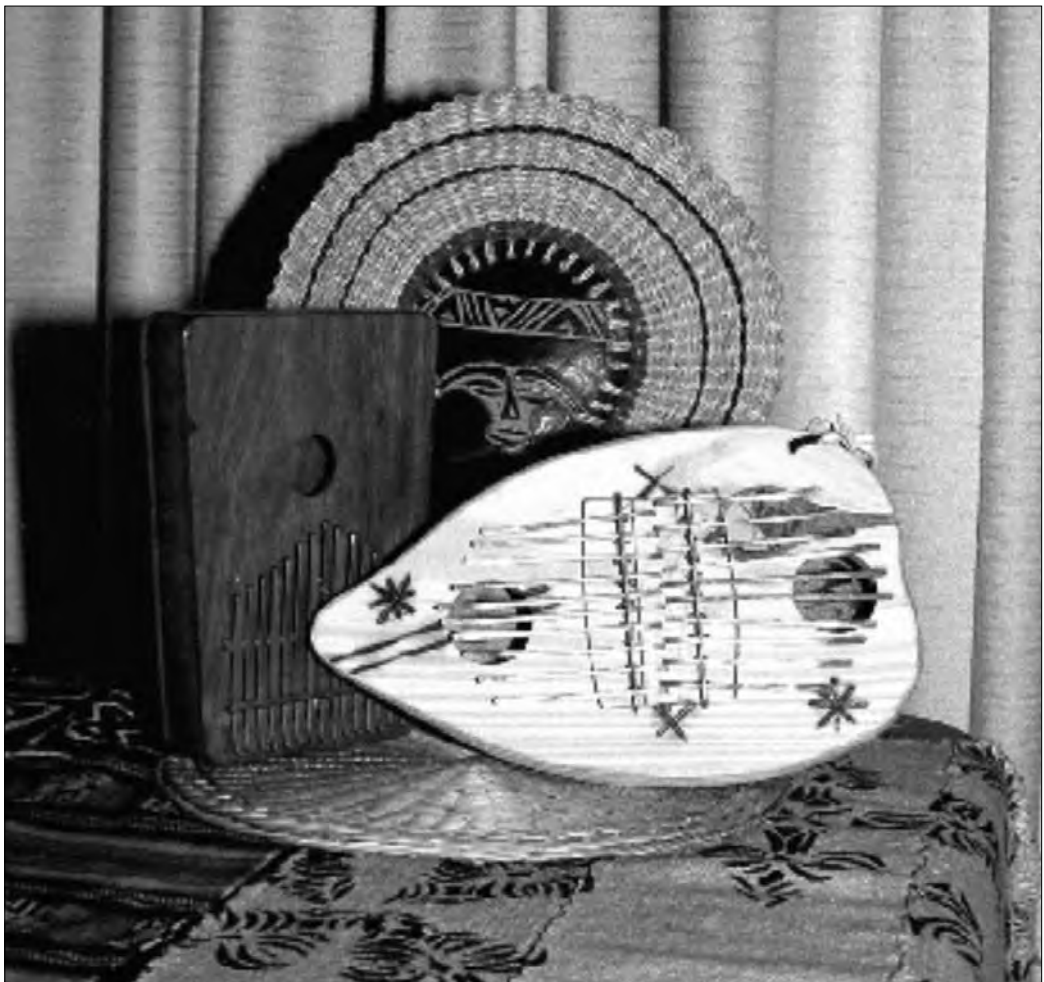
Chordophones are used both as a melodic and an accompanying instrument. The musical bow often appears with a resonator attached either in the middle or at the end of the bow; the mouth is often used as a resonator as well. The multiple bow lute, an instrument related to the musical bow, is a five- to eight-bowed instrument (each bow having a single string) found in Central Africa; the bows are attached to a resonator at one end. Zithers in stick, board, raft, trough, and frame form (e.g., the six-stringed triangular-frame zither of the Bassa of Liberia and the *inanga* or trough zither of Ruanda) are found in various areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. Harps and lyres (after Egyptian models) are rarely found south of the equator, and one-stringed fiddles found in many regions are often based on Arabian models.

African idiophones are found throughout Sub-Sahara Africa, and the *kalimbas* or thumb pianos are a popular brand of these indigenous instruments. The *sanza* (Central Africa, Mozambique, etc.) *mbira* (Southeast Africa), *kembe* (Central Africa), and *limba* (East Central and Southeast Africa) are other variations of thumb pianos found in the region. These instruments are small plucked idiophones consisting of flexible iron or bamboo tongues fixed across a board or box. Additionally, a calabash resonator may be attached to or may house the board. The thumbs (and occasionally the index fingers) are used to pluck the instrument, producing a delicate pizzicato sound.

The *mbira* is a unique Africa musical invention. Zimbabwe's musicians are among Africa's finest *mbira* players. Complex polyphonic melodies and polyrhythms frame

mbira compositions that are often performed in large mbira ensembles. Such ensembles may include the unifying rhythm of the *hosho* (gourd rattle), low-pitched ostinati performed by the mahon'era, and perhaps drums. Singing is integrated into the composed parts and variations. A high-pitched yodeling style called *huro* intensifies the music. *Kudeketera*, a rapidly executed declamatory style, introduces poetry reflecting various aspects of Shona life and history.

Vertical wooden or bamboo flutes, whistles, mirlitons (a kazoo-like instrument), transverse trumpets and horns of ivory (frequently with raised embouchures), and ocarinas are included in the aerophone category of African instruments. In Sub-Saharan Africa ensembles of five or more flutes or horns are typically found performing music in hocket. Wind instruments also include nose flutes, end-blown trumpets, transverse



Thumb pianos (kalimba and mbira) (Photo by Alissa Roedig).



Djembe (Photo by Alissa Roedig).

flutes, panpipes, and the bullroarer (an instrument which is often associated with circumcision rites and whose intermittent roaring sound is produced by whirling a slat of wood tied to the end of a leather thong). While the one- or two-pitched flutes and whistles are purely rhythmic in function, the five-stop flute used by the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria (along with various other multi-pitched flutes) serve melodic functions in African music.

Besides the numerous drums, African percussion instruments can be divided into two broad categories: instruments with rhythmic functions and instruments with melodic functions. Large gongs, twin gongs, and ritual gongs; rattles and foot rattle; woodblocks and bells are examples of instruments with rhythmic functions. Instruments with melodic functions include the various wooden and drum xylophones found throughout the region.

The *nyungu* (empty water jar) is an important percussion instrument commonly found in Ankole, Bugisu, Sebei, and Kitosi areas; the rhythms produced are used to accompany singing and dancing. Performers in both Kija and Nkole prefer to use two jars of different sizes simultaneously. Dry plantain fibers, which must be very crisp, are folded to form a beating pad that must cover the mouth of the jar completely with each stroke. The resulting sound is a gentle percussive effect. Using the two jars at the same time produces interesting cross-rhythms.

Membranophone drums are also utilized as both melodic and rhythmic instruments and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some of these drums are beaten with the hand, while other are beaten with a stick or rubbed. They are either single or double-headed and are played in ensembles of varying sizes. Kettledrums (the *ngoma* of South Africa), the West African hourglass “pressure” drum, clay pot drums (*bompili*) usually played by women, frame drums, and countless other drums are played throughout Africa.

Structures of African Rhythms

Rhythm is the most important factor in African music. Even melodic patterns generally serve rhythmic functions as well. An inclination toward ensemble playing lends itself to a wide assortment of vertical rhythmic relationships with Black African music. This results in a stylistic predisposition to the use of hemiola and polyrhythms. At least two independent rhythms are maintained even in solo performances (as previously noted in regard to performers on the musical bow, flutes, etc.). Additionally, each line may contain its own beat pattern, which may not coincide with the pattern of the other complimentary lines. The resulting effect should not be confused with syncopation, where lines are also offset to form a regular (single) underlying pulse. Polyrhythms have rhythmic points of reference, which mark broader rhythmic phrases for each independent pattern. Hand clapping or other percussive accompaniment might accentuate the underlying basic pulse.

Through the shifting of accents, the changing of orchestral timbre and density, and various other techniques, a wide spectrum of orchestral color is achieved. Master drummers and conductors often indicate the tempo, style, dance steps, and other factors, which vary within the course of a single piece of music.

Although there is a predominance of duple motifs, triple and alternating duple and triple motifs are utilized frequently. Similar patterns are found in different African societies, but certain patterns are typical of particular geographic areas (such as the bell patterns of the Niger and Congo regions).⁶⁶ Some instrumental rhythms (on melodic instruments) may be metrically free and abstract. Others are lyrical. Melodic instruments of one or two pitches can be effective in creating impressive rhythmic patterns.

Certain rhythmic characteristics link African music with “Black” music of other world cultures. Both metronism⁶⁷ (the presence of a strict metronomic pulse) and the importance of percussion are aspects of music that have been retained in the sacred and secular styles of “Black” music outside the African continent. Africanisms came to North America principally via West African sources (more specifically, from the Slave Coast in the vicinity of the Guinea Coast area). With the cessation of slavery, “Black” Americans maintained some of the African musical traditions through activities such as the drumming and dancing in Congo Square, the popularity of street parades, and the tradition of music at funerals.⁶⁸

African rhythmic characteristics have been retained in certain African-American music. The unique rhythmic elements contained in “jazz,” operating within various tonal and formal structures, represent one of the music’s main characteristics. In addition to the use of polyrhythms, hemiola, the shifting of accents, the application of syncopated patterns, and other devices, the interesting placement of accentuated notes and their relation to the basic pulse provides a source for additional rhythmic color and contrast. “Jazz” interpretation allows the performer the freedom to play consistently behind, ahead, on top of, or right on the underlying beat. These and other “jazz” concepts evolved from an early phase where the emphasis was on collective improvisation, where all instruments tended to play rhythmically. Polyrhythmic innovators, such as Elvin Jones, Max Roach, and Art Blakey, later developed revolutionary styles of “jazz” drumming that conveyed a sense of collective percussion improvisation on a single set of trap drums.

Classes of African Musicians

African musicians might be arbitrarily divided into three main categories: the non-professionals, the semiprofessionals, and the professionals. These musicians serve numerous functions for a variety of occasions in traditional African society.

Since all members of the community participate in music making, all Africans are musicians in the broadest sense. Music other than that of professional musicians, teachers, etc., is learned primarily through social experience and communal participation.

Many semiprofessional musicians earn a living through a portion of the year and rely on other occupations for the remainder of the year. Bambara farmers in Burkina Faso (Upper Volta) perform at festivals, during the dry seasons, at which villagers pay the musicians for their efforts. The Senufo orchestras are composed of ten musicians who are also blacksmiths. Many harp and lute players in other areas of Africa are also soothsayers or healers.

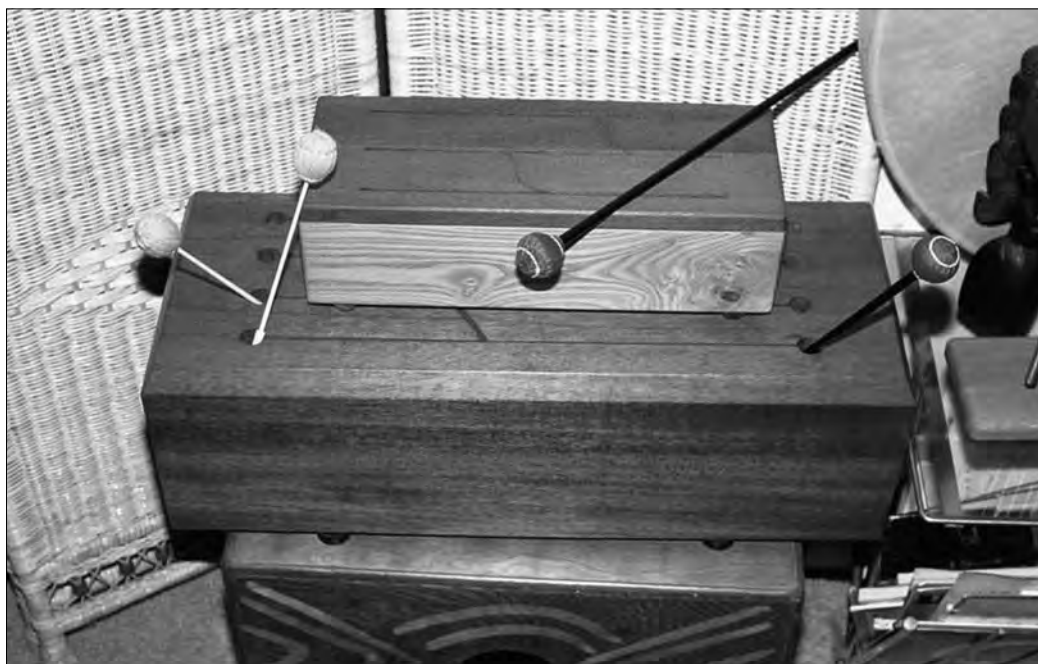
Numerous other African musicians earn their living solely through their musical offerings. Trained instrumentalists, master instrument builders, tuning specialists and

other professionals are found throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Musicians may be attached to the court of a ruler, who serves as their patron. Others are paid as they travel from village to village. Training generally takes the form of informal apprenticeships under the tutorial supervision of a relative. Mnemonic aids, such as the singing of nonsense syllables, serve as a basis for basic rote learning. The methods are similar to those used in teaching Hindu drumming and Japanese *gagaku*.

The Basongye of the Congo have five classes of musicians: the professional instrumentalists; performers of slit drums; the rattle and double bell players; the song leader; and members of vocal ensembles. Most Basongye tend to have a low regard for musicians and discourage their children from becoming musicians. Ironically, musicians are still a vital part of the community.

In some societies the privilege of playing particular musical instruments is governed by strict rules. In Ruanda, for example, the privilege of playing the six royal drums was reserved for one particular musician. Only a few young musicians of exceptional virtuosity can aspire to be one of the official drummers. Drumming styles are based on multiple polyrhythms, syncopation, polymetrical stratification, and dense textures.

The structure of Mandinka society involves three levels of stratification. The privileged class of nobles (*foroolu*) at the upper strata is followed by the artisans called the amaaloolu. Blacksmiths (*numoolu*), leather workers (*karankeolu*), and *jalis* (or *jelis*)



Slit drums (*ogoro*) (Photo by Alissa Roedig).

are the professionals who make up this class. The *jalis* proper and the *finas* are the two subclasses formed by the subdivision of *jalis* class. The subclass of *jalis* proper consists of musicians who inherit the profession from their fathers. The poet-praise singers who do not play a musical instrument form the subgroup *finas*. The *jalis* subgroup serves as the patron group for the *finas* in a relationship similar to that where the nobles in the village serve as patrons to the *jalis* proper.⁶⁹

Jalis are entertainers who sing and play music to provide music for listening pleasure. They perform numerous other functions including mediating between disputants, serving as marriage brokers, and often functioning as intermediaries between suitors and the parents of the young women considering marriage. Although means of travel is changing in modern times, *Jalis* traditionally visited their patrons and lodged in each of their homes for a few days, bringing their entire family with them. Currently, however, the state of *jaliyaa* practice involves several male *jalis* combining their resources to hire a taxi, not only to circulate between the homes of their patrons, but to make visits to the homes of other wealthy people as well.⁷⁰

Jalis enjoy a special level of privilege enabling them to infringe upon the customs of society, ignore social restraint, and break social taboos without fear of reprisal. The *foroolu* do not enjoy such privileges. A *jali* could, for example, “insult someone’s mother or run naked down the street without any serious consequences.”⁷¹

The two main instruments on which the *jali* perform are the *koora* (a twenty-one-stringed harp-lute) and *baloo* (a nineteen- to twenty-one-keyed xylophone). Although people think of *jali* in terms of their instrumental capabilities, “a good instrumentalist does not feel complete unless he has at least one wife who is a good vocalist.”⁷²

One of the best-known classes of African musicians of professional caliber is the group of griots. Griots are more esoteric musicians who may be recognized by their characteristic surnames: Keita, Munadi, Diubate, Dibate, Kuyate, and Sory.⁷³ They are recognized as professional musicians throughout Africa and feared for their dabbling in witchcraft. This caste of people transmit their musical legacies from one generation to another and serve to invoke supernatural beings, singing praises to ensure their satisfaction. The role of the griot in some African societies, in regard to praise singing and historical chants, is extremely important.

Griots, being much more concerned with past events than future ones, are familiar with the history, the philosophies, ethics, and most other aspects of their societies and can relate detailed information to their listeners from memory. This may be accomplished through riddles and proverbs that recall events no longer within the realm of contemporary memory.

Acquiring their virtuosity from years of study under a tutor, griots are comparable in many ways to the troubadour of medieval Europe. In addition to telling old stories, they are constantly collecting new ones for their audiences. Their repertoire includes

music for special occasions as well as improvised songs for benevolent patrons. Griots are quick to slander those who are not so generous.

In Equatorial Africa, the players of the *mvet* (harp zither) are the equivalent of the West African griots. They serve the multiple functions of musician, dancer, sibyl, and keeper of the oral tradition. Unlike the griot, the *mvet* is not treated with scorn since his repertoire does not include songs improvised to praise the rich. Within the music, though, there is ample space for musicians to display their improvisational skills. All African musicians serve to benefit the community at large.

EUROPEAN METHODS OF EXAMINING AFRICAN CULTURE

In her article “Sub-Saharan Africa” Barbara Reeder Lundquist concludes that three historical events affected the Sub-Saharan Africans: the slave trade, European dominance, and the imposition of national cultures. For many Sub-Saharan cultures, music is a means of “power gathering,” a method of demonstrating membership within a community. The music leaders have an elevated position in their society because of the high value placed upon music. Sub-Saharan music generally de-emphasizes terraced and other varieties of contrasting dynamics in favor of sustained intensity.

John G. Jackson discusses both the deliberate destruction of African culture and the misunderstanding of African history by students whose knowledge comes from the largely Eurocentric documentation. In the chapter “The Destruction of African Culture” (in his *Introduction to African Civilizations*) Jackson reminds the reader that often African history is presented in such a manner as to claim the best aspects of its culture for Europe or Asia. The ancient Egyptians’ knowledge of mathematics and astronomy was much more extensive than we are generally led to believe by most historical documents written by early European historians. It follows, therefore, that this must have also been the case in other African kingdoms where, as in Egypt, pyramids were constructed and where other evidence of advanced technical knowledge is encountered.

Kofi Agawu sets three problems for ethnomusicology: the location of disciplinary borders, the problem of translation, and “a network of political and ideological matters.” Agawu asks, “What sort of ethical issues constrain the practical effort to understand another culture? What is the relationship between empire and ethnomusicological representation? Can we—that is, is it a good thing to—study any music without taking note of the social, economic, political, and technological circumstances of its producers?”⁷⁴

Agawu posits that judgmental comments to describe music should be encouraged whether the critic is ignorant about the background of the music, or not. He suggests that flawed judgment can give us information about the beholder. Compared to earlier periods of ethnographic research, critics of today may be “less confident about what their ears tell them,”⁷⁵ because they are perhaps a bit more humble and, consequently,

less ignorant about the subjects they investigate. Being less quick to judge African and other world music without researching its ethnological background may create a more reliable body of historical information.

Ethnomusicologists, like most “jazz” critics, usually present credentials that have little meaning within certain performance mediums. From an Afrocentric musical perspective, where individuals have studied, how many performances they have attended, or how large their record collections are have far less validity than their level of performance proficiency on a musical instrument, or how well they dance in the cultural style they are reviewing. Credentials may produce a sense of empowerment within a closed social group, but “a collective ‘us,’ whether a reference to Westerners, white males, or ethnomusicologists, is no more valid than a collective ‘them,’ which lumps people with different abilities and levels of knowledge about tradition and culture.”⁷⁶

Of course, if we fail to give proper attention to the environment in which any subject is found, then our investigation can hardly be deemed empirical. If this practice occurs as a systematic attempt to distort history, it is unfortunate, to say the least. The first spoken words were recorded in pictures etched on rocks in caves to preserve a moment of the history of humankind. As we have evolved to more precise and sophisticated tools of communication (eventually entrusting scholars with the responsibility of keepers of knowledge) racism, sexism, and other bigotry have often thwarted honest and objective reporting. Although this may in itself be instructive, revealing sustained insecurity and tendencies toward malfeasance, it is a dangerous practice when the preservation of knowledge is regarded as a somewhat sacrosanct domain.

The sincere foreign student of African music (or any other music that is unfamiliar) must also attempt to leave cultural baggage behind. It is an extremely difficult task for any of us to accomplish. Biases, cultural and otherwise, are made apparent in the choice of words a listener may choose to describe a musical performance with which she or he may be unfamiliar. We must remember, after all, that words such as unpleasant, discordant, disorganized, etc. are frequently socially conditioned responses subjectively described in politically charged terms. Complete objectivity is a near impossible position or state of existence. We must strive to check provincial orientation and subjective opinions, nevertheless, when attempting to understand African music. “The notorious distinction between what ‘we’ as Westerners and what ‘they’ as Africans hear must be replaced by distinctions between what any two individuals hear. . . . Such democratization is only conceivable in a world in which representer and represented inhabit the same sociological and political spheres.”⁷⁷

Careful consideration and study of the process of artistic creation can unveil key aspects of sociocultural expression and behavior that can lead to new levels of appreciation and understanding. In making a comparison between a timeless African folk tradition and two centuries of functional harmony, W. E. F. Ward proposes that

African harmony may be “as far developed as European harmony in the sixteenth century.” He continues: “Africans have not merely cultivated their sense of rhythm far beyond ours, but must have started with a superior sense of rhythm from the beginning.”⁷⁸ We must ask the question, however: How do we benefit from “contests” involving comparisons of music of a particular culture with that of another?

In the chapters that follow we will begin to reveal the African origins of “jazz.” Although the influences of European colonization affected both the Americas and West Africa dramatically, many Africans feel that music is an area where tradition remained relatively stable in many regions of Africa. If the similarities between the traditional music of West Africa and music from African areas where slave traders had minimal impact is an indication, then this is apparently true. Therefore, some West African music from 1600 (the time marking the arrival of West African slaves to the New World) would have probably been perpetuated along an unbroken line of oral tradition with a level of stability that would have maintained traits until the 1950s (when ethnomusicologists began intensive field research in West Africa).

David Such warns “comparisons between early forms of African-American and West African music have to be made under the assumption that the latter remained relatively stable over this period. Hence, West African societies would have had to remain relatively free of outside pressures that might have significantly altered their music.”⁷⁹ Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that, if African Americans were able to retain significant traits of African music while being deprived of all traditional instruments and tribal connections, Africans on their own continent are most likely to have retained infinitely more sociocultural stability. Although elements of society were modified to a degree, clearly many African languages, dance, visual arts, manners of dress, religious practices, and other significant cultural components remain intact and provide a level of evidence to substantiate this theory.

SUMMARY

African vocal and instrumental slurs and vibratos have counterparts in African-American music in America. Because these elements of music evade some Western musical analysis, they are given little emphasis in most “jazz” research and criticism. Those trying to record early African music during the slave era often became frustrated. (“It is difficult to express the entire character of these Negro ballads by mere musical notes and signs. The odd turns made in the throat . . . seem almost as impossible to place on the score as the singing of birds.”⁸⁰) Styles incorporating these decorative and fundamental devices are still heard in traditional African vocal music throughout the continent, where a much greater spectrum of expressive devices are employed. African vocals often include manipulation of timbre, glissando, yodels, trills, vibrato,

syllabic, and mellismatic singing, use of falsetto break, and stylized cries. As W. E. B. Du Bois once said, "Africa is at once the most romantic and the most tragic of continents. Its very names reveal its mystery and wide-reaching influence. It is the 'Ethiopia' of the Greek, the 'Kush' and 'Punt' of the Egyptian, and the Arabian 'Land of the Blacks.' To modern Europe it is the 'Dark Continent' and 'land of Contrasts'; in literature it is the seat of the Sphinx, gnomes, and pixies, and the refuge of the gods; in commerce it is the slave mart and the source of ivory, ebony, rubber, gold, and diamonds. What other continent can rival in interest this Ancient of Days? There are those, nevertheless, who would write universal history and leave out Africa"⁸¹

A SURVEY OF AFRICAN KINGDOMS

The story of humanity may be richer than that we know,
We must examine all of it to know that this is so.
Ham and Noah's other sons created all Hamitic and Semitic cultural levels,
These sons led African and Asian Canaanite tribes from the Tower of Babel,
These tribes were called Phoenicians by Greeks -who adored their strange tall
palm trees,
Were tribes like the Egyptian Phoenix bird from whose ashes the younger he
or she leaves?
Some settled in the land of Canaan, named after the youngest son of Ham
in fact,
Today it is called Israel but biblical leprosy laws confirm these people were Black.

Kush (Nubia)

The Kushite kingdom lasted over a thousand years.
They used elephants in combat evoking all kinds of fears.
King Piankhy was the first Kushite king to rule Egypt we see,
He ruled these people fairly during the twenty-fifth Dynasty.
They conquered the Egyptians in 730 B.C. remaining for a century,
They were then defeated by Assyrians with superior iron weaponry.
The Kushites fled to Nubia moving their capital to Meroe in the south,
Soon it was the iron capital of Ancient Africa and strong once again.
It was King Natashien who reigned from 328 B.C. and he was no slouch;
With his firm rule, Nubian hieroglyphics, alphabet and script began.
Trade exploits to Arabia, India and China caused their fame to expand.
After the crucifixion, many Kushites became Christians as times changed;
And by 320 A.D. King Malequereliar became the last king that reigned.

The Axum Empire was eventually the new trade center, and after 1200 years, Christian Nubia fell to Moslem rule despite all the struggling and tears.

*Goddesses became gods when the pagan temples were destroyed,
Her story became his-story as sacerdotal egos became annoyed.
Time can erase the memory of a soul,
Then the mind becomes tired and old.*

Ancient Ghana

Ancient Ghana should not be confused with contemporary Ghana at all. It was the gold capital of the world, then to the Arabs it did fall. Koumbi, its famous capital was divided into two great and powerful African cities, Where miners found nuggets for the king while keeping the gold dust for their own kitties, The king and Soninke tribe lived in one area, Moslems and foreigners in the other, The latter group taxed all goods entering into or passing through the city. A strong army kept the Trans-Saharan trade routes open and under cover, Until 1054, when Almoravids invaded the region for 14 years, finally conquering it, what a pity.

*How many mothers, sisters and daughters achieved their arcane aspirations,
Yet it's the names of sons, brothers and fathers that remain preserved within the nation.
I know destructive force yield an easy way to be,
Yet the universe remains creative if you have the eyes to see.*

We know the Sumerians and Hamurabi's Babylonian kingdom of circa 2150 B.C., It takes much more than racist canals to change a history from sea to shining sea. Mesopotamia was inhabited by Ethiopians and some Canaanites were Carthaginians, Africans were certainly always African from North to South and so were India's Dravidians, Just as all Mayas, Aztecs, Incas, Choctaw, Sioux, Apache, and Eskimos are all misnamed "Indian."

Mali (not the Republic of Mali)

Out of the ruins of the Moslem state of Ancient Ghana around 1230 A.D. Grew Niani, the capital of the Mandingo Empire, and strong it was to be. Sundiata captured rich salt and gold mining areas then sent his men away,

So his generals became his governors and counsel was held with local chiefs
each day.

By 1312 King Mansa Musa kept desert raiders away with his 90,000 men,
His infantry was supported by 10,000 more warriors on camels and Arabian
horses.

Soon peace came and warriors became farmers; they did not have to fight again,
Their fair king became known as a lover of music, poetry and created new resources.
Mali's empire spread to Tazhaza and the gold areas Galam and Bure to the South,
Numerous gold, copper, silver and leather craftsmen put food in every mouth.
Timbuktu and Djenne became centers knowledge, commerce and culture we hear,
But in 1324 Mali's economy became inflated and remained so for 25 years.
A devout Moslems that led a pilgrimage to Mecca took 60,000 men and such,
The victors forced no one to convert, but the gold they left there proved too much
Good king Mansa Musa died in 1337, but his empire evolved until its time was
through;

Many Greek, Roman and Indian scholars came to study there in Sankore at
University in Timbuktu.

*So the great queen Isis is dethroned from the trinity,
And once great folk become indentured for eternity.
The weak, not the meek then inherit the earth . . . for a while,
But insecurity and insanity can be measured in the absence of a smile.*

Songhay

It is the largest Ancient African kingdoms we've examined thus far,
Its people came from the region of Dendi on the Niger River bar.
This occurred before the 9th century and by the 11th century or so,
Songhay expanded quickly well beyond the bend (at Niger) to Gao.
Before long this capital city became the Moslem center of learning and trade,
So when Sunni Ali came to power prosperity had already been made.
That was 1464, then beginning in 1468, this warrior king attacked Timbuktu,
Defeating the Tuaregs and Djenne (in the south), subjugating the whole slew.
The war took 7 years, later King Askia Mohammed continued the proliferation
of this plight . . .

The empire now created farmers, merchants and miners (who were traditionally
out of sight).

Soon every member of the community held roles such as keepers of cattle, miners,
and fishermen.

Until the Portugese took over the rich African trade and brought things to
a bitter end.

*But how does the Queen of Sheba fit into his-story?
Can Queen Nefertiti find her place in all this masculine glory?
Time can erase the memory of a soul,
Then the mind becomes tired, the mind becomes old,
So the great queen Isis is dethroned from the trinity,
And once great folk become indentured for eternity.*

Then came invasions, Indo-Germanic and Germanic invasions of Asia,
Greek invasions of the Middle East; Roman invasions of the Middle East and
Northern Africa; Jews and Arabs became involved in the “white” slave trade . . .
The world was becoming more complex and so were its complexions.
Although these earlier societies had ample prejudices,
They weren’t stratified strictly by color—Reading Herodotus makes clear that
point—yet we are still astonished to find that Socrates was a brother.
Before truth of Moses, Abraham, Cleopatra, Aesop, Hannibal and others was told,
Our Western history separated the land from its people; was that absurdity dumb
or bold?
An Egyptian was an Egyptian; a Greek a Greek; a Hottentot was a Hottentot
The Land of the Free; Home of the Brave—are we moving backwards or what?

Kanem-Bornu

These twin kingdoms lasted over a thousand years; Idris Alomia was its greatest
king.
The dominions were located on either side of Lake Chad; its mighty military
controlled everything.
It traded nuts, leather, ivory, and ostrich feathers for salt and European goods.
Their warriors were famed for horsemanship so the Lake Chad Region was free of
robbing hoods.
Thus the trade and commerce was usually not impeded; consequently, its economy
could not help but flourish.
To sustain both Kanem and Bornu for so many centuries most certainly took
strength, wisdom and courage.

*How many mothers, sisters and daughters achieved their arcane aspirations,
Yet it’s the names of sons, brothers and fathers that remain preserved within the nation.*

*I know destructive force yield an easy way to be,
Yet the universe remains creative if you have the eyes to see.*

Benin

The trading center for large sections of West Africa, and a culture rich in communal commitment from people harboring pride within every heart . . .

Was the forest kingdom of Benin in what is now Southern Nigeria from whence wood and bronze artifacts sprang forth as African art.

These dignified people used Manillas (or metal rings) and cowrie shells as money, while making daily shopping and bartering a casual affair;



This map shows many of the different languages spoken on the African continent. The diversity of the languages reflects the length of time Africa has been settled. The longer areas of the earth have been settled, the more languages are found in that region.

The Oba or chiefs allowed various officials to manage the kingdom, while a few miles away the “Queen Mother” groomed the king’s heir.

Ewuare the Great (who ruled from 1440 to 1473), a somewhat eccentric chief, was known as a magician, doctor, warrior and wise man;

The city had long, broad, and straight streets with many houses, complex temples, and law-abiding citizens—you must understand.

At first the Portugese tried to steal Benin’s many riches, but they changed their approach after being forcefully and repeatedly driven away.

Then they and other Europeans trade partners learned that dealing with shrewd African merchants took 8 to 10 entire days.

Before making important decisions the custom was to eat, drink and be festive for a significant period of time.

After all, the people of Benin reserved a day each month for celebrating—as diametrically opposed to plotting crime.

NOTES

1. Klaus Wachaman, *Essays Music and History in Africa*, p. 9.
2. The name “Ethiopian” is Greek in origin. It combines the Greek terms *Ethios* (burnt) with *ops* (face) reflecting the belief that the Ethiopian complexion was a result of their exposure to the intensified rays of the African sun. Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and other worldwide mystical orders acknowledge Egypt as the source of the wisdom and knowledge studied and guarded by their organizations for many centuries. The descriptions of Africa written by early Greek historians were probably not as racially motivated as their modern counterparts.
3. Lady Lugard, *A Tropical Dependency*, p. 221. (See E. A. Wallis Budge, *A His-tory of Ethiopia*, 1:1–2.)
4. Malefi Kete Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
5. Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1973).
6. Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Story of the Moors in Spain* (Baltimore: Black Classic, 1990), pp. vii–viii.
7. Notes from the CD recording *Alemu Aga: Bägänna of Ethiopia: The Harp of King David*, Long-Distance Music #7142009.
8. A. C. Jordan, *Tales from Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. xii. Hereafter cited as *Tales*.
9. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Social Life in Ancient Egypt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), p. 25.

10. Ibid., p. xiii.
11. Ibid.
12. All inhabitants enjoyed the use and enjoyment of the land.
13. *Tales*, p. xiv.
14. Mickey Hart, *Planet Drum* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 17–26.
15. Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather* (New York: Limelight, 1989), pp. 41–42.
16. Frank Tirro, *Jazz A History* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 38.
17. Francis Bebey, *African Music: A People's Art* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1980).
18. Handy, *Black Women*, pp. 121–24.
19. Dahl, *Stormy Weather*, pp. 41–42.
20. Ibid. p. 40.
21. Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 66.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ortiz M. Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue* (New York: William Morrow, 1972), pp. 1–5.
25. Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments* (New York: Norton, 1940), p. 96.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Lise Manniche, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991), p. 80.
29. Ibid., pp. 24, 64.
30. Ibid., p. 25.
31. Ibid., pp. 35, 60.
32. Ayele Bekerie, *Ethiopic: An African Writing System* (Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1997), pp. 132–33.
33. Ibid., p. 128.
34. From the liner notes of the CD *Bnet Houariya—Voix des femmes Marrakech*, 1997: “Al Sur.” Distributed by Media 7—France.
35. Koskoff, Ellen, *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 71.
36. Abd al-Wahhab, Hasan Husni, “Taqaddum al-musiqa fi-sh-sharq wa-l-andalus wa-tunis,” *Waraqat*, vol. 2. (Tunis: Maktabat al-Manar, 1966), pp. 196–97.
37. Ibid., pp. 199–200.
38. Ibid., pp. 231–32.
39. *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, p. 71.

40. Ibid., p. 72.
41. Abd al-Wahhab, Hasan Husni, "Taqaddum al-musiqa fi-sh-sharq wa-l-andalus wa-tunis," *Waraqat*, vol. 2. (Tunis: Maktabat al-Manar, 1966), p. 202.
42. Roland Oliver, *The Dawn of African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 45.
43. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 9th ed. (Springfield: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1977), p. 1491.
44. Oliver, *Dawn of African History*, p. 77.
45. Unesco, *African Music*, p. 74.
46. John Phillipson, *The Music of !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, Africa* (New York: Folkways Records and Service, 1962).
47. Ibid.
48. Egyptian symbolism involving the female, male, and their offspring (Isis, Osiris, and Horus) may serve as archetypes for families of musical instruments—such as the three sizes of talking drums found in Nigeria, etc.
49. Oliver, *Dawn of African History*, p. 68.
50. Turnbull, *Man in Africa*, p. 244.
51. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Ed. Willi Appel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 17.
52. Ekundayo Phillips, *Yoruba Music (African)* (Johannesburg: African Music Society, 1933), p. 4.
53. *Language and Music*, pp. 1–5.
54. Colin M. Turnbull, *Man in Africa* (Garden City: Anchor, 1976), p. 159.
55. Thomas Monro, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, Benton, William, ed. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britanica, 1974), 1:161. Hereafter cited as NEB.
56. *Harvard*, p. 17.
57. Ibid.
58. Francis Bebey, *African Music: A People's Art* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1975), p. 3.
59. Monro, Thomas, *NEB*, p. 242.
60. *Harvard*, p. 21.
61. Ibid., p. 20.
62. Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue*, pp. 8–13.
63. A. N. Tucker, *Tribal Music and Dancing in the Southern Sudan (Africa) at Social and Ceremonial Gatherings* (London: William Reeves), p. 55.
64. Ibid. Pianos have been "compromised" (tempered) to facilitate playing in different keys.
65. Ibid., p. 21.

66. Unesco, *African Music* (Paris: La Revue Musicale, 1970), p. 17.
67. Paul Oliver, *Savannah Syncopators: African Retentions in the Blues* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), p. 16.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
69. Geoffrey Haydon and Dennis Marks, eds., *Repercussions: A Celebration of African American Music* (London: Century, 1985), pp. 16–17.
70. *Ibid.* p. 17.
71. *Ibid.* p. 18.
72. *Ibid.* p. 25.
73. Bebey, *African Music*, p. 22.
74. Agawu, Kofi, “Representing African Music,” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 245–46.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.* p. 260.
77. *Ibid.* pp. 249–50.
78. W. E. F. Ward, “Music in the Gold Coast,” *Gold Coast Review* 3 (July–December 1927): 222, 223.
79. David G. Such, *Avant-Garde Jazz Musicians: Performing ‘Out There’* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), p. 33.
80. Quoted in William Francis Allen et al., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. vi.
81. W. E. B. Du Bois, as cited in Walton, *Music: Black, White and Blue*, p. 1.