

Towards a “true African-Brazilian Musicology”: interview with Meki Nzewi

Interview by Kamai Freire¹ and Nina Graeff²

Introduction

Meki Emeka Nzewi can be considered one of the pioneers of an "African Musicology" that overcomes the limitations of Africanist approaches. An Africa-sensed Musicology is more than a quest; it is a positioning of legitimization of African epistemologies and methodologies for understanding and defining the music practices of the African continent. At the same time, it is a form of combating colonialist procedures that marked the development of ethnomusicology or, in its early days, Comparative Musicology (Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft), based largely on exogenous and distanced analyses of African music, undertaken mostly from the point of view of European and North American white researchers (NKETIA, 1962; 1974; AGAWU, 1992; 2003; MAPAYA 2018; MAPAYA and MUGHOVANI, 2018, 2018; GRAEFF, 2020).

Born in Igbo (Nigeria) in 1938, Meki Nzewi is professor of African Music (theory and practice) at the University of Pretoria (South Africa) and Program Director of the Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and African Dance Practices (CIIMDA). As a composer, cultural arts educator, theorist and music arts philosopher, creative writer, music dramatist, performer and choreographer, he has written and directed a series of musical theater works with a repertoire of multicultural compositions for various genres (symphony, opera, musicals, ensembles, voices/solo instruments, etc.). As an “African Mother Drummer”³, he initiated the Modern African Classic Drum with compositions written in solo, duo and ensemble. He has published numerous books and articles (see selection in the

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³ As Nzewi explains in the interview, the constitution of a typical African music ensemble resembles the family roles of community life: “the mother instrument performs the distinguished role of the mother as the director of family living. It is the director of ensemble purpose and musical sense. It is, of course, the most creatively active member of an ensemble. The mother instrumentalist marshals the musical and extra-musical actions that transpire in context-based musical arts performances” (NZEWI, 2009, p. 63).

bibliographic references) and was the First President of the Pan African Society for Education in Music Arts (PASMEA).

In his texts, Nzewi speaks of a "true African mind", which we have paraphrased for the title of the interview, seeking to apply the philosophy behind this concept to the music of African hues of Brazil and to propose the beginning of a joint quest for a "true" African-Brazilian musicology.

Kamai Freire and Nina Graeff

Interview

Kamai Freire and Nina Graeff: *Brazilian Music, with its prominently African origins or influences in most of its diverse genres, became popular all over the world. Nevertheless, Brazilian musicology and music teaching is grounded on conservatorial and, hence, colonial music practices and theories, lacking methodological and theoretical frameworks to analyze and to teach music under perspectives more attuned to its own musical arts, epistemologies and memory. Your work offers remarkable contributions to the development of an African Musicology that listens and gives voice to its own modes of experiencing and theorizing upon "musical arts", which, to use your words, "derive from a multiplay of human, cultural and environmental sensitizations" (Nzewi, 2020). Therefore, we see your work as a potential model for the development of an "African-Brazilian Musicology"; as a lens through which scholars can investigate Brazilian musical arts in much more comprehensive ways, while decolonizing their practices of analyzing, teaching and making sense of music. Considering this, we have formulated the following questions. As we study the social changes in African musical arts, both in the continent as in the Diaspora, we often notice ruptures and hindering on an individual's path to maintain - or to retrieve - a "true African mind". In your personal understanding, what is a true African mind and how does it manifest itself in terms of modes of thinking and making music?*

Meki Nzewi: To start with, indigenous Africa conceived, created and practiced the musical arts as a holistic divine endowment to humanity intended to oversee fellow humanity consciousness in all aspects of personal and societal living; African musical arts is⁴ conceived and designed structurally and in public presentation to furnish sublime mind health primarily, and thereby enable gaining basic physiological health, interactively transacting cordial relationships (inter-personal, intra-communal, and inter-communal); also guaranteeing stressless daily subsistence occupations. Its functional conception and cogitation particularly oversee the conscientious functioning of communal/societal

⁴ Nzewi intentionally employs the term Musical Arts in the singular form for considering „the original conceptualization, logic and expression of the musical arts as a creative and proactive unity of sonic, choreographic, mythically/ mystically dramatic and material components. [...] The sonic component invariably structured creative-performative expressions in the other components, hence musical arts is a generic, singular term that implicates the scientific underpinnings. The arguments tendered here are anchored on cognitive study of the underlying philosophy, theory and humanity principles of creativity that mark African indigenous knowledge paradigms" (NZEWI 2017, p. 63).

institutions and social organizations. Fundamentally it orders ardent observance of religious beliefs and canons, policing morality prescripts and superintending social equity etc. The musical arts also caution and sanction probity in the observance of, and compliance with community living injunctions and maintenance of the integrity of cultural ethics and codes of conduct. The musical arts (a holistic cogitation, creation, and deployment of sonic, choreographic and dramatic siblings) was cogitated and structurally configured as a potent soft science⁵ of humanning, which interactively generated functional outcomes in all aspects of living and dying unto supernormal livingness. Music for a true African mind is not therefore, conceived, configured or experienced as mere entertainment celebration of life; rather, as a pleasantly stringent facilitator of living on Earth and beyond.

KM & NG: *Following the idea of the “true African mind”, how can scholars investigate music from an African perspective, proposing theories and methodologies grounded on wider - if not totally different - ways of experiencing music, as to overcome Eurocentric parameters embedded in their musical and musicological training?*

MN: Theory is always already intrinsic in indigenous African musical arts intellection, logic and vocabulary. But Africa has vindicated theory-in-practice, which stipulates that true knowing derives from actually interactively experiencing any intellectual cogitation, while floating theory about any subject idea may never land as factual knowing and doing. Hence, true African legacy prioritized the original, human factual education methodologies. (A baby at birth practically grabs the mother’s breast to originally gain the theoretical knowledge that food is essential for sustaining life).

Intentionality is basic to humanning knowledge intellection and creation. Fundamentally, emphasis on musical intellection and production in indigenous Africa focuses on functionality. As such, creative intention (purpose) initiates and factors creative configurations, which yield performative features and production realities. As such, analyzing and appreciating an Africa-sensed musical arts product is almost always in terms of how it accomplishes its intended performative objective. There are two categories of musical arts ideation and production in indigenous Africa - event music (specifically created for marshalling the intended societal event from which it often derives its name) and music event (contemplative sonic creation not intended to transact a specific societal event, even though it could be featured as a subsidiary attraction in an event context, which already has an event music authoritatively signifying, signaling and marshalling its public experiencing). Music event is of course quite often designed to accomplish supra ordinary intentions such as mind wellness or

⁵ “The soft science of the musical arts, unlike the tangible and material (hard) sciences, is an intangible force that produces tangible outcomes in practical performance sites. The effects and affects are perceived in both spiritual and tangible dimensions. Most modern technological inventions as well as the crass promotion of entertainment mentality disable sublime mental disposition. The result is evident in the prevalent extreme self-centeredness (individualism), villainy, and obsessive materialism (economania) overwhelming humanity globally, in the conduct of societal affairs and inter-human/ group relationships” (NZEWI, 2017, p. 63).

spiritual solace. Analyzing an event music entails determining how the structural and presentational configurations command and interpret essential contextual activities. An observer or analyst would then keep track of how the performers and audience are sonically enabled by specific structural/formal constructs to execute transpiring event actions, in context. There could be periods of action lull in the musical arts marshalling of sequences in [terms of] the progression of known/expected event scenario of activities. Hence event music is text: it sonically narrates event progress, and evokes reactive outcomes that are verbalized or demonstrated. Analysis or appreciation then starts from pre-knowledge about the why of the musical arts creation, and focuses on how, as well as what about, an event context inspires musical creation and progression.

A music event, on the other hand, is essentially a sonic entity designed to manage mind (human and sometimes animal) and relax the body. It thus also peripherally entails functional outcome such as when it offers the recipients mental solace, induces sleep (through consistent internal circling of a structural gestalt - as a soft science of mind entrapment and seclusion, much misunderstood and misrepresented in exogenous literature about African music as mere repetition). Music event could also be extra-ordinarily functional when it serves as an attention template and conduit for social media communications such as minstrelsy rendition of critical messages etc. In these music event or event music instances analytical discernment will entail identifying the significance of thematic configurations (tonal, rhythmic or melorhythmic⁶ constructs) of the expressive musical texture and idioms, which generate/evoke/infuse/activate the desired mental or physical responses or moods that are witnessed. Hence there are proactive idioms and themes. All these actually musicological and contextual texts/details are calculated and conformed in African theory-in-practice principles. Hence, for example, in Africa: music could be the dance one hears; and dance, the music one sees, and which commands focusing choreographic and appreciatory analysis of dance music for example, on the *rhythm of dance* layer of the dance music ensemble texture. The humanity imperatives of sharing (sonic space and thematic gestalts), which mark indigenous musicological vocabulary should also be discerned for Africa-sensed analysis.

A true African musical mind (in education and research sites) should eschew the flashy floating theory that marks Western intellectual mindset and procedure, and dispose itself to perceiving the profound, humanity-focused theory-in-practice philosophy that marks indigenous African musical arts creativity, constructs experiencing and interactions. This seriously queries the cultural-human sense of contemporary education that has remained hegemonic in philosophy, methodology and content (consuming published literature on a proposed field research topic before experiencing field practice of the topic title limits perceiving the subject/object of research attention directly from the authoritative knowledge owners/experts/creators/practitioners or performing the knowledge live). Theorizing before experiencing existing knowledge

⁶ Nzewi, as a great exponent of the theory and practice on talking drums, applies the term melorhythm for referring to “an African indigenous concept and practice”, which “is a line of musical statement constructed with successive units of sound in different as well as repeated levels of tone” (NZEWI, 2007, p. 3).

prejudices the mind. The African educational philosophy is that the most effective way of attaining enduring knowledge in body and mind is through practical experiencing. Through consistent practical engagement particular parts of the body become automatically eloquent in replicating sonic-choreographic expressions. Systematic practice derives from rationalized theoretical principles; and whatever creation has replicable procedure and shape is theory framed, whether or not verbalized/written. Musical arts education in indigenous Africa commands practical procedure, which starts from infancy when a child carried by a performing adult gains empathic performative sensitization through the performing carrier. As infants begin to walk, they join children's groups who create autonomous performances. Children in African culture traditions engage in independent creative productions, some of which compare with adult productions in terms of genius and performative expertise. African children do not blatantly imitate adults as much as they could be sensitized by adult models. There are cases of child prodigies who perform competently alongside adult experts in specialized adult musical arts groups. Otherwise, musical arts productions in African cultures are normally organized along age and gender categories. Schools in contemporary Africa need to strategize independent knowledge creations and performances as basis for verbal lecture explorations.

KM & NG: *African-Brazilian traditions are very much grounded on communalism and on ancestrality. In your understanding, how does the ubuntu principle, among other African philosophies of life, express itself in the ways by which music is practiced in Africa? Which musicological examples (e.g., rhythmic, vocal, formal principles) would you mention as paradigmatic thereof?*

MN: The musical arts is a divinely intuited humanning soft science of psycho-physiological wellness. Humans craft it to manage mind, body and societal systems wellness. When the mind is serene, thoughts that determine all issues of life are healthy. That is humanity conscientization. The sonic phenomenon being panacea for mind health, thereby body and life systems health, prioritizes humanity principles in structural constructs and production materials. Organized humanity processing and life experiencing is a communalism hub. The hub of indigenous African socio-political systems was the community of cohered families. African Communalism creed is well captured by the South African term, *ubuntu*, which translates, instructs and practicalizes the humanity creed of: "I am because you are"; no actually person is more human than the other, and the socio-cultural relational creed is: "unique individuality within bounded communalism". This philosophy of manifesting individuality attributes within community order percolates musical arts thinking, structuring, production and evaluation. The African ensemble music creativity model recognizes that every ensemble member is playing an individuality role, which is uniquely contributing to community sensibility, irrespective of quantity or quality. Thus, the typical African ensemble prescript for ensemble music is the Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC), which is humanity framed.

ETC is the transaction of family life roles in group musical arts playing-in-togetherness to produce a coherent sonic identity. It is constituted by the

following communal living roles of family members (bearing in mind that the basic structure in the formation of a community is the nuclear family) comprising: Mother, Father, Siblings, Baby (the only inchoate individuality) and Extended Family roles. These have been transferred to music family-texturing for constituting a musical identity recognizable as a piece:

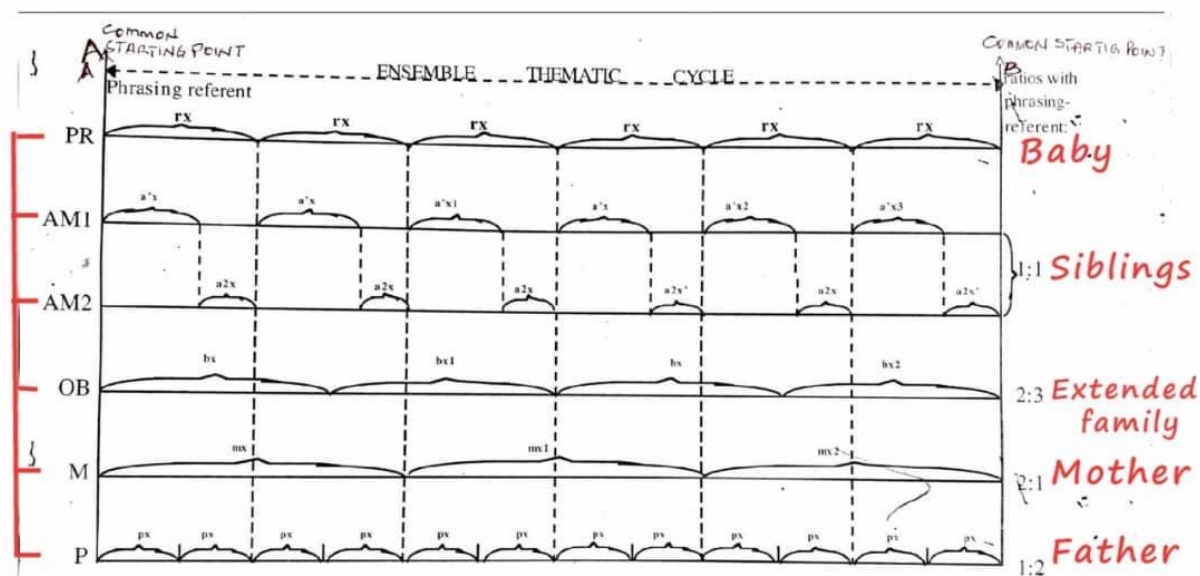


Figure 1: Ensemble Thematic Cycle.

In creating a typical African ensemble music construction therefore, the ensemble members' roles (sonic quality and affective/effective family action delineation) are:

Mother instrument (played by a man or woman) performs the elaborate textural role of coordinating an ensemble texture: She coheres the production of the ensemble music product; organizing the scenario form of the music as well as sonically marshalling the presentation event as it is taking place;

Father instrument role is the Pulse; the reserved pounder of the deep sounding heartbeat, which unifies nuclear family role expression - the significant ensemble sound);

The **Siblings** are action motivators in ensemble family who correlate their thematic fragments to furnish a primary thematic component that energizes event actors/perceivers;

The **Baby instrument** is the Phrasing Referent layer: a high pitched (repetitive screaming) voice. Its stimulating theme is consistently repeated all through a performance, and focuses the attention of all other ensemble thematic actors in aligning their thematic gestalts to conform to the ensemble textural unity;

The Obligato instrument plays an **extended family** role of contributing an enriching but expendable textural theme when present.

All the component ensemble instruments observe a Common Starting Point (CSP). The lineal thematic aggregate of all the ensemble theme roles or layers, which have various ratios with the length of the Phrasing Reference theme as the index, furnishes the significant sound of any piece of indigenous African ensemble music. A Common Starting Point (CSP) for all the instruments invariably

marks African indigenous instrumental music performance. All other instrumental layers relate in a mathematical ratio with the standard length of the Phrasing Reference layer.

The duration of the aggregated ensemble theme roles from the CSP to its re-occurrence furnishes the micro form of a composition as well as the unified, significant ensemble theme identifying a piece of African indigenous music. This also marks the micro form of a piece, which roles over as the linear building blocks of a wall for the duration of the performance of a piece, when the macro form of the piece is arrived at with a well-defined cadence signaled by the mother musician role. The distance from the Common Starting Point to its re-occurrence furnish the Ensemble Thematic Cycle, which reoccurs with varying internal contents till the Mother instrument signals the final cadence to furnish the macro form of an African music composition in a context.

After the initial statement of the respective ensemble themes at the ESP, the component ensemble instruments, with the exception of the Phrasing Referent instrument, can discretionally express their creative individualities (a humanning principle of African music) by discretionally varying the structural features of their respective themes (internal thematic variations) without obscuring the essential sense of the thematic gestalts all through the piece. The Phrasing Reference and Pulse roles themes are the authoritative markers of affective energy stimuli (basic psychical affect) in any African indigenous music sound, which have been migrated to underscore the emotional and motional energy in jazz and other African diasporic music as well as many other world popular music genres. The ETC is thus the span of the affect of an ensemble gestalt (gross durational content of differentiated instrumental thematic gestalts) by which a piece is known, and which recurs in essentially the same shape and time but with continually changing sound quality. We note that each ensemble role instrument player is a unique individuality within the ensemble commune of instrumental music.

African vocal music is strongly chorus-based. The African communality protocol commands that the chorus is more important than the solo. Thus, African music formulation does not reckon with solo-chorus thought and definition. Rather, Africa recognizes Chorus-Solo order in which a soloist emerges and makes musical sense only in the context of an established chorus community as foundation for such solo emergence and action. If the solo stops for any reason the music performance remains stable and goes on; if on the other hand the chorus ceases to sound, the solo would flounder, baseless, without a platform. Same with expression of solo voices in community living. This performative humanity philosophy thus anchors with the African cultural life philosophy in which the individual is never more important than the community/group.

Melodic construct in African music is deliberately terse, usually within an octave. The all-inclusivity philosophy that marks creative imagination requires that the range of a melodic construct must be within the vocal capability that allows every citizen to participate. Otherwise, there are instances of individuals who capably deliver three octaves voice range when specially needed in vocalic lilting - African melismatic vocalese -, for instance. Another reason for short range melodic constructs is to ensure clear articulation of the words of a melodic

text. Non-vocal melodic language on melody instruments such as the notched flute has no melodic range restrictions.

Harmony in indigenous Africa is rationalized in horizontal axis. A melodic statement is harmonized by other holistic complementing units, not note by note. Any underlying vertical harmonic outcomes, although incidental, are culturally normative. Block horizontal harmonic resolution is emphasized to furnish unilineal cultural concord. Harmonic relationship along lineal axis, furnishes agreeable independent equivalents of an ongoing theme. Indigenous African harmonic principle is thus lineal (not vertical calculation), and a harmonizing voice (human or instrumental) is an independent sonic statement, a stand-alone melodic layer, complementing a given tune, but with consciousness for the normative cultural vertical concordance sensibility which is normally enculturated. For a given theme or tune there could be more than one complementary harmonic voices singing along, and every complemental voice, vocal or instrumental, is a unique independent version of a model that must be in consonance with the cultural vertical, harmonic concordance norm. Cultural concordance principle marks the sonic grammar of any African culture group.

Africa has two dance categories: In Free Medley dances every dancer uniquely interprets the choreographic affects of the musical ETC stimulations; In Stylized Formation Dances all participating dancers are rehearsed to conform with the choreographic text (often sonically enunciated by the music ensemble's rhythm-of-dance instrument). Every dancer could then deliver individuality unique gestural nuances within the uniform choreographic statements.

Africa does not indulge in masquerade play, rather spirit manifest as a total theatre creation, which stages realistic or fantastic manifestations of supernatural images that dramatize instructive object lessons. Spirit Manifest is then the typical functional African drama in which supra normal actors are given arresting physical manifestation as extraordinary visitors from the supernatural spirit realms who have manifested to interact with a cultural human community. They display impressive behavioral protocols structured to engrossing music played by humans. A performance must be connotative of a culture's religious ideology and belief systems; and must convey critical messages that boost or caution mind wellness norms within the owner society. A spirit manifest creation could be a total theatre dramatization on a historic theme; it could stage magical feats; or it could be comic displays that provoke cathartic laughter.

Musically negotiating life and death events in communal living has flexible formats to accommodate contingent incidents. It is not form-fixed. But there are standard event-context formats wherein every performance still offers a different experiencing of the known but intentionally variable contextual format, because life encounters must not be fixed episodes. Variations of sameness⁷ marks life actions.

KM & NG: We see a great applicability of your concept of Performance Composition into Brazilian Music. To a large extent, African-Brazilian traditions are not based on fixed-form compositions, but rather on collective knowledges

⁷ On the matter of difference within sameness in African-Brazilian musical traditions see Graeff (2019) Candomblé; and Csermak (2020) on Samba de Roda.

intergenerationally shared and reinvented at specific contexts of performance - sometimes even through the intervention of spirits and ancestors in dreams and trance states. Could you please explain the concept of Performance Composition and how it relates to improvisation? Does it include the possibility of spiritual intervention in composition processes?

MN: Performance Composition is the African contextual musical arts performance norm. It derives from the philosophy of prompting creative individuality, which recognizes that every genuine human being is a divinely capacitated moment-person (ability to exhibit spontaneous self-presence and alert acumen deriving from sublime mindedness) in life situations. As much as an event-music is created to transact the scenario of a specified societal-cultural context, the scenario of activities that transpire to accomplish the demands of the event make allowances for contingencies. Humans are not mentally or emotionally rigid entities. Thus, there may be prescribed features and procedures, but the execution on every observance occasion could entail contingent, momental variations and occurrences. The musical sound cogitated to sonically transmit on-going event transactions is expected to capture sonically the unexpected, transpiring contextual occurrences. As such the mother musician must be a spiritually transformed and creatively alert moment persona, capable of spontaneously re-composing a known musical arts scenario to suit the circumstances of every event occasion.

Event music composition and re-composition must sonically capture and transmit relevant contingencies of a performance to every listener present or within hearing distance. This is the acute creative presence that marks an accomplished African specialist musician. Noting that no African music, including personal solace types, is a finished and fixated composition, like written concert music, every re-performance of a known composition is expected to sonically relate event contingencies, and not just celebrate creative exuberance which marks improvisation. Performance composition thus distinguishes momental creative capability in the performative philosophy of African music. Indigenous African music constructs normally evoke elevated spirituality atmosphere, which super-normally transforms the mood of both the performers and the attentive audience.

Performance moment creativity is not always a consciously calculated mental exercise. Performance composition could also feature in music event when the creative elaboration of the significant framework of a known piece captures the peculiar spiritual environment or state of mind inspiring creativity in every performance circumstance, given acute minded competent performers. Performance composition then is the situationally inspired re-interpretation of the significant formal/harmonic/thematic frameworks of a piece. It is normally guided by the extra-musical contingencies of every performance occasion as well as the creative integrity of a situation alert performer. A performance composition is, therefore, super normally inspired, and should consciously transact a non-musical intention, which could be just palpable human emotions even in modern concert performance presentations that are Africa-sensed. When spontaneous or moment creativity remains a fanciful cerebral exaggeration of the sheer sonic

possibilities of a known musical theme and/or format the exercise becomes what is regarded as mere improvisation

KM & NG: *Percussion ensembles and rhythmic diversity play a major role in numerous music traditions spread all over the Brazilian territory. However, the few theories on African principles of rhythmic organization being recently translated and disseminated in the country were mostly developed by European and North American researchers. Could you please explain some of your main theoretical approaches to the rhythmic principles underlying the “African Classical Ensemble” (NZEWI and NZEWI, 2009)? Which elements are essential for their understanding, but have been ignored in exogenous conceptualizations?*

MN: The idea of percussion as sheer rhythmic exuberance is not at all African. Percussion deviates the mind from the purposive designs of some African music instruments and expressions. African classicism commands de-contextualizing and advancing exemplary African creative intellections and manifestations, normally context-based, into uniquely humanning international musical performance and appreciation re-creations. Advancement should not compromise the unique humanning performative integrity of African music. African membrane drums are not conceived and constructed to play percussion, i.e., exuberant musical rhythmicity on one level of tone. The materials and melorhythmic musical constructs of mother membrane drums as well as other tone levels playing instruments were primarily conceived and configured to accomplish special music-humanning missions. As such, the materials and technological finish of double- or more toned instruments must subtly infuse mind and body health. Drummistic sonic manipulations in ensemble situations command fellow-human consciousness. There are melorhythmic idioms that accomplish healthy functioning of specific body organs and parts (such as maternity dance and shock rhythm structures). Because of the primacy of meaning and emotion in humanity principled musicking, movement of music in time in Africa is almost always more than mere ferrying of sheer rhythmic and melodic fancies. The Western statistical concept of sheer rhythmic expressions in musical movement is known as percussion, while Africa rationalized a composite sensibility about the sonic potentials and inflections of non-melodic instruments starting with the human body as an instrumental resource in music making.

A rhythmic idiom in indigenous African musical imagination conveys temporal span, tonal depth, emotional quality and mathematical quantification. It is thus perceived by the senses in visual, sonic, psychical and psychedelic dimensions; that is, intentional rhythm is a sonic integer constituting three structural integrals with an affect. And the African drum is the primary instrument for articulating rhythmic poetry because the idea of intentional rhythm is “an integral of a poetic perception of motion, not a sheer statistical calculation” (Nzewi 1997:33). The African drum (membrane, wooden or clay), is conceived, constructed, and intended to emit more than one level of functional mellow rhythmic sonicism (pitch-modulated rhythmicity) hence the term we use for drum sound is melorhythm (hidden pitches). This makes the African drum, which is technological designed to normally emit levels of tone (with hidden pitch

essence) suitable as a surrogate human voice; hence talking drum: The typical drum (wooden or membrane) signals as well as transmits spoken language and lyrical communications (drum-singing). It as well sparks sonically induced choreographic imagery, such as the shock rhythm idiom, on two tone levels, which induces functional body bumps that bounce heart health. The talking drums invariably feature as mother instrument in ensemble textures.

A primary African philosophy of life, which informs African music arts experiencing, is the spirit of sharing. Musical structures are often such that make provisions for performers or performer and audience to engage in spontaneous sonic or sonic/speech dialogue. Sharing in musicking prompts consciousness of the other person in ordinary human interactions and community actions. In African classical ensemble music, the participants often interact individualities of themes (other-conscious thematic collaborations)⁸. Relationships in thematic structuring often coerce responsive interactions characterizing a music piece or generates exuberant audience reactions to a music type.

KM & NG: In Brazil, as in other countries of America, various music instruments of European colonizers have been adopted and adapted by African descendants, sometimes replacing African instruments. As a consequence, scholarship tends to assign instruments and their practices to a European legacy, dismissing the African-ness of their origins and playing techniques. How can African Musicology contribute to a more profound and holistic understanding of music instruments in the diaspora, as to push the musicological approach beyond their organological aspects and “sheer sonic essence”?

MN: In history, Africans were abducted from their homelands and forcibly relocated in strange human and cosmic environments where they were subjected to unredeemed forced labor and other grossly dehumanizing inflictions. Sustained mass mental shocks and psychical trauma afflictions were inevitable. Being true Africans, they desperately evoked their reliable indigenous mind-health panacea to counterforce the mental-emotional stresses. Practicing their cultural musical arts, with innovative situational adaptations, enabled them to stay alive and accommodate the horrendous conditions. Of course, they were already culturally enculturated adults before their enforced dislocation. They had to fabricate instrumental accompaniments from whatever was manageable. Their robust health conditions despite the arduous, inhumane inflictions no doubt confounded and baffled their inflictors. The penetrative African musical arts force inevitably fascinated the hosts who started to adapt and emulate the engrossing structural features of the enigmatic but captivating music-for-life. In the course of adopting/adapting the fundamentally motive African sensitizations,

⁸ “A performer in an indigenous African ensemble plays a recognizable theme on an instrument or voice. We refer to such a distinctive theme as a layer that fulfils a structural role in the conformation of an ensemble texture. Performers then interact with their respective themes in a spirit of play to produce a purposeful musical arts product. The spirit of play that marks an ensemble demands recognizing fellow participants as sensitive humans, as well as valuing everybody’s individual contribution, irrespective of size or role” (NZEWI & NZEWI, 2009, p. 5).

jazz emerged in North America, while salsa, tango etc. emerged in Latin America. The genres resulting from these innovative intercultural creations crystalized with environmentally substituted and modelled instrumentations as well as theoretical and choreographic modifications. The exotic creations were context-liberated, but fronted dance and spirituality engrossing receptions, induced by the retained mind-transporting structural stimulators - the Phrasing Referent and the Pulse-idioms, which subsisted as pointers to African creative legacy.

Contemporary modernist adaptations of African music instruments and idioms within and outside the continent often divest the soft science base. African tradition researched extra musical potencies of environmental materials, which are preferred for constructing indigenous African musical instruments. Health rationalization account for choice of nature materials, and animal skin. Such soft (humanity) science specifications for the materials preferred for African indigenous music instruments constructions (treatment of materials, technology, and shapes) plus performance techniques, and structural configurations warrant cognitive attention in Africa-sensed researching for contemporary continuum in modern global milieu. For instance, the cast iron preferred for constructing indigenous bells corrects iron deficiency and boosts human body iron, whereas modern instruments constructed with random mineral products like aluminum, copper, synthetic skin etc. impair body health. It is instructive to note that in indigenous Africa, congenital madness⁹ was assuaged and managed by cast iron bell musicking science. The health benefits, particularly mind wellness, of African indigenous musical arts rationalizations from instruments technology to functional musicological constructs could be advanced into modernity. A pressing example is tackling the stiff states of mind, which inflict the sophistication-acting modern-privileged humans whose deleterious consciences fecund and unleash the escalation of anti-human policies and harmful inventions and technology products destructing mankind globally. It is impaired mind wellness that indulges gross inhumane dispositions, economania inventions and deleterious actions.

Indigenous African music philosophy and soft science logic prioritized mass public health. For instance, the musical arts was the attitudinizing force foremost in managing, effecting and mending diplomatic relationships in indigenous Africa. Music has continued to service modern diplomatic maneuvers, although peripherally, in contemporary diplomatic gestures globally. The challenge for humanity oriented modern music experts, with the collaboration of governance authorities, is to identify and advance the capacity of African musical arts prototypes as adroit diplomatic agency, into modern global milieu.

In education sites the theory-in-practice principles and idioms, which imbue other-humanity conscience and fellow-humanity disposition in life-dealings need to be globally deployed from early school age.

Adult musical arts play-shopping gatherings can be strategized to eliminate stress for policy makers and bureaucrats, business moguls and leaders of industry as well as stiff-minded workers generally. A typical African drum was

⁹ The use of both terms might be considered problematic, since "madness" is a generalized and negatively charged term commonly used to denote a wide range of disorders that can be of psychiatric, neurological or simply emotional and social order.

researched and technologically designed to resonate mind and tissue healing ions, which penetrate body pores when the instrument is struck. The specific plant and animal materials chosen for building typical African drums were not random - they were well researched and tested for health potencies. In conjunction with the mind-tuning and benign attitude-stimulation structures of humanning African music structures, participants in drum play-shopping interactions, irrespective of race, gender and age invariably experience progressive purgation of stressed souls and stiff minds. As already stated, the African drum tone has a neutral pitch essence camouflaged by its intentionally raw and robust resonance emitted by the rough inside of the wooden shells. The fact is that a typical African drum can be tuned, and it sounds in tune and harmony with non-African music instruments and ensembles irrespective of tuning or performance key. This made it possible for an African drum team to play a symphonic piece with the English Chamber Orchestra in Pretoria, South Africa, at the First International Classical Music Festival of South Africa in 2002. Our advancement initiatives have researched the classical advancement of the African drumming technique. This has made it possible for the single membrane drum to play modern written classical compositions for drum solo as a classical solo instrument, or drum with human voices and Western instruments in classical concert creations. The various types of compositions, which have been published, include drum solos, duos for the membrane drum and voice/Western concert instruments, as well as modern classical ensemble pieces (see NZEWI and NZEWI, 2009).

***KM & NG:** As a consequence of cultural colonialism and imperialism, we notice an increasing homogenization of tonal systems, of sound-color aesthetics and of tuning concepts worldwide. Indigenous African musical arts, however, seem rather to foster sonic diversity and freedom. How do you perceive this homogenizing process in Africa? And how can African epistemologies expand the perception of music researchers beyond Eurocentric aesthetics of melodic, harmonic and timbral neatness?*

MN: To start with, as stated above, the average indigenous technology drum plays in tune and harmony with any Western instrument or ensemble combination of instruments. Although a membrane drum has a fundamental pitch, the construction emits raw harmonics, which camouflages the pitch essence, and gives it a neutral tone. Hence it sounds in consonance with the key or pitch of any other instruments including the human voice performing alongside it. The methodological indoctrination perpetrated by hegemonic Western music mentality and Western classicism ideology internationally, has prejudiced the perception of the special classical connotation of indigenous musical arts intellection and creations. But, of course, attitude primes and prejudices perception (aural, visual, and taste).

There is strong consciousness for aesthetic blending in indigenous African music. Unlike the Eurocentric notions of the aesthetic, the primary African rating of the aesthetics has functional determinations. For instance, intentional raw harmonics has already been discussed as producing health-administering sonic

emissions. The ions penetrate the human body through body pores to infuse mind and body wellness once the materials for the constructing of drums are health-researched nature resources, skin or wood. Synthetic, pure metallic, and precision-technology materials used for constructing modern industry replicas of African music instruments fall short of this health factoring genius. Sonic and language aesthetics in indigenous Africa command deep rationalizations to fathom. Raw harmonics as well as raw lingual expressions such as superlative negatives (often used to discuss aesthetic affect) generate positive outcomes or are instructive lingual expressions. In drum music, hidden pitches, which mark the science of raw harmonics, have already been stressed to make it possible for the membrane drum to play in tune with other instruments irrespective of key and modulations. In speech, superlative negatives such as “the sonic beauty closed the ear” convey top grade “pleasurable” music aesthetic.

In Indigenous Africa, musical arts practices do evoke strong consciousness for the aesthetic. Unlike the hegemonic notion of contemplative aesthetics, Africa cherishes functional aesthetic more - how effectually a musical arts performance has accomplished the humanity and societal purposes warranting its creation and exhibition, and accords psycho-physiological pleasantness. The robust aesthetic language can be metaphorical in assessing the qualitative merits of a musical arts experience. For event music the verbal assessment expression given above implies: ‘the outstanding effectiveness generated in accomplishing the intended humanity purpose is deafening (exemplary)’. Aesthetic verbalization excites double think, and obviates developing farcical life orientation.

***KM & NG:** Similarly, just as African languages were completely lost, severely weakened or partially absorbed into colonial languages in their diasporic countries, scholars investigating African-Brazilian music often consider that the inextricability between language and music typical of African musical arts has been either lost or reduced in the Diaspora. How would you explain and exemplify such inextricability within vocal and instrumental music in Africa, as to help researchers in the Diaspora to fathom the extent and nature of losses and transformations in African musical heritage?*

MN: In Africa, musical sense is a precursor of musical meaning. Hence every publicly experienced sonic creation transacts life in concrete dimensions by humanning, that is, in human-making (intensifying sublime humanity disposition), sociopolitical, religious, economic, or communal-relational terms. African musical arts was, therefore, esteemed as divinely ordered cultural but supernormal language, a meta-language for super ordinarily inter-relating humans, and for transacting societal practices beyond reproach. In indigenous Africa whatsoever was rendered musically was thus rated as devout communication that must not be queried or contradicted; specialist vocalizing musicians were under divine oath never to utter falsehood in musical utterances, or they would incur psychosomatic afflictions for telling lies in music. Thus, music was the foremost disciplinary superhuman force. Musical arts specialty often unleashes the mind devastating devise of public ridicule as a devastating deterrent force that punishes misdemeanor; the performative phenomenon

generally engineers and interacts inter-communal and inter-cultural bonding. That the average human is fallible and harbors compromisable disposition was recognized in indigenous cultures; and corrective measures were therefore instituted in the uncompromising sanction of the musical arts. Indigenous specialist musicians were accorded inviolable rating in indigenous cultures for they represent the voice of truth, and of the people when on public musical missions. On the other hand, modern musicianship practice does boldly utter blatant falsehood and could be partisan or be deviated by vain commercialism aspirations for personal aggrandizement or when pursued as avid commodity ventures.

Voice surrogate instruments were regarded as neutral supra-human voices. Thus, public summons sounded through instrumental music voice were neither disputable nor disregarded in a cultural milieu. Furthermore, the process of sincere public singing/poetry transports a spontaneous performer into an elevated spiritual mien beyond normal mundane consciousness such that indulging self-interests or falsehood in songs or declamations was not easy as guilty conscience could falter the poetic-melodic flow, and the message will be distorted and disbelieved.

***KM & NG:** In regard to all mentioned indigenous African ethics, aesthetics, mindsets, sciences, powers and humanning forces of music, do you sense ruptures or loosening of such Africanness in Africa today in, for instance, more urbanized, globalized or commercial contexts of music making?*

MN: Ruptures and devastation of true African mind and musical arts force in the life imaginations of the contemporary Africans as well as modernist African societal systems have already occurred and are continuing to wreak governance havoc and relationship breakdowns. Contemporary music-making in Africa today has become farcical, devoid of prestigious African virtues and integrity, totally commoditized and scarcely humanning. The dementing forces of colonization, modern religion and Northern education paradigms have effectively devastated and contradicted devout cultural mentality, devout spirituality, and sublime life orientation. The on-going borrowed modern African societal systems scarcely inspire or aspire for the regeneration of humanning, African knowledge prototypes. Modern Africa is awash with culturally amorphous political leaderships coupled with wayward modernist life orientations, systems practices and technological blitz. The average enlightened African now brandishes low regard for veritable indigenous knowledge heritage. Modernist lifestyles, as witnessed in contemporary Africa from early home upbringing to adult socializing experiences and exogenous life imaginations as well as exogenous socio-economic practices, have either distorted or erased cultural mental integrity. The humanity sensitization and fellow-human sensibility previously inspired and overseen by functional musical arts have become subverted or falsified. The prevailing fashionable modernist upbringing and borrowed life imaginations besetting Africans, from political and elite societal leadership levels down to deprived commoners, resist and intimidate any efforts to restore cultural integrity and humanity instincts, sensitivities and sensibilities. The worst

affliction conflicting the average cotemporary African is puppet-mindedness - a borrow-borrow imagination of life. However, basic research has proven that restoring African/Brazilian cultural mindedness can still be achieved if rigorous Africa-sensed musical arts re-culturing activities could be initiated in schools and strategic community sites. The indigenous musical arts agency will surely subtly begin to nurture true Africanness that would re-instill original African human-cultural integrity and sensibility, and from there launch commitment to advance home-culture inspired development initiatives, instead of the devastating borrow-borrow mentality besieging contemporary Africans in all facets and levels of modern living.

Since colonization debacle purposive African musical arts integrity has become derogated, ignored, subdued, and browbeaten by modernity forces (commodity- and technology driven), and despised by glorified exogenous religions. But the societal and humanity virtues and values, particularly the mind reformation capacities, have only been subdued, maybe battered; but not beaten and buried yet. Given the resilience of a few ardent and cognizant scholars, along with resilient cultural practitioners and committed modern educators, a re-humanizing re-birth of Africa-sensed being and living and advancing in modernity is in the horizon.

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