THE TALKING DRUM

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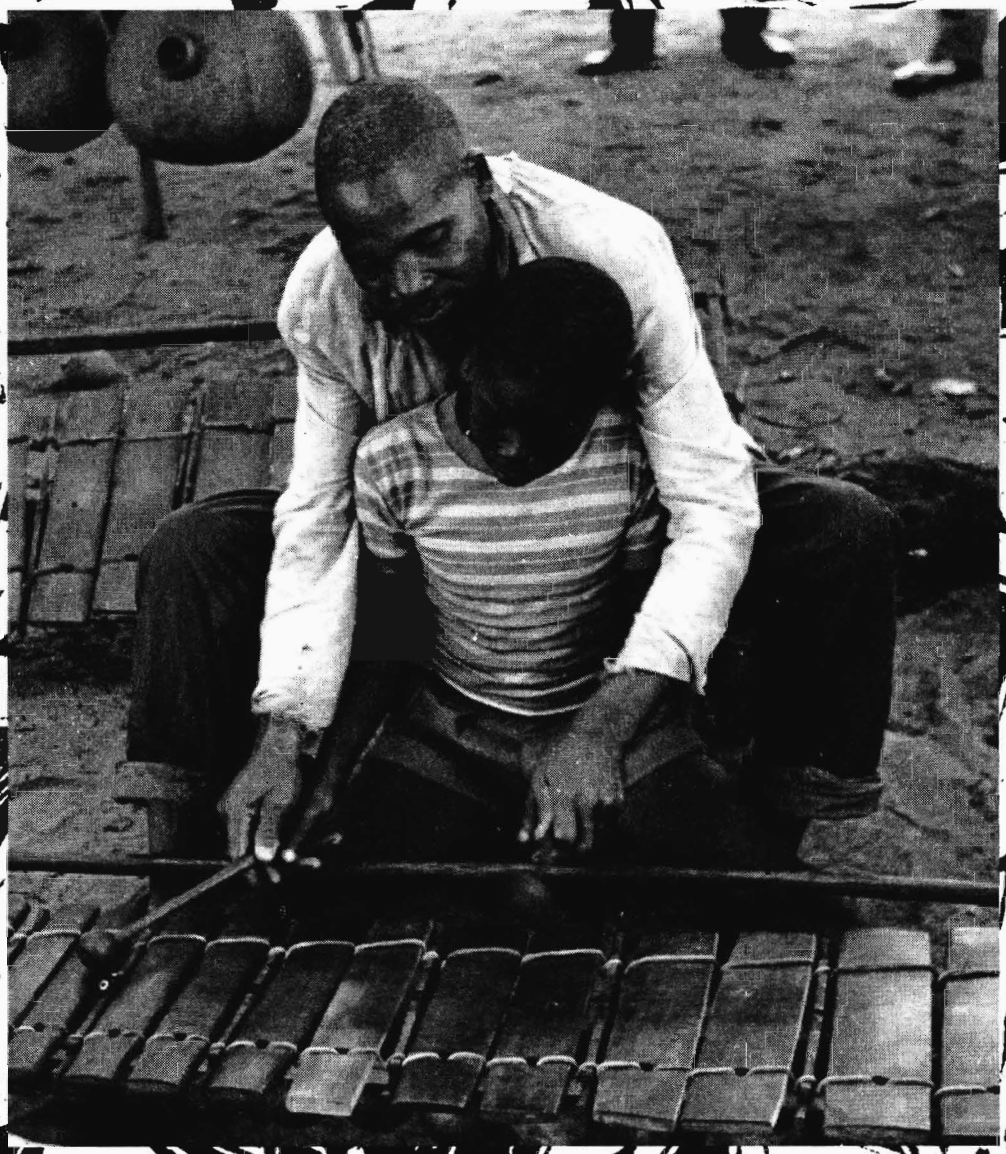

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Network for promoting Intercultural Education through Music (NETIEM)
Pan-African Society of Musical Arts Education (PASMAE)

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Illustration for *The Talking Drum*: Dina Cormick

Editorial

A significant aspect of music-making in Africa, so often commented on by overseas visitors, is how music skills are acquired so easily through the informal learning experience of community life. In contrast, many in the "Western world" struggle to attain music skills despite the many formal educational opportunities available. One example is when David McAllester, well-known American ethnomusicologist and educator, visited the Venda in South Africa, he was astonished to discover that musical performance is for all people in Venda. He wrote in *Becoming Human through Music*, that "this is a staggering discovery for a music teacher in our civilization which is obviously "advanced", but where we worry about the high proportion of people who … are paralysed musically".

Dave Dargie's article, "Introducing Pulse Notation", furthers our understanding of this unique feature of African music. Dave is a long time contributor and supporter of *The Talking Drum (TTD)*. His research has opened many doors for educators keen to draw on aspects of music making in Africa.

Mandy Carver's article: "Understanding African Music" is drawn from her recent publication of the same name. The source for her material is the ILAM (International Library of African Music). In the words of Diane Thram, the editor, "One of Hugh Tracey's concerns was that the changes brought by modernization and urbanization that accompanied the colonization of Africa would, over time, cause the music he was recording to disappear. To this end he believed that it was imperative to provide material for African music education in the schools. With the publication of Understanding African Music, the ILAM Music Heritage Project SA is providing practical materials for contemporary curricula that pay attention to African musical values and systems of organization. It is providing music teachers and students and any other users of this book with a listening and visual experience that is sure to increase their knowledge of African music and at the same time enrich their lives." Hugh Tracey initiated this, and Mandy Carver is realizing and serving the cause of African music in the schools. Andrew Tracey's generosity with his knowledge and his enthusiasm as a teacher and his publications contributed to her work. This unique publication should be in every school. See page 12 to order a copy. South Africa is fortunate that the legacy of Hugh Tracey continues and is preserved at the ILAM, a rich depository of African music. *TTD* is only one of many beneficiaries.

Finally, from Patience Musandirire comes "Marimba Playing Technique". He is an active member of PASMAE (Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education) with an interest in African marimba playing techniques, the nature and scope of African music, African drumming, and musical arts education. Currently he works in Orapa, Botswana as a musical arts education teacher and consultant of African musical arts in marimbas, where he runs an annual marimba festival for private schools in northern Botswana, hosted by Livingstone House School in Orapa.

In the last editorial I said we may have only one issue in 2013. If, however, there are sufficient submissions for a second issue, this will appear in December, but if not, then this is the only issue for 2013, our twentieth year.

Elizabeth Oehrle

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The Talking Drum wishes to thank the Bartel Arts Trust for their generous support.

Introducing Pulse Notation

© Dave Dargie, University of Fort Hare

1. Introducing Pulse Notation

1.1. Pulse notation is a way of transcribing music which uses more than one rhythm system at the same time. It is especially useful in transcribing cross-rhythm, in which one rhythm system is based on duple beat patterns (beat patterns using multiples of two beats) and another rhythm system uses triplet beat patterns moving simultaneously with the duple pattern(s). Such a system can be referred to loosely as a "2-vs-3" combined pattern.

Hugh Tracey, Ethnomusicologist in the field c.1950.
© ILAM —photo used with permission.

1.1.1. Cross-rhythm therefore means rhythm which uses rhythm patterns of "2-vs-3" or "3-vs-2" beats simultaneously.

1.1.2. Derived cross-rhythms.
The way cross-rhythm is used in much African music may include very complex derived cross-rhythms. In Thembu Xhosa music, for example, one finds patterns of 4-vs-3, 10-vs-8, 12-vs-13 and other complex patterns. The pattern of 10-vs-8 occurs because of alterations to original beat patterns by equalisation of beats. The 10 beat pattern may be derived from an original 12 beat pattern in the following way. Suppose that sung syllables are placed on only 10 of the original twelve beats. Instead of two sung syllables each being stretched over two beats, the beats are adjusted so that 10 equal beats now fit into the "space" of the original 12 beats. In this way the singers have equalised each sung tone.

If the song is sung using the original 12 beat pattern, the singers clap 8 beats "against" the 12 sung beats. This rhythm of 12-vs-8 is simply the cross-rhythm pattern 3-vs-2 sung four times. When the original 12 beats are equalised to 10, the new 10 beat pattern still fits exactly with the 8 beat clapping pattern used by the singers. This is a typical Thembu practice which gives great impetus and power to the song, while at the same time creating a problem for the analysts. Even when the analyst has worked out what is happening in the music, it is clearly not easy to transcribe a cross-rhythm of 10-vs-8 beats using normal notation. Pulse notation offers a way of writing out such music much more easily.

1.1.3. Other ways of disguising rhythm.
For a long time musicologists were not able to analyse Xhosa rhythm. This was in part because of the use of cross-rhythm and equalisation of beats mentioned in the previous section 1.1.2, but also because Xhosa musicians use other methods of rhythmic disguise. One extremely effective way of disguising rhythm used in Thembu Xhosa music is rhythmic delay. When such delay is used, then singers may clap or dance on beats which fall after the voice beats. The way they do this is to use a different rhythm system for body movement from the system for the voice beats. The main difference is that the voice beats and the body movement beats have different main beats. Typically, body movement main beats fall a very rapid pulse after one of the voice beats (not necessarily a voice main beat). The rapid pulse system separating the two beat systems is typically rapid triplets. In addition, it may happen in some songs that clapping beats and foot beats do not coincide.

All this means that it is not at all easy to transcribe Thembu Xhosa and other similar music. If one observes Thembu singers, even very young children, performing a song, what they are doing may seem very easy and natural. But when one tries to imitate them, one may find it is anything but easy to do so correctly. Because such singers are well used to using their rhythm systems, they can slot into such rhythms in a very natural way, without any bother of writing out their music. But for outsiders trying to understand what is happening, it is often necessary to find a way of first writing out the music correctly in order to be able to study it. For this, pulse notation is a very useful tool: not primarily to learn to perform the songs, but in order to understand and analyse them.

2. Introducing Pulse Notation

To illustrate pulse notation, the very well-known Xhosa "Click Song", *Igqirha lendlela nguQongqothwane,* is useful. Here a traditional version of the song is used, not the popular version which alters the traditional original in a jazz or popular way..

The "Click Song" is a **cyclic song.** This means that the song is based on a cycle of beats and a harmony pattern linked to the beats. This beat and harmony cycle is sung over and over

again. The melodies used all fit into the basic rhythm and harmony pattern of the cycle. So to transcribe the song we use a basic score pattern showing this cycle, which is 8 main beats. The singers sing a rhythm pattern of 8 x 3 beats, making 24 beats in all. To reflect the pattern of the cycle, one can construct a representative grid. The five clef lines represent the pitches of the notes in the usual way. But vertical lines are drawn over the clef lines to represent the beats. Thick lines may represent main beats, thin lines represent beats carrying less emphasis.

Call-and-response form.

Traditional Xhosa songs typically use call-and-response form. There is a song leader (or leaders) who sing the "call", the leader part, and the follower(s) sing the response. The leader and follower parts may or may not overlap, and there are typically a number of follower parts. These follower parts may be parts all singing the same text at the same time at different pitch levels. This creates a system of parallel harmony. But different followers may also use parts which do not use the same text, and which overlap (i.e., start at different points of the cycle, so that a part begins before another part has completed its cycle). In writing the various parts into the score in the grid lay-out, if the cycle can fit into one line across the page, then one line should be allocated to each sung part, whether a leader or a follower part. The idea then is that a singer singing that particular part will start at a designated point of the line, sing to the end of the line and continue again from the beginning of the same line.

Building a complex whole from simple elements.

The "Click Song" uses a typically Xhosa simple melody. Many Xhosa songs become complex by weaving a number of simple elements into a complex whole. These elements include polyphonic parts and harmony parts (using the Xhosa system of parallel harmony). They include using more than one rhythm system simultaneously. Our transcription will need to show all of this in a clear way. So each part, leader or follower, must be allocated its own line. Harmony parts may either be written on a separate line running next to the main melody line, or, if there is enough space, the harmony parts may be written on the same line as the melody being harmonised.


Nofinishi Dywili with *uhadi*.

Scale, harmony and melody.

The "Click Song" uses the Xhosa hexatonic (six note) scale, written here as F-G-A-B-C-D. This scale comes from the musical bows used by the Xhosa, especially the *uhadi* calabash bow, which has been used by the Xhosa people for hundreds of years. The "Click Song" is also noted for using the Xhosa harmony system, two major chords a whole tone apart. This harmony also comes from the musical bows. In this transcription the chords will be written as F major (F-A-C) and G major (G-B-D).

The melody of this song is both simple and typically African, with phrases beginning high and falling to their end. The song uses two sets of text lines and two melodies. It will be seen that the two melodies are harmonic parallels of each other.

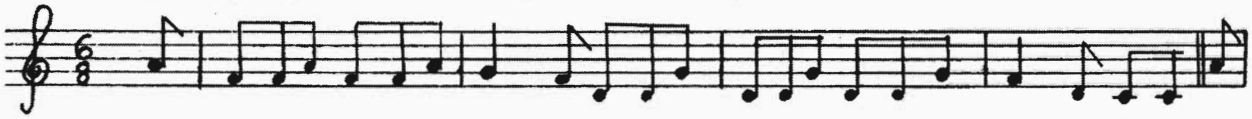
Singing with the *uhadi* bow.

The "Click Song" is popular with bow players. For our example an *uhadi* bow version by the noted Xhosa musician, Mrs Nofinishi Dywili (d. 2002) is used. Recordings of this song, performed by Nofinishi Dywili, are included on the CD "Songs of Nofinishi Dywili no 1: solo bow songs", and on the DVD "Performance at the Home of Nofinishi Dywili" (Nofinishi Dywili with the Ngqoko Group). Both CD and DVD were recorded by D. Dargie, and copies of the recordings may be obtained from the International Library of African Music (ILAM) at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, or from the author. The transcription will reflect both a solo and a group version of the song.

Here now are transcriptions of the "Click Song", using both normal notation and pulse notation, to demonstrate a system of pulse notation.

2.1. The Melody of the "Click Song" in normal notation.

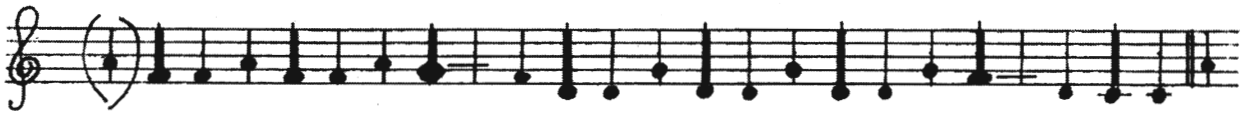
The melody of the "Click Song" is composed of both leader part and follower part. When one person sings the song, leader and follower parts may be joined into one melody, as shown in Example 1.



Example 1: The Melody of the "Click Song" in normal staff notation.

2.2. The same melody as in example 1, in pulse notation.

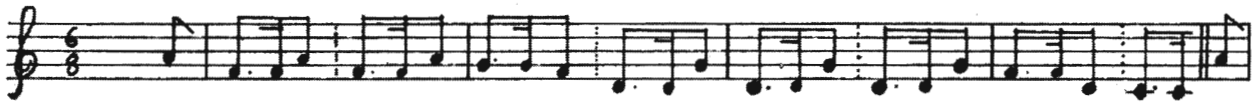
A grid has been constructed by drawing vertical lines across the clef. Care has been taken to lay out the score so that at a glance the score reader may see what beats are equal and where the beats fall into the rhythm scheme. When a note is held over more than one beat, this is indicated by a line drawn from the note across the next beat line(s). When the sound stops, nothing is written on the beat line when the singer is silent. Rests, note tails and flags are not used. This is how the melody line of the "Click Song" looks in pulse notation. Compare this with example 1. Note that the singer begins after the double bar near the end of the line: this beginning note is also written, for clarity, in brackets at the beginning of the line. The main beats are represented by thick lines, the other beats by thinner lines. In this way it is intended to make the rhythm of the song immediately "visible" without having to decipher tails and flags (or dots) appended to the notes.



Example 2: The melody of the "Click Song" in pulse notation.

2.3. Nofinishi Dywili's *uhadi* version of the Click Song melody, and use of pulse delay.

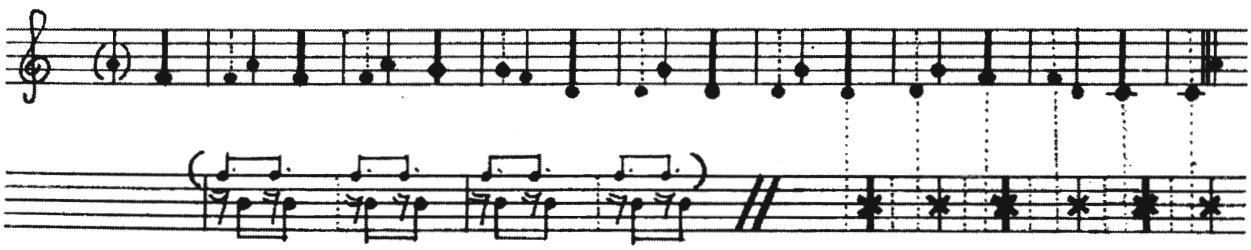
Nofinishi was seldom satisfied to play a song without adding some "salt" or "spice" through the rhythm. She often made use of "dotted rhythms", as shown in the transcription of her bow version of the "Click Song".



Example 3: The melody of the "Click Song" as played on the *uhadi* musical bow by Nofinishi Dywili, and the introduction of pulse delaying for the clapping.

In fact, Nofinishi"s bow rhythm is not a "dotted rhythm" as in western music. It is a combination of the triple rhythm used by the singers and the simultaneous duple rhythm of the body movement (clap and dance). This can be made clear by using pulse notation. For this, a grid is drawn which shows patterns of 3 and 2 simultaneously. This grid is shown in the top line of the score in Example 4. Both rhythm systems use the same main beats. The triplet rhythm is then represented by main beat (thick line) plus two equally spaced thin lines for the other triplet beats. The duple beat is represented by the main beat plus the dotted lines crossing the clef. Now it can be seen how the notes represented in Example 3 by semiquavers fall in Example 4 on the vertical dotted lines.

Example 4 goes on to show how the clapping of the singers fits into the pattern. In the lower line of Example 4, at first four "bars" (indicated by dotted lines) show the duple rhythm represented by dotted quavers on the top line of the clef, two to the "bar". On the middle line of the clef the actual clap used by the singers is shown, each time falling a semiquaver behind the notes actually on the beats (on the top line of the clef). This is because the singers are using beat delay technique for their clapping. The claps fall behind the main beats by a rapid (triplet) pulse. After the slanted double bar on this clef the claps, indicated by x marks, are clearly shown falling behind the main beats by a triplet pulse by the vertical lines across this lower clef line. Dots link the two clefs, showing clearly how the clap sounds fall a rapid pulse behind the melody tones.



Example 4: Nofinishi's *uhadi* melody in pulse notation.

3. A full performance of the "Click Song", shown in pulse notation.

A transcription of a performance of the "Click Song" by a group of singers led by Nofinishi Dywili with the *uhadi* musical bow may now be attempted. This transcription is based on a performance by Nofinishi with the Ngqoko Xhosa Music Ensemble, shown in video on the DVD "Performance at the Home of Nofinishi Dywili", mentioned above. This transcription, spread over five lines of score, includes material not shown in the examples above, as follows:

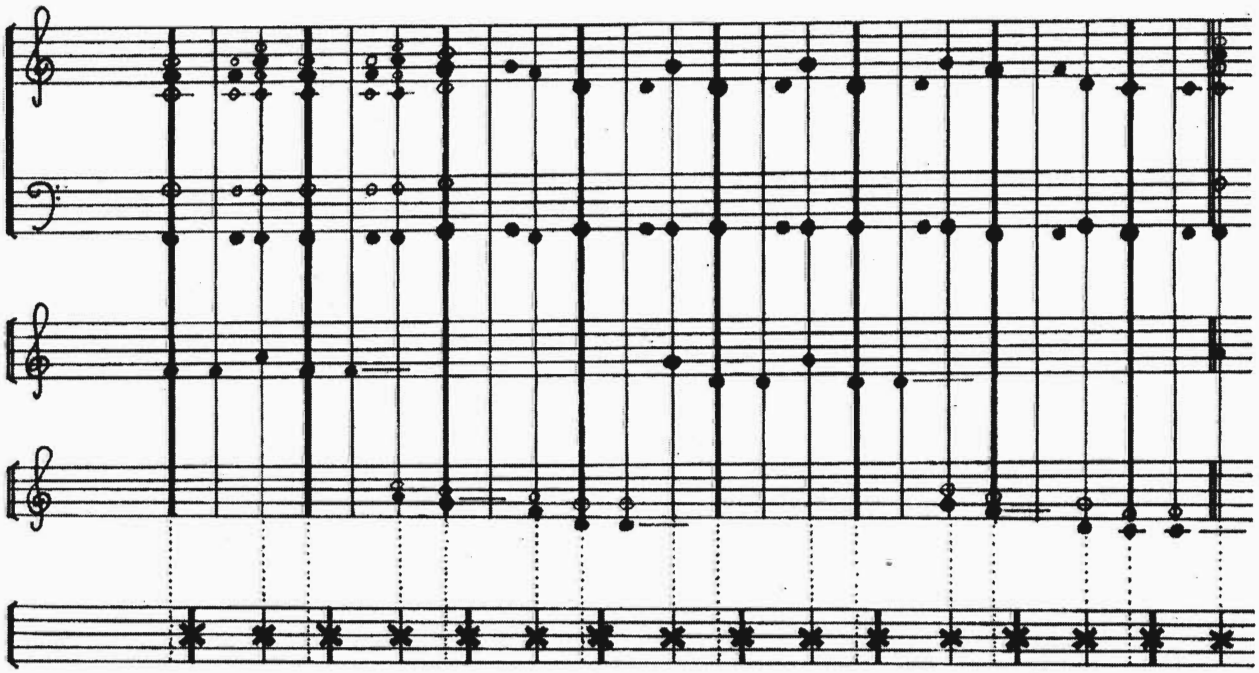
TOP TWO LINES SHOW: **the *uhadi:* fundamentals (on the lowest line of the bass clef) in solid notes, and overtone melody (in the treble clef) also written in solid notes. The other audible overtones, in treble and bass clefs, are written as hollow notes.**

It can be immediately seen that the overtone patterns are patterns of parallel harmony. It is on these patterns of harmony that Xhosa singing in harmony is based.

THIRD LINE: **melody of the lead singer.** In the earlier examples the melody was shown as a whole, as sung by a solo singer. The melody in fact is a combination of the parts of the lead singer and the follower(s). In the group performance transcribed here, Nofinishi Dywili both plays the *uhadi* and sings the leader part. Her colleagues in the Ngqoko Group sing the follower parts. When the song is sung by a group, as here, the melody is divided as shown. The leader sings what is shown on the third (middle) line of the score. The leader begins with the note shown at the extreme right of the line, immediately after the double bar.

FOURTH LINE: **melody and parallel harmony of the followers.** The melody of the followers completes the phrases begun by the leader. This is shown in the fourth line of the score. When harmony is used by some of the singers, it moves parallel with the main follower melody. In the fourth line of the score the main melody tones are written with solid notes, the harmony is written with hollow notes. Seeing that the followers' part completes a phrase begun by the leader, the followers' part also begins after the double bar near the end of the line.

FIFTH (BOTTOM) LINE: **the clapping rhythm, with pulse delay.** Again the claps are indicated by the mark x. The claps on the clapping main beats fall a rapid (triplet) pulse behind the voice beats. It should be noted that this causes the claps on the unstressed clap beats to coincide with the third of the voice beat triplets.



Example 5: A performance of the "Click Song" by Nofinish Dywili with *uhadi* calabash bow, with members of the Ngqoko Xhosa Music Ensemble (The "Ngqoko Group").

4. In Conclusion.

Some work still remains to complete the transcription, including writing the texts into the score. But it is hoped what has been shown so far will suffice to give an introduction to a system of pulse notation. If one gets used to it (which is easy enough), then one can gain a good idea of a complete song performance at a glance – including pitch notations, rhythm patterns and all. The great majority of the transcriptions in the book *Xhosa Music* (Dave Dargie, 1988, published by David Philip, Cape Town) have been written using this type of pulse notation.

Understanding African Music by Mandy Carver

The International Library of African Music (ILAM) in Grahamstown, South Africa recently published my book, *Understanding African Music*. This textbook is designed for music students aged between 15 and 18 years and uses numerous recordings from the ILAM archive to illustrate important African musical concepts. With chapters based on key African elements of music, the text describes and explains many principles of sub-Saharan music making. Included in each chapter is a case study of one particular musical practice that illustrates the musical concepts being discussed as well as several classroom activities which allow students to get hands-on experience of those concepts. Chapters on Community, Participation and Relationships, Movement, and the Environment extend the familiar list of the elements of music. The book is richly illustrated with photographs from the ILAM archive and is accompanied by a disk containing 96 audio tracks and 3 video clips..

The material in this article is drawn from the book. Tracks are available for free download from:
http://files.ru.ac.za/?a=d&i=ijukpqhl8B
Password: 1954

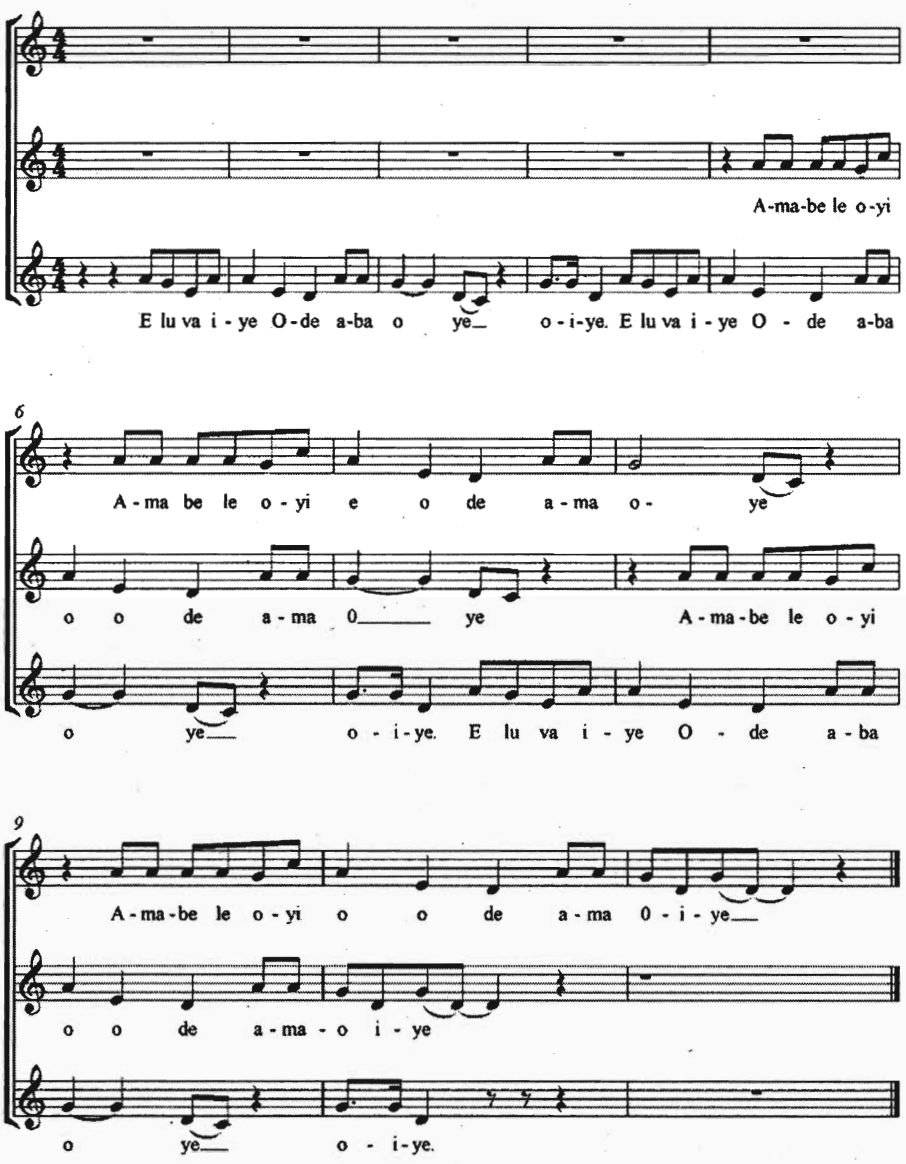
For information on buying the book please contact ilamsales@ru.ac.za.

Amabele-o-iye

Ethnic group: *BaMbuti*
Language: *Asoa*
Recorded: *Congo, 1952*
Performers: *Moisi, Magdalena, Teresa*

This song was sung by three *Mbuti* grandmothers in the Ituri Forest, in the Congo. It is sung on mnemonics – the words do not mean anything, and the vocal lines are improvised.

Amabele (Ituri Forest)



Lesson ideas

Listen to the track
Use the score to sing in three parts
Write out the scale on which the song is based
Use the scale to improvise some independent lines that add to the texture of the song
Try an instrumental version, relying on improvisation, rather than score reading

Samandoza Iwe

Ethnic group: *Shona*
Language: *ChiShona*
Recorded: *Zimbabwe, 1951*
Performer: *Muchaenda Sigauke (leader)*

This dance is performed by young men and women and one dancer in the centre of a circle.

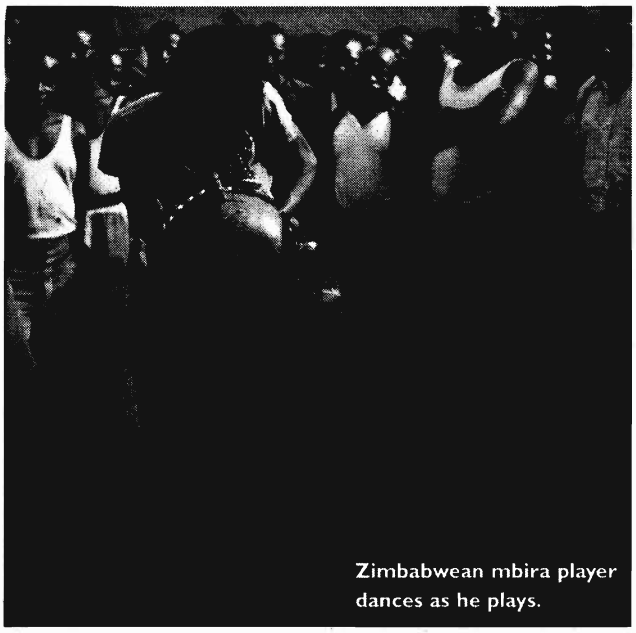
Listen to the song and try to clap the pattern after hearing it a few times. Try to start the pattern with the performers on the audio track. Once this has been done aurally, look at the score below. Clap bar 1–5 together. Form two groups and have one group clap in 4/4 while the other claps the pattern. Then clap the second pattern against a steady 4 (starting at bar 6) and note the difference in the feel between the two.

The rhythm that is clapped in *Samandoza Iwe* is the first line – the second (bar 6) is the same rhythm shifted back one crotchet.

Inkulu into ezakwezela

Ethnic group: *AmaXhosa*
Language: *IsiXhosa*
Recorded: *King Williamstown district, South Africa, 1957*
Performer: *Nontwintwi*
Instrument: *Uhadi*
Translation: *"Something very bad is going to happen"*

This is intimate music that is meant for singing with people close by, as it is very quiet and contemplative. Although the *uhadi* bow can accompany groups of singers, it is primarily a woman's solo instrument. When listening to this song, you need to imagine a hut at night, the wind murmuring outside, the hut full of people, sitting on the floor, their faces lit by the faint glow of embers from the fire in the centre. Everyone is very quiet – listening. When he recorded the *uhadi* players, one man told Hugh Tracey that to listen to this music properly, you need to listen in silence – lie down and close your eyes. And then you must think of places far away where you've never been and try to imagine what it is like.



Zimbabwean mbira player dances as he plays.

The *uhadi*

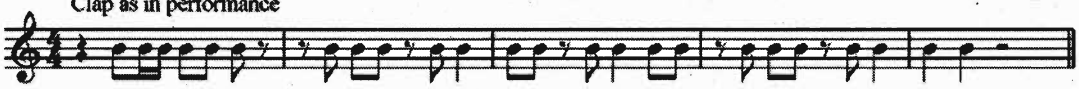
The bow has two fundamental notes – the open string and one fingered note which raises the open string by about a tone. The note that is perceived is an octave above the actual fundamental and the player taps out a rhythmic foundation on the bow. By moving the calabash, which is attached to the bow, closer or further away from her chest as she plays, the performer selects particular harmonics which resonate in the calabash and create a delicately quiet melody. (These harmonics are difficult to distinguish against the louder bow rhythm.) The harmonic melody could be the one she sings, or it could be a counter melody. To the bow player, her *uhadi* is like a partner with whom she performs a duet.

In this song, the bow plays the additive rhythm, 3 + 3 + 2. The song is made up of variations of a few key phrases. Most of them have a downward contour. The Xhosa language dictates the rhythm of the sung melody, which follows the rhythm of the spoken words. The clicks contained in *isiXhosa* were inherited from the San, the hunter gatherers who long ago migrated to the arid desert areas of Botswana and Namibia.

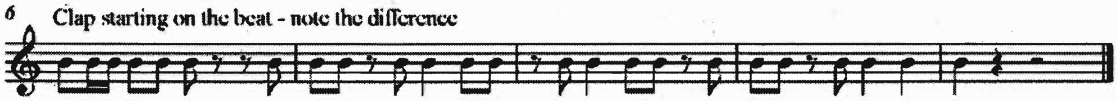
Features of this music

Scale: Xhosa scale is based on the harmonics produced by the musical bow. The *uhadi* has two fundamental notes a tone apart produced with the open string and one fingered note a tone above it. The scale is formed from the major triads built on these roots, using the 2nd and 5th partials of the harmonic series resonating in the gourd. The Xhosa scale is like a diatonic major scale with a raised 4th and no leading tone. The *uhadi* is not tuned to a fixed pitch, but will be tuned to a note that suits the singer's range.

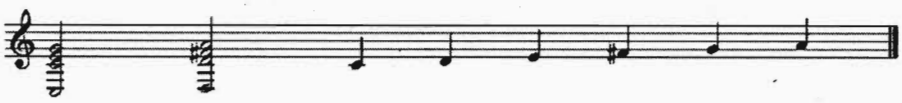
Clap as in performance



6 Clap starting on the beat - note the difference



The Xhosa scale

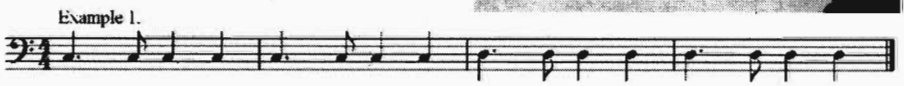


Tonality: A limited number of notes in a scale will limit the harmonic possibilities. *Uhadi* music is built on two chords which alternate in different rhythmic patterns. Two-chord structures are common in African music, with the interval between those chords varying in size.

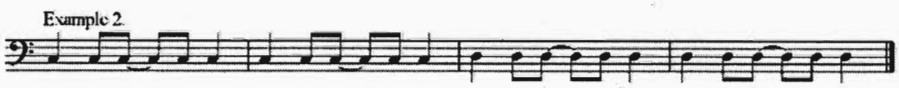
Lesson ideas

1. Questions for Listening
   - Identify the additive rhythm played by the bow. Can you transcribe it?
   - How many beats does the bow's repeating cycle consist of?
   - Describe the contour of the sung phrases.
   - What is the singer's range in the song?
2. Using the Xhosa scale, improvise downward melodies on your instrument.
3. Using the Xhosa Scale, the two chords built on fundamentals a tone apart and an additive rhythm of 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 3 , compose a 16 bar piece.
4. Class task – Using marimbas / xylophones
   - Limit your composition to 8 bars
   - Identify the notes of the two triads to find the scale you will use.
   - The bass players play the progression limited to 2 notes, using a simple repeating rhythm.

Example 1.



Example 2.



Jane Notinki Mdyogolo playing the *uhadi* bow.

The bass is played repeatedly in order for students to experiment with improvising a melody.

Experiment with improvising a melody using the notes of the scale that you identified.

Listen to yourself and repeat the parts that sound good to you.

Remember which notes sound good with which chord.

Work with a partner and take turns to play, in a call and answer form.

Each partnership plays for the whole group.

Allow bass players the chance to improvise by swapping parts.

Chopi mbila lesson, Mozambique.

The Nature and Scope of African Marimba Playing: 'Introducing the Musandirire "Polygamy" Model in Zimbabwe Marimba Playing'

© Patience Musandirire, Musical arts education teacher and consultant, Botswana

The role of marimba music in developing musical arts practices in Africa seems to be dying away, mostly due to lack of proven models and methods pertaining to the art and science of playing this instrument. This paper addresses Zimbabwean marimba playing through the use of a method derived from one cultural practice that existed, and to some extent still exists, within some African cultures, the practice of "polygamy". There are many methods that are used to play marimbas around the world, and most have been infected by western musical ideologies that dilute the traditional African marimba feel. Whilst it is a display of skill and very exciting to play a "rock" composition on the marimbas, the scope at which it appeals to the methodological compositional structure of African musical arts is largely lost, and as a result, this does no justice to the intrinsic nature of African marimba music.

Introduction

Mans, (2006) discusses ways of empowering the future audience in cognitively identifying with the indigenous creative ideas and cultural meanings of the African indigenous musical arts systems and type. In this regard, I will introduce my model that could be useful for discussion and conceptualizing Zimbabwean marimba playing. Advocacy of this model in marimba playing will help uphold the characteristics of African music for the present and future audiences in the development and preservation of musical arts education. I have called this model the "Musandirire Polygamy Model in Zimbabwean Marimba Playing".

My model of Zimbabwean Marimba Playing arises from the ideas of polygamy, and also takes into account the characteristics that form the basic principles of African music. Though the practice of polygamy has since stopped in some African cultures, it is the system that exists or used to exist in that practice that forms the fundamentals of my polygamy model in Zimbabwean marimba playing.

Though the modern world condones the practice of polygamous marriage as an absurd primitive traditional practice, there is much that we could learn from it. The learning perspectives bring out some fundamental responses that in my view have immense meaning when we "philosophically" compare a marimba ensemble to a polygamous family structure, as explained in my model in the paragraphs that follow.

Why Zimbabwean Marimbas?

Marimbas were introduced to Zimbabwe in the 1960s. The Zimbabwean approach in African marimba playing is embraced the world over as a way to understanding the development of marimba music in African cultures. Through attending conferences and African musical arts exhibitions and also as a marimba expert, I have come to know that Zimbabwean marimbas have appealed to many the world over. I realized this as I have been involved in a number of practical researches and musical arts exchange programs around the world, where the Zimbabwean marimba playing technique played a major role in

educating foreign cultures about African marimba music.

This is evident in countries like Norway, Sweden, and Netherlands etc. where they have on-going cultural exchange programs with marimba instructors' from Zimbabwe. In the USA, local communities and guest performers produce an annual African cultural music concert and workshops called Zimfest. These workshops and concerts are based on different musical cultural activities from Zimbabwe, and Zimbabwean marimba music is very popular.

Zimbabwean Marimba Music in Relation to the Characteristics of African Music

Marimba instrumental music in Zimbabwe is borrowed from the *mbira* songs. The *mbira* is the most musical instrument that conforms to ancestral and spiritual values and activities in various cultures in Zimbabwe. The *mbira* music is reproduced on the marimba because people identify with it; thus, it preserves cultural significance. It is only right that we play true African music on the African marimba instrument as a way to sustain the continuous existence of meaningful African musical arts in African societies. We may concur about the aspect of culture being dynamic and consent that there is always change in customs as generations interrelate, but true appreciation of African music will command us to revert to the old methodological systems that form the foundations and fundamentals of true African musical arts compositions. Marimba music is also associated with patterns of "call and response". The compositional structures of songs include the aspects of polyphony and polyrhythm which are the basic elements that give identity to African music.

This style is common in Southern Africa where there is dominance of the call and response fashion. Since African traditional music is music that is mostly learnt through the oral tradition, one expects that different traditional songs may be recomposed and adapted because that will not alter the musical value contained in them.

Polygamy in the African Music Context

It is important for us to first understand what polygamy is, and dissect the family system and structure of a polygamous marriage in African cultures. This will act as a point of departure for us to be able to understand how the Musandirire Polygamy Model in Zimbabwean Marimba Playing works.

Polygamy in Africa refers to a marriage situation where one person is married to more than one life partner. This system was practised or is practised by men who marry more than one wife and consider the woman as the sole home maker who carries all the composite burdens which culture and tradition expects of her. Polygamy trends vary from culture to culture.

The Role of the Mother

The mother's role in a polygamous family situation cannot be over emphasized. The first wife in most instances gives direction to the other wives. Children stay with their mothers in separate houses built by the husband for each wife.

It is therefore the duty of every mother to discipline her children according to the expected behavior required. Wives depend on each other to accomplish the burden of work and child bearing. Although there is always some hatred and jealousy among the wives, fighting and witchcraft are rare owing to the terms and cultural expectations attached to their marriages. A wife who causes trouble and upsets the family harmony would cause her parents to return the wealth paid for her bride price. As a result, each wife tries to contribute positively to the upbringing of the whole family. It is the job of the first wife to educate the younger wives on how the family should be run.

However, each wife is independent to run her homestead the way she desires. Serious issues would always be referred to the first wife who acts as the mother of the family. When there is a family function, each wife and her children would bring their field produce for the enjoyment of the united family. This also shows who the hard workers are and who needs advice to improve their harvest.

Children follow the examples given by their mothers and their behaviour shows the kind of teaching they have received.

In a polygamous family, the father is seen as a man of few words, who supports and oversees the family business. Most of the physical work is coordinated by the firstborn son of either wife. This first born son acts as the backbone of the family and is responsible for teaching his young brothers, always checking that the girls behave and report back to father.

Musandirire Polygamy Model in Zimbabwean Marimba Playing

In defining the Musandirire Polygamy Model in Zimbabwean Marimba Playing, I have allotted each marimba a comparable place in the polygamous family e.g. mother, son etc.

The soprano marimba –*mothers*

The soprano marimba, the highest pitched instrument, acts as the mother instrument in the marimba ensemble. There are usually two or more sopranos in a marimba ensemble, and in this kind of situation, one needs to identify the mother as in polygamy.

This is the instrument that is responsible for starting the songs by

playing the call melodies or the question parts. It is not common to start a musical performance all at once. The performance is built up as many independent instruments join in until everyone gets a part in the music.

The mother soprano persistently gives the identity of the song by constantly playing the lead question parts throughout the composition, and ultimately controls what other instruments play. She sings the song whilst others respond.

She speaks with authority and talks a lot so that she attracts everyone's attention. She plays many variations covering all the octaves and she is at liberty to make inroads into the melody lines played by other sopranos.

The rest of the "mothers"/sopranos support the mother soprano by answering her call melodies. They play short polyphonic melodies that always leave room for each other as the music interlocks. In polygamy, there should be no competition amongst the sopranos, and they should most of the time aim to play their answering parts in different octaves. It should be taken into account that everyone has a unique input towards the success of every composition. The sopranos always refer their answering melodies and rhythms to the mother soprano. The energy of the performance should be felt as people join in with their individual artistic skills that also include improvisation. These are true values of African music that should be recognized as we try to sustain the development of African musical arts education.

Across Africa, women are known for ululating as a way to show their gratitude towards any good deed done in the family; likewise the mother sopranos are responsible for playing the ululating parts by 'rolling' their hammers on a high pitched note. This could be done at climaxes depending on the structure of the song.

Rolling of marimba hammers should not be used as a sign to end a performance, which has become the norm with most marimba players. It should however be noted that the success of this marimba family depends on the ability of the mother marimbas to appreciate their different roles and positions in the big "polygamous" family.

The tenor marimba –*children*

The tenors act as the children in the marimba family. They play polyrhythmically with each other. There should be at least one tenor to complement the mother soprano steadily with its melody throughout the performance.

As the children in the polygamous family, the tenors are dependent on what the mother soprano plays. Though they may at some point play polyphonic melodies, they are not free to conflict with the sopranos, but must support and harmonize them. Lastly, no child is allowed to play what any other child may be playing.

The baritone marimba –*first born son*

The baritone acts as the son of the family and as the 'small father'. As in polygamy, he is responsible for man's work that upholds family values. He acts as the handy man, acting on instructions from the mother and the father. The baritone is free to play independent responding and harmonizing rhythms that bind the music together. He is the link between the mothers and the father. Studies of polygamy show that the 'small father', thus the baritone, enjoys respect from the mothers, as he is expected to take over if the father dies.

The bass marimba –*father*

In marimba playing, the bass is the father, maintaining a steady pace that provides a continuous firm underlying rhythm to other instruments. All other instruments can play different variations but will still come back to fit in the underlying sound provided by the bass. The bass does not play variations or any rhythms he feels like, corresponding to the smaller number of notes that he has. Normally the bass marimba is limited to 8 or 9 notes. The polygamous father is a man of authority but few words. He makes a marimba composition enjoyable especially if he joins last.

Conclusion

The relationships inside a polygamous family and a marimba ensemble are comparable, and this can lead to greater understanding of African group musical dynamics. In my polygamy model, it is very important to understand the dynamics of the polygamous family structure before applying it to the playing of the Zimbabwean marimba playing technique. Ultimately one expects to hear a rich and well balanced performance that has appreciation of the different contributions brought in by the unity in the polygamous marimba ensemble. Everyone has a unique input towards the creation of music and their contribution is what brings the people together towards achieving one common goal. "All fingers are not of equal size, but each finger has its special capacity in performing life functions" Nzewi, (2007:53).

My model could be an answer to marimba performers and learners who may not know exactly how to start teaching and learning the Zimbabwean marimbas

YouTube links: "Musandirire Polygamy Model in Zimbabwean Marimba Playing"

Taimboreva:
http://youtu.be/wjzdhQ294L8

Shaka Zulu:
http://youtu.be/ZHGEL-Aec34

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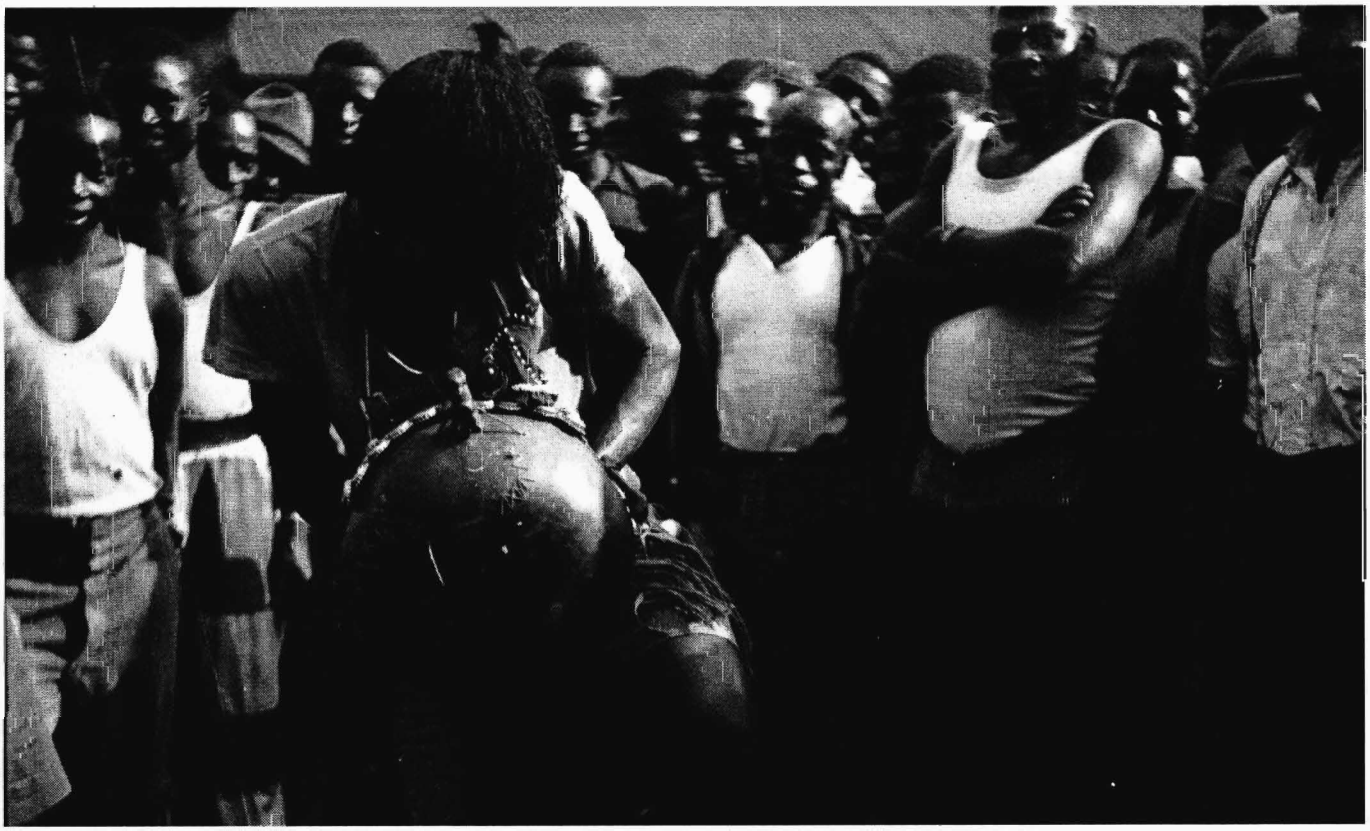

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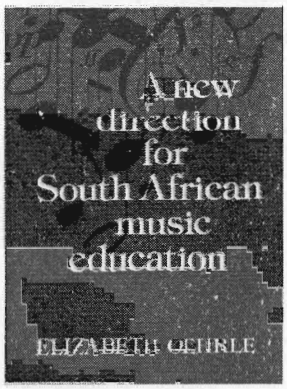

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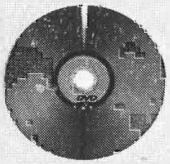

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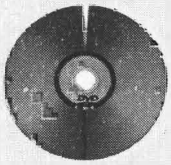

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