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'Art' music in a cross-cultural context: the case of Africa

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> The artistic challenge, one I accept, is to use the tools of Western progress and communicate messages of African heritage.
>
> Francis Bebey[1]

> When a note arrives in town from the village, the town returns it with electronic delay, with reverb, limiter and all the studio technology, but it is the same note that came from the village.
>
> Manu Dibangu[2]

(Re)constructing African music

In the interconnected global ethnoscape of the late-twentieth century, the aesthetics of 'art' and popular music alike increasingly bore the mark of hybridity and cultural crossover. It is a world in which once-secure musical boundaries became highly porous; in which transnational cultural exchanges produced an array of richly intersecting multicultural musical forms; indeed, a world in which 'polystylism' was itself considered a representative hallmark of a postmodern condition that challenged the very concepts of cultural authenticity and artistic originality. Collaborative avant-garde projects, like that between Philip Glass and the West African griot Foday Musa Suso, resulted in music that smoothly overlays discrete musical styles, in this case Glass's distinctively minimalist additive rhythms (already indebted to Indian classical music) with the cyclic patterning of the *kora*.[3] Elsewhere, European composers with minimalist leanings, like György Ligeti, extended the dense textures created by Central African polyphonic techniques by drawing out acoustically produced 'inherent

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1 Quoted in Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye! A Celebration of African Music*, London, 1991, p. 113.

2 Quoted in Angela Impey, 'Popular Music in Africa', *Africa: Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, New York, 1998, pp. 415–37; p. 415.

3 Cf. 'Spring Waterfall' on Jali Kunda's CD *Griots of West Africa and Beyond* (1997). The *kora* is a form of harp (technically harp-lute) traditional in West Africa and common in commercialized 'world music'.

rhythms' in the context of Western musical instruments.[4] Relatedly, American postmodernists, like Mikel Rouse, wrote operas (such as *Failing Kansas* (1995) and *Dennis Cleveland* (1996)) that sound like creative transcriptions of the African rhythmic processes found in A. M. Jones's *Studies in African Music*.[5]

Experimentally minded Western musicians are equally indebted to other non-Western influences. On his *Rhythmicolor Exotica* (1996) percussion virtuoso Glen Velez draws on percussion techniques from around the world (such as the frame drumming from ancient Mesopotamia) to create sound collages that ostensibly articulate the surrounding mythologies associated with these techniques (such as Mayan creation stories). John Zorn, a self-declared product of the 'information age', composed rapid-fire successions of diverse musical styles; these 'blocks of genre' (ranging from commercial radio sounds to Japanese music) produce a shifting, restless, and 'decentred' sonic panorama, as for instance in 'Forbidden Fruit' with its volatile palette of fragmented references to pre-recorded music, quotations, and generic parodies. In popular music, ambient-oriented electronic projects, like *Deep Forest* (Eric Mouquet and Michel Sanchez, 1994), combined a range of ethnographically retrieved music samples with multiple layers of highly manipulated electronic tracks; Africanized techno-funk is coupled with lyrics based on the conversations of West African drummers on the proto-punk band Talking Heads' album *Remain in Light*;[6] Moby's dazzling multi-genre album *Play* is anchored by samples from Alan Lomax field recordings; sample-heavy dance tracks, like 'London Zulu' compiled by the techno outfit *Global Underground*, are consciously aimed to 'pick you up and dump you somewhere on the other side of the planet';[7] and celtic harp and whistle are joined by West African *kora* and *djembe* (Ghanaian hand drums) on Youssou N'Dour's collaboration with Breton harpist Alan Stivell.[8] Even Madonna, reinvigorating her sound with dance-based electronica, drew on a number of the world's cultures for sonic and

4 As for instance in Book I of Ligeti's *Etudes* for Piano (1985). The concept of 'inherent rhythms' was introduced by Gerhard Kubik in the early 1960s to refer to combinations of parts performed by several musicians; in his words, 'The image as it is heard and the image as it is played are often different from each other' ('The Phenomenon of Inherent Rhythms in East and Central African Music', *African Music Society Journal* 3 (1962), pp. 33–42; p. 33). The concept was influential in circles of both scholarship and composition, for instance probably influencing Steve Reich's notion of 'resultant patterns'.

5 A. M. Jones, *Studies in African Music*, London, 1959.

6 Talking Heads, *Remain in Light* (1980). It is likely that David Byrne's pastor-like ranting on the theme of water in the Talking Heads' 'Once in a Lifetime' is the result of his acquaintance with John Chernoff's account of how African drummers converse with one another in *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*, Chicago, 1979: in 'Water No Get Enemy', Fela Anikulapo Kuti sings, '. . . if your head dey hot, na water go cool am. If your child dey grow, na water you go use. Nothing without water. Water him no get enemy' (Chernoff, *African Rhythm*, 72).

7 D. J. Sasha, *Global Underground: Arrivals* (1999), CD sleeve.

8 See, for example, 'A United Earth I' on the CD *Dublin to Dakar: A Celtic Odyssey* (1999).

visual inspiration on a recent tour.[9] In short, the polystylistic ethnoscape was practically a condition of musical life in late postmodernity.

It is tempting to acclaim this proliferation of cross-cultural artistic inventions as a newly democratic postmodern play of stylistic norms. But not all syncretic musical forms articulate equally with late postmodern modes of production, and it is necessary to differentiate these forms in terms of their social, cultural, economic, political, and musical specifics. To begin with, ethnically based musical borrowings took various stylistic forms. On the one hand, new marketing labels such as 'world beat' and 'world music' explicitly categorized diverse musical practices in terms of distinct cultural types – a development that has paradoxically spawned entirely new genres of music like 'ethnotechno' and 'goatrance'. On the other hand, existing Western metropolitan musical genres took on a progressively multicultural hue via stylistic cross-pollination with music from culturally remote regions. Likewise, musicians operating from *non*-Western *loci* increasingly appropriated or transformed Western styles and idioms to suit local purposes: for example, the 'Afrobeat' of Femi Kuti recalls American funk, blues, and hiphop, while South Africa's first major post-apartheid music genre, *kwaito*, is a fusion of various North Atlantic styles (techno, rave, rap, salsa) and homegrown styles (*mbaqanga*, *mbube*).[10] Occasionally these references to Western music were quite specific about their models: Vusi Mahlasela's album *Wisdom of Forgiveness* (1994) is substantially indebted to the work of Paul Simon, sounding practically like a follow-up to Simon's 1986 *Graceland* – right down to the boyish vocal timbre and the hopeful lyrics embracing a unifying feeling of cross-cultural empathy. Similarly, Wes Welenga's album *Wes* is an imitative echo of the keyboard-centred ambient music of Deep Forest (itself a paradigmatic example of 'ethnotechno'). Paradoxically, Welenga copies the sound of the *sampled* aspects of Deep Forest's music with his own voice.[11]

Despite the blurring of stylistic borders, these various syncretisms often operated under different rules and constraints in the late-capitalist economic and political order. They cannot simply be read as so many instances of laissez-faire postmodern pastichism or polystylism. Let me explain using the following well-documented examples. First, in addition to the well-known participation

9 Madonna's interest in non-Western music is also reflected on her song 'Cyber-Raga' on the CD *Groundwork: Act to Reduce Hunger* (2001), which was distributed exclusively by Hear Music and the Starbucks Coffee Company; it includes a text adapted from the Vedic mantra and the Mahabharata, accompanied by breakbeats, electronics, sitar, and tabla.

10 See, for example, TKZee Family's *GUZ 2001* (1999).

11 Wes Welenga, *Wes* (1998). Other examples of Africanized ethnotechno include the song 'Limbo' by the Sandoz Project, which features sampled vocals of the Nigerian Yoruba people, and 'AKA Electric' by Steel Porn Rhino, which employs songs from the pygmies of Central Africa; both tracks can be found on *Ethnotechno: Sonic Anthropology*, Volume 1 (1994).

of Ladysmith Black Mambazo on *Graceland*, Paul Simon hired the South African musicians Chikapa 'Ray' Phiri, Bakithi Khumalo, and Isaac Mtshali to perform the dance/funk rhythm section on his song 'You Can Call Me Al'. Musically speaking, this is a kind of cross-cultural dialogue of styles; the lyrics, arranged in a fuzzy word montage, articulate a postmodern constellation of ideas loosely related to the theme of lifeways in global modernity.[12] Similarly, Kevin Volans used transcriptions of the *Nyanga* pan-pipe dance of the Nyungwe people in Mozambique for the second and fourth movements of his string quartet *White Man Sleeps*; the sound is invigoratingly original, replete with acoustical illusions produced by the 'inherent' melodies of interlocking pan-pipe parts, which, in turn, elaborate typically African harmonic movements. Interestingly, in both these cases, the already hybridized pieces became the source for further musical exploration. Fifteen years after the release of *Graceland*, MDC produced a techno dance tune called 'Sunny Trumpets', which splices and pastes the opening trumpet riff of 'You Can Call Me Al' in various patterns, surrounding it in hypnotically motoric techno-dance rhythms with strongly accentuated offbeats and no words. Analogously, in 2000, Nelly Furtado employed a sample from the second movement of *White Man Sleeps* on the opening track ('Hey, Man!') of her album *Whoa, Nelly!*, where the words, sung in a laid-back girl-next-door vocal style, comment on the complexities of life in the modern world. Thus, in both of these cases, the 'African' input into the music, at least twice removed from its original context, seems to circulate in a new kind of signifying practice. The result is a hybridized hybrid: the African music has become a reference of a reference, caught in a seemingly endless free play of signification.

The problem is that while these rich recontextualizations produced fascinatingly complex cross-cultural intertexts, the economic realities underlying their production tended to benefit only some of the agents involved: despite their efforts to acknowledge their sources, both Simon and Volans are listed as the exclusive composers of the above works. And, once commodified, the copyright privileges that accrue to these pieces extend to the samples made by MDC and Furtado respectively. So, in 'You Can Call Me Al' Simon may voice the captivating realms of cultural interchangeability that have become possible in the new global order, and in 'Sunny Trumpets' MDC may conjure the spirited sound of Africanized trumpets, but, financially speaking, only the Westerners benefit from the borrowings. This is not to criticize the work of

12 For example, the third verse runs: 'A man walks down the street. It's a street in a strange world. Maybe it's the Third World. Maybe it's his first time around. He doesn't speak the language. He holds no currency. He is a foreign man. He is surrounded by the sound. The sound. Cattle in the marketplace. Scatterlings and orphanages. He looks around, around. He sees angels in the architecture. Spinning in infinity. He says Amen! and Hallelujah!' The title of this song resulted from a dinner engagement at which Pierre Boulez kept mistakenly calling Simon 'Al' (and his wife Peggy, 'Betty').

Simon or Volans (both of whom have made considerable contributions to the causes of African music and musicians), but to demonstrate the skewed logic of capitalism in a context of drastic economic and political inequality. According to Simon Frith, copyright law is implicated in economic exploitation on a global scale: 'from an international perspective, copyright can be seen as a key plank in Western cultural and commercial imperialism', used 'as a weapon . . . by the multinationals against small nations'.[13]

While global exchange of musical material across borders of drastic inequality often carries an imprint of economic exploitation – and there are countless examples of brazen appropriations of non-Western musics[14] – this is not inevitable, nor does it apply to every case. While current copyright law tends to protect Western musicians in most cases (if only because non-Western music is often regarded as in the public domain), the South African musicians involved in *Graceland* greatly benefited from the exposure. While ANC supporters picketed a performance in London because the concert defied the terms of the cultural boycott against South Africa (then still under white Nationalist Government control), the exiled South African activist musicians Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba wholeheartedly lent their support to it, even appearing on stage with Simon, because they recognized the strategic value for African musicians of participating in the tour. And indeed, in the late 1980s, major international labels began to sign up groups like Ladysmith Black Mambazo: numerous cross-cultural collaborations and exchanges resulted from their involvement with Simon. Even Laurie Anderson's intensely personal style was inflected by South African *mbaqanga* guitar riffs (performed by Bakithi Khumalo and Ray Phiri on her 1989 CD *Strange Angels*). The *Graceland* tour also brought international recognition to a host of African musicians *not* directly involved with Simon: vocal groups like the eight-piece Black Umfolosi from Zimbabwe, whose gospel-inflected a cappella singing resembles the *mbube* harmonisations of Black Mambazo, gained international recognition in the 1990s (the group is billed in the West in terms of its stylistic links with Ladysmith Black Mambazo). It has even been argued that Simon's music 'softened the more strident tonalities of the antiapartheid struggle'.[15]

13 Simon Frith (ed.), *Music and Copyright*, Edinburgh, 1993, p. xiii.

14 In his article 'The/An Ethnomusicologist and the Record Business', *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28, 1996, pp. 36–56, Hugo Zemp describes various scandalous examples of Western musicians exploiting African and other musicians for profit. For an extended discussion of the role of transnational capital in the formation of global pop, see Timothy Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*, New York and London, 1997. For a discussion of the ethical and financial implications of sampling in electronic dance music, see David Hesmondhalgh, 'International Times: Fusions, Exoticism, and Antiracism in Electronic Dance Music', in Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds.), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, Berkeley, 2000, pp. 280–304.

15 Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West*, New York, 1999, p. 171.

Again on the positive side, the invention of 'world music' encouraged a dramatic increase in the number of commercial recordings of African music, a development that spawned renewed interest and activity in various African instrumental styles, including the *mbira* and *kora*. Today, young performers like Forward Kwenda and Musekiwa Chingodza sustain professional careers as mbirists in the United States and beyond, while *kora* soloists, duos, and trios regularly tour Europe and the United States. Arguably less positive from the point of view of African traditions, African performers frequently relocated to these regions, drawn by their technological resources: the Gambian *kora* player Foday Musa Suso, who blends the sound of the authentic *kora* with electronics and drums, currently resides in New York City, and Chartwell Dutiro, former *mbira* player for Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited, in London. At the same time, various African initiatives for the promotion of local music are attempting to compete with the established centres of production in New York and London. For example, a number of music festivals (including the SADC festival in Zimbabwe and the MASA festival in Ivory Coast) are forging musical connections within the continent, while in South Africa and Senegal sophisticated recording studios assist in the development of an infrastructure for the production and promotion of local talent.[16]

In this way the modern incarnation of traditional African music, bestowed with a kind of 'classical' prestige (replete with 'master' musicians), opened a significant global market for numerous African musicians towards the end of the century. Inevitably, however, these new modes of marketing, engineering, sound production, and styling affected the sound of African music. As the international 'world music' industry continued to modify and refine its expanding niche markets, a new demand for 'authentic' traditional African music was created in Europe and America. Old ethnomusicological recordings were repackaged to reflect historical authenticity, and new recordings underscoring the 'ritual' aspects of African music-making appeared. For example, Louis Sarno's *bayaka: The Extraordinary Music of the Babenzélé Pygmies* (1995) used wall-to-wall sounds of the jungle – insects, birds, monkeys – to provide a smooth sonic segue from track to track; the tracks include the sound of women yodeling and singing in the distance (probably with studio-added echo), *mondumé* (harp zither) music, drumming, and so on. The music *sounds* fascinating, mysteriously veiled by the jungle, and above all, remote. The same aesthetic of the imaginary informs some new *mbira* recordings, such as the 1998 release of *Pasi Mupindu (The World is Changing)* by Tute Chigamba's Mhembero Mbira Ensemble: this was recorded live in Highfield, Harare, with the microphones

16 Impey, 'Popular Music in Africa', p. 437.

held at some distance from the *mbiras*, presumably in order better to capture the overall ambience, and although some of the formal intricacies of the *mbira* playing are lost in the process, the resultant music *sounds* authentically African, like a ritual.[17] In this way, a peculiar marketing category instituted in the North Atlantic mediates the aesthetic angle of the music's sound.

While considerable attention has been devoted to the relationship of both African traditional and popular music to the international music market, very little attention has been paid to the relationship of African 'art' music to musical internationalism. Perhaps this is because 'art' music partially falls outside the international commodity sphere (and thus below the perception level of many commentators), or perhaps – as the Nigerian composer Akin Euba suggests – the very idea of African 'art' music does not tally with Western notions of what 'typifies' Africa:[18] the African production of musical idioms with a contemplative dimension is dismissed as inherently un-African. Popular and 'art' musicians alike recognize the incipient racialism implied by insisting Africans compose only 'African'-sounding music: as the Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibangu puts it, 'Yes, I am an African but is it the African they [audiences in the USA] want to hear or is it the musician? . . . If you judge everything by its color, nothing has changed.'[19] Likewise, South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela seeks to exercise musical discrimination based on purely aesthetic rather than racial considerations: 'We are all living in a universal world today and the criteria should be what is good music and what is bad . . . . But if people insist that music doesn't have enough bone in the nose, or the lips are not big enough, or the nose is not flat enough, at that point instead of being culture it becomes tribalistic or racial.'[20] African composers of 'art' music frequently voice similar views, and indeed, although the relevance of 'art' music in Africa is hotly contested,[21] it plays a fascinating role in the struggle for international cultural legitimacy precisely because it seems to defy ostensibly indigenous African practices at its very inception.

Having said this, however, it is not in practice possible to make clear distinctions between traditional, popular, folk, and 'art' music in Africa. Johnston Akuma-Kalu Njoku broadly defines 'art' (or, as he terms it, 'art-composed')

17 Ironically, the *Mhembero* Ensemble was founded only in the late 1980s, when Chigamba's daughter Irene finished a tour with the Zimbabwean National Dance Troupe; far from representing indigenous rituals of Zimbabwe, the troupe was formed with the aim of performing professionally.

18 Akin Euba, *Modern African Music: A Catalogue of Selected Archival Materials at Iwalewa-Haus, University of Bayreuth, Germany*, Bayreuth, 1993, p. 1.

19 In Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye! A Celebration of African Music*, London, 1991, p. 7.

20 Ibid., p. 24.

21 See, for example, Abiola Irele's polemical essay, 'Is African Music Possible?', *Transition* 61 (1993), pp. 56–71; and Kofi Agawu's 'Analytic Issues Raised by Contemporary African Art Music', in Cynthia Tse Kimberlin and Akin Euba (eds.), *Intercultural Music*, Vol. III, Richmond, CA, 2001, pp. 135–47.

music as notated music composed for performances in concert halls and on stages aimed at audiences of contemplative listeners[22] – a tradition associated with 'Western'-influenced ensembles and genres, which in turn are associated with the aesthetics of beauty in sounding forms. Even with this kind of definition in place, however, the boundary between African 'art' music and other forms of African music remains hard to draw. For one thing, there are many examples of traditional African musical expressions that emphasize contemplative listening in the manner of Western 'art' music. For another, most African states instituted and funded various national musical ensembles, ballets, or cultural troupes after they gained independence, and although these projects largely functioned as symbols of national identity and unity in the wake of the colonial experience, they also encouraged just the kind of aesthetic paradigm advanced by Njoku in his description of 'art' music. In other words, the state-sponsored institutionalization of indigenous music reflects an attitude of pride and seriousness that parallels the aspirations of Western 'classical' music.

For example, soon after independence in Mali, the state sponsored several large orchestras representing the musical styles of each region of that country. Likewise, in the early 1980s Zimbabwe established the National Dance Company as well as various 'Culture Houses' representing cultural regions around the country. These new cultural formations significantly shifted the function of traditional music in modern Africa, and served contemporary aesthetic and political needs. The National Orchestra of Cameroon (founded in 1978), for example, strives to revive traditional forms of music in the context of a contemporary idiom; it frequently tours the various regions of Cameroon, presenting formal concerts and dances. Here traditional music serves as a public relations tool in the context of African nationalism. A similar case can be found in Angola, where the Ministry of Culture funded various folklore-oriented groups as well as a national orchestra called *Semba Tropical*, while in post-colonial Tanzania the National Dance Troupe (founded in 1964 by the Ministry of National Culture and Youth) developed a unique musical style that amalgamated regional styles from around the country; this nationalized form of music reflects the political doctrine of *Ujamaa*, a socialist-inspired doctrine attempting to eliminate tribalism. Even more ambitiously, the Pan-African Orchestra, founded in 1988 in Accra, Ghana, aims to construct a post-colonial African cultural identity that extends beyond regional differences: the music is a composite style derived from the indigenous traditions and resources of various ethnic groups in a number of African countries, including the twenty-one-string *kora*, west

22 Johnston Akuma-Kalu Njoku, 'Art-Composed Music in Africa', in Ruth Stone (ed.), *Africa: The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, Vol. I, New York, 1998, pp. 232–53; 232.

African drums, rattles and bells, animal horns, bow chordophones, and flutes. As suggested by the title of their first CD – *The Pan-African Orchestra, Opus 1* (1995) – this is music intended less for social participation than for listening. Furthermore, the orchestra has a designated conductor, a position currently held by Nana Danso Abiam, formerly the conductor of Ghana's National Symphony Orchestra, and in this respect resembles the structure of its Western counterpart more than it does a traditional African ensemble.

It is true that towards the end of the century, some of these national cultural projects were discontinued: as a result of the economic adjustment programmes instituted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, for example, the National Dance Company of Zimbabwe was disbanded in the early 1990s. Other groups, however, continue to thrive. The Gambian National Dance Troupe, for example, is regularly engaged both domestically and internationally, while the Drummers of Burundi, comprised of court musicians attached to royal families, have gained an increasingly international profile. In fact, despite the nationalist and pan-Africanist ambitions of these musical projects, the new approach to indigenous music-making has increasingly become a resource for commodification by the international music industry: in the last decade alone, the drummers of Burundi have released three hugely successful CDs, while the dramatic traditional *kora* music and singing of Dembo Konte, Malamini Jobarteh, Kausu Kouyante, and Amadu Bansang Jobarteh have likewise received recent international acclaim. In these contexts, 'traditional' music – music that is not so much traditional as reinvented in the context of nation-building – is increasingly consumed in a manner approximating 'art' music in the West: it is music composed, conducted, and performed by professional musicians and aimed at a separate listening audience.

In this way the notion of commodified 'art' music is not antithetical or anomalous to contemporary Africa. It may be true that commodification of the African cultural sphere is not a desirable development, but this moral stance alone does not reckon with the fact that such commodification is already in practice under way in most parts of Africa. Politically speaking, there is a need to seek strategies for effectively combating drastic exploitation of African musicians in this inevitable process, rather than recoiling in alarm from the commercialization of African culture *per se*. And it may be this oppositional role that provides the best working definition of the 'art' music of Africa, interrogating the ethnically based expectations and desires of the 'world music' market without lapsing into the false view of African art viewed in terms of uncommodified pre-conquest utopianism. This means that, as with popular musical forms in Africa, the development of 'art' music is complex and contradictory, involving the incorporation *and*, paradoxically, the rejection of Euro-American musical

styles, structures, and techniques. Thus the music's uneven relation to national politics, liberation struggle, and post-colonial national identity on the one hand is vividly counterbalanced by its demands for recognition in an international frame on the other.

What follows is a survey of aspects of locally produced African 'art' music as it intersects with popular and traditional musical forms in an era of transnational commerce. An essay of this length cannot hope to do justice to the scope of the topic and is thus necessarily selective; rather than making a vain attempt to represent the diversity of 'art'-musical production in Africa, I shall aim to identify some of its defining characteristics. Moreover, even though an 'art'-music tradition in many parts of Africa can be traced back to the nineteenth century,[23] I will approach the topic in the context of post-colonial Africa alone, and thus focus primarily on the final decades of the twentieth century. As a convenience I will divide this study into two major geographical zones, first north and west Africa, and then south and east Africa, in each case outlining the broader contexts of popular and 'traditional' musics against which the 'art' repertories need to be understood.

Unequal fusions: popular and 'art' musics of north and west Africa

Any account of music in north and west Africa in the late twentieth century cannot fail to mention the explosion of new musical forms resulting from the creative syntheses of styles. From the soaring melodies and bursting rhythmic fragments of Youssou N'Dour's Wolof-based *mbalax* to the sophisticated and lavish arrangements of Salif Keita's Manding-based big-band fusions, west African music in the 1980s and 1990s was essentially a music of crossover and metamorphosis. *Mbalax*, for example, drew on the rhythmic language of *sabar*, *bugarabu*, and *tama* drums, which were smoothly layered into the electronic sound world of guitars and synthesizers that typified Western popular music of the time.

N'Dour's remarkable vocalizations covered a range of eclectic topics, ranging from the subject of radiating toxic waste dumped in Africa by industrialized nations (on *Set*, 1990) to cover versions of Western rock music sung in Wolof (such as Bob Dylan's 'Chimes of Freedom' on *The Guide*, 1994); following N'Dour's example, Chérif Mbaw (a Senegalese singer-guitarist living in Paris) recorded his *mbalax*-derived album *Kham Kham* (2001), which combines

23 In Nigeria, for example, compositions in the Western 'art'-music tradition were performed under the auspices of the Lagos Philharmonic Society as early as the 1870s; see Njoku, 'Art-Composed Music', p. 233.

typically staccato vocals with restless guitar work, in his native Wolof. Despite the foreign language, these albums were popular successes in France, and their message did not go unnoticed: it may well have been the political dimension of N'Dour's lyrics that cost him his contract with Virgin Records, who dropped him after two albums. More generally, popular music in west Africa is a voice of resistance: for instance Femi Kuti, son of Afropop pioneer Fela Kuti, harnessed a pulsing music style that blends African with African-American music in the service of stinging political messages. He spares neither Western cultural imperialism nor African corruption in his critique: on *Blackman Know Yourself* he sings in a calculated pidgin English, 'We get the wrong people for government / Who force us to think with colonial sense / Na wrong information scatter your head / You regret your culture for Western sense.' And in a less overtly political but similarly eclectic spirit, Salif Keita (along with other 'electro-griots' like Ismael Lo) blended the styles of jazz, rumba, and the folk music of the Sahel region into highly westernized quasi-orchestral fusions.[24]

In anglophone west Africa, equally inventive genres emerged in the final decades of the century. Nigerian *fuji* music, a musical style based on multiple percussion parts and vocals (without guitars or bass), gradually superseded *juju* music in popularity. Alhadji Sikuru Ayinde Barrister even created an offshoot of this style called *fuji garbage*, which added a Hawaiian guitar and keyboards to the percussion-oriented ensemble; in the 1980s he toured both Britain and the United States extensively and to critical acclaim. Meanwhile dynamic new genres, like *bikoutsi*-rock, appeared in Cameroon: the high-energy music of Les Tetes Brulées (The Burnt Heads) drew on the subtle polyphonic *bikoutsi* music of the Beti people,[25] and by magnifying these percussion lines into delirious synthetic textures resembling futuristic hammering they crafted a sound as unique as their mohican hairstyles and retro-Africanist body paint. At the start of the 1990s the international market for African crossover music opened up to prominent female artists from west Africa as well. For example, Angelique Kidjo, whose debut album was a resolutely pan-African blend of Congolese *makossa* and *soukous*, Jamaican reggae, and Islamicized *zouk* woven into unique adaptations of traditional Beninoise folklore, achieved fame in France and beyond; likewise, Oumou Sangare from the Wassoulou region of southern Mali, along with Mbilia Bel and M'pongo Love from the Congo (formerly Zaïre), achieved international renown in the 1980s and 90s. This was also a time of unprecedented collaborations between African and Western musicians. N'Dour performed with Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen, and Stevie Wonder; Ali Fakar Toure collaborated with Ry Cooder; Ismael Lo recorded music with Marianne

24 Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, pp. 57–65. 25 In ibid., p. 124.

Faithfull; Manu Dibango worked with Bill Laswell and Herbie Hancock for Celluloid; Fela Kuti's music was remixed by Laswell with Jamaican reggae artists; Salif Keita recorded with Joe Zawinul; Sting scored a hit with Algerian *rai* star Cheb Mami. The list goes on.

It is thus in a context of extensive creative innovation and experimentation that west African popular music evolved in the 1980s and 1990s: the translocation and amalgamation of musical styles from various quarters opened hitherto unexplored musical possibilities. Indeed, the transatlantic feedback between Africa, Europe, and other parts of the globe resulted in an international terrain of popular music that was irreducibly hybridized. Aside from the overt cross-culturalism of electronic world trance, for example, even mainstream DJs like Paul Oakenfold from Britain, spinning techno and house music in the dance capitals of the Western world, drew inspiration from the sound of African drumming ensembles;[26] in turn, African pop, stimulated by technology, global communications, migration, and capital investment, became a global phenomenon. But while African no less than Western popular music was increasingly layered with mutual influences and strategic borrowings, the path to success was more hazardous for African musicians than for their Western counterparts: the relationship between African artists and their commercial labels all too frequently followed the pattern begun by N'Dour in the 1980s. The Nigerian *juju* star King Sunny Ade, for example, was dropped by Island Records after three albums, and Thomas Mapfumo, the 'lion' of Zimbabwean *chimurenga* music, after two. Many foreign companies set up subsidiary bases in African countries (Nigeria, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe), but in reality the geographical centre of the corporate network comprising the recording industry was situated in Europe and the United States, as was the centre of mass music consumption. Music industries in Africa could not compete: while the 1980s witnessed a shift from vinyl to CD as the primary sound-carrying medium in the West, for example, African recordings are still released primarily on cassette, because CDs are simply not affordable to local consumers. Furthermore, lacking crucial resources and faced with increasing political, social, and economic instability, the music industry in Africa became increasingly vulnerable in the 1990s, with the once-thriving industries of Nigeria and Tanzania going into decline.[27]

26 In 'Somali Udida Ceb' (Somalia Don't Shame Yourself'), a song by Maryam Mursal mixed by Paul Oakenfold, the interest in African socio-politics is explicit; appearing on a CD entitled *Spirit of Africa* (2001), Oakenfold's mix forms part of a joint initiative of the Mercury Phoenix Trust (founded by the surviving members of the group Queen in memory of their singer Freddie Mercury) and Real World records to combat AIDS in Africa.

27 Impey, 'Popular Music in Africa', p. 417.

This structurally inscribed socioeconomic inequality was ideologically reflected in the aesthetic discourse surrounding late-twentieth-century marketing categories for popular music. As we have seen, the invention of 'world' music as a niche market constructed a demand for authentic-sounding African music, which in turn affected the production, marketing, styling, and engineering of African pop; as a result, the African products were 'indigenized' through a complex interplay of imagination, fabrication, sound, and fashion. But while both African and Western pop were at bottom equally hybridized musical expressions, critics have interpreted this hybridity in contrasted ways: the African elements in the music of 'rock' stars like Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, and David Byrne are regarded as creatively enhancing their work, while the Western elements of 'world' musicians like Youssou N'Dour, Manu Dibango, and Sunny Ade are seen as compromising theirs. This places unique aesthetic constraints on African musicians: they are charged with betraying their roots in a way that Western musicians are not.[28] Seen this way, African music is confined to the condition of a historically unmediated raw material which can be manipulated to revitalize and enrich Western popular music.

In contrast, because it is not as vulnerable to the profit-driven markets of the international music industry, the 'art' music of Africa poses an intriguing challenge to the ideologies of race implied by this exclusionary scenario. As with popular music, the development of 'art' music in west Africa involves a complex layering of traditional practices into imported musical idioms, styles, and genres. The incorporation of non-African idioms into traditional musics and vice versa has a long legacy in this part of the world: all west African countries underwent a period of colonial domination during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which affected their musical soundscapes to varying degrees. The arrival of Christianity in Nigeria, for example, not only introduced church music (hymns, chants, canticles, cantatas, anthems, motets), but also contributed to the generation of new secular musical styles that drew on it, such as *highlife* and *juju*;[29] church music was adapted and reworked by Nigerian congregations, already well-versed in choral music, to reflect local conditions and aspirations. As the disjuncture between the colonial state and the African churches intensified in late colonial times, these adaptations increasingly incorporated traditional drumming, clapping, and dancing. This process of gradual re-Africanization was remarkably widespread throughout

28 N'Dour, for example, resists the curatorial role he is expected to play and emphasizes instead the importance of cultural blending: 'You can't really program music. A musical life should not have any limits . . . It's from . . . new experiences that interesting things happen' (Youssou N'Dour, 'Postcard: Youssou N'dour on Senegal', *Time* 158/14 (2001), special issue: 'Music Goes Global', p. 66.

29 Euba, *Modern African Music*, p. 4. Still today, various churches house Western orchestral instruments, which are occasionally used for concerts (Njoku, 'Art-Composed Music', p. 236).

twentieth-century Africa, ranging from the 'Spiritual churches' of Ghana to the 'Ethiopian churches' of South Africa. Arguably, the process of strategically borrowing cultural concepts and resources from the West for local purposes typifies modern Africa, and so it has become possible to speak of African *traditions* grounded in Western idioms or instruments: west African Christian hymn settings, Congolese guitar compositions, Zulu concertina music (commonly known as the *gxagxa* tradition), and, of course, African 'art' music.

West African 'art' music at the end of the twentieth century covers a broad spectrum of compositional approaches. Ranging from the non-modulating diatonicism of J. H. Kwabena Nketia's *Antubam* for cello and piano and Ayo Bankole's *Three Part-Song*s for female choir to the intensely dissonant quartal harmonies of Gyimah Labi's densely-textured *Dialects* for Piano, or the distinctive modal language of Joshua Uzoigwe's *Four Igbo Folk Songs*, African 'art' composition embodies a vast panorama of possibilities.[30] Despite the many references to high-life music and other distinctively west African popular idioms, however, and despite the use of quotations from folksongs, the *tonal* collections employed and the *harmonic* behaviour of the musical materials tends to derive from some or other Western modality: Okechukwu Ndubuisi's settings of folksongs for piano and voice, for instance, draw strongly on Western functional harmony. Indeed, the tonal dimensions of the original folksongs are substantially altered to suit the demands of key-based diatonicism, sometimes to the point of disregarding the tonal inflections of vernacular Igbo: in works such as 'Atuak Ukot Odo' and 'Onye Naku na Onuzo Muo', the short motives and conjunct melodic motions of the original tunes are lyrically transformed into continuous melodic lines in which the call-and-response structure is disguised by elision and overlapping of phrases.[31]

Rhythmically speaking, however, these pieces elaborate various cross-rhythmic ostinato patterns reminiscent of African drumming: one typical pattern of this sort, which Njoku describes as the 'Ndubuisi bass' (in the manner of 'Alberti bass') is a 12/8 arpeggiation figure with a rhythmic accent on every

30 J. H. Kwabena Nketia (b. 1921) is probably the world's leading African authority on African music and aesthetics living today. Nketia was a professor of music at UCLA and the University of Pittsburgh. He is also the Director of the International Center for African Music in Legon-Accra, Ghana. Ayo Bankole (1935–76) was a Nigerian composer who studied music at Cambridge and ethnomusicology at UCLA, holding a teaching position at the University of Lagos in the late 1960s and 70s and intermittently working as music producer at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. The Ghanaian composer Gyimah Labi (b. 1950) studied composition with Ato Turkson and ethnomusicology with Kwabena Nketia at the University of Ghana, Legon; he then emigrated to the United States, where he currently resides. Joshua Uzoigwe (b. 1947) pursued his music studies at the University of Ibadan (Nsukka), and at Trinity College of Music (London); he also completed an MA in ethnomusicology under the guidance of John Blacking. Further information on African composers (compiled by Daniel Avorgbedor) can be found under their respective names in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn (London, 2001), and details are therefore provided only selectively in this chapter.

31 Njoku, 'Art-Composed Music', p. 243.

second quaver. In these songs, Njoku argues, even the word-painting achieved by instrumental means is based on idiomatic Igbo verbalizations through drumming.[32] And the role of drumming in west African 'art' music extends to the domains of both style and idea. In other words, while some composers explicitly foreground the traditional instruments of west African drumming ensembles in their works, others derive compositional ideas from the structural behaviour of these ensembles. Gyimah Labi's crowded rhythmic polyphony exemplifies the former tendency: his Timpani Concerto is even scored for traditional instruments (bell, rattle, kidi, and sogo), along with two saxophones, a cowbell, and timpani, and they tend to articulate traditional African rhythmic patterns. The bell, for example, outlines a subtle variation of a typical west African time-line (with occasional interruptions and silences), while the soloistic timpani loosely approximates the behaviour of a west African master drum.

At the other end of the spectrum, the music of J. H. Kwabena Nketia is less overtly beholden to the multi-layered rhythms of west African drumming. Yet Nketia's work is frequently regulated by the underlying structural principles of traditional music. Nketia describes the organization of his compositions in terms of the 'traditional principle of achieving complexity through the combination of simple elements'.[33] In keeping with the tradition of assigning the 'role of master drummer to the lowest pitched instruments', he frequently places his principal rhythmic motifs in the lowest voices; the upper layers, by contrast, tend either to emphasize the lower ones (through octave doubling, polyphonic imitation, or rhythmic interlocking), or to draw out independent motivic possibilities that seem to comment on the bass movements. In the fifth movement from his Suite for flute and piano, for example, the piano elaborates lengthy spans of changing harmonic consonances in a steady *perpetuum mobile* punctuated by momentary interlocking rhythms, while the flute precariously vacillates between doubling the piano part (with unpredictable deviations!) and deriving new melodic and motivic ideas from various rhythmic patterns set forth by the piano. Thus, as was the case with Ndubuisi, Nketia's rhythmic language reflects traditional concepts related to west African drumming, while his tonal language is an unconventional reworking of Western diatonicism.

The same division of influence between African and Western elements seems to characterize the output of the internationally known Nigerian composer Akin Euba.[34] That is, the percussive, rhythmic, and timbral aspects of Euba's

32 Ibid., p. 244.

33 Kwabena J. H. Nketia, 'Exploring African Musical Resources in Contemporary Composition', in Cynthia Tse Kimberlin and Akin Euba (eds.), *Intercultural Music*, Vol. I, Bayreuth, 1995, pp. 221–39; p. 232.

34 The Nigerian composer Akin Euba (b. 1935) is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh; his musical and academic training took place in England, the United States, and Nigeria. Euba is internationally renowned as both composer and scholar.

work are characteristically African, while his tonal language tends to be shaped by Western 'art'-musical practices, albeit distinctly modernist ones: in his *Scenes from Traditional Life* for piano, for example, melodic movement is defined by a twelve-tone row. It might be argued that the row is delicately infused with traditional African modalities of pitch construction – for instance, the tonal patterns of *dundun* drumming rarely include augmented fourths and minor seconds, which are equally scarce in Euba's composition – but the music is unambiguously organized on dodecaphonic principles. More striking is the way various melodic fragments incessantly lapse into extended passages of arpeggiated rhythmic ostinato as well as a host of familiar-sounding African rhythmic patterns intoned on repeated tones: the thematically consequential fragment opening the first movement is loosely derived from a west African time-line pattern, while the striking syncopated bass rhythm undergirding the third movement is derived from a west African highlife pattern.[35] This unusual approach to the piano exemplifies Euba's concept of 'African pianism' – an example of how a European instrument can be adapted for distinctly African aesthetic purposes. Euba outlines the key features of African pianism thus:

> Africanisms employed in neo-African keyboard music include (a) thematic repetition (b) direct borrowings of thematic material (rhythmical and/or tonal) from African traditional sources (c) the use of rhythmical and/or tonal motifs which, although not borrowed from specific traditional sources, are based on traditional idioms (d) percussive treatment of the piano and (e) making the piano 'behave' like African instruments.[36]

Other composers who have worked in this idiom include Gamel Abdel-Rahim, Halim El-Dabh, Kenn Kafui, Labi, Uzoigwe, and Nketia; Nketia, for example, explicitly models his *Twelve Pedagogical Pieces* for piano on distinct African styles ranging from music of the Anlo-Ewe (in *Volta Fantasy*) to popular highlife rhythms introduced into Ghana by the Kroo of Liberia (in *Dagomba*).[37] But in spite of the conscious 'Africanization' of the piano in a piece like Euba's *Scenes from Traditional Life*, the music of these composers ultimately reflects an allegiance to Western 'art' music. Or at least, their musical structures are generated by a divided paradigm, one in which the treatment of pitch is modelled

35 Uzoigwe, *Akin Euba*, pp. 68–9. 36 Euba, *Modern African Music*, p. 8.

37 In relation to this title, it should be noted that Nketia, Labi, Euba, Nzewi, and others have been actively involved in writing theoretical studies of traditional African music. In most parts of Africa this effort answers to a critical educational need: in the late-modern African context, where 'Western' classroom-based education is the norm, there is an almost total lack of textbooks that use musical examples from Africa.

on Western compositional procedures while the treatment of rhythm tends to draw on African ones.[38]

Occasionally, this division of labour is literally carried out in the context of a single work. In his opera *Chaka*, based on the dramatic poem by Léopold Sédar Senghor about the famous nineteenth-century Zulu chieftain of that name, Euba employs a massive cross-cultural instrumentarium: the African traditional instruments in the orchestra include Ghanaian *atenteben* (bamboo flutes), *agogo* (bell), rattle, slit drums, various fixed-pitch membrane drums, Yoruba hourglass, and kettle drums. These forces are deployed largely in a stylistically west African way, in which bell patterns derived from various dances (including the Ashanti *adowa* dance and the Ewe *atsiagbekor* dance) are creatively combined with a variety of polyrhythmic patterns. Throughout the two 'chants' of the opera, these sections of traditionalized African drumming are layered, woven, and juxtaposed with music composed for Western chamber ensemble. The Western instruments, by contrast, largely intone Western idioms: Euba exploits a range of Western compositional procedures ranging from twelve-tone technique (in the manner of Alban Berg) to the circulation of leitmotifs (in the manner of Richard Wagner). This basic dualism between African and Western styles, in turn, grounds an array of vocal styles ranging from African praise chanting and speech-song in free rhythm to haunting operatic escalations in the soprano's highest register.

Chaka's dizzying polystylistic excursions produce cross-cultural meanings that are rich and strange. The piece opens with a memorable horn motif outlining a perfect fifth and fourth before folding into a cadence. Thus, like Senghor's poem, the opera begins at a kind of end-point: Chaka's death. After a suggestive pause, the sounds of a well-known bell pattern, polyrhythmically coordinated with agile African percussion patterns, emerge as if in a memory; this tapestry of rhythm is spattered and smeared with gestural fragments from horns and winds. Then the musically hybrid texture, punctuated by solemn references to the opening motif, finally segues into a concluding section featuring the *antenteben* flutes. At one point, Euba incorporates a neo-African rendition of the *Dies irae* in a rhythmic 6/8, a theme later heard again in connection with Chaka's illustration of colonial oppression; here the brass emphatically elaborates the chant in a manner recalling Berlioz. This intertextual reference not only expands the theme of death beyond the figure of the dying Chaka towards the murderous dimensions of the colonial venture itself, but paradoxically also

38 On the other hand, Euba's widespread use of open forms as well as his innovative notation in *Four Pieces for African Orchestra* are reminiscent of experiments in the Western avant-garde. In reality, they are grounded in an effort to render an African idiom more precisely than traditional notation, a fact that paradoxically serves as a reminder of the non-Western basis for much Euro-American innovation.

reverses the logical sequence of Berlioz's thematic transformation: it is as if the more literal quotation in fact *derives* from the Africanized *Dies irae* in the prelude. The retrospective hearing encouraged by this kind of memory-menacing music poses a challenge to the history of relations between Africa and Europe. Indeed, Euba's opera can be described as a complex study in allusions to and quotations of stylistic idioms on both sides of the continental divide: for example, at one point in the first chant White Voice's self-righteous expression of redemption through suffering is mockingly accompanied by an organ sounding a cadential formula, and then, in the second chant, Euba presents a traditional African call-and-response song 'Ki lo se to o jo' ('Why Do You Not Dance?') for chanter and chorus.

Euba's bi-musical facility is a calculated challenge to Euro-American cultural dominance. While his polystylism functions in a less overtly deconstructive way than that of, say, Luciano Berio or Alfred Schnittke, his intertextual palette is more genuinely multifaceted. In the spirit of Senghor's now famous dictum, 'Assimilate but don't be assimilated,' Euba's work is motivated by an effort to forge encounters between Europe and Africa in mutually enriching ways. He writes in his book *Modern African Music* that 'The modern African composer has responded to the politics of imperial conquest by beating Europeans at their own game, and then rejecting the rules as irrelevant.'[39] But this rebellion in musical language cannot disguise the fact that such African composers have a paradoxical double voice, for without singing the praises of Western musical premises there can be no global recognition of the African voice. Moreover, the yearning to merge African and European aesthetics in Euba's œuvre is confounded by the almost alienated division of musical material: Western instruments harmonize; African instruments rhythmicize. Such a dual musicality risks recapitulating what Kofi Agawu calls the 'invention' of African rhythm no less than the vividly contrasting invention of European harmony:[40] stated in Theodor Adorno's terms, the pre-constituted stylistic oppositions presented by the music cohabit in a blocked dialectic.

Two types of 'art' music from north and west Africa confound the kind of aesthetic dichotomy found in the works discussed above. The first type involves the unbridled paraphrase of traditionally conceived music in the context of Western art-music instruments. The Sudanese composer Hamza El Din's *Escalay* ('Waterwheel') for string quartet is a classic example of this orientation: it is a creative transcription of El Din's composition by the same name for *oud*

39 Euba, *Modern African Music*, p. 9.

40 Agawu recognizes the way rhythmic processes are frequently foregrounded to signal the African dimensions of neo-African 'art' music: 'This "invention" of African rhythm has had the negative effect of discouraging explorations in the dimensions of melody, instinctive harmonization and timbrel density' ('Analytic Issues', p. 143).

(lute), an instrument of classical Arabic origin, combining Arabic influences with ideas growing out of the vocal music and drumming of traditional Nubia. The Kronos Quartet commissions, *Saade* ('I'm Happy') by the Moroccan composer Hassan Hakmoun and *Wawshishijay* ('Our Beginning') by the Ghanaian composer Obo Addy, also belong in this category: Addy specializes in traditional Ghanaian music and dance as well as various African/American fusions, rather than notated 'art' music, and his bands Kukrudu and Okropong – both founded in the 1980s – use no musical notation. (*Wawshishijay* was transcribed for Kronos by Chris Baum.[41]) But by shifting the music to a medium that lies at the heart of European high-'art' music, Addy's African music morphs into a contemplative Western form. Interestingly, Addy explicitly demystifies the vexing ideological dimension of an innately African rhythmic sense: 'American audiences are a little funny about me playing African music with white people in the band. But you can get a white person who is more rhythmic than an African.'[42] While it is true that Addy's work for the Kronos Quartet resists the polarities found in the art compositions by Euba, Nketia, and others, it potentially falls prey to a different kind of ethnographic essentialism that is encouraged by the packaging of the CD *Pieces of Africa* (1992), designed as it is to resonate with the curatorial ideology of 'world' music.

A second way African composers have confounded the widespread aesthetic dichotomy between rhythm and pitch involves the creation of tonal pitch fields that are neither African nor European in origin. Composers like Joshua Uzoigwe from Nigeria and Gamal Abdel-Rahim from Egypt, for example, have achieved this ideal principally through the use of modal constellations. In the 1950s and 60s Abdel-Rahim composed primarily in a Western idiom, but following a systematic study of traditional Egyptian music in the 1970s and 80s the composer began to cross-breed Western stylistic traits with Egyptian ones. Abdel-Rahim's musical language replaces the major/minor system with Egyptian folk *maqams* (or modes) and incorporates extensive use of rhythmic irregularities drawn from traditional music.[43] But the most important innovation in Abdel-Rahim's work is his extension of traditional monody into the context of polyphony. The composer governs the linear polyphonic weave by rules grounded in the typical intervallic structure of the modes: in works like his Rhapsody for Cello and Piano, for instance, extensive motivic transformations engender new modal fields, which, in turn, establish large-scale form through modal modulation.

41 Taylor, *Global Pop*, p. 59.

42 In Lynn Darroch, 'Obo Addy: Third-World Beat', *Northwest Magazine*, 20 August 1989, p. 4.

43 Samha, El Kholy, 'Gamal Abdel-Rahim and the Fusion of Traditional Egyptian and Western Elements in Modern Egyptian Music', in Kimberlin and Euba (eds.), *Intercultural Music*, Vol. I, Bayreuth, 1995, pp. 27–37; p. 29.

Like their contemporaries in popular music, west and north African composers of 'art' music are faced with considerable challenges in the new century. As Kofi Agawu and Abiola Irele have pointed out, various prohibitive material circumstances curtail its development on African soil.[44] Agawu notes that 'there is no patronage for composers of "art" music, few competent performers, few good performing venues, and practically no support of radio or television. Add to this the paucity of written music and – perhaps most significant for a composing tradition based on European models – the general unavailability of – perhaps even a lack of interest in – twentieth-century European music and you can see the formidable problems facing the post-colonial African composer.'[45] Irele even suggests that, in contrast to African popular music, an African 'art' music is neither possible nor desirable: he notes the extraordinary range and vitality of local musical life in Africa and contrasts the expressive power of various traditional and popular musical forms with the diminishing relevance of modern 'art' music in the West.[46] Irele correctly points out that the formal complexity of much *traditional* African music is the match of the West's high musical art and that these traditions have contemplative value: why then manufacture a contemplative idiom in the European image when one already exists in African traditions? He asks rhetorically, 'What novel contribution to the universal patrimony of music can be made by a work written for that wonderful instrument – say, a "Concerto for Kora and Orchestra" – that hasn't already been made by the organic fusion of oral utterance with song in the Manding epic of Sundiata?'[47]

One problem with this position is that, as we have seen, it is open to a perniciously essentialist interpretation (serious music is for whites, popular music for blacks). Another is that related fusions between the *kora* and Western instruments – which often means collaborations between musicians from different cultural traditions – are in fact already under way in various parts of the world. Philip Glass's collaboration with Foday Musa Suso on 'Spring Waterfall' is one such example. After listening to various kinds of world music, Suso composed the *kora* part using a digital delay and harmonizer; cascading layers of the *kora* were mixed into three tracks of piano music played by Glass in his characteristic minimalist style. The point is that not all 'fusions' are equal. As we have again seen, African music has become increasingly mired in the operations of the transnational music market, where it occupies a precarious and vulnerable place, and in this context musicians whose overwhelming allegiance is to the aesthetic dimensions of music have an urgent role to play in

44 See Irele, 'Is African Music Possible?', and Agawu, 'Analytic Issues'.
45 Agawu, 'Analytic Issues', p. 137. 46 Irele, 'Is African Music Possible?', p. 70. 47 Ibid.

keeping the world's ears open to precisely the value, complexity, and autonomy of which Irele speaks. And 'art' music is a potentially crucial frontier in this general struggle, acting perhaps paradoxically as a custodian of traditional African sound-worlds. In this respect at least, the contribution made by African composers – their insistence, in Agawu's terms, on playing 'in the same league as their European, American, and Asian colleagues'[48] – cannot be spirited away in the metaphorics of Irele's hoped-for 'organic' evolution.

Recontextualizing tradition: popular and 'art' musics of south and east Africa

Musical life in southern Africa underwent dramatic transformations in the final decades of the twentieth century. These changes reflected the drastically altered political landscape accompanying independence. In the Zimbabwean war of liberation, for example, popular music was used to encourage fighters in the guerrilla camps as well as to politicize and mobilize people living in the rural areas; known as *chimurenga*, these songs were disseminated locally via nocturnal gatherings (*pungwes*) involving local peasants and guerrillas who had established themselves in a particular area, as well as radio programmes (often broadcast from sites outside Rhodesia). While most *chimurenga* songs were based on a hybrid Euro-African style – a blend of pop, rock, *makwaya*, *jocho*, *jiti*, Ndebele songs, and Christian hymns – their African nationalist rhetoric extolling the value of indigenous art forms gradually became reflected in their stylistic idioms as well: in particular, *chimurenga* star Thomas Mapfumo's output of the 1980s and 90s was marked by a distinctively hypnotic reinvention of *mbira* music. In the song 'Chitima Ndikature' (from *Chamunorwa*, 1989), for example, the sound of the *mbira* is transposed to one of the guitar lines, while the second guitar intermittently outlines the characteristically descending melodic figures played by the index finger of the right hand on the *mbira*; the shuffling sound of the *hosho* (hand-held rattles) is emulated by the high-hat and the bass drum, while the bass guitar plays a pattern that emerges from the combined left-hand parts of the *mbira* lines. Mapfumo's lyrics address the problem of political injustice and exploitation on both local and global fronts: immersed in a lengthy Congolese war and faced with escalating inflation, the worst petrol and food shortages in decades, and an AIDS crisis of staggering proportions, the Zimbabwean government came under increasing attack towards the end of the millennium. Again, Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi's infectious *chimurenga-mbaqanga-rumba* music of the 1990s stages a critique of the current governing powers in

48 Kofi Agawu, review of 'Akin Euba: An Introduction to the Life and Music of a Nigerian Composer, by Joshua Uzoigwe', *Research in African Literatures* 27/1 (1996), pp. 232–6; p. 236.

much the same way that traditional *chimurenga* musicians had done under threat from Rhodesian censors; songs like 'Wake Up' (on Mtukudzi's massive international hit *Tuku Music*, 1999) urge listeners to be attentive to current political developments via suggestion instead of outright statement.[49] The musical basis of the music hinges on the dampened string technique typical of *chimurenga* 'mbira-guitar', interlacing two polyphonic lines around an indigenous tune.

In a context where black people had long been denied equal access to political, cultural, and commercial mobility, popular music had a lengthy association with expressions of freedom and political defiance. In South Africa, for example, Mzwakhe Mbuli, dubbed the 'Poet of the Struggle', formed The Equals, a band whose township-derived music enlivened political rallies in the 1980s and early 90s. In apartheid South Africa the simple act of performing with musicians across the colour line was an act of defiance – the most well-known example of such inter-racial musicking being Juluka, a popular band founded on a collaboration between the white South African Johnny Clegg and the black South African Sipho Mchunu. While less extroverted in their political message than Mbuli and the Equals, Juluka combined lyrics that explicitly expressed the disruptions of the dispossessed with forceful Zulu-based *mazkhande* riffs and athletic dancing; they also drew on funk, reggae and *mbaqanga* styles. While South Africa had a long tradition of multiracial musical performance, particularly in African jazz circles, Juluka paved the way for collaborations between black and white musicians on the terrain of more visibly popular music. Further mixed bands like Mapantsula and Mango Groove appeared, and even Afrikaans-identified white bands like The Kalahari Surfers, The Cherry Faced Lurchers and the Gereformeerde Blues Band (mockingly named after the hyper-conservative Nederlandse Gereformeerde church) sang out against social oppression, political hypocrisy, and military conscription. Unlike the Zimbabwean case, South African music associated with political liberation tended to turn less towards indigenous musical idioms and more towards defiant genre-bending.

Of course not all innovative synthetic styles reflected political ambitions. Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse, for example, combined *mbaqanga*-derived 'bubble-gum' pop with disco and soul to create an unabashedly popular jive music; although his 1987 album *Chant of the Marching* introduced a political dimension to the music, his popularity derived more from the new synthetic disco style than from the social message. Likewise, the unbridled bubble-gum music of Yvonne Chaka Chaka became massively popular in pan-Africa: on the strength of her 1988 album *Umbqombothi*, she was able to fill the seventy thousand seats

49 See the discussion of Tuku Beat in Jonathan Stock's chapter, pp. 33–5.

of Kinshasa's football stadium.[50] Despite the cultural boycott on South African music, some musicians managed to break into the international market in the 1980s and 90s. Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, for example, recorded with the Art of Noise in the 1980s and toured England and the United States as an independent outfit in the early 1990s; they combined a fast-paced brew of *mbaqanga* and synthesized Zulu music (known as *simanjemanje*) with dizzying dance steps. Mahlatini's legendary bass 'groaning' intoned powerful images of African pride and independence.

Following the achievement of material independence in 1994, the already thriving South African popular-music scene entered a renewed wave of eclectic innovation and experimentation. The unprecedented influx of musicians from across Africa, coupled with a growing music-festival culture, encouraged creative exchanges between local and international musicians, and in the process new musical genres were invented and old ones transformed. For example, the highly synthesized 1980s bubble-gum pop of divas like Chaka Chaka and Brenda Fassie morphed into the pulsating pop style known as *kwaito* in the 1990s; in this new era, the outrageously provocative Fassie (affectionately dubbed the 'Queen of *Kwaito*') mostly abandoned singing in English and adopted instead an innovative blend of Sotho, Xhosa, and Zulu. (Her 1998 album, *Memeza* or 'Shout', was the first South African album to go platinum on its first day of release.) *Kwaito* is a genre-defying style blending the programmed percussion and vibrant call-and-response vocals of 1980s bubble-gum with British garage, American hiphop, and the new Jamaican ragga music; this inter-cultural mix, in turn, is framed by laid-back bass lines that can sound like Chicago-based house music in slow-motion. New *kwaito* bands like Bongo Maffin and TKZ Family raised their international profiles when they appeared on the Central Park SummerStage in 2001.

While most popular South African music of the 1980s and 90s was the hybridized result of transatlantic borrowing, blending, and metamorphosis, Africanized 'art' music in the region tended strategically to limit its aesthetic parameters to the structural configurations of specific indigenous idioms. The compositions for string quartet by the Zimbabwean composer and *kalimba* virtuoso Dumisani Maraire, for example, are creative paraphrases of traditional African forms.[51] In *Kutambarara* ('Spreading'), Maraire presents a well-known *kalimba* tune in the context of a string quartet along with a Western-styled

50 Ewens, *Africa O-Ye!*, p. 204.

51 The *kalimba* is a 'thumb piano' similar in technique (but quite different in structure) to the *mbira*. Dumisani Maraire was a master *kalimba* performer who spent many years at the University of Washington, Seattle teaching Shona music and culture; his Ph. D. thesis, from the University of Washington, examines Shona *mbira* music in the context of spirit possession. Before his death in 2000, Maraire lived in Zimbabwe, where he taught at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

choir; the *kalimba* is retuned to a diatonic scale and the music's Shona-based harmonic movement is reinterpreted as a functional progression. The four strings elaborate a multi-part texture derived from the *kalimba* lines, while Maraire sings messages in Shona about 'spreading . . . African concepts, perspectives, philosophies, traditions and cultures' to the increasingly jubilant response of the choir.[52] The musical works of the Ugandan composer, Justinian Tamusuza, are similarly rooted in paraphrase technique:[53] his pieces *Ekitundu Ekisooka* ('First Movement') for string quartet and *Abakadde Abaagalana Be Balima Akambugu* ('Mutual Lovers Are Always Successful') for soprano, tenor, and prepared piano, for example, are both based on specific Kigandan folksongs. In *Abakadde*, the voices, which sing in Luganda about the struggle for sustainable love in intimate relationships, are set in a kind of call-and-response contrast with the piano, which has been prepared in order to approximate the timbre of Kiganda xylophones; the music constantly, albeit irregularly, shifts between metric articulations of simple and compound time, with the downbeats implied by the melodies' staggered entrances tending to be disaligned with each other no less than with the piano part. These cross-penetrating contrapuntal lines, in turn, interact with patterns drawn out of the texture by a layer of cross-rhythmic accents in the piano and by changes in the microtonal vocal inflections of the voices. Tamusuza restricts his tonal language to two pentatonic collections (gently estranged by the piano preparations and the vocal inflections), forming a large-scale ABA′. The return of the opening section is punctuated by traditional hand-clapping.

The tendency towards unfettered transcription, paraphrase, and quotation of local African music became a hallmark of South African 'art' music in the 1980s and 90s. Unlike the 'art'-music tradition in west Africa (broadly speaking a tradition committed to integrating African and European musical structures), the new South African model was to identify local forms of African music *as* a self-contained form of 'art' music.[54] By the beginning of the 1980s, several varieties of South African music had entered the concert hall on both a local and global scale: before forming the rock-oriented band Juluka, Johnny Clegg and Sipho Mchunu had performed traditional music for Zulu mouthbow and guitar to an audience of contemplative listeners at venues such as the Market Theatre in downtown Johannesburg, while the then exiled jazz pianist

52 Dumisani Maraire, liner notes from *Pieces of Africa*.

53 Justinian Tamusuza (b. 1951) was trained in Kigandan traditional music before studying composition at Queen's University (Belfast) and Northwestern University (Illinois). He currently teaches at the Makerere University in Uganda.

54 One exception to this general rule is Hans Roosenschoon's *Timbila*, which combines the music of Venancio Mbande and the Chopi xylophone players with a symphony orchestra; the work was commissioned by the locally based Oude Meester Foundation in 1984, a time of particularly intense state-sanctioned oppression.

Abdullah Ibrahim performed in sit-down concert venues in Europe and the United States. Ibrahim's unique pianistic style – blending a motley array of distinctly South African idioms (from Sufi music to Xhosa music) – was harnessed to messages of political defiance and hope; in this way the concert piano became Africanized in both form and content (the comparison with Euba's concept of 'African pianism' is telling). Building on these foundations, South Africa had produced by the end of the 1990s a number of innovative musical genres approximating the condition of 'art' music, ranging from the Soweto String Quartet (performing African popular music) to the gospel group SDSA Chorale (showcasing the rich a cappella traditions of South Africa). In this way locally made music became increasingly classicized in the post-Apartheid era.

In southern Africa, local musicians have long adopted Western instruments (the guitar, the trumpet, the concertina, the piano, and so forth) in the service of African aesthetics, and the idea of performing indigenous idioms on Western *orchestral* instruments in the final decades of the twentieth century was an extension of this. Such reconceptualization of African music as 'art' music emerged in a complex historical conjuncture. First, the cultural boycott against South Africa in the apartheid years paradoxically produced an era of fervent artistic innovation grounded entirely in local resources. Second, in the context of growing anti-apartheid sentiment many of the arts actively experimented with imagining delineations of a genuinely post-apartheid South African cultural identity. Third, the emergence of new marketing categories in the music industries of the industrialized nations brought a potentially international profile to homespun forms of African music: for instance, the already-cited Kronos Quartet release *Pieces of Africa* was marketed and styled in terms representing an intersection between avant-garde-oriented new 'art' music and tradition-oriented 'world' music.

In apartheid South Africa, the minority government invested considerably in Western forms of culture, including the building of impressive institutions housing productions of symphonies, ballets, operas, and drama. Consequently, in the domain of music education, the central methodological and canonical reference point was European music. A coterie of white composers, largely supported by institutional bodies propped up by the apartheid state, created 'art' music reflecting and sustaining this ideological orientation.[55] However, in the 1980s and 90s, a number of calculated attempts to resist the then prevalent anti-African aesthetic surfaced within the art tradition, with composers like Kevin Volans, Michael Blake, Mzilikaze Khumalo, and Bongani Ndodana creating works prominently featuring African modes of music-making. Ndodana

55 Representative composers include Arnold van Wyk (1916–83) and Hubert du Plessis (b. 1922).

treats the source material grounding his music as an open-ended palette of ideas that can be freely combined; while his thematic lyricism and intricate rhythmic patterning is beholden to African music, the constant transformation of thematic material recalls European Romanticism. For example, Ndodana bases the first movement of his *Rituals for Forgotten Faces* (IV) for string quartet on the unmistakable *ughubu* bow playing of the late Princess Magogo. Vacillating unpredictably but incessantly between two fundamental pitches, the music evolves into a web-like array of motivic ideas. Sometimes these cannot be disentangled and become pure texture; at other times they sound forth in stark simplicity; or they mischievously evaporate, illusion-like, into silence. The chromatic pitch collection coupled with the free transformations of themes and ideas exceeds the language of the original *ughubu* bow, but by elaborating simultaneous layers of melodic-rhythmic groupings, even the non-traditional transformations sound like African modes of variation. Likewise, in the second movement of *Rituals*, Ndodana inhabits the terrain of African plucked lamellophones, once again complicating the distinction between cluster and figure, texture and polyphony, innovation and tradition.

Another example of music distinctly modeled on African idioms is the music of Michael Blake: his *Let Us Run Out of the Rain* (for two players at one piano or harpsichord or for percussion quartet), for example, is a refracted paraphrase of *Nsenga kalimba* music from Zambia. The music filters and recombines typical *kalimba* fingering patterns into novel fragments, which in turn articulate unpredictable formal episodes of call-and-response. By transferring the overtone-rich sounds of the *kalimba* to the time-worn blandness of the modern industrial piano, the music paradoxically conjures up the faded colours and open spaces of the southern African landscape. In some works Blake abstracts the process of paraphrasing African music still further: his *French Suite* for piano solo traces elusively skeletal references to the formal patterns produced by the *kora* and the *mbira* in the unfamiliar (and defamiliarizing) context of asymmetrically shifting rhythmic groupings. Blake's understated translations of African music into Western idioms deftly negotiate the borderline between quotation and abstraction, and, in the process, interrogate the opposition between the two.

Likewise, the pioneering work of Kevin Volans' African-inspired work is a critique of the commonplace figuration of African music in the metaphorics of 'folk' or 'world' music (and its attendant de-emphasis of 'pure' aesthetic value), drawing attention instead to the profound formal complexity and beauty of African music. In the words of the composer, 'I . . . did quite consciously want to elevate the status of street music and African music in South Africa.'[56] Volans'

56 Quoted in Timothy Taylor, 'When We Think about Music and Politics: The Case of Kevin Volans', *Perspectives of New Music* 33 (1995), pp. 504–36; p. 514.

strategy was to take a hands-off approach and allow the music to be heard *as* quotation: the source material is overt, vivid, literal, almost tangible. In his piece *Mbira*, for example, Volans simply presents ten full minutes of basically unaltered transcriptions of the mbira tune *Nyamaropa* (performed by Gwanzura Gwenzi) for two retuned harpsichords. Even the titles are pre-given: 'She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket', 'Cover Him With Grass', and 'White Man Sleeps' are all taken from African song titles (the last a translation of *Nzungu agona*, one of the silent dance patterns of the Nyanga Panpipe Dance of the Nyungwe at Nsava, Tete, Mozambique). It is precisely because of the immediacy of this recognition that the African dances themselves recede from earshot and the listener is drawn to something else: released from their familiar context, the musical materials are experienced as a formal play of sound, giving rise to a purely 'aesthetic' hearing.

Again, in his string quartet *Hunting: Gathering*, Volans juxtaposes a variety of pieces of African music – *kora* music from Mali, *lesiba* music from Lesotho, an Ethiopian folk tune, and so on – in a musical pastiche that passes like a journey or a dream. In the middle of the second movement, the *mbira* tune 'Mutamba' appears in its traditional form; this was the song played by Zhanje for Pasipamire, the legendary spirit medium for Chaminuka, during the nineteenth-century Shona/Ndebele wars (legend has it that the song endowed Pasipamire with superhuman strength in the face of certain death). Volans then builds a set of variations on it, characteristically separating the two *mbira* parts by one pulse – a technique which, on a note-to-note level, is in keeping with Shona tradition. But in the context of the quartet the passage is striking for its gentle, almost Schubertian, melodic character. By placing the *mbira* music in the strings' most comfortable range, and by framing the passage with more abstract colouristic sections (such as angular leaping gestures in the violin, random fragments of pizzicato, desolate tapestries of extended harmonics, and suddenly outbursting double-stops), Volans draws attention to the intricate *melodic* and *harmonic* power of 'Mutamba'. Challenging the Eurocentric stereotyping of African music as 'rhythmic', he effectively downplays the musical exoticism of the *mbira*, and the passage in this way makes a unique aesthetic and political point.

The emergence of an Africanized 'art' music in southern Africa was an overdetermined confluence of contradictory historical factors. Consequently, the music paradoxically both aspires to cultural legitimacy in an international context *and* aims to resist the global juggernaut threatening local traditions. While its significance to the the overall cultural scene in Africa is contested and in doubt, African 'art' music has a substantial role to play in the context of global intercultural relations. First, the creative tension between local African musical

traditions and Western 'art' music has the potential to encourage new directions in the evolution of international 'art' music in the twenty-first century. As Nketia argues, while intercultural encounters were considered idiosyncratic throughout most of the twentieth century, they came to be regarded as a 'distinct area of contemporary compositional practice . . . an alternative or complement to modernism' in its final decades;[57] since 1977, for example, an international composers' workshop hosted in Europe under the auspices of the International Music Council (UNESCO) has facilitated globally based intercultural contact between composers. Second, although its role has been systematically under-narrated, the importance of African music to the development of Western music in the twentieth century has been considerable: aside from the extensive quotations of African music in that of the West, African procedures and structures arguably lie at the heart of some of Europe's most ground-breaking musical production. Just as the figure of the 'primitive' in Pablo Picasso's middle-period work culminated in the radical abstractions of analytic Cubism, so European music's radically abstract mathematical formalizations in the twentieth century coincided with a fascination with African and other non-Western music. In this way the impact of non-Western music was felt in Western music's most 'formalist', and thus apparently culturally 'pure', musical production, no less than in its more overtly hybridized production: even Pierre Boulez's very first attempts at total serialism (the serial organization of all musical parameters) in the 1950s were carried out on the terrain of African music – in this case *sanza* music from the Cameroon, in his *Etude* for tape.

But what is really remarkable is the fact that almost all standard historical accounts have been wholly silent on the contribution of African music to both the formation and the displacement of Western music's various aesthetic categories: the work of the minimalist composers is generally interpreted within a wholly Western framework, despite the literal and overt references to African and other non-Western music and, in the case of Steve Reich, the composer's well-documented study of African drumming. African music, in short, has become a central reference point for defining a genuinely post-serialist aesthetic in the West. And yet, shorn of its African heritage, the conventional historical narrative emphasizes the music's abstract organization at the expense of any understanding of the complex intercultural negotiations of sound and meaning that gave rise to it. This is where the African 'art' music of the 1980s and 90s paradoxically reclaims a stake in the making of the world's musical history.

57 Nketia, 'Exploring African Musical Resources in Contemporary Composition', p. 224.

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