# A CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF MUSICAL ARTS

# Informed by African Indigenous knowledge systems

**VOLUME 5:** Theory and practice of modern African classical drum music

**BOOK 3:** INTERCULTURAL CONCERT ENSEMBLES



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#### Ciimda series

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This volume is dedicated to Israel Anyahuru, my mentor, musical spirit guide and friend. – Meki Nzewi

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# **F**oreword

The inventor of the bomb is idolized, a fantastic human hero
The designer of a wheelchair is taken for granted, another ordinary human
The bomb explodes, killing masses, maining surviving few
The wheelchair provides human support for the mained survivors
A sensible human world INDEED!
HUMPH! What has this got to do with the musical arts?

The typical African open-ended membrane drum is your soul mate. It is easy to communicate and relate to. It tunes your spirit and soothes your moods. It facilitates your bonding relationship with others. It massages your sensitive organs. It absorbs your strokes, and does not tell you what you do not want to hear. It regenerates your spiritual wellness and psychical health.

The drum is a commonly used instrument of musical arts practice all over Africa, which, over the ages, has captured global attention. The why and how of the African drum and the epistemology of drum music conceptualizations that compel such fascination, however, remain insufficiently explored.

There are many indigenous drumming traditions in Africa, and all share common, fundamental theoretical and technological principles. Every drum type or species, and its ensemble music theory, serve a specific objective in the culture of origin. The basic theoretical and scientific principles informing African drum-based music, however, manifest cultural peculiarities that are environmentally and historically determined. The variations in performance technique and tonal/sonic manipulation are derived from the technology as well as the sonic rationalizations that accomplish the utilitarian deployment of a drum or drum music type in a culture. The more technically and compositionally complex conceptualizations, such as those for the tuned drum rows – ese, ukom and mgba of the Igbo of Nigeria (Nzewi, 1977), the entenga and namaddu of Buganda, Busoga, Bugwere and Langa of Uganda (Wachsmann, 1965) – are rare and not under consideration here, in spite of modern notation symbols and classical concert compositional idioms having been developed for the Igbo drum row species (Nzewi, ibid).

The primary commitment during our years of research and advancement studies regarding African indigenous drum music conceptualizations and practices has been to discern the common philosophical, theoretical and scientific fundamentals, and to advance these for contemporary classroom education, modern literary concert performances, specialized groupor personal-therapy applications and other socialization as well as creative utilizations. We have designed a modern African classical drumming style that captures and updates the basic technical, creative and performance principles that underpin various cultural performance

practices and compositional idioms. The theory and technique of modern African classical drumming thus imparts the generic principles of African drum music creativity, performance and humanistic deployment. A competent modern classical drummer trained in the written genre becomes automatically skilled to perform the oral genre, style and type of any African culture after brief orientation. That is because standard oral procedure is central to our training in drum literacy skill. A person who has already acquired classical music literacy can easily acquire the skill to perform music written for the drum or any other indigenous melorhythmic instrument. On the other hand, a competent performer of any particular style or type of African drum music cannot perform the written genre or easily perform other cultural drumming styles without the generic literacy skill having been acquired.

Some indigenous drum music styles and types in Africa are classical in their respective indigenous philosophical, theoretical and methodological formulations. We use the term classical in the sense of developing through a systematic approach to creativity that results in standardized theoretical and performance procedures such as mark indigenous musical arts types basic to utilitarian intentions. The indigenous conceptual and contextual imperatives inform the theory of structures and performance practice in the modern classical African drum music style specifically designed for contemporary contexts of concerts, classroom creativity and performance education, as well as applied play-shopping. 1 This volume provides essential expositions that introduce samples of our modern classical repertory. The philosophical and theoretical insights will guide a scholar, performer, teacher, learner, general practitioner/ enthusiast or self-therapist who wishes to engage in African drum music practice with intellectual enlightenment. The discourse that prefaces the written compositions for each of the three series is virtually the same. Supplementary explication specific to a modern classical drum music category is provided as appropriate for the particular series. The texts provide epistemological grounding for cognitively appreciating the indigenous conceptualizations and configurations that inform the modern classical compositions and contemporary human applications. Volume 5 Book 3 on intercultural concert ensembles, basic to drum music theory has an appendix that samples the written testimony of music students brought up in the European classical music tradition, and who were introduced to African modern classical drumming in their first year at the Department of Music, University of Pretoria, South Africa. <sup>2</sup>

The written compositions in the three concert categories exemplify the imperative literacy procedure for contemporary advancement rationalizations. The theoretical procedures and compositional techniques are therefore markedly African indigenous, and only marginally derive from any period or style of European classical music theory. The compositions are grouped for publication in the following three categories:

Volume 5 Book 1 – Drum solos and drummistic piano solos

Volume 5 Book 2 - Concert duos (drum and voice/woodwind/horns)

Volume 5 Book 3 – Intercultural concert ensembles

We prefer the term, **play-shop** to what is commonly termed **workshop** because it conveys our approach, which is derived from the original intentions, rationalized into the indigenous African concept of making music together: playful interactions that negotiate (shopping for) communal dispositions and salubrious spirituality while gaining knowledge. 'Workshop' evokes different attitudinal orientations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The reader of the three series in this volume may find it more intellectually illuminating and culturally enlightening to read the testimonies in the appendix to Volume 3 before proceeding with the introductory text. They are sampled narrative accounts of the experiences and reflections of first-year music students who completed the one-semester African music module "Introduction to African music" at the Music Department, University of Pretoria, South Africa. The educational methodology applied in the class prioritizes gaining intellectual insight through practically experiencing philosophy and theory.

# THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MODERN AFRICAN CLASSICAL DRUMMING

The mother drummer quips to his audience: "Do you hear what the drum is saying?"

We start with a brief introduction to some African musical instruments:

#### The drum

- The drum from all over Africa can be discussed musically as an instrument that produces two or more primary levels of tone (not definite pitch). As such, the African drum is normally used as a singing or talking musical instrument.
- Indigenous drum technology carefully selects researched material components. Not all
  drums have a skin membrane as a component material part. Thus there are membrane
  or skin drums, wooden slit drums, calabash drums, clay bowl drums, and water pot
  drums.
- The wooden slit drum is carved out of logs of wood, and has two lips that produce different tone levels. African languages are tonal, and the musical interval between the two lips of a slit drum quite often approximates the primary speech tones of the culture group that owns it. The hollow in a slit drum provides the resonating chamber. Messages within a community or between linguistically homologous communities in indigenous African societies were coded and communicated by means of slit drums. Hence the slit drum is a surrogate language communication instrument, and the archetypal telegraphic instrument that relies on the tones and the rhythm of language.
- The calabash drum made of a single material could be a hemispherical calabash shell. Some cultures immerse the rim of a hemispherical calabash shell in a bowl of water for enhanced mellow resonance. The top and sides of the calabash are beaten with sticks or with the hand. The hollow enclosed between the empty calabash shell and the water is the resonating chamber. Another rare species of drum is a completely round calabash with a round mouth (sound opening), which bounces on a hard surface when beaten.
- The water pot drum is of two types. The type specifically conceived as a musical instrument has an opening at the base of the neck in addition to the mouth atop the neck of a normal water pot. Beaten with the palms of the hands, the manipulation of the side and top openings produces drum tunes. The other type is a large, ordinary water pot played with felt to produce a booming bass tone. This type is normally used as a pulse-marking instrument that keeps the regulatory beat that focuses the structurally differentiated layers of a typical indigenous music ensemble texture. Playing technique (open and closed strokes) produces two variant shades of the only available tone level.

- The membrane drum is of two primary types: the single membrane drum and the double membrane drum. The single membrane drum could have a mortar-shell (closed bottom) or open-ended wooden frame. The wooden frame of a double membrane drum proper must be hollow from one end to the other. Both sides are then covered with skin. There is a wide variety of both single membrane and double membrane drums with respect to shape, size, and material of shell. The hollow shell of a membrane drum could be carved out of wood, made of clay or of a large hemispherical gourd.
- Depending on the size and the construction of a drum, it could be played by stationary or mobile musicians.
- Open-ended membrane drums need to have the open end totally or partially open in order to produce the requisite quality of sound of the African drum. Hence some large, long-bodied drums that cannot be carried about by the drummer during performances are played slanted, supported by wooden sticks or the performer's body in order to have the open end slightly open. When a large, long-bodied membrane drum is played standing with the open end flat on the ground, only one muffled primary tone is possible unless there is a sound opening somewhere on the drum shell. Otherwise, openended membrane drums normally produce at least two distinct primary tone levels.
- The cultural area as well as the type of drum recommends whether a drum is played with sticks, hands, one stick and one hand or two hands and the heel of one foot, in which instance the drummer sits on the drum. Friction drums also occur.
- The membrane could be fixed to a drumhead by means of vegetable or skin thongs in a variety of techniques, or with wooden pegs driven through the skin into the side of the drumhead. In other instances, natural gummy saps commonly of vegetable origin could be used to gum the skin around the drumhead.
- A drum, depending on the species and size, could be played standing, sitting on the ground or on top of the drum, with the drum trapped between the legs/thighs or trapped between the armpit and body, particularly the hourglass tension drums, or hung over the shoulder. Very large drums would be carried on the head or shoulder by one person and played by another while the performance is travelling. Other types could be tied to the waist above the ground by means of a strap, and played while standing.
- The primary high tone level on a drum is an open stroke that is produced when the rim of the membrane is tapped or struck with the fingers. The primary low sound is an open stroke produced when the membrane surface is beaten towards the centre with the cupped or flat palm, as long as the base of the palm hits the skin. A sharp, held slap with stiff fingers at the rim also produces a primary tone level. Held strokes at the rim or centre produce secondary, muted tone qualities. Drums can produce glissando effects with a rising tone or a descending tone when rapidly stroked, while the base of a palm or a finger is pressed down and slid along the skin surface from the rim to the centre and vice versa.
- The African drum is a subtle melodic instrument. Tunes played on drums are created by the sensitive manipulation of the three primary levels of tone, as well as the secondary muted shades of tone possible on a drum species. This is comparable to combining primary tone levels and secondary tonal inflexions for semantic articulation of the syllables of a language in verbal speech. Hence the African drum of any species is a melorhythmic instrument, and is definitely not conceived of or performed as a percussion instrument. A melorhythmic instrument then plays musical themes that could easily be reproduced by the human voice as melodies that capture the

1

fundamental pitch-equivalents of the tone levels. The drum "sings" or "talks" when a rhythm structure is produced with a combination of the primary and secondary tone levels. Drum singing/talking is used as an effective pedagogic device in indigenous instrumental music education – mnemonic pedagogy. The drum may be deployed musically to produce percussive effects when a purely rhythmic pattern is played at only one tone level. The double-ended hourglass drum can produce a tonal range of about an octave. The smaller species of mortar-shell drums, such as the component drums of drum row instruments, produce only one primary pitch level with secondary shades of tone, depending on the striking technique. Tuned drum rows play melodies based on the scale of a culture's tone row system, and range from four to as many as ten component pitch-graded drums.

- The drum, basically, is a form of language simulation and communication technology. Drum signalling, which was common in Africa, is the prototype, rudimentary telegraphy. The idea of transmitting messages over distances by means of sound codes is an original African invention, basic to African musical technology and the science of sound. Knowledge of the coding indices (the tone levels and rhythm of a tonal language, as well as the provenance or context of the sound production) enabled cognitive persons to decode the messages.
- The drum equally is used as a surrogate speech instrument. In some African cultures, the drum instantly engages in a conversation with a speaking human (human verbal-instrumental voice dialogue), or transmits instructions or messages to designated persons within the context of a performance. When deployed musically, the voice of the drum, like the singing/reciting human voice, is revered as an indisputable spirit voice. Hence what the drum or an indigenous musician declared in music was regarded as a supra-normal message or command that had to be obeyed. Hence also, indigenous musicians specializing in the utilitarian music types were sacrosanct, inviolable, and enjoyed the status and respect accorded to religious priests in musical arts performance circumstances. Spoken words can lie and betray; indigenous music and dance are frank divine communications that reveal.
- In most cultures, drums may be used in pairs of different sizes and thereby provide primary tone levels played by different performers in music ensembles. One drum is designated as female, the other male. Most African cultures regard the larger drum of a pair as female. The female drum of a pair has a lower, more commanding tone and would normally play the ensemble role of the mother instrument that takes major solos and also talks. When drums are paired, the phrases or fragments played on the female and male drums in combination would generally complement one another to produce a single primary ensemble theme. Otherwise, the male acts as the support for the female playing the prominent or "mother" instrument role. In African indigenous ensembles, the instrumentation and structural rationalization of ensemble parts are commonly conceptualized to reflect the roles played by members of a typical African family. The drum ensemble therefore is structured like a normal human family in which the woman traditionally is the manager of the family. In some - not many cultures the male-female designation is reversed for philosophical or psychological reasons. In some other cultures, three to four drums played by different performers could constitute the key instruments in a drum music ensemble.
- African musical instruments, including most drums, are carefully tuned during construction, and fine tuned before a performance. In the case of some drum types, tuning pegs are fixed in a variety of techniques. Tensioning strings could also serve as a

tuning device, depending on how the skin is laced to the frame of the drum. Using a tuning mallet, for tapping the area of the skin where it is in contact with the wooden frame, raises the tone level during fine-tuning, especially for mortar-shell drums. Heating the drum in the sun or by the side of a fire is another technique for raising the tone level of drums with or without tuning pegs. Rubbing water or spittle on the skin of a high-tuned drum lowers the tone to the desired level. The tenseness or mellowness of the primary pitch of a drum would be dictated by the context as well as the human sentiments pertaining to its use. A drum furthermore needs to be properly stored after use.

- The pitch and "voice" quality of a drum that has not been played for a while rises or drops, depending on the type of drum and the atmospheric conditions that affect the skin. Normally an open-ended membrane drum is stored lying on its side in order to "breathe" properly (achieved by circulation of air inside the body) and retain its sonic quality and strength of material. In some African cultures, special drums are stored on a raft built above the fireplace to insure the "life" of the voice (timbre). The skin of a drum that is not played at all, and is not appropriately stored, soon deteriorates, but playing the drum enhances its "life" and "voice". It is advisable to refrain from placing objects on the membrane of a drum. The skin could be damaged.
- If a drum skin bursts or the lace snaps during a performance, it is replaceable. If the shell breaks or develops a serious crack, the drum is ruined as a musical instrument.
- Materials such as wood and skin for building drums are specially tested and selected. Some empowering/activating meta-scientific rituals could be mandatory during the process of constructing spiritually potent instruments. This could start with the process of procuring the materials, or could occur at the stage of deploying the instrument in public use. Certain types of resonant wood are preferred by various cultures, depending on the type and sonic potential of wood available from the local vegetation. Tested types of hard wood are commonly preferred for enhanced ambience and resonance. The skin of certain, not all, bush animals is preferred for skinning drums because of the special resonance it produces. The quality of skin for making drums depends on what the animal is seen to feed on. The skin of cows and goats is thicker and not as sonorous as the skin of certain bush animals, but could be used for skinning large drums that are played with wooden mallets. Skin that has blood in the veins is known to be the best for building drums because it is stronger and "alive", and thereby produces healthier sonic vibrations that soothe brain and body tissues. When blood has drained away from the veins in the skin, as in the case of an animal caught in a trap overnight, some decay may have set in, and the skin will be weak in material as well as sonic health. Such skin breaks more easily in performance. A drum made with inferior skin is easily recognized because the skin surface is usually flat and white, while the veins or patches of blood would be visible when a "live" skin is used to build a quality drum.
- The drum functions as a cultural object and a symbol. The particular cultural symbolism determines the size, shape, special materials of construction, sculptural embellishment, preservation, occasion and period of performance, as well as the cultural meaning of the sound that is produced, and who is qualified to play it. Not all the carvings on drums, especially drums made to attract contemporary curio buyers, carry significance; it may just be decorative artwork.
- In some cultures, specific drums are endowed with religious or political symbolism. The public appearance and sound of such a drum signifies the societal idea or institu-

- tion that it represents. The domba drum of the Venda, for instance, is an ethnic symbol housed in a secret, highly protected location. It is not accessible to the public, particularly outsiders. The playing of the original domba drum thus has special cultural significance beyond the musical essence for the cognitive Venda person.
- The drum, generally, is an iconic metaphor in Africa of the union of the male and the female spirits the skin is regarded as the essence of the woman and the drumstick or hand as the essence of the man. The physical interaction between the skin and the beater results in a potent action that gives "birth" to conducive or objective sound. This metaphoric rationalization concerning the drum prescribes the sex that plays the drum in a culture, and for what delicate or esoteric associations. More commonly, men as well as women who have reached the age of menopause play the drum. In younger women's musical arts groups, men would be required to play the drums, though females currently play the maropa drum in Pedi and Venda societies of South Africa, and in modern settings. The player straddles the drum between the legs and uses hands or drumsticks as beaters.
- The sound of the drum is conceived in Africa as elevated (spiritual) or psychical communion. The sound of the drum affects the mind in a manner that is psychically therapeutic or, if programmed accordingly, induces mood excitation. Depending on the nature of the sound, and the management of structure and form in the composition, automatic responses that range from physical activity to altered consciousness or sedation may be induced. Originally, a primary intention of drum music in Africa was psychic therapy enhanced by the manner of presentation and other ensemble components involving instrumental and thematic ramifications. The African drum produces healing sonic energy and also imbues and enriches benign spirituality. Hence it is used in various ways and situations in rituals as a healing musical instrument, for both mass and personal psychical health management.
- The tones produced on the drum generate raw or cluster harmonics, the healing energy of which massages the mind. Hence experiencing the right type of drum sound and music means undergoing metaphysical management of mental tension or other states of being.

The sound of the drum summons the community to share cathartic somatic energy. The drum is an agent of social-spiritual communion. To submit to the spirit of drum music is to share harmonious company and feelings with other humans. To imbibe the sonic energy of properly rationalized drum music is to experience spiritually elevating entertainment.

#### The bells

- Gongs are not indigenous to black Africa; they are metal discs, commonly of bronze, used as musical instruments in some Asian cultures. In Africa, bells are made by smiths, from flat sheets of cast iron processed by means of indigenous smelting technology. Africa boasts the largest species and variety of bells in the world. These bells are conical metal instruments made by welding two curved metal lobes along the lateral rims.
- Bells are more common in the West African societies and other societies that have a
  long tradition of iron ore smelting technology. Bells could be single, paired (double)
  or quadruple. The Igbo society of Nigeria probably has the widest variety of bells as

far as technology and sonic or compositional potential is concerned. These bells range from single metal bells – small to medium large –to the large (giant) bell species that stand about one metre from the closed apex to the flared rim. Twin bells (male and female producing different tone levels) joined together at the apex and ranging from the small to the large species that could have religious symbolism are also found in this society. In some Ghanaian cultures, the double bell has mother-and-child symbolism (the mother carrying a child on the back, for instance the *gankogui*). In other species of bells such as found among the Igbo, the male and female are joined side by side at the apexes. The quadruple bell represents the most advanced Igbo bell technology and type of bell, and is constructed specifically for playing the specialized music of Ogene Anuka, a two-person orchestra in which the quadruple bell is complemented with a medium-sized double bell played by the second performer. The orchestra plays complex compositional structures with a six-tone scale and a number of additional tonal inflexions (Nzewi, 2000).

- Bells in Africa are melorhythmic instruments: a variety of tone levels and shades are
  possible, even in a single bell, depending on the striking and damping techniques.
  Double bells have two open-tone levels while quadruple bells have four open-tone
  pitches.
- There is much misunderstanding concerning the role of the bell in African instrumental music ensembles. The small single bell is often used as a "phrasing reference" instrument, not a time line instrument, as is reported in most literature on African music. The same single bell could be used differently in an ensemble as an "action motivation" instrument, like the double bells. The large giant-sized bells, as well as the quadruple bell, are deployed musically as mother instruments. The giant, single bell is normally a "rhythm-of-dance" instrument that outlines the rhythmic-eurhythmic essence of the choreographic rhythm and gestures of Stylized Formation dances. It also calls and directs dance sequences in solo dances.
- Bells are held in one hand and played with a stick or a padded striker held in the other.
   A single bell is also played with two sticks when it is clasped under the knee joint and deployed as an "action motivation" instrument.
- The bell is tuned during construction. The Ogene Anuka manufacturers normally use a standard tuning model for tuning a new instrument during construction.
- Bells made of cast iron are health-imbuing instruments. Special bell music structures
  were used for anaesthetic purposes by traditional orthopaedics who mend broken
  bones.

## String instruments

- String instrument types range from the single-string bow, of which there are many
  varieties that are played as solo instruments or in ensembles or as private musical instruments for personal solace, to string instrument types with multiple strings. Bows
  may be bowed or struck. When bowed, rosin is applied to the bow. The bow is common to most cultural groups in Africa.
- Harps and lutes are more technologically elaborate and musically complex string instruments found in Africa.
- Some species of lute are indigenous to Africa. The guitar-shaped type is Arabian in origin, and has been assimilated into music making in the African societies that have

- had extended contact with the Arab presence in Africa. The African lute is shaped like a truncated triangle with the sounding box fixed to the truncated apex. The strings are attached from a bar at the base of the inverted triangle to another bar on the sounding box. The box could be a hemispherical calabash shell or a wooden box, and the strings are of gut, palm ribs or other fibres.
- The harp is common among most cultural groups in West Africa. The kora of the Jali and Griot music cultural areas of West Africa is the most technologically advanced species of harp with up to 21 strings. The professional Jali and Griot music families play it. The kora could be played as a solo instrument, or in combination with vocal performance. A performer may start playing from childhood.
- Meticulous tuning is undertaken before a performance. African musicians generally are very particular about the proper tuning of tuneable instruments in an ensemble.

### Rattles and shakers

- Rattles and shakers are classified as purely percussive musical instruments in African musical thinking. There are many different types and species of these instruments on the African continent, each with a peculiar sound production technique.
- The material for construction depends on what is available in the different natural cultural environments. Rattles are normally bunched hard objects bells, seeds shells, sticks, animal shells, etc. that produce sharp or jingling sounds when beaten or shaken. The quality of sound produced with rattles depends on the peculiar natural timbre of the objects that are bunched together.
- Shakers generally are resonant containers that enclose hard objects like seeds. When the enclosed seeds make contact with the sounding body of the container, harsh, percussive sound is produced. The quality of sound produced on shakers would be derived from the timbre of the sounding body. Containers range from wickerwork containers of many shapes and sizes, to gourds and calabashes and, nowadays, discarded metal containers or containers constructed by smiths. The species made from gourds is the gourd object covered with a net of hard seeds or other stringed objects.
- Shakers and rattles could be used as independent musical instruments on which purely rhythmic patterns are played with one or both hands. Others are sources of sympathetic sound and are worn on moving parts of the body (legs, hands, waist, chest, head) or are attached to other musical instruments such as the drum or finger piano. The rhythm produced by the moving or dancing parts of the body to which they are attached is made audible by these instruments. In other words, they resonate or translate the rhythm of dance movements into sound, or give sonic vibrancy to the physical movements of other instrument parts.
- Shakers and rattles belong to the action motivation category of African ensemble instrument roles.

## The finger piano

• A finger piano is made of a portable sounding box or bowl with a flat board with a bridge on which prongs or lamellas are mounted in such a manner that the longer

- ends that are played are raised above the board. The length and thickness of a prong/lamella determines its pitch.
- The finger piano essentially occurs as a common keyboard instrument all over Africa. The sounding board could be a calabash or a wooden box/board. The number of prongs, which determines the available scale range, could be as few as four and as many as 25 and more. The most complex professionally used species are found among East and Central African societies, where double-deck species are also found.
- A finger piano could be played with the thumb or the fingers striking the prongs/ lamellas downward or upwards, depending on the species and the culture.
- The finger piano is a soft-sounding, often personal, instrument. The sound produced by the prongs/lamellas is resonated by the sounding box. The finger piano is also used as a group music-making instrument, sometimes in vocal music ensembles, and could be further accompanied with rattles or shakers.

### **Panpipes**

- Panpipes are not widely distributed in Africa. Indigenous panpipes are constructed from hollow vegetable tubes, while some modern varieties now use rubber, plastic or metal tubes. In musical terms, a panpipe is a construction of several tubes of different lengths (also diameters), and therefore pitches, which are stringed together in a raft in scalar order. The ends of the pipes are level at the blowing end, while the bottom arrangement could be oblique or "V"-shaped, or be arranged in any irregular shape dictated by the lengths/pitches of the pipes.
- A panpipe is a soft "voiced" melody instrument played by one artist, mostly for private music making. In South African music cultures, the *tshikona* of the Venda and the *dinaka* of the Pedi distribute such pipes to individual players in a note-producing order commonly referred to as the hocket technique, which may give rise to polyphonic texture. The *tshikona* and *dinaka* are ensemble musical performances with drum accompaniment, which involve dances as well as playing actions that compel movement.
- The number and combination of notes that make up a panpipe (stringed together or allocated to individual dancing pipers), as well as the scale or tone row of the tunes that are played, would depend on the scale or tone row system developed by a music culture.

African musical cultures have developed a vast variety of other types of wind instruments made from animal horns and bones, wood, shells of seeds and clay.

Then there are xylophones that are standard keyboard instruments suitable for the study of chordal-harmonic cultures in Africa, which range in complexity from the portable, soloplayed types to the complex, *Chopi* xylophone orchestra of Mozambique (Kirby, 1934). Drums of many types and species are commonly featured with virtually any other class of musical instrument. The dynamic level of the drum play in such indigenous ensemble/orchestra combinations would be guided by the dynamic potential of the other instrument(s) as well as the venue of a performance – intimate or open air. In contemporary African music studies and performances we have demonstrated that the African drum, being a most versatile and undiscriminating musical instrument, can be played in harmonious combination with any

other musical instrument – melodic, percussive, melorhythmic, key- or chord-sensitive – from any part of the world.

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# CONCERT, EDUCATION AND HUMANIZING OBJECTIVES — THEORY AND PRACTICE

## Rationalizing advancement

What an ensemble music type intends to achieve in the society prescribes creativity and performance practice. Musical creativity, production and presentation in indigenous Africa are governed by standard practices and procedures. There is a systematic approach to the composition, choice and construction of musical instruments for an ensemble, and also principles regulating how, where, when and by whom a music type is composed, presented and experienced. Contemporary African minds are sadly bewitched by exotic modern religions and knowledge systems that are parallel in concept and content to the African prototypes, but which often are deleterious but fanciful imported goods and ideas that instil a consumer mentality. Our research, education and advancement commitments aim to regenerate Africa's indigenous knowledge systems in manners that emphasize the original intellectual mettle of the African knowledge heritage. The ultimate aim is to provide authoritatively African enlightenment and enrichment to the global confluence of human knowledge systems. Africa's prodigious knowledge lore and humane practices must not be relegated, or be allowed to continue weathering prejudices, misinterpretations and misperceived aspersions that threaten them with total obliteration.

There is an indigenous formula for creating ensemble themes that furnish the significant ensemble sound of a musical arts style and type. And every type or style makes epistemological sense and imbues human meaning in African musical arts conceptualization. Indigenous musical arts comprise applied arts and science. The form and structure of an ensemble or solo musical performance are directed at accomplishing prescribed musical or extra-musical objectives. Proactive aesthetics is a constant creative aspiration, irrespective of the utilitarian objective of any musical arts product. The fact of performed theory as well as the philosophical grounding of indigenous musical arts rationalizations must guide literacy advancement procedures. This is predicated on the cognizant discernment of heritage, which could then be cognitively refashioned to bestow human-cultural originality to contemporary scholar-ship and performance practices. The inescapable imperatives of the human cultural milieu in contemporary Africa mandates advancement initiatives that are literacy driven without compromising the seminal human merits (spontaneity in creativity included) that mark formal oral practices.

Negotiating advancement in scholarship and performance on the drum and related instrumental music mandates a written repertory and, therefore, the rationalization of devices for notation. A notation system that will be faithful to the indigenous epistemological principles must take account of the sonic peculiarities of the instruments. We have rationalized notation symbols for modern classical drumming within the ambit of representing rhythmic constructions in conventional music writing. The conventional rhythm notation is very appropriate for capturing the rhythmic configurations and performance sensitivities of indigenous African music. Our conceptualization and notation of drum music compositions for modern concert solo, duo or ensemble practices have incorporated the sonic-visual aesthetics of dance and the dramatic sensitization that mark indigenous models. Elements of sonic-visual theatre incor-

porated and notated in modern classical African drumming include finger snapping, clapping, chest pounding, and the use of leg rattles to accentuate the rhythm of feet (dance).

In conceiving and designing modern classical drumming, solo or otherwise, as sonic-visual theatre, we have taken into account the fact that music making is primarily experienced as a shared, inter-personal or communal activity in indigenous Africa. It is not normal to encounter solo drumming as a private musical event in indigenous African cultures. However, my foremost indigenous mentor in African drum music theory and practice, Israel Anyahuru, did inform me that an urge to play would seize him when he had not performed an engagement for some time. In such instances, he would indulge in solo drumming in the privacy of his room for personal psychical composure. The drum can be played as softly as a whisper and as loudly as a trumpeting elephant, and still communicate the desired psychical effects and affects. Modern classical solo or group drumming is conceived as a public musical event. Private solo drumming for self-therapy, which will also be discussed, does not require the theatrical dimensions of concert drumming.

Instruments of music found in African ensembles perform specific ensemble music roles, which are derived from the sonic character and technological features of particular instruments. The term, role, implies that the musical line played by any instrument in an ensemble is reasoned in human and social terms. In indigenous Africa, music is closely interwoven with how the society or community conducts its political, religious, health, economic, educational and social affairs. Everybody in an indigenous African community grows up with basic musicality acquired through obligatory participation, in any capacity, in appropriate musical arts performance sites from childhood. However, exceptional expertise is recognized even at a tender age. Knowledge of the context combined with performance expertise marks the role of the mother musicians, particularly mother instrumentalists who play mother musical instruments such as the mother drum types, some woodwind, keyboard and string instruments. Africa abounds with drum music ensembles, and there are various types and styles. The utilitarian objective of a music type recommends the instruments that are included in an ensemble, as well as the musicological content and the theatre of presentation.

## The psychological basis of African drum ensemble music

The psychological objectives of African drum ensemble music are subject to two primary conceptualizations that influence stylistic content: to generate psychoactive affect (excitation drumming), and to induce composure or a transcendental state of being (contemplative drumming). The rationalization of the instruments in an ensemble, the compositional structures, the density or sparseness of texture, the thematic development technique, and the form and theatre for presentation, all derive from the psychological objectives basic to the context that prescribes the creation or performance of the music.

The musical arts as a systemic product was strategic to preventive health care, and targeted management of the healthy mind of every individual on the principle that a healthy mind induces a healthy body, and thereby healthy community living. The material and technology of indigenous musical instruments generate raw (cluster) harmonics that characterize melorhythmic sound energy. Raw harmonics that subtly massage sensitive body tissues, particularly brain tissues, combined with the science of sonic structures induces psychical health. The proliferation of crimes of all sorts from the sophisticated, conglomerate boardroom to the crude, street and home criminalities, and thereby inhumanity is as a result of pandemic psy-

chical ill-health (diabolic spirituality) inflicting the contemporary human world everywhere. The imperative of free-spirited, self-expressive dancing as a component of musical arts making particularly engenders psychophysical health.

The applied objective of an indigenous drum ensemble music type determines the two styles of drumming that have been categorized, from psychological intentions, as psychoactive or excitation drumming (cathartic effect) and contemplative drumming (sublime effect). In contemporary experience, African drum music has been generally misunderstood and, thereby misrepresented as euphoric drumming by Africans who have received a modern education and adhere to a modern religion. Euphoric or self-consumed (Ego) drumming was not common in indigenous Africa, even in children's playgroups. It is a contemporary misperception and corruption of psychoactive drumming commonly promoted in pop music and "drum workshops" that lack serious intent and theoretical as well as psychological health underpinning.

In the global imagination engaged with African music, the djembe drumming style and ensemble of some West African societies are thought to represent standard practice and expertise in terms of technical display and instrumentation. This is primarily because the exhibitionistic style of djembe performance that was necessitated by its specific indigenous cultural meaning has been abstracted and re-invented to suit modern superstar fancies. The reason is also because the artistic features of indigenous djembe drum style, when isolated from its societal-human context, are comparable to the Northern Hemispheric performance philosophy of professionalism and individualism. These are marked by an obsessive display of ego, as well as entertainment aspirations not ballasted by extra-musical intentions and humanizing contexts for creativity and performance. European-American patrons and promoters have globally misrepresented African drummers and drumming styles in manners that perceptually confuse the indigenous African conceptualization of drum music as tune making with the European classical music idea of percussion as sheer rhythmic fantasy and ecstasy. The technology and musical conceptualization of the typical African drum, which makes it a melorhythmic (tone-level sensitive) instrument, requires the playing of tone-based tunes that can be sung.

#### Psychoactive or excitation drumming

Psychoactive drumming could produce a transcendental effect in given contexts, particularly in susceptible/receptive participants and sometimes through autosuggestion. The density of linear texture that is sustained over the performance time expels the self-consciousness or self-presence of a subject, and could induce a state of altered consciousness. This could be accompanied by the manifestation of benign spirit essences that ride the psyche of a targeted persona, or other transcendental behaviour/actions – individual or group. Psychoactive drum ensemble music generally marks action-oriented music types and, according to the cluster harmonic science of melorhythmic instruments, also affects the human mind when applied to psychical healing or transformation.

#### Contemplative drumming

The quintessence of the salubrious art of African drumming is the contemplative drumming style, which may interpose excitation drumming when needed, to create emotional and psychical balance. The science interplays physical/psychical tension and catharsis in accordance with African dualistic philosophy of life that informs creative theory and psychology. The interplay of tension/excitation and calmness/contemplation also is a basic artistic principle of form common in African indigenous musical arts presentation. The objective of contemplative drum

music, which informs the structural configuration, could be verbal language communication (drum telegraphy or dialogue between a drum and a speaking human voice); curative (drum music for personal or group therapy); group cohesion or team bonding; and the remedying of both self-inhibitive (extreme self-withdrawal) and extroverted (overly self-assertive) personality traits. The *djembe* drum ensemble style is ideal for mass psychic catharsis.

Both contemplative and excitation drumming frequently occur in the Western and Central African cultural areas of Africa. In contemporary southern Africa, the drum music intention and tradition exemplified by the density of *Sangoma* drumming strategize therapeutic and psychical transformation structures. <sup>3</sup> Psychoactive *Sangoma* drumming and the poetic dancing that it generates and underlines have healing potency in indigenous medical science. Poetic dancing is a primary concept of dance in Africa south of the Sahara. Contemplative drumming has "classical" dimensions in terms of the systematic conformation and development of basic structural elements, as well as the presentational form. The classical (contextual) form for creativity and presentation in drum music is marked by an extremely elaborate conformation in the *ese* music of the Igbo of Nigeria. *Ese* music has five compartments (movements) that match the five thematic subdivisions of the funerary scenario for meritorious adult men, which it marshals. Each compartment is identified by peculiar thematic, structural and mood characteristics, as well as a prescriptive theory of compositional procedure. The mother musician sonically conducts formalized contextual activities that transpire within each compartment.

#### Advancement initiatives

We have been engaged in researching and advancing the theory and practice of African drum music, both solo and ensemble, in the Ama Dialog Foundation for Africa & the World Arts in Nigeria, from a literacy perspective, since 1993. The research results have been applied in various play-shopping programmes and contemporary classical concert compositions. Research based in the Ama Dialog Foundation has resulted in designing African modern classical drumming for single membrane drum and tuned drum row types. Simple notation systems have been devised, and written concert repertory have been produced - drum solos, drummistic piano solos, duos for the drum and violin/wind instruments/voice, inter-cultural ensembles for mixed African indigenous and European classical instruments including the voice, as well as choral works derived from African indigenous vocal conformations, and symphonic works. African classical drumming concerts (solo, duo with voice/classical instruments and intercultural ensembles) featuring modern trained singers and European classical instrumentalists have been given in parts of Europe and Africa. Modern classical drumming has now become an instrumental performance specialization in the Music Department of the University of Pretoria, South Africa. At CIIMDA<sup>4</sup> (Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices of Africa - Research, Education and Performance for SADC countries), we are focusing on the theory and practice of drum and dance ensembles that have mobilized concert activities by learners in the schools system.

Personal drumming, psychoactive and contemplative, is a salubrious experience whether self-administered to induce sleep (soporific therapy), or to contain anxiety, or to indulge crea-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Sangoma drumming style is explained in the brochure accompanying the DVD titled "Sangoma Dance Aesthetic – Choreo-graphing spirituality" produced by Nzewi (2005) in CIIMDA.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The government of Norway, through the Norwegian Foreign Office, funds CIIMDA under a Framework for Cooperation (2004-2008) with the Rikskonsertene (Norwegian Concert Institute). CIIMDA is based in Pretoria, South Africa.

tive fantasy that relaxes and stimulates the mind. Otherwise drum ensemble music constructs community, in the context of which a number of specialized contemporary applications have been designed. The theory and method that we apply to both oral and literary drum musical performances are modern classical, and rely on the basic playing techniques and creative principles informed by indigenous epistemology.

Some basic principles are emphasized in ensemble and solo drumming activities for modern music-making options.

#### Modern classical drumming

This implies the reorientation of drum ensemble music practice distilled from the indigenous philosophical and theoretical conceptualizations, which advances the playing technique as well as recognizes the contemporary literary imperative. This volume focuses on the openended single membrane drum that is prevalent in African indigenous cultures. The species suitable for modern classical drumming should produce three clear, primary tone levels *cum* timbre qualities – the deep, the high and the slapped notes. The popular *djembe* drum of some West African cultural groups is versatile and ideal for oral drumming because of its distinct primary tones. It is not recommended for literacy modern classical drumming, however. A drum with an unencumbered wooden shell is more suitable because the shell is struck with a ringed finger to produce one of the primary notes we have incorporated for literary classical drumming.

Modern classical drumming requires the performer to sit on a chair without armrests, in such a manner that the spine is upright, ensuring a straight back and shoulders. While an open-ended drum should be resting on the ground when played, the open end, the "mouth" or base, must not be flat on the ground, otherwise the sound that is produced will be trapped within the drum, and the quality of tone muffled. However, openings for sound to escape could be provided at the open base of the drum shell during construction. The drum is held between the legs with the membrane at the top, the drumhead tilted outwards, away from the performer. An opening (a "mouth") is thus provided between the base of the drum and the floor, so that a clear tone becomes possible. The feet of the player must rest flat on the ground so that the performer can physically mark the pulse with one or both legs. A player whose pulse-sense is still insecure is advised to actually "walk" the pulse of the music, fairly lifting one or both legs up and down evenly and steadily. In community ensemble playing it is advisable that all performers uniformly mark the common pulse visually and physically by tapping or "walking" the feet. This simulates basic dance steps, inalienable from indigenous musical arts performance principles, particularly in literary drum playing. In group playing, which often entails differentiated individual thematic contributions, physically marking the pulse simultaneously, induces the common pulse feeling that ensures unified community action. It is not advisable to have a conductor who is not playing an instrument in indigenous or modern drum ensemble music that emphasizes the physical group pulse feeling for systematic musical flow. When necessary, particularly as required for playing written drum music, the drum should be secured to the waist with an adjustable strap so that the legs are free to play the leg shakers that simulate dance in the musical score.

The open-stroking technique, in which the hand or stick bounces off the drumhead on impact, allows the skin to vibrate freely and fully to produce clean tones on the drum. A held stroke technique, during which the hand or stick rests on the skin briefly on contact and therefore inhibits free vibration of the membrane, no matter how briefly, mutes the desired tone quality. Ordinarily it is regarded as a poor playing technique that should be avoided. A held stroke may be desired specifically for the slap tone, or for special tonal inflection such

as may mark the "full stop" at the end of a melorhythmic statement. Playing from the wrist with a flexed wrist action is recommended. It is not advisable to play with the forearm, with a stiff wrist lifting up and down, as this could incur fatigue and is not visually aesthetic in drum playing. The drum is a best friend that must be coaxed with firm friendly stroking to "sing" as softly and as loudly as desired. The performer must not batter or fight with the drum. Alternate use of the hands is a must, unless the technical demands of a special musical figure commands striking successfully with only one hand. Playing with alternating hands has health implications: it balances the psyche of the performer, and is visually graceful. How the drum is played affects the psychical health of a performer as much as the phrasing of the thematic configuration that is played on the drum. The African drum is a proud instrument that can sound calmly and powerfully, and sitting with straight shoulders while playing with alternate hands, with the arms free from the armpits, enhances the proud visual aesthetic of the performer.

Melorhythmic tunes rely on tone levels that have pitch essence as well as the sonic potential of particular species of wood used in drum construction. The sound of the drum shell is conceived as a component note of melorhythmic compositions. Four primary notes therefore are possible for playing tunes on the drum for general drumming – three levels of tone on the drum membrane and one on the drum shell. These are again highlighted here:

- The clear deep tone (open stroke) is produced with cupped hands striking the centre of the drumhead in such a manner that the base of the palm makes contact with the skin and bounces off. A held stroke that stops the skin from vibrating freely on impact is sometimes used for tonal effects or to end a piece or theme.
- The clear high tone is produced when the rim of the drumhead is struck with fingers straight and held together tightly, and played as a bounce-off or open stroke. (A skilled player could actually produce the same quality of tone at any dynamic level using a finger and striking from the wrist as already advised.)
- The slap is a primary tone that is produced at the rim of the drumhead when the straight and tightly held fingers actually slap a held stroke so that vibration of the skin is limited. Playing with a strong flick of the wrist enhances the desired sharpness of a slapped tone, and additionally exercises the wrist.
- When the drumhead is played with a padded stick, the centre is struck with the drumstick, to produce a primary note. A held stroke at the centre with the drumstick gives a muted tonal timbre of the fundamental tone of the open stroke. When a drum is played with two sticks or one stick and one hand, a primary note is produced when the stick is used to strike the wooden shell of the drum. Again playing from the wrist is advisable. In literary solo drumming, the stick is replaced with a strong metal ring worn on the middle or first finger of the left hand. The ring strikes the wooden shell for a primary tone in addition to the hand being used for other primary notes already discussed.
- The clap is an essential note combined with the other drum notes for composing melorhythmic structures in modern classical drumming.
- A glissando effect, respectively rising and falling, is produced by sliding a finger or
  fingers, or the base of the palm of one hand, up and down the drumhead with sensitivity for note-duration while rapidly repeated strokes are played with the finger/fingers
  of the free hand.

The playing techniques and notes discussed above for melorhythmic compositions apply both to oral modern classical drumming and literary drumming. Literary drumming, however, incorporates more notes and will be discussed later.

# Philosophy and theory of idiomatic categories in ensemble music creativity

Composing music in the indigenous idiomatic configurations entail creating and manipulating intangible realities that imperceptibly influence attitudinal dispositions and relational habits. In indigenous Africa everybody is assumed to possess a basic acumen for musical creativity and should, as such, be capable of composing original tunes. If a person denies such innate genius, it will not serve her/him. Skill in playing the drum develops with practice, just as in other musical instruments. The following discussions are faithful to the indigenous drum ensemble principle that music making should effectuate utilitarian intentions at the same time as it conceptually implicates entertainment or recreational objectives. The nature of themes and how they are combined and developed in a composition would depend on the function the music is intended to serve in the society or group. Thus the configuration of idiomatic categories must make sense, structurally and formally, at the same time as they negotiate contextual meaning. The following idiomatic principles, which are not necessarily exclusive musical conceptualizations, inform the theory of indigenous ensemble music compositions, bearing in mind that an individual can constitute her-/himself into an ensemble. This implies that an experienced individual performer can synthesize an ensemble piece, that is, evoke community participation in a monoplay, while the musical sense of the ensemble concept will still be clear. Conversely, a solo piece can be arranged for performance by an ensemble without compromising the significant theme and sound.

# The principle of thematic complementation – creating and sharing thematic space or complementary phrasing

A musical statement could make provision for two or more persons to share the structural configuration in a linear dimension in the first instance. This minimal collaboration generates a sense of sensitively binding with another person or persons to accomplish a spiritual-human objective. The structure that is shared constitutes a primary thematic sense or the significant sound of a piece. The segments contributed by sharing partners may not be of equal duration or size, but each input, no matter how small or large, is essential for the thematic integrity of the musical statement. The length of the significant theme for this sharing of inter-personal stimulation could be a bar or two in 12/8 or 4/4 metre. The spontaneous compositional dialogue could also be of two independent but complementary thematic identities that linearly constitute a composite thematic identity for developmental activities, as discussed below. Whether shared or independent, the significant theme/s should first be looped in a circle that repeats, and each individual or group contributor must be acutely conscious of the point of entry and exit in the circle. Thereafter, a number of developmental options are possible:

- The complementing partners could begin to create their own compatible patterns for filling in sections where each is normally silent in the shared realization of the significant tune. The fill-in patterns form a secondary layer of musical phrases that enrich the overall musical texture. A spontaneous or fixed fill-in pattern must not compromise the correct entry point for playing one's section of the shared primary statement. Thus alertness and acute awareness of the human and structural sense and the contribution of collaborating with others are sensitized. If not, a disruption of the significant sense of the piece or any joint human objective could occur.
- The contribution could entail the sharing partners each spontaneously varying the content of their respective segments at their own discretion. When the content of a

thematic fragment or gestalt is varied without obliterating its significant sense, the replaying of the circle becomes a recycling experience. Internal variation could be combined with the developmental option of fill-in patterns. Each player's recreation of an own thematic segment relies on an internal variation technique while the filling-in exercise is an external development technique.

Opening up and sharing musical space in melodic, melorhythmic or rhythmic constructions that mark African indigenous creative theory thus inculcates the virtue of recognizing and respecting the human sensibility and contribution of collaborating with others. The above sharing options could involve partners playing the same or different types or species of instruments such as two or three drummers, a drummer and a flautist, and so on. Sharing linear structures implicates opening and sharing personal space, which compels sharing or bonding humanity. Two persons involved in internal variations of respective parts would be engaging in mutual, spontaneous creative stimulation. It could be quite demanding to create variants of such a minuscule fraction of a theme, which could be as brief as two quarter note beats in duration. The exercise, especially working with a partner, could generate a sense of achievement and, thereby, spiritual elation. The commonly known African responsorial structures of chorus and solo, or question and answer, are basic to creating space for others to emerge or be heard. The principle is informed by the indigenous philosophy of becoming humanized by sharing with fellow humans what a person could ordinarily accomplish alone and in loneliness. A responsorial game could also make use of two independent themes constituting a cycle. The developmental options identified above would also apply.

#### The principle of matching compatible themes in horizontal harmonious reckoning

Two or more compatible but independent themes of the same or different lengths could be played simultaneously to yield the significant sound of a piece. Compatibility in terms of belonging to the same metric framework, and blending harmoniously in conformity with a culture's vertical harmonic idioms. Such complementary matching themes could be played on the same or different types of instruments used in an ensemble. Matching themes do not necessarily need to be of equal length, but must have a ratio of relationship. For instance, one thematic identity could sound twice in the time frame of the other; or the ratio of durational relationships could be 2:3, 1:4, etc. The ratio has consequences for the basic horizontal harmonic scheme of the significant sound of an ensemble piece. It is possible that the composite sound of a piece could be made up of three or more thematic identities that have different lengths. This gives rise to the theory of the Ensemble Thematic Cycle, ETC. <sup>5</sup> It is important that the common starting point of an ensemble piece is clearly defined, whether on the principle of theme sharing or of matching themes. There is always a common starting point for any number of instruments that are contributing themes of varied lengths to the ETC of a piece in an indigenous ensemble.

#### Performing self within community solidarity

A compositional principle for an ensemble could provide for a reiterated composite ensemble theme that forms the pillar or textural framework on which individuals could take turns to spontaneously exercise compositional or improvisational freedom. It could be discussed as a theory of free improvisation/extemporization over a recurring block of sound in an ensemble. The contemplative/emotive interest would then be on the free improvisation while the motive/

See Nzewi, M. 1997: African music: Theoretical content and creative continuum. Oldershausen: Institut fur Didaktik popularer Musik.

free medley dance interest is on the regularly recurring textural-harmonic block that could feature internal variations given experienced performers.

#### Performing attentive listening

This drum ensemble game sensitizes group attentiveness. An originator spontaneously plays continuously changing melorhythmic themes, each of which is immediately reproduced exactly by other members of a play-shopping group. All the themes that may or may not be related must be of equal duration, so that, the point in the time loop for an exact repeat by the group is regular. The originator manages space within the time frame for creative explorations while the group must always come in at the exact same spot in the recycled thematic loop. This exercise primes the participants with regard to consciousness of the metric sense. As such, both originator and members of the play-shopping group must be marking a common pulse with the feet. Participants in a play-shopping session who are competent drummers could take turns playing the role of the originator. At the initial stages, a particular theme that is not accurately reproduced, rhythm *cum* tone level, by a majority of participants could be repeated until skill in keen listening and exact reproduction is developed. This is an exercise that is strategic in aural training and spontaneity, to stimulate acuity in listening and pattern perception, as a change in sound could be as minute as an eighth-note or an altered tone level of a preceding pattern.

#### Creative spontaneity in chorus-solo framework

The group should play a consistent short chorus theme that leaves space for solo statements within a one- to two-bar time loop in a 12/8 or 4/4 metric framework. Participants in the play-shopping group take turns, without interrupting the musical flow, to create a theme and continually vary it internally within the solo space. New themes could also be attempted within the time frame of a soloist's creations. The game stimulates creative spontaneity in life through the use of the musical paradigm. Again, an individual who has a secure sense of pulse and cycle could play the game alone.

#### Twosome dialoguing

Any two players of comparable competence on the drum can engage in twosome playing. They should inter-stimulate each other by conducting the dialogue in different formats, creating individual themes that they develop alternately. Partners could take turns, with one person maintaining the own segment or theme as a recurring, unvaried background or chorus while the other engages in free improvisations with an own theme. The improvisation approach could be internal or external and could introduce new themes. Extended external improvisations must resolve properly into the enabling theme and relationship with the partner. This exercise could also entail one partner merely keeping a steady pulse theme over which the other partner improvises, instead of an answering theme. A dialogue could also entail leading each other in playing varied thematic creations or variations that are reproduced exactly by the partner. The two must mark a steady common pulse with the feet. Twosome dialoguing could be featured within group play-shopping. The various types of twosome exchange are spiritualizing experiences that enhance fellowship.

## Objectives of modern classical drum music

#### The oral/written drum music interface

Oral and written compositions share the same philosophical and theoretical principles in the configuration of thematic categories. The practice of a performer physically marking the pulse is advocated for both oral and written playing. The difference is that, in the written genre, solo drumming requires the performer to produce some of the written notes with the feet. For that purpose, stringed shakers for producing essential shaker notes/figures of the score with the feet are tied to the ankles. Drum solos feature in written and oral drumming. Ensemble playing could involve any manageable number of performers playing the same drum species, or combining a drum species with other indigenous instruments such as the wooden slit drum, the bell, the shakers, etc. Ensemble playing could also include European classical instruments and musical instruments, indeed of any other, world cultures. The typical African drum is an harmonically versatile instrument because it generates raw or cluster harmonics. The scientific and technological rationalization of the African drum, being derived from humanistic principles requires that it sounds in a neutral key. As such, tone levels that are generated on the drum are consistently in tune and harmony with any key or key changes (modulations or off-pitch adjustments) that may occur in the singing voice or melodic instrument of any culture, including the European classical melody instruments. On the other hand, indigenous aesthetics warrants that a drum or drums have to be tuned to produce the desired psychical ambience that will suit the mood of the music it plays. This principle of mood tuning does not contradict the fact of being in tune with any pitched instruments playing in the key and key changes written or preferred for a duo or an ensemble piece. If more than one pitched instrument is used in an ensemble with the drum, such melody instruments must be tuned normally to the appropriate key of the piece, oral or written.

## Oral solo drumming

Basic performance and creative skill is required for oral solo drumming. The pulse sense must be secure and should be physically marked with one foot or alternating feet. Three objectives of oral solo drumming within the ambits of psychical self-therapy follow:

#### Anxiety management

Spontaneous solo drumming is therapeutic in such psychically unsettling situations as a traffic hold-up or other human situations that generate psychical tension or anxiety. Problems are more likely to be exacerbated than solved by anxiety. Knowledge of deep and high tone levels, as well as the slap, could be actuated to simulate drumming on the dashboard, a book/table top or any other hard object. This becomes more composing drumming when the melorhythmic patterns being played are simultaneously sung silently or mentally, using drum mnemonics. The adequate procedure for dispelling tension and anxiety is to compose and internally vary a nuclear theme of not more than two bars in 12/8 or 4/4 time. In African developmental theory, any theme of such duration could be recomposed (a developmental philosophy of internal regeneration of theme and self) an unlimited number of times without compromising the significant melorhythmic sound. A variation would entail the manipulation

of the tone levels along with the breaking up (fission) and reconstituting (accretion) of the rhythm durations of the basic theme<sup>6</sup>. The mind is looped into the thematic gestalt and every internal reordering of the sonic components of the theme, no matter how minute, is a creative achievement that obviates bother, distressing thoughts and generates elation.

#### Sleep therapy (self tranquilizing) and musical anaesthesia

The tone quality of a drum, combined with the humanistic science of thematic structures, can be self-applied to induce sleep. A drum with vibrant tone quality is needed, and must be played softly in a slow tempo. The ideal thematic structure should be simple, not rhythmically dense, and not more than one bar long in 12/8 or 4/4 time signature. Sleep therapy is best self-administered next to the bed. The structure of the theme and the tempo must not be varied. The short, open textured theme traps the mind in a recurring sonic loop that blocks off the intrusion of extraneous mental activity, and soon lulls the person to sleep. This simple science of inducing calmness and sleep by repeating a simple theme marks lullabies in African indigenous baby-soothing practice. In Africa, indigenous curative science greatly relies on musical anaesthesia, which is administered by a non-patient. It is encountered in some indigenous orthopaedic practices as an aid to bone-mending surgery, and also in the indigenous management or containment of insanity, whether innate or acquired. These are cases in which repetition of uniquely constructed structures is a conceptual forte in African musical arts science. The general principle remains to trap the mind in a revolving musical loop, and thereby sedate or banish the patient's psychical presence as well as psychophysical sensations for as long as the sonic loop is circling.

#### Euphoric solo drumming

The African drum is a most reliable companion, a soothing partner that responds to the player's moods and demands exactly as commanded. It is ideal for celebrating high spirits. The thematic category suited to euphoric playing should be spirited and preferably structurally dense. Euphoric drumming welcomes creative exuberance as imaginative internal and external development. Such drumming could induce a state of timelessness, and causes a cathartic feeling in the body and soul at the end of a euphoric trip. It is also ideal for the release of tension – the degree of creative imagination needed for spontaneous creative elaboration of a theme banishes extraneous mental engagement. The environment and the mood of the person would recommend the loudness or softness of play.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See page 102 of Nzewi, M. (1991). *Musical practice and creativity: an African traditional perspective*. Bayreuth: Iwalewa-haus, University of Bayreuth.

# Ensemble drum music

Anybody who wishes to participate in a drum music ensemble could easily perform capably in a group without any need for prior skills training. African drum music is the friendliest ensemble in which to experience the extra-musical benefits and joy of performance. The learning procedure that we advocate relies on the indigenous African performance principle that welcomes the joint participation of beginners, amateurs and "experts" in the same play-shopping/performance session. An uninhibited beginner is capable of playing danceable music within minutes of a first ensemble experience. Drumming a steady pulse already is a complete musical structure for choreographing a dance sketch. Participants must, however, note that development of creative proficiency in African drum music never ends. Every performance situation is a fresh challenge to creative genius. Ensemble drum music experiencing that involves two or more participants could be designed to effectuate the following contemporary objectives:

### Classroom education in the African musical arts

Classroom education in African musical arts at any level is an important contemporary objective for modern classical drumming. The single membrane drum that can be tonally manipulated is versatile and ideal for classroom explications of the theoretical, philosophical, psychological, and performance practices of indigenous musical arts. Verbal theoretical or philosophical explanations as much as possible should take place in the context of practical experiencing by the learners. Practical classroom objectives should simultaneously produce literate and oral classical performers. Such practitioners could specialize as solo modern classical concert artists. The average performer should be skilled to play oral or written duos, and play in any orchestral music written for the African drum and any combination of instruments - indigenous and inter-cultural. Ideally, oral ensemble activities that must include practical dance and music symbiosis should precede every session of practical activities in written music. The oral play should aim at accomplishing other extra-musical, humanistic objectives - stimulating creativity, other-consciousness and the management of psychological indisposition such as self-inhibition, self-centredness, extroversion and other socially problematic character traits. These are crucial objectives in both classroom music education and rehearsal sessions that mandate strategizing oral ensemble play-shopping that deploys appropriate structural categories and interactive group-drumming games.

It is not very necessary to emphasize the playing of written scores at lower educational levels, although enterprising educators and learners are urged to start to incorporate the written approach early. We have already stated that a person who is competent in the written classical drumming genre, which gives guidance in generic African drum music practice, is capable of playing any drum music style from any African culture. Learners should work primarily with the tonally sensitive, open-ended single membrane drum and the slit drum. Both cover the technical demands of most other types of drum in Africa. However, in the absence of such standard indigenous instruments, schools should emphasize performing with locally available musical instruments and dances. Clapping and feet drumming are welcome alternatives where no instruments are readily available in a school environment. Attention must then be paid to simulating the structural imperatives of the idiomatic categories already discussed.

Education in the theory and philosophy of indigenous musical arts should constitute every class into a performing group or community. Additionally, school concert groups that could give public performances should be established, and must aim at being paid some performance fee by local patrons. The funds generated should be used to procure instruments as well as culturally sensible costumes more suitable for public performances, whether indigenous or modern classical. Schools should also attempt to perform contemporary popular music types using mainly indigenous musical instruments.

The idiomatic configurations discussed so far are to be used in both classroom education and applied play-shopping. They equally inform the philosophical-theoretical rationalization of the written compositions in this volume of *Contemporary study of musical arts*, from the solo to the ensemble categories. The design and procedure for classroom musical arts education that is based on the theory and practice of African classical drum music should strategize the following creative elements and performance principles:

- Practical sensitization with regard to the basic structural elements as well as body feeling of African musical sound such as pulse, tone levels, sense of phrasing, metric interface, various thematic categories, and the techniques of thematic variation.
- Distinction between the various ensemble parts and roles of instruments, as well as the knowledge of how and why the differentiated themes are combined in ensemble creativity.
- The potential of ensemble structures and interaction for instilling other-consciousness and group cohesion.
- Exercises in the spontaneous creation of themes (compositional procedure), development of themes and improvisation.
- Ensemble texture: part relationship as a matching of compatible themes instead of chord-based, note-by-note harmonization of themes.
- Self- and group expressions in dance, mime and movement.
- Principles of inter-cultural ensemble composition and performance.
- Training should combine rote playing with the written approach as already advocated, as needed for persons interested in modern classical concert playing. It is advocated that written scores should as much as possible make provision for performance composition passages where soloists could exercise creative genius through improvisation in rehearsals and concert performances.
- Ensemble practice sessions will aim at creating and producing standard ensemble pieces for a live audience, at least a school audience.
- The CIIMDA training course offers theoretical and practical expertise in African drumming and is designed to capacitate music educators to impart the ensemble performance values entrenched in African music principles to learners in schools.

## Applied drum ensemble play-shopping

#### Team bonding play-shopping

We have designed a specialized content and procedure of play-shopping aimed at engineering team bonding among persons involved in various collaborative undertakings that require the synergy of diverse human individualities and relational tendencies. Such play-shopping activities are normally laced with the theoretical explication of procedure and sonic materials. This helps the mind to attune to the metaphysical sensations generated by musical arts structures intended to imbue bonding psychical dispositions. Practical musical arts experiencing

could be objectively conformed and applied as an effective-affective metaphysical tonic and communion according to the humanistic science of indigenous African knowledge systems. Modern drum ensemble play-shopping for team bonding is a socialization force that enhances fellow feeling and team spirit among categories of staff or collaborators in any corporate bodies or public institutions. It is also essential for members of common interest associations, including games and sports teams. "The [participant] experiences how musical arts making encodes social structures as well as directs the patterns of life – how music manages life. Social integration as well as the psychological stabilization of the individual as a component of a community is being achieved. "7 Applied play-shopping should strategize special thematic structures as well as part relationships (ensemble roles) that have been identified as engendering fellow feeling and mutual support. The potency of communalistic action is conveyed by the indigenous African maxim, which instructs that: "when people combine to spear urine (contribute peculiar innate energies) at the same spot (to effectuating a unified enterprise/objective), great foam (quantum outcome) is accomplished" [indigenous truism].

Indigenous African musical arts making is ultimately a metaphysical experience. It commands interacting with potent intangible energies that galvanize spiritual regeneration through psychophysical activity. The benefit that accrues in an applied play-shopping activity would depend on the degree of open-mindedness a participant brings to the experience. The following general canons, in procedural order, that could ensure successful play-shopping for team bonding in particular, are recommended:

- The ground arrangement of a play-shopping activity must be circular. The circle is a metaphysical force. When a psychically engaging activity is organized in circular formation the ascribed personality or sense of importance of every participant is physically neutralized. Every participant's peculiar life force and animating (breath) chemistry is inevitably directed at the centre of the circle where it becomes subsumed into the collective life force, and becomes communally recharged for equal redistribution. All participants then inhale and feel the same metaphysical life essence of a bonded group. The circle or circular formation facilitates all round eye contact that heightens sense of common interest the sharing of spiritual communion.
- Participants should stand behind their respective drums and start walking without
  moving forwards to a common regular tempo. This marking of the group pulse must
  be kept going right through the play-shopping exercises, whether sitting or standing.
- The facilitator divides the participants into two or more common-action groups, and introduces an interactive clapping game: determine a rhythmic statement, and then divide it into two or more segments. Get a group to start clapping the first segment, which then is a short rhythm figure that leaves empty space before it recurs in the circular time of the full theme. As soon as the first group is secure with repeating the clapped pattern, assign the segment that completes the rhythm statement to the second group, if two groups are preferred. If three groups are preferred, the pattern assigned to the second group will leave further space for the third group to complete the relay clapping exercise that makes the repeated rhythmic statement. The groups must be attentive while they clap their respective contributions to the complete rhythm circle as all will still be walking on the spot to the common pulse, irrespective of the structural peculiarities of the clapped segments. The facilitator could stop any group within the rhythmic circle, and assign it a new pattern that is structurally cognate with the on-going section/s. The activity stimulates consciousness of the varied con-

tributions that result in a unitary product in the linear dimension. The facilitator could play games that would enable the participants to visually and sonically perceive how they inter-relate/inter-contribute different musical (human) energies that produce a finished product - the singular rhythmic statement. The facilitator could end this exercise while the participants continue walking the pulse, and introduce a different structural category: assign a complete short rhythm statement to be clapped repeatedly to one group. Give another group a compatible interactive rhythm statement of the same or a different length to also clap repeatedly. Some notes of the second or third independent rhythm statements should sound in the spaces occurring in between the clapped impulses of the first rhythm structure. The second pattern may also have notes that coincide in places with the clapped impulses of the first group's theme. This combination of simultaneously clapped statements produces an interlaced but unitary structure although the two or three groups are engaged in differentiated line/s of musical activity. A listener outside the venue would perceive the outcome as a unitary product involving all the participants in playing only the resultant statement as an undivided group. This is because the unitary outcome is perceived at the same level of tone and timbre - the collective flat clap.

- The group sits at the end of the warm-up clapping activity. If it is the first meeting of the participants, or if there are new members, the facilitator will take the group through the techniques for producing various levels and qualities of drum tones deep tone, high tone, slap, open stroke, held stroke, etc. Exercises used to re-enforce skill in proper playing techniques as well as production of tone levels should entail short thematic phrases that combine the tone levels as they are introduced. The participants should play each thematic figure repeatedly while marking the common pulse with the feet. Each exercise should be played with increasing speed from slow to as fast as possible in order to develop technical skill in the flexibility of the wrist, adequate sitting posture, correct drum positioning, marking regular time, and alternate hand striking principles.
- At this stage, the group should be primed in spirit and technique for partaking in special team bonding performances and creativity. Play-shopping designed for team bonding should emphasize the following structural categories: Sharing of thematic statements; matching compatible themes in linear harmonious thinking; performing self within group solidarity (internal and external improvisation); sensitizing interpersonal listening, sense of thematic spans, and short sequences of twosome dialoguing by two participants, for other members of the group to appraise.
- Before the play-shopping activities end, celebrating with free group dancing will provide a further spiritually bonding experience. Some members of the group could take turns to create dance music that could feature other available instruments such as the pulse and the phrasing referent instruments, while the rest of the participants engage in somatic medley dancing.
- Effectively applied play-shopping activities that inculcate team spirit inevitably and subtly remedy personal psychological traits such as self-inhibition and an extroverted disposition. In any type of play-shopping we emphasize that, once the group support structure forms a steady background, what a soloist plays on top cannot be theoretically wrong because the solid, unvaried community response/support accommodates any slips. An inhibited personality then has little fear of expressing the self creatively or of playing something "wrong" in a supportive public forum. Confidence is gained during public expression of innate human quality after the fear is banished by the

Nzewi, M. (2002). Modern music education and the African reality; grabbing the tail of a rainbow. In Magne Espeland (Ed. ). Samspel – ISME 2002 Focus area report. Pp. 79-86.

pervasive feeling of comradeship. An extrovert is constrained to take limited solos and stay with others in exercises that coerce reiterated group motifs. Generally, every participant of whatever peculiar temperament is given group support to create themes for others to partake in, as well as to do solo improvisation with structured group support. A soloist theoretically does not play it "wrong" when there is a persistently urging textural foundation.

#### Anti-stress play-shopping

Anti-stress play-shopping is purposeful music therapy that enables participants to occasionally purge problematic psychical tension. It is also a performative site for discharging occasional personality disorientation/dissociation through the metaphysical interactions generated by structured drum music activities in a group. Play-shopping could be tailored variously to de-stress the staff of a stress/tension-prone workplace; to tackle personality rehabilitation needs; as general therapeutic interventions for socially dissociated persons; and also for managing depressive conditions. Three special categories of structural configurations that may be perfunctorily encountered in general music making and composition could be specially programmed for group therapy:

- Density of structure (rhythmically busy) in a group drumming activity displaces space, and thereby displaces self-absorption for a while, that is, sends the mind on a trip into supernormal consciousness.
- Openness of structure, on the other hand, coerces creative insertion of the self-image. It provides space for cathartic actualizing of self-worth through creative energizing (in sound or sensation) of the offered space, or otherwise negotiating self-worth in consciousness of the humanness of others.
- The third category is euphoric drumming in which an individual who is given steady pulsating structural support, a reiterated thematic block, feels liberated to celebrate life through unrestrained exploration of the own creative fantasy (extensive improvisation) that is rewarded with a feeling of psychical-emotional catharsis or purgation.

What causes tension or stress or psychotic indisposition is often a disinclination to recognize and accommodate the different human sensitivity, merits and foibles of others, or insecurity or disillusionment with one's innate self-worth or, otherwise, the tendency to rationalize the experiences of life with closed and suppressed or unshared emotions. A positive experience of anti-stress play-shopping can endure for a while. Hence a person prone to stress or depression or intolerance is urged to own a drum, and occasionally undergo self-purgation of deleterious attitudinal dispositions by engaging in self de-stressing solo play when group play-shopping is not available. Such self-administered anti-stress therapy could use the idioms of contemplative drumming.

We have applied anti-stress drumming therapy in practical projects to effect personality transformation of socially dissociated and disoriented young persons who then started demonstrating positive human merits and other-conscious social instincts as well as creative self-expression. <sup>8</sup>

The general canons and procedural order itemized for conducting team-bonding playshopping are recommended for group anti-stress therapy meetings. The idiomatic categories to be emphasized as soon as appreciable creative and technical skills are acquired include: creative spontaneity in chorus-solo framework; group euphoric drumming; performing attentive listening; performing self within community solidarity; anxiety management creativity; and sleep therapy.

#### General

Efforts to design a literacy continuum for African indigenous knowledge systems including the mental arts should emphasize the principle of advancement. This implies systematic creative rationalization aimed at updating indigenous philosophical imperatives, theoretical principles and humane practices in terms of innate artistic sense and creative intentions of any given period of human civilization. Meaningful advancement should thus reflect the contemporary local as well as global imperatives in the context of inherited indigenous lore. In the musical arts, an advancement mentality must discern, prioritize and propel the humanizing orientation and societal virtues that mark Africa's original creative aspirations. This implies eschewing exogenous theories, technologies and practices that compromise, subsume, supplant or arrogantly abuse the noble merit and objectives of Africa's indigenous philosophies, principles and practices. It includes cognitively designing a literacy continuum of cultural authority – adapting the exogenous but compatible idioms and materials into the mould or theoretical framework of heritage; as opposed to tokenism/fancifulness – the frivolous insertion of abstracted elements of heritage into adopted but incompatible exogenous intellectual models or theoretical-philosophical moulds.

#### Leadership

Most indigenous African societies formally honour and celebrate outstanding human achievements and achievers. However, in the indigenous social, political, religious, economic and musical arts systems, leadership is not conceptualized or practiced in terms of the superstar serviced or worshipped by subordinates. Leadership is recognized and practiced in original African cultural systems as the captain of significant partners or team-mates. Leaders of contemporary choral or instrumental African music ensembles adopt the role and antics of a commanding conductor in a European classical orchestra or choir. This supreme commander structure in performance situations is absurd by African indigenous leadership principles, and sometimes outrightly ridiculous, especially in choral performances that reflect an African cultural orientation. After all, in any well-practised performing group, every member of an ensemble already knows her/his part well and also knows how or when it fits into the whole group performance structure. There may be some need to update the role and normative performance behaviour of the African mother musicians (contextual manager/ensemble coordinator) as contemporary presentational imperatives may recommend, without bastardizing African leadership philosophy and practice. A case could, perhaps, be made for large and complex orchestral groups such as a symphonic orchestra performing essentially African literacy compositions. In such an instance an authoritatively African construct adopts a European typological mould, and could, therefore, require the convenient presentational management.

See Smith, K. (2003): The Soccajasco kids project: an African musical intervention in an African problem. In Anri Herbst (ed.), Emerging solutions for musical arts education in Africa. Cape Town: African minds, Pp. 306-320. Also Nzewi, M. (2002). Modern music education and the African reality; grabbing the tail of a rainbow. In Magne Espeland (ed.), Focus area report, 25th Biennial World Conference and Musical Festival, International Society for Music Education (ISME) Bergen: ISME, Pp 79-86.

#### Structural content

The trend in contemporary Africa to re-conceptualize vocal music to suit the theoretical and stylistic models of European classical music has persisted. Thus we find authoritatively African themes and, sometimes, creative idioms being contrived in the SATB theory. Considering the prodigious theoretical configurations that mark Africa's creative manifestations and human practices, it is absurd to witness contemporary Africans unreservedly re-culturing themselves to become wholesale mental and consumer mutants of European and American modernism. Humanly prestigious African participation in any aspect of globalization should aim to project authoritatively advanced African human merit and intellectual mettle into the global mainstream – constructing and managing African uniqueness within the communion of world practices. The prevalence of African puppets shamelessly parading and parroting the unique intellectual productions of other world cultures injures and perjures the profundity of indigenous knowledge inventions.

The contemporary predilection for recreating indigenous African creative-artistic models that aim to conform to the European-American classical creative theories, forms and presentational practices in the performance arts needs to be reformed. The imitated exogenous models are fanciful models of the humanizing and communality-building uniqueness of Africa's indigenous prototypes that are acutely needed in the contemporary promotion and inculcation of wholesome spirituality. The trend in vocal music education, for instance, subverts humanly unique African vocal music philosophy and aesthetics in composition as well as presentational aspirations and theatre. An intellectually and humanly prestigious endeavour must contemporaneously advance indigenous models and standards while skilfully integrating viable elements of the European classical tradition. The thematic development theories, harmonic systems, partner relationship formulae, vocal aesthetics and evocative presentational theatre peculiar to indigenous African choral and instrumental styles remain genuine, intellectual exemplars. The idea of discarding or subordinating their intellectual and utilitarian merit to exogenous fancies is self-debasing, and a betrayal of posterity.

Part of the advancement strategy is to recognize that European classical musical instruments are viable for representing and interpreting African indigenous theory and idioms with creative imagination and without loss of characterizing integrity. Performance technique on the instruments, however, may require slight reorientation.

Pitiably few practical initiatives involving concerned African intellectuals devoted to advancing Africa's intellectual genius in the creative and performance arts, exist. Contemporary pursuits that advance the indigenous standards of creativity and presentational theatre need to be systematic, basic to cognitive research orientation that would furnish modern theoretical, utilitarian and performance directions. But there are intuitive advancement aspirations outside academic institutions that are contemporaneous. Advancement initiatives, as any envisioned audience recommends, should cultivate an inter-cultural vision in instrumental selections and theoretical formulations, but should primarily demonstrate African creative theories and principles. It is imperative, in contemporary Africa, to expose cultural arts educators, bureaucrats and promoters to the benefits of strategic advancement initiatives taking place in Africa, especially outside conventional institutional complacencies. This is the mission of the Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices of Africa (CIIMDA), which targets the reorientation of education for the present and for posterity towards the advanced philosophy, theory and humanizing objectives of the indigenous musical arts.

# THE WRITTEN CLASSICAL CONCERT GENRE

Performing written classical concert music entails ability to read and interpret a written score. We have designed notation symbols for representing the various tones used in classical African drumming. The symbols are combined with conventional durational symbols for musical rhythm in writing music for the drum and other indigenous ensemble instruments. Solo concert drumming implicates the imperatives of visual theatre and dance in African musical arts conceptualization. Thus the solo concert performer occasionally simulates dance, which is implicated in the idea of African drum music, when producing and interpreting the written body rhythm notes. These are the clap sound, the rattle sound produced when the performer activates the rattle tied to her/his ankle by stamping the feet, the finger-snapping sound, the chest-drumming (body rhythm) sound, and the cupped palm slapping sound that produces a plosive sound ambience different to the sound of a normal clap. The normal notes produced on the drum are combined with these extra sounds to simulate the integrated artistic components of African indigenous musical arts conceptualizations in our design of modern African classical solo drumming.

# Drum notation

The tone symbols we have devised for composing written African single membrane drum music are as follows:

	A deep tone produced at the centre of the drumhead with cupped hands – bounce-off stroke
×	A high tone at the rim of the drumhead with rigid tightly held fingers – bounce off stroke
S	A slap tone at the rim played as a sharp, held stroke
Î	A tone produced on the body of the drum with a ring worn on a finger
>	A clap tone produced by clapping together flat palms
~	Finger snapping with both hands
Γ	A rattle tone produced by activating the rattles tied to the ankles when the feet are stamped
* *	A roll as appropriate: rim or centre of the drum head
ĩ	A chest tone produced by beating the chest with fists
** *	A crushed note
Ĭ,	Reverb on two tones
gliss	A glissando effect produced by playing rapidly repeated strokes while gliding a finger/fingers or the base of the palm up and down over the drumhead

(Vocalized syllables are written in conventional music notation symbols.)



cupped hands for deep tone



playing the deep tone



fingers held together for high tone



playing the high tone



struck wooden shell



struck wooden shell



clap with cupped hands



normal clap



playing the cowbell



slap on drum

# Classical drumming exercises

Technical exercises have been provided on the following pages for familiarization with classical drumming notes as well as the stimulation of improvisatory skill. They also serve as fairly progressive exercises for understanding rhythm and the two primary interfacing metric matrixes in African indigenous music, the common quadruple and the compound quadruple metres. Each exercise unit is blocked with double bar lines. Each unit should be accurately played independently and repeated as many times as necessary. Then the exercises should be played sequentially until it is possible to play them from beginning to end without stopping, repeating each unit before proceeding to the next. Where improvisation, internal variation style, is indicated, the number of variations to be played is unlimited, but at the discretion of the learner. As technical skill improves, the learner should increase speed, noting that consistency of speed is critical. The pulse should be measured with the foot/feet.



playing the shakers

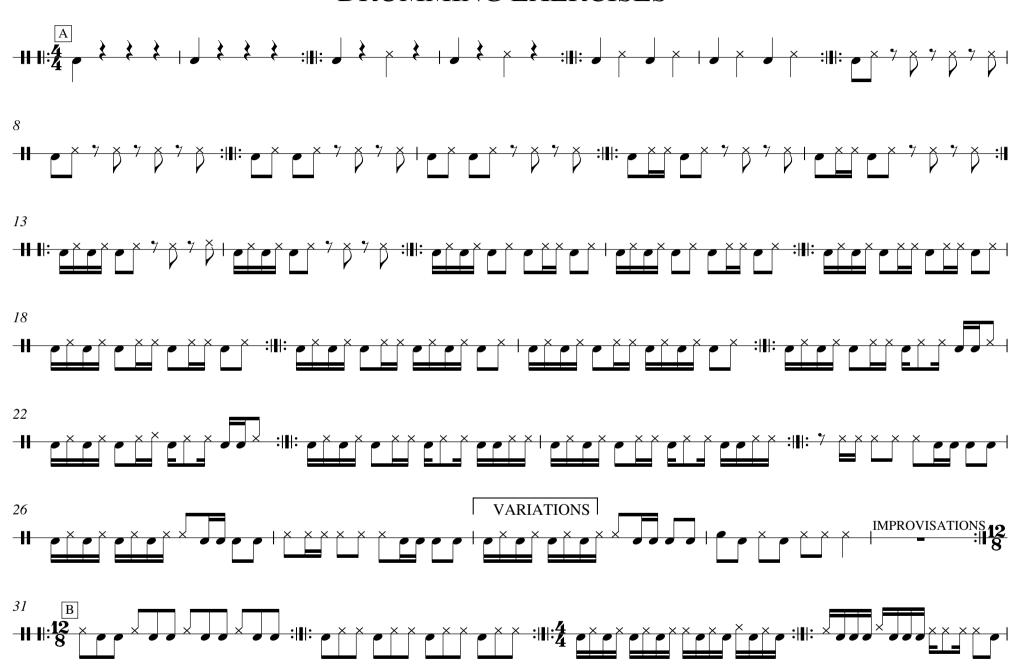


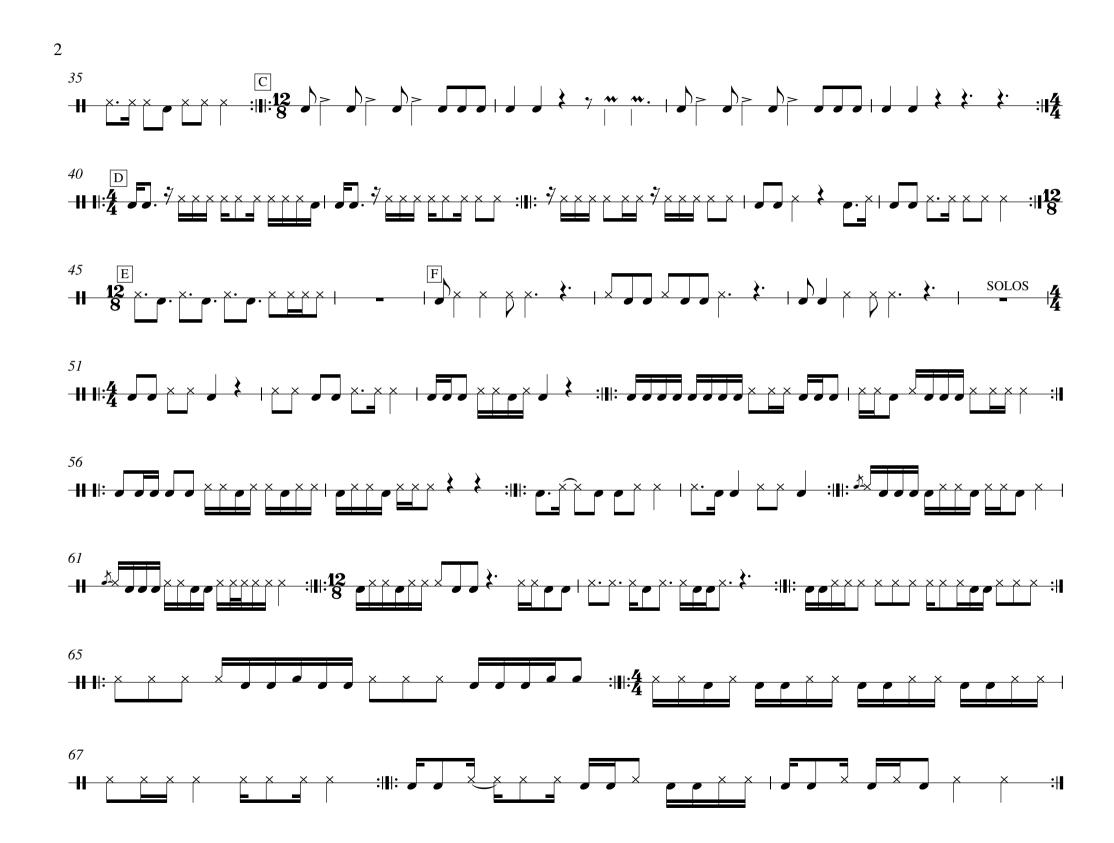
playing the slit drum



snapping of fingers

# **DRUMMING EXERCISES**





# INTERCULTURAL CONCERT ENSEMBLE

## Conceptual background

Musical arts education in indigenous African cultures is rooted in an all-inclusive humanizing philosophy and methodology. The concept of the classroom as a context is a contemporaneous advancement of the African indigenous canons of human-making education. The concept has been applied at two research-oriented learning sites: the Department of Music at the University of Pretoria and the Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices of Africa (CIIMDA) – Education Research & Performance for South African Development Countries (SADC) based in Pretoria, South Africa. The philosophical, theoretical, social, psychological, health, human making and spiritualizing conceptualizations of the indigenous musical arts knowledge system in Africa are explained through practical procedures.

The first-year African music class of predominantly non-black students is transformed into a performance and discussion class of African drum ensemble music. The students are first introduced to the indigenous rationalizations and conformations of group music intentions and creativity through oral performance activities. Following this, the class rehearses and performs a concert based on written intercultural composition that incorporates the compositional theory and performance dynamics that mark the indigenous African musical arts system. The instruments that feature in the compositions are determined by the willingness of students from a particular class to play their European classical instruments of specialization or competence. In their second year, the students are required to independently organize themselves into small performance teams of five to seven. Each team has to create, rehearse and present a concert item employing intercultural instrumentation and the principles of the African drum music ensemble composed and rehearsed by them as a group. The practical creativity aspect of the course is complemented with conventional classroom lectures on indigenous and contemporary African music.

CIIMDA as an educational intervention aims to establish the indigenous musical arts knowledge system as the foundation of musical arts education in contemporary classrooms at all levels of education. The programme that is offered is designed to remedy the exogenous mentality that has instituted European classical music philosophy, theory and practice as the core knowledge resource in the curricular rationalization and content of musical arts education in contemporary Africa, from kindergarten to college and university levels. The mission of the CIIMDA education project is to reorient music teachers/educators from the SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries who have scant or mere virtual epistemological knowledge - intellectual and practical - of indigenous African musical arts formulations. Practical activities form the basis for inculcating the philosophy, theory and humanizing conceptualizations that should constitute school musical arts education curricular and practice in Africa with literary imperatives. The programme requires teachers to give a public concert of original musical arts productions that they have independently created and rehearsed in small teams during the initial two weeks course. Team members are expected to contribute variously to the creative practical learning experience as composers, choreographers, instrumentalists, dancers, and/or singers. After the course, participants are expected to form cells or join the existing network of the Musical Arts Education Action Team (MAT) cells in their respective countries. The teachers are further expected to apply the research as well as practice-based orientation to musical arts education in classroom musical arts learning sites. They are also mandated to set up performing groups modelled on the musical arts styles and types available in the immediate environment of the schools or colleges of their various locations.

The open-ended single membrane drum is central to our theoretical, philosophical and practical courses. The drum establishes confidence as a learner-friendly instrument. A normal person could learn the basic performance techniques and principles and play danceable music within fifteen minutes of their first ensemble experience. The advantages of using the psychology of interactivity as the strategy for philosophical and theoretical experiencing of knowledge that combines oral and literacy grounding have already been identified as including:

- Gaining the psychical-physical wellness which raw, cluster harmonics of indigenous African musical instruments combined with special sonic conformations imbue.
- Dancing that engineers benign spiritual disposition when an individual's creative body is interactively structured into the somatic group pulse and team spirit of live music.
- Performing according to the humanizing principles of African compositional structures that compel creative-spiritual bonding when musical-psychical spaces are shared, emotions interacted performatively, inter-stimulating sonic dialogues exchanged, and bothersome personality dispositions exorcised through structured communion with collaborating others, as well as engaging in spontaneous, self-actualizing creativity in the security of the communal music pulse that helps to remedy personality problems such as inhibited or extroverted dispositions.
- Generating psycho-active energy through recomposing the inside of a significant theme and texture (recreating mental state) without compromising the significant sound (immediate consciousness).
- Appreciating the essentiality of accommodating all magnitudes and qualities of human/musical attributes needed to accomplish a group objective or an enterprise, and compels performing the Ego in the midst of other-consciousness and group solidarity.

The first-year music students give a public concert on the basis of the written intercultural ensemble piece rehearsed by them as a class learning activity. The group score awarded for the performance forms the major individual score at the end of the course evaluation of the students, but a person loses marks for missing class rehearsal experiences without acceptable excuses. A minor individual score is received for a short essay in narrative style which is intended to elicit each student's analytical reflections on the ensemble performance experience in terms of personal perceptions, the philosophical-theoretical features of the piece, and individual experience of the class discussions and performance activities that transpired during the course.

The teachers/educators who receive training during CIIMDA courses are evaluated on the basis of a prepared lecture on knowledge gained during the course, and delivered to simulated learners (fellow participants in the course), as well as the contribution made to the team creations performed in public. Each participant is further expected to establish a standing performing group with learners in her/his school, which is monitored by CIIMDA consultants during follow-up, outreach courses in the participating countries.

The learning methods and objectives outlined above advance the philosophical, theoretical and methodological imperatives that underscore the indigenous African knowledge system in the musical arts into contemporary classroom education. The CIIMDA curriculum and methodology thus train African musical arts educators to discern and apply the multi-faceted objectives of the musical arts as life, psychical wellness, humanly connected communion and development of creative intellect in classroom sites.

Our methodological approach to contemporary education in the musical arts at both the University and at CIIMDA regards the classroom as a research site. The pieces in this ensemble series are derived from research into the creative philosophy, compositional grammar and idioms of the indigenous musical arts. A number of the pieces were originally written as class projects for performance by the first-year classes at the University of Pretoria. The appendix provides a sampling of the testimonies of the students who experienced the first-year classroom activities that introduced them to the theory and practice of African musical arts.

## Performance guidelines

The pieces are written for various combinations of African and European classical instruments. The African instruments include:

- The open-ended single membrane drum, preferably the djembe, in two layers.
- A bass-toned single membrane drum playing the pulse role. A padded stick produces the deep tone on the drumhead, and a drumstick plays the drum shell notes.
- A medium-sized slit drum played with two padded drumsticks.
- A twin metal bell with clear low and high tones.
- A shaker or rattle.

In the scores the pulse role is played on the bass drum. The slit drum sometimes conducts the ensemble sonically by bringing in the other ensemble voices. Otherwise it joins the *djembe* 1 &t 2 (or other available drums) in playing the melorhythmic voices. The bell plays the phrasing referent ensemble role, while the shaker plays a percussive, action-motivation role or may be assigned a phrasing referent role in places. As many *djembe* or alternative skin drums as are available could be used in performing the pieces. They should be divided into two groups (Skin Drums 1 &t 2) for playing the matching or inter-structured drum layers. The drums must be played at a dynamic level that balances with the other instruments in the ensemble. One each of the bass drum, the slit drum and the bell would be adequate for any size of ensemble. More than one shaker/rattle could be used.

The European classical instruments that are featured include the saxophone, trumpet and flute. Available student performers in any given class who were willing to play compositions for their instruments that have not necessarily adhered to European classical performance principles guided the choice of instruments for a piece. Any group that wishes to perform the pieces could substitute as many other classical horn or woodwind instruments as are preferred. The melody instrument parts can be transposed to the appropriate key/s of the instrument/s, or rearranged for any available combination of European classical instruments. Where a piece is written for flutes, for instance, and there are no flute players, any available woodwind instrument or horn could be substituted as long as it is possible to play the flute range in the score. The instrument could be played in the written key because the melorhythmic instruments harmonize with the European classical instruments in any key. There will only be a normal need for a combination of melody instruments to sound in the same key. Any number of melody instruments that are available could be assigned to any melody instrument layer. It may become possible to transpose a melody instrument part in the scores to suit the range of a preferred or available instrument. Attention must be given to the balance and blend of all

the instruments preferred for the ensembles. Any number of performers can take part, as long as there are performers for all the instruments and substitute instruments.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the compositions involve the indigenous African performance composition procedure. As such, sections of a score may provide for improvisation (free duration) on stipulated or preferred instruments over a supporting, repeated ensemble framework. Soloists are challenged to develop improvisational skill in such sections of a piece. Dance could be added at appropriate sections of any of the compositions, and should also be improvised by willing participants who could be playing any of the group instruments.

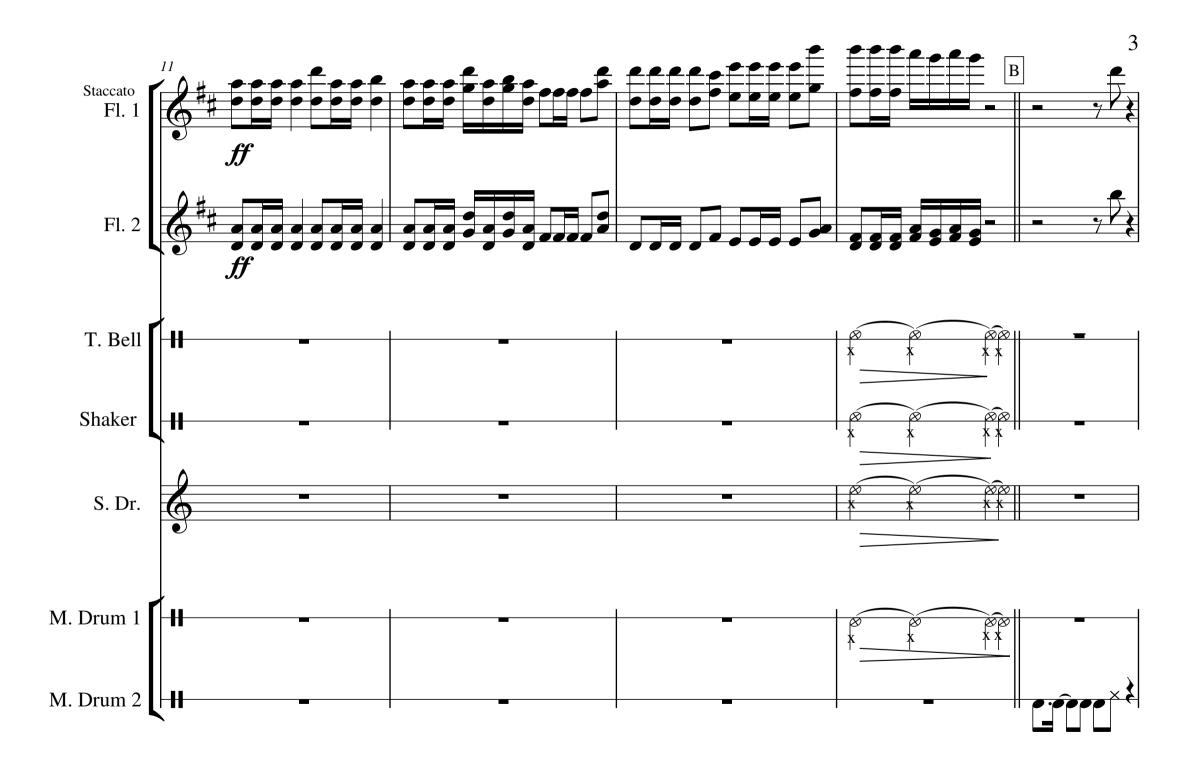
"Gloria" is a choral theatre ideal for young voices, and should be performed with controlled dramatic movements and a changing floor plan, at the discretion of the Choral Director. No conductor as such is needed once the performers have learnt their lines and structural relationships. The instruments are part of the dramatic vision and could be located at the centre, sometimes encircled by the singers as the preferred stage blocking and movement of the singers recommend.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The indigenous African compositional theory and the intercultural principles applied in the compositions in this collection have also been used for two symphonic works by Meki Nzewi– *Death and the dance of the spirits* and *Menu of poetic dances*.

# Dancing drums & lilting flutes

Meki Nzewi













A CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF THE MUSICAL ARTS - VOLUME 5 BOOK 3







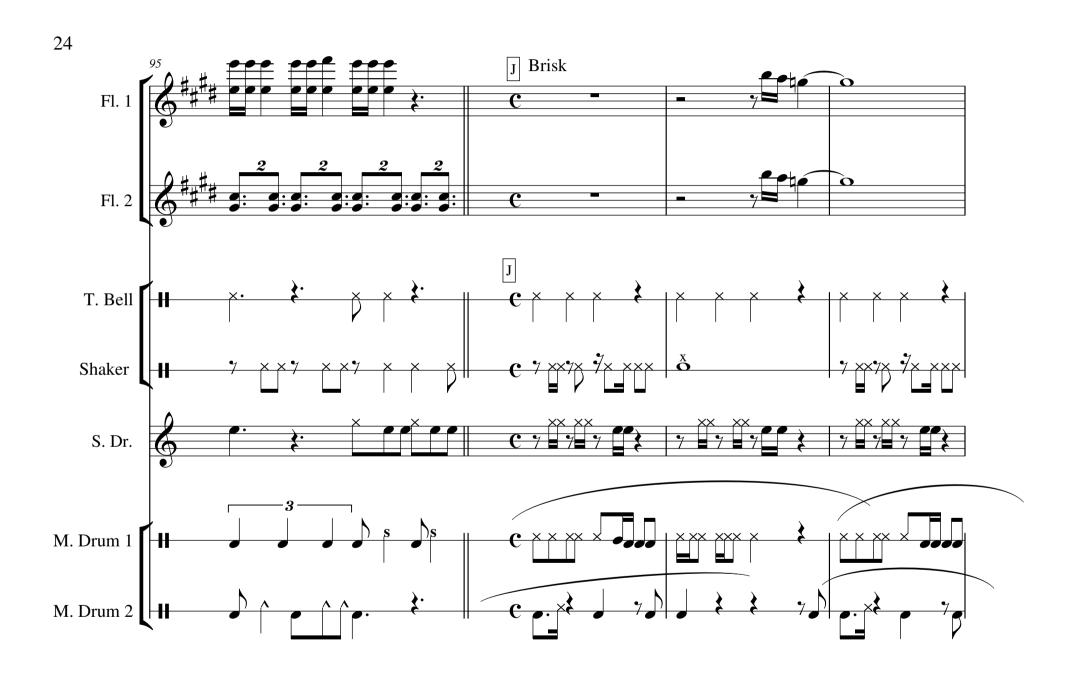


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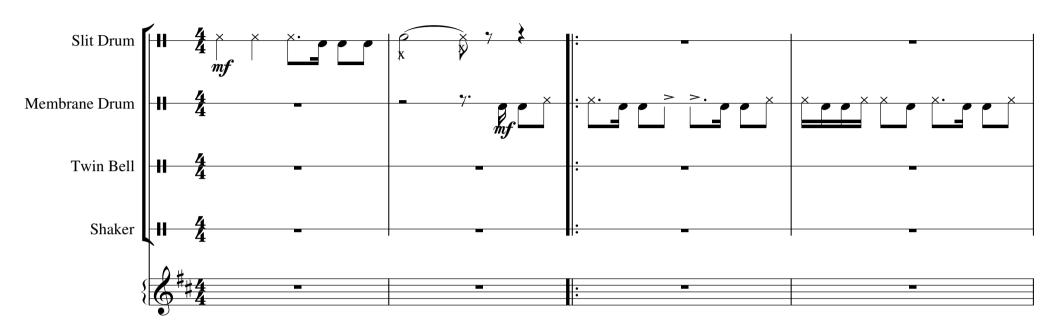


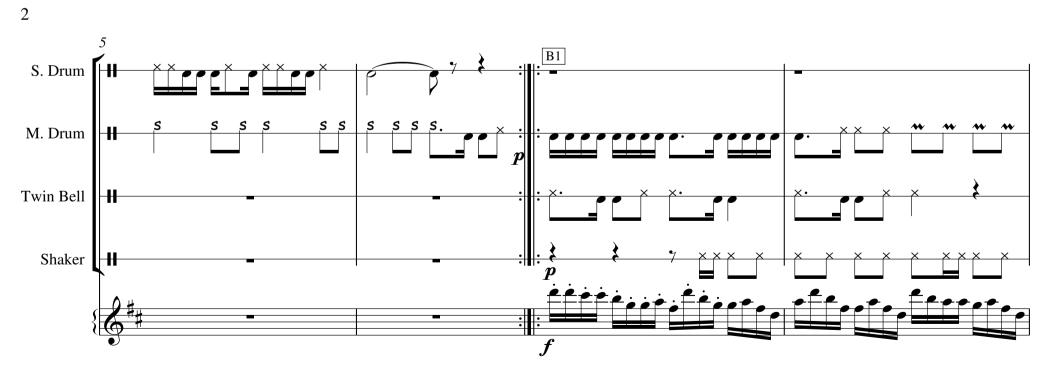




## Keep you hopping 1

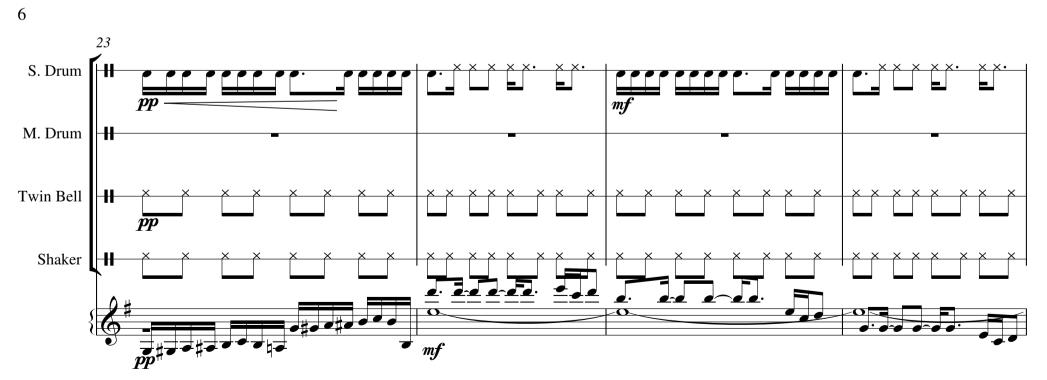
Meki Nzewi

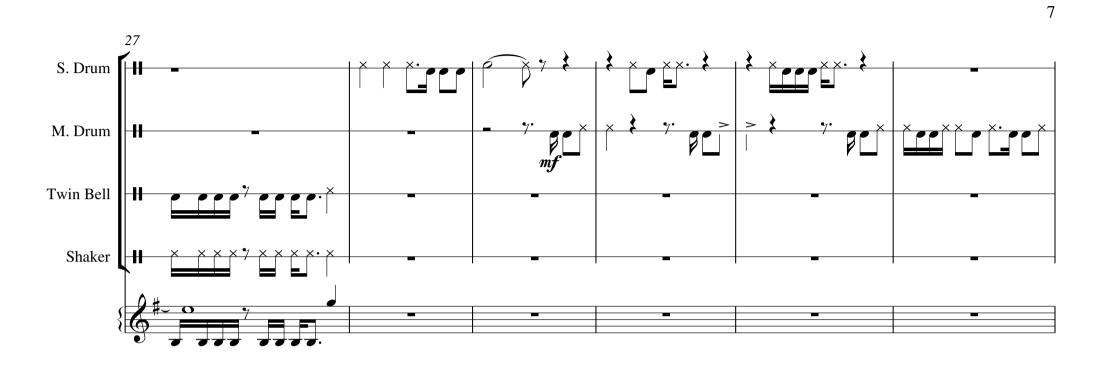


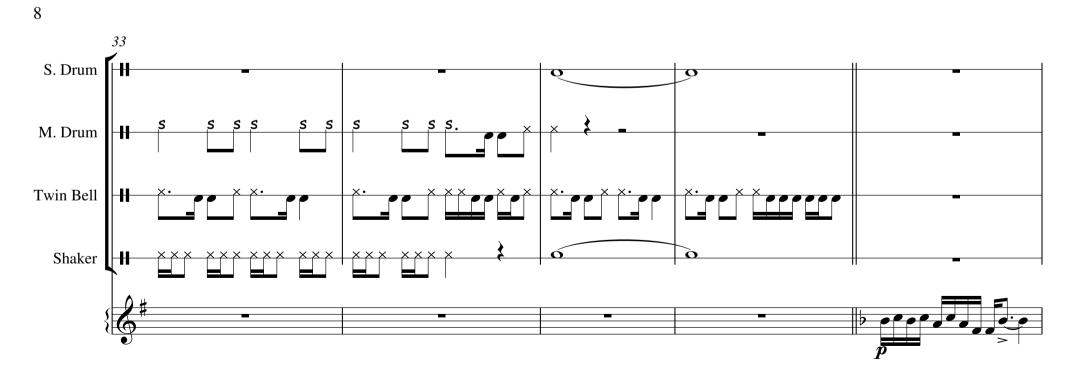


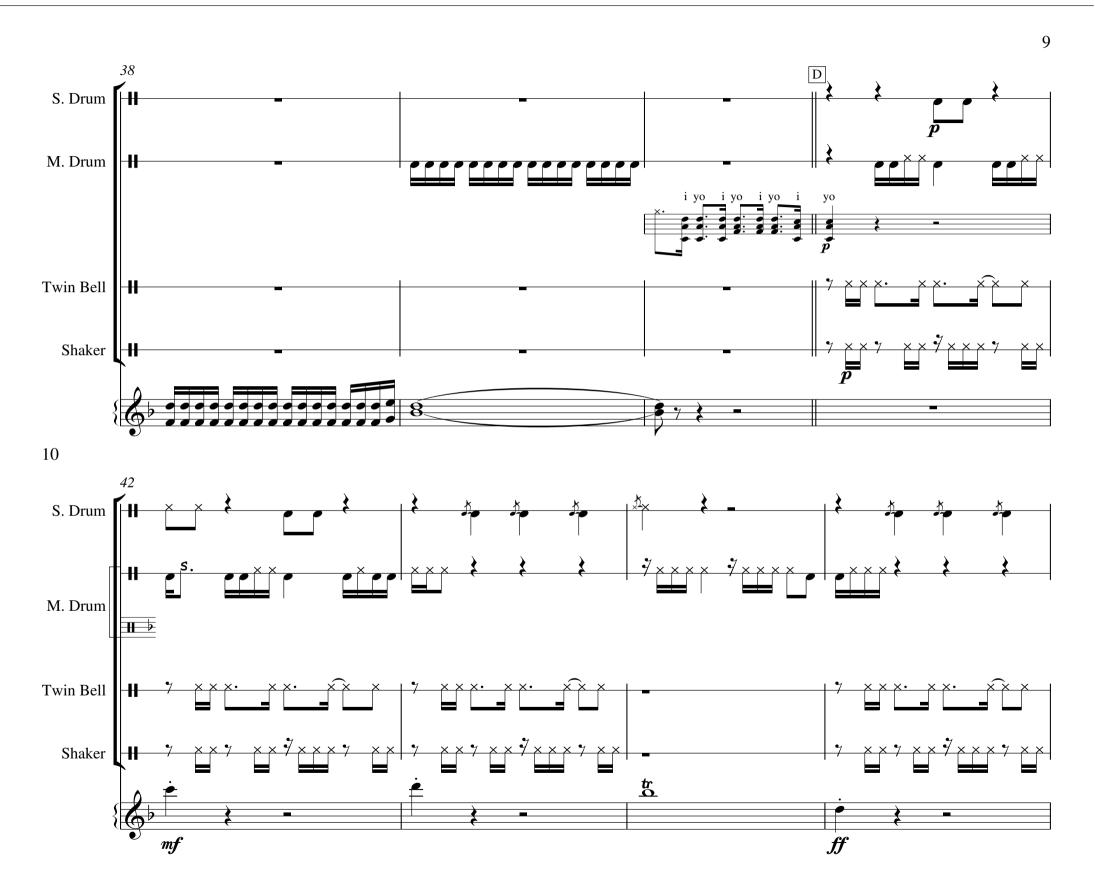


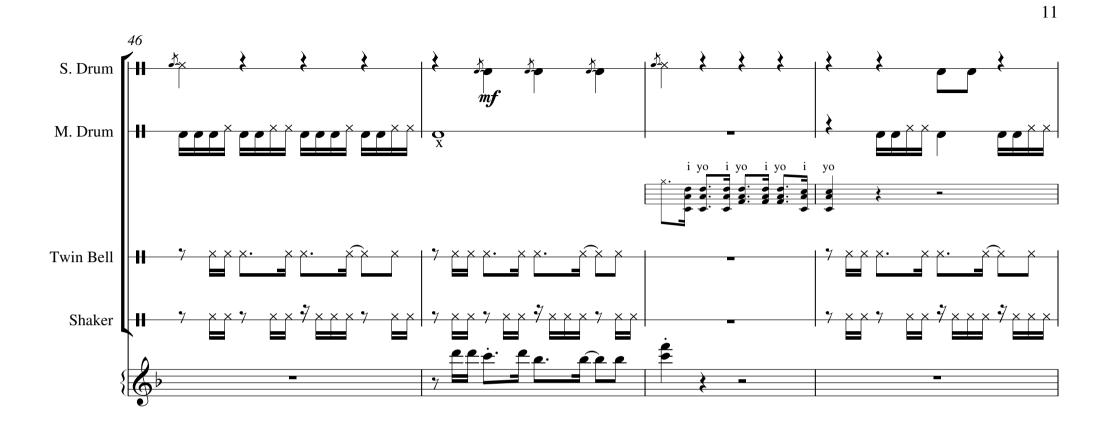


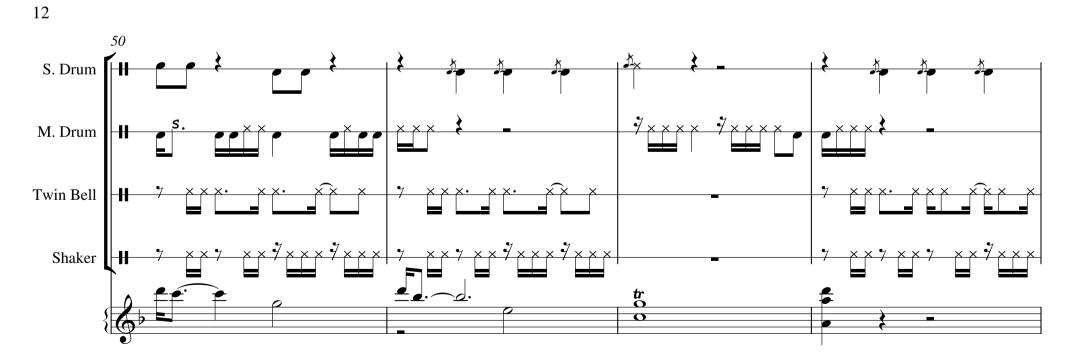


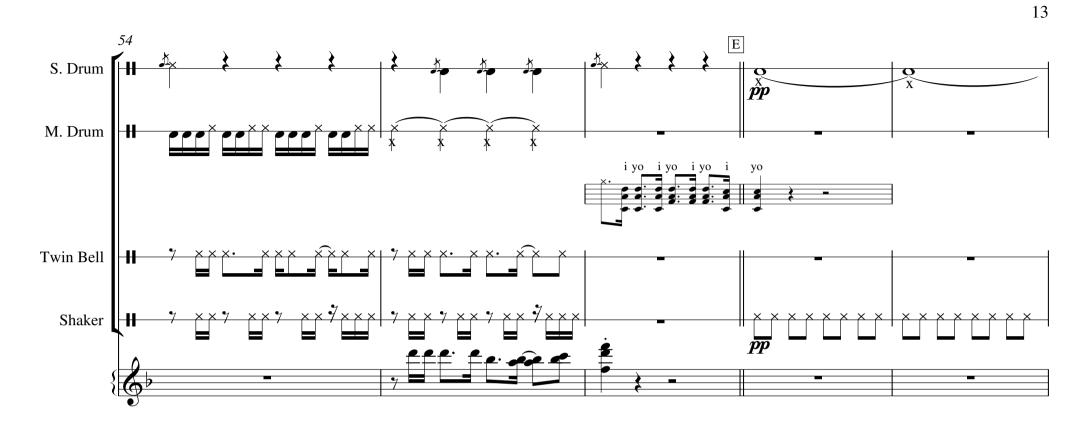


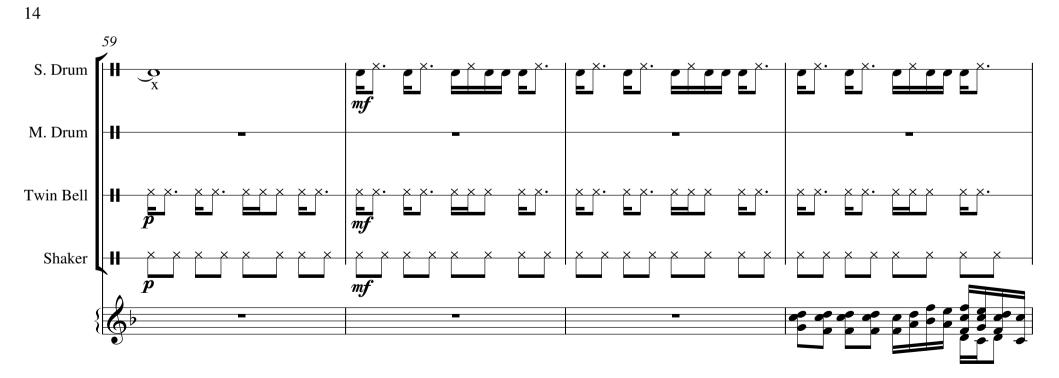




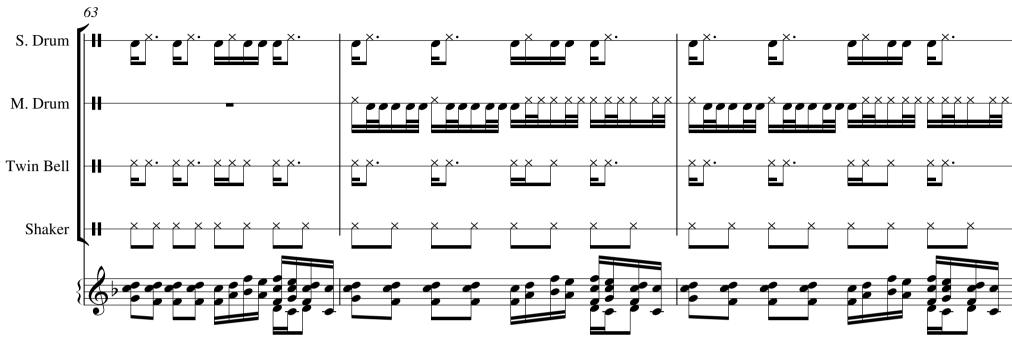


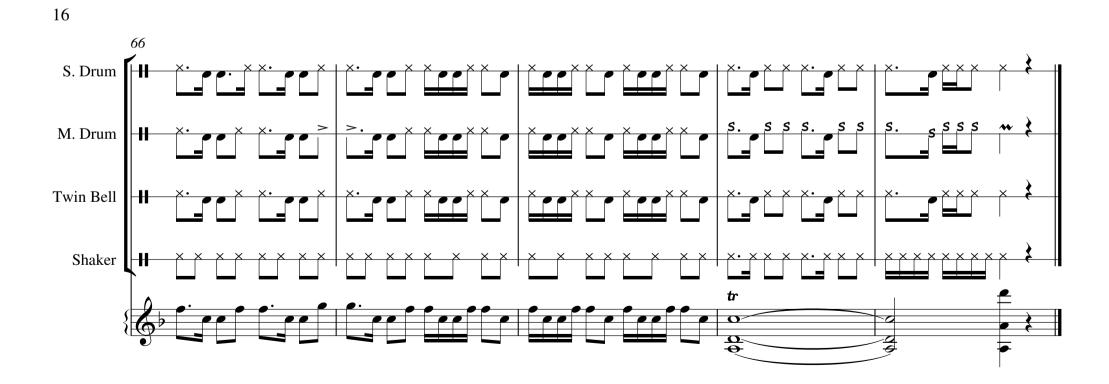


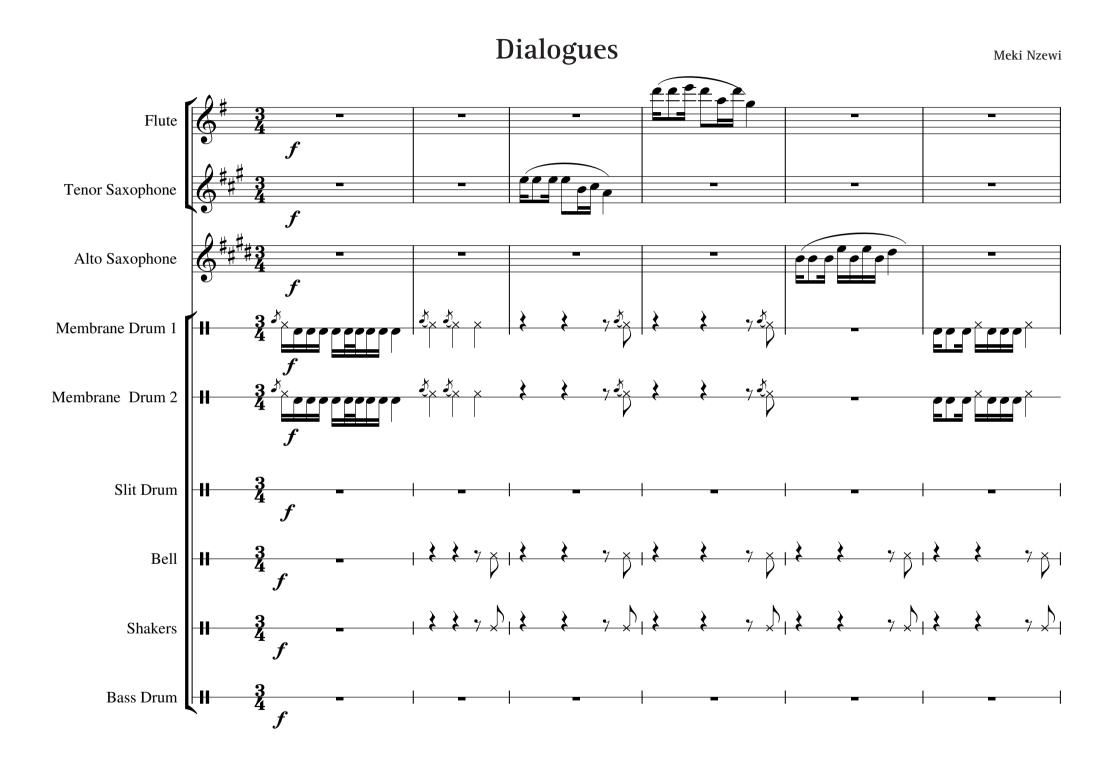


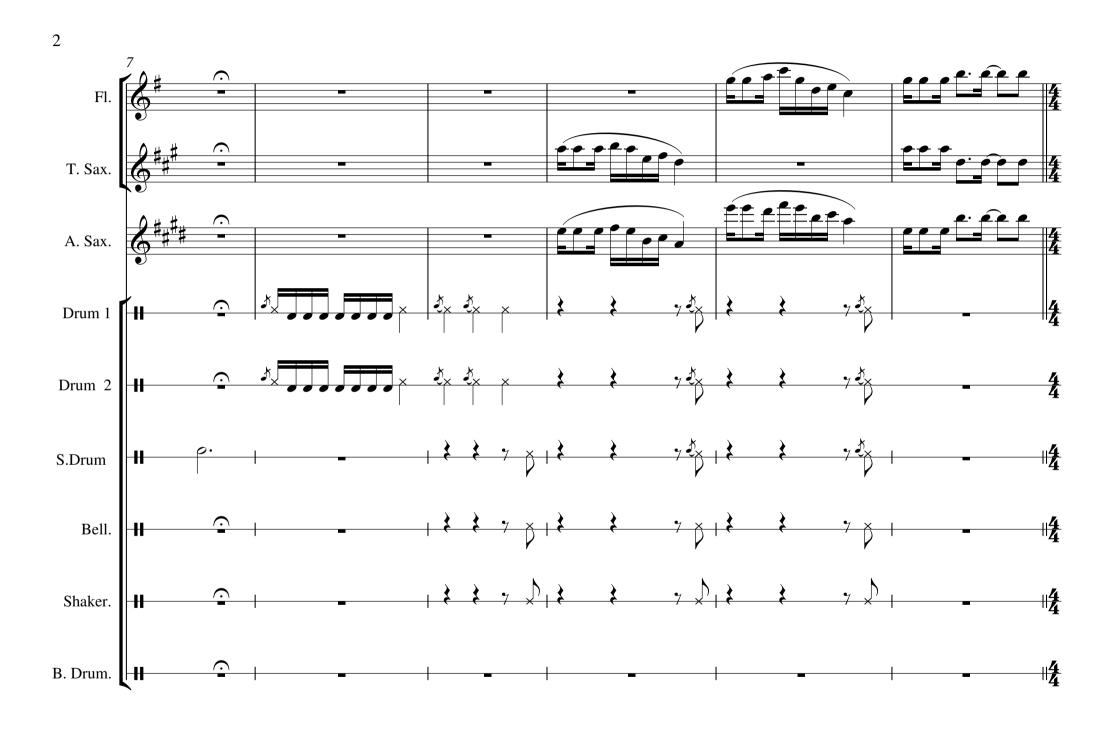


























































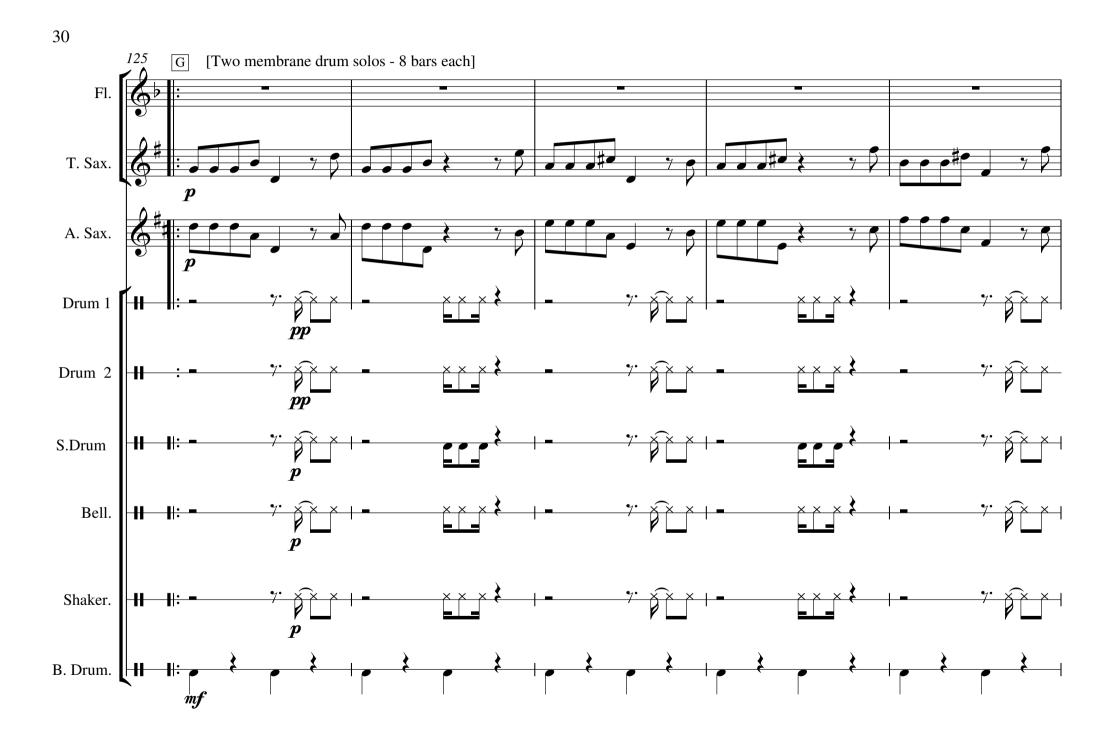


A contemporary study of the musical arts – Volume 5 Book 3







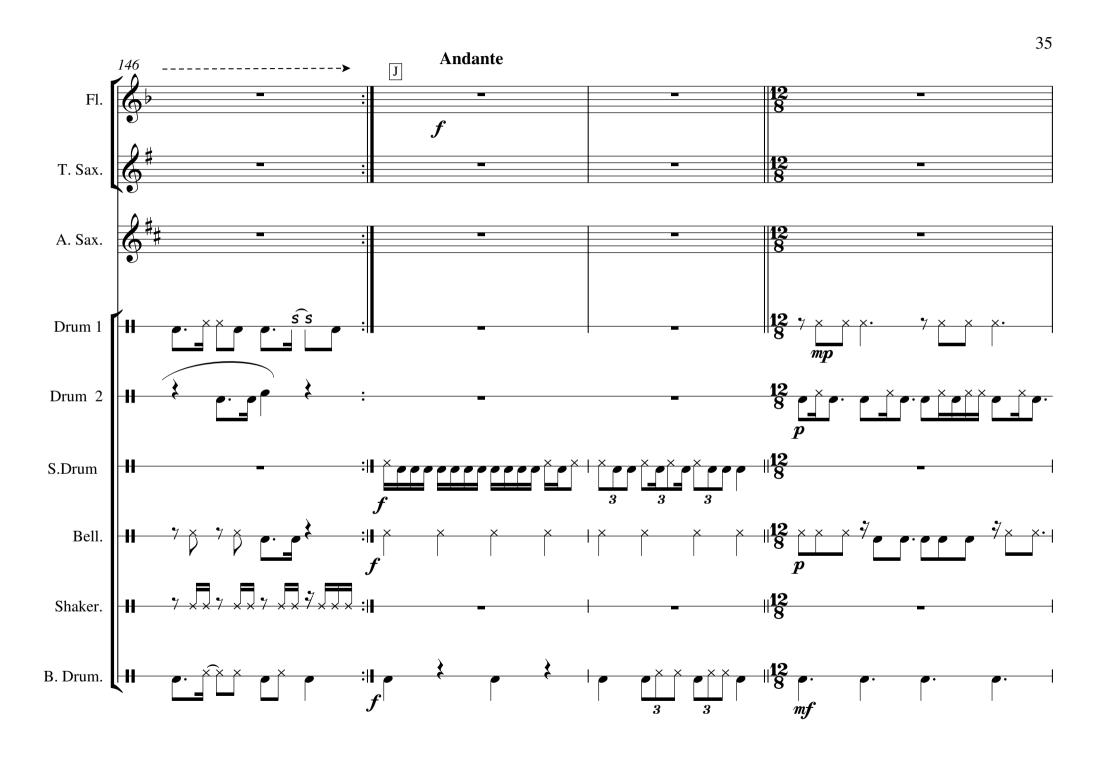




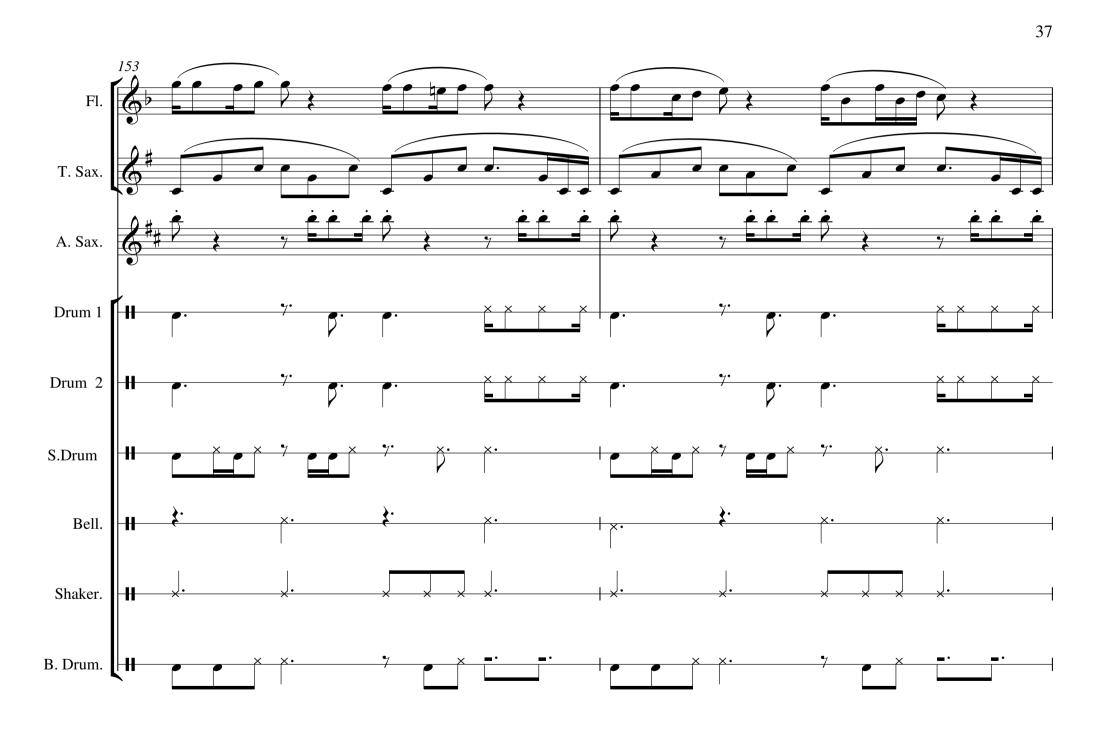








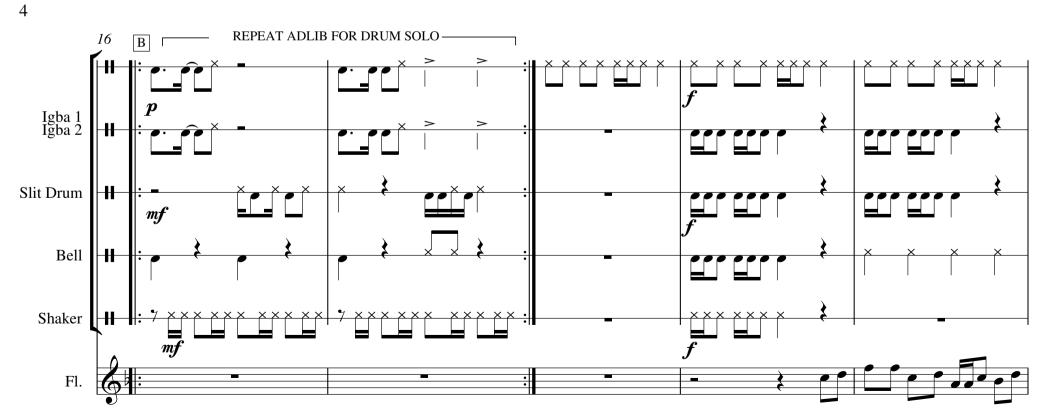






## ENSEMBLE DISCOURSE mekinzewi Spirited A Igba 1 Igba 2 Slit Drum Bell Shaker 2 Igba 1 Igba 2 Slit Drum Bell Shaker



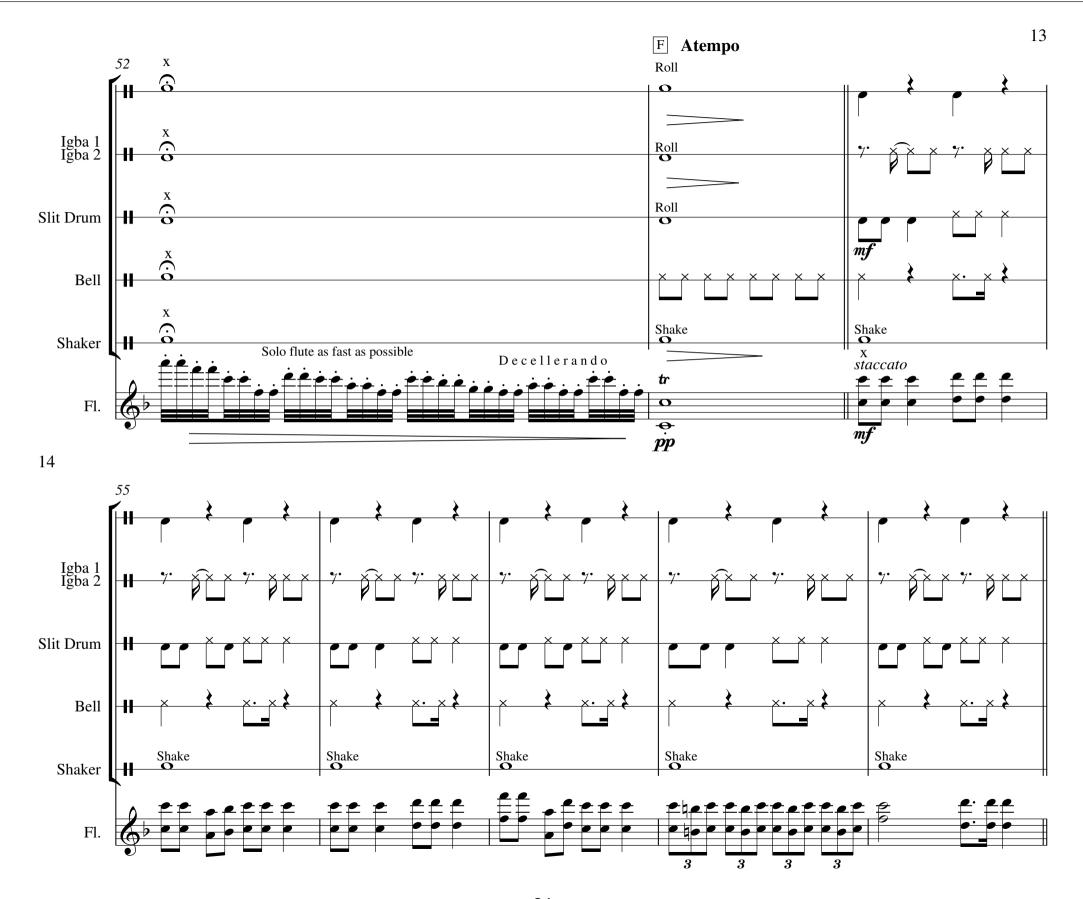




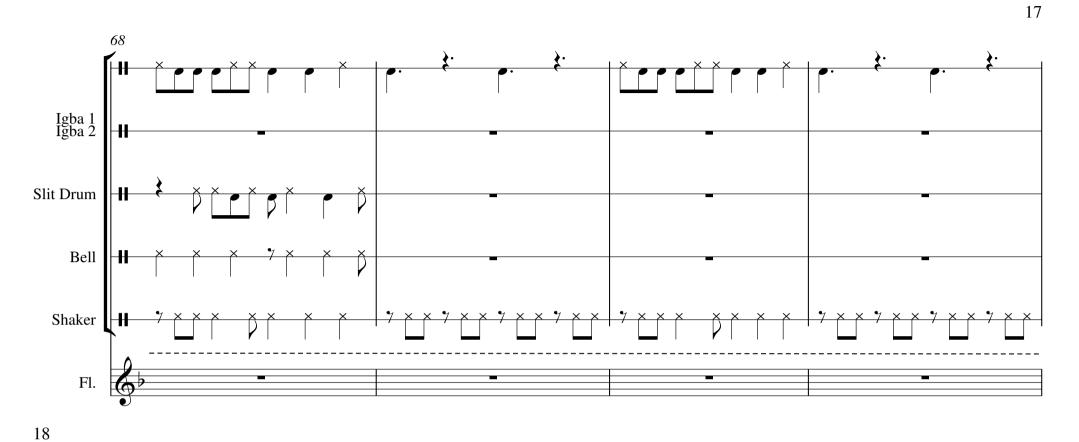


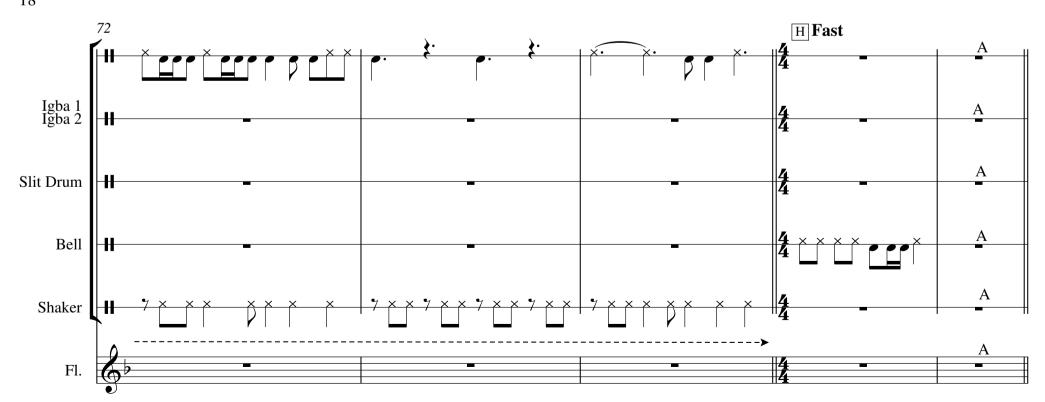






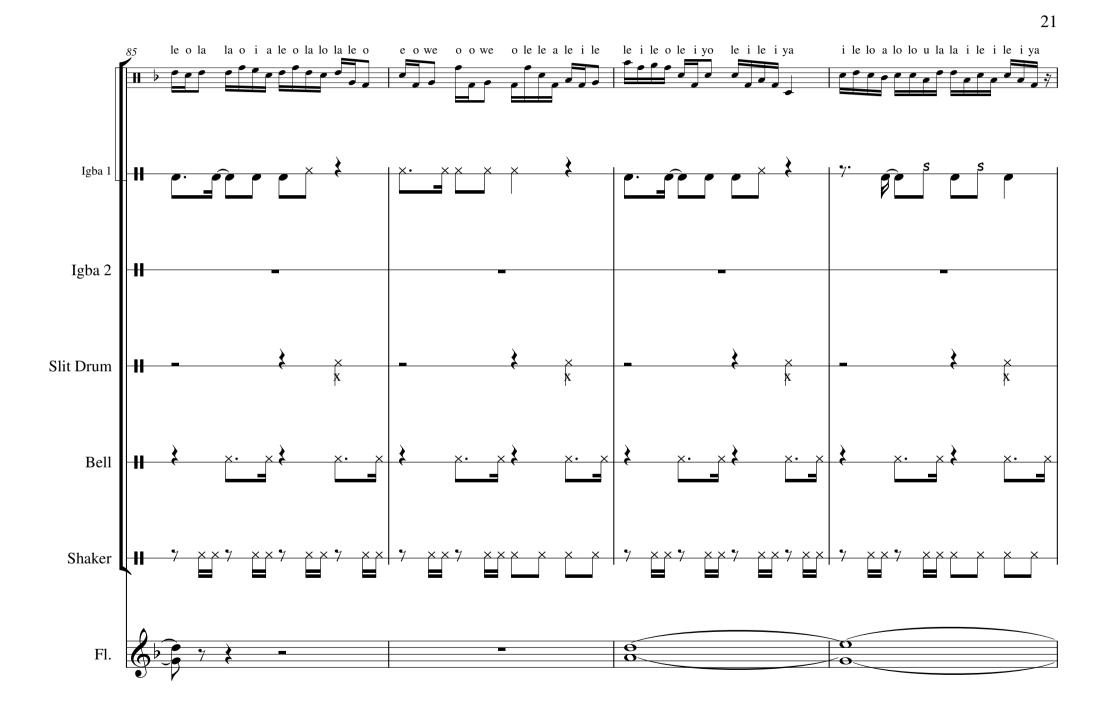


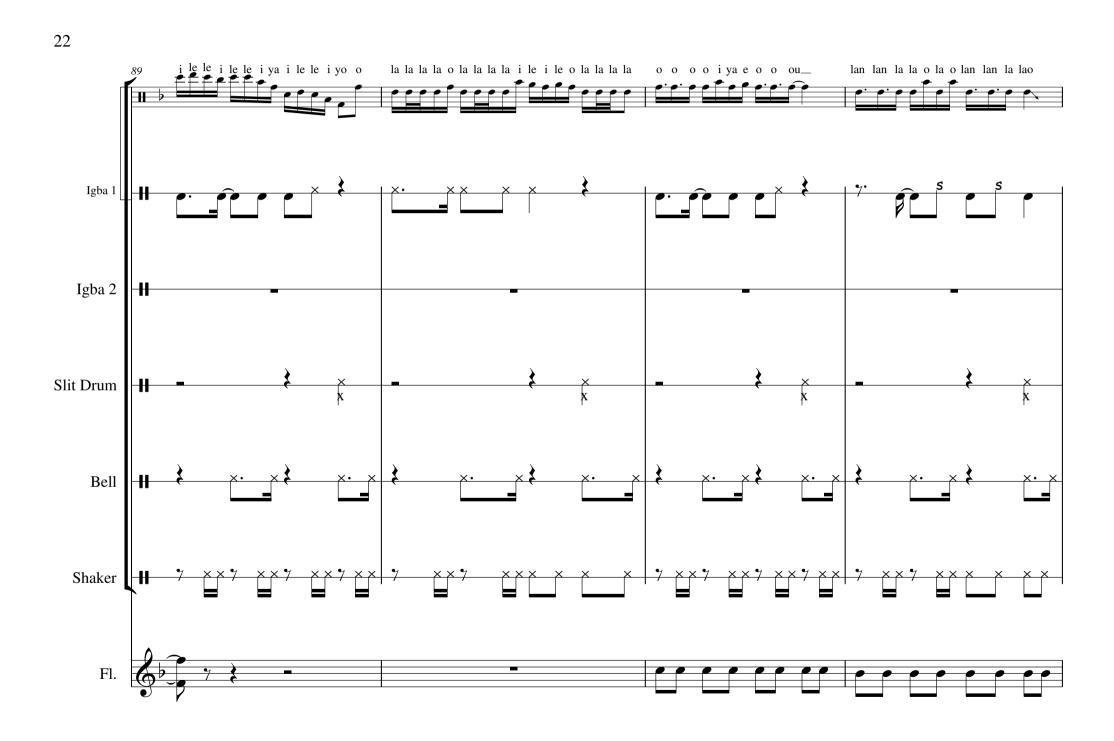


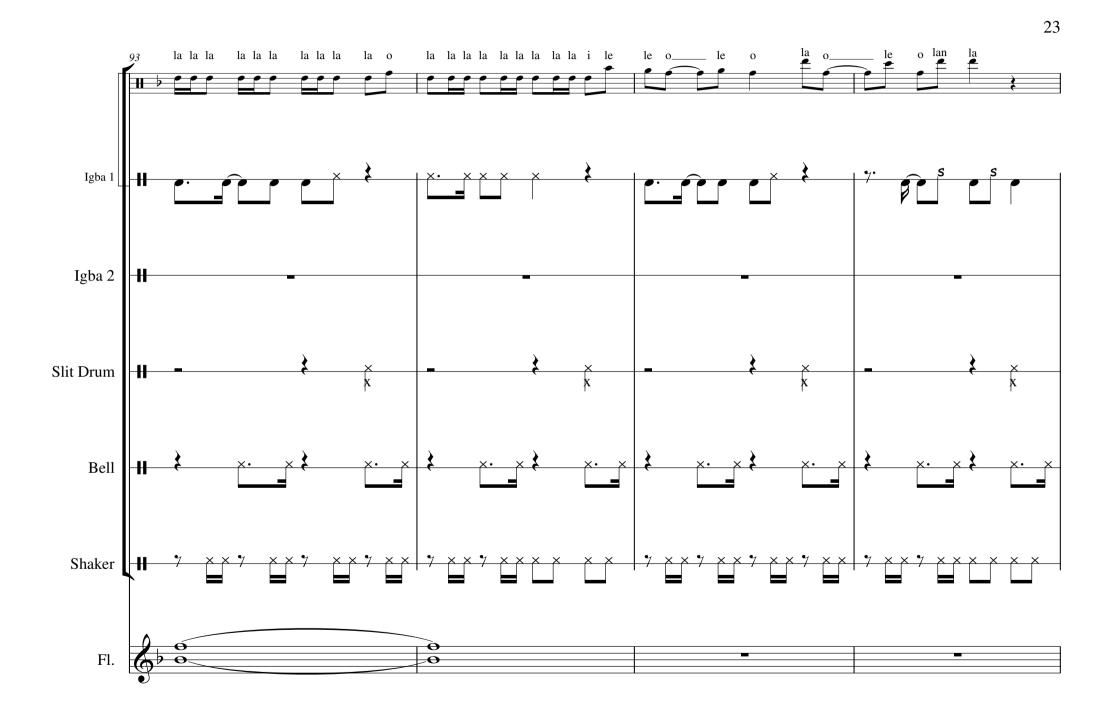


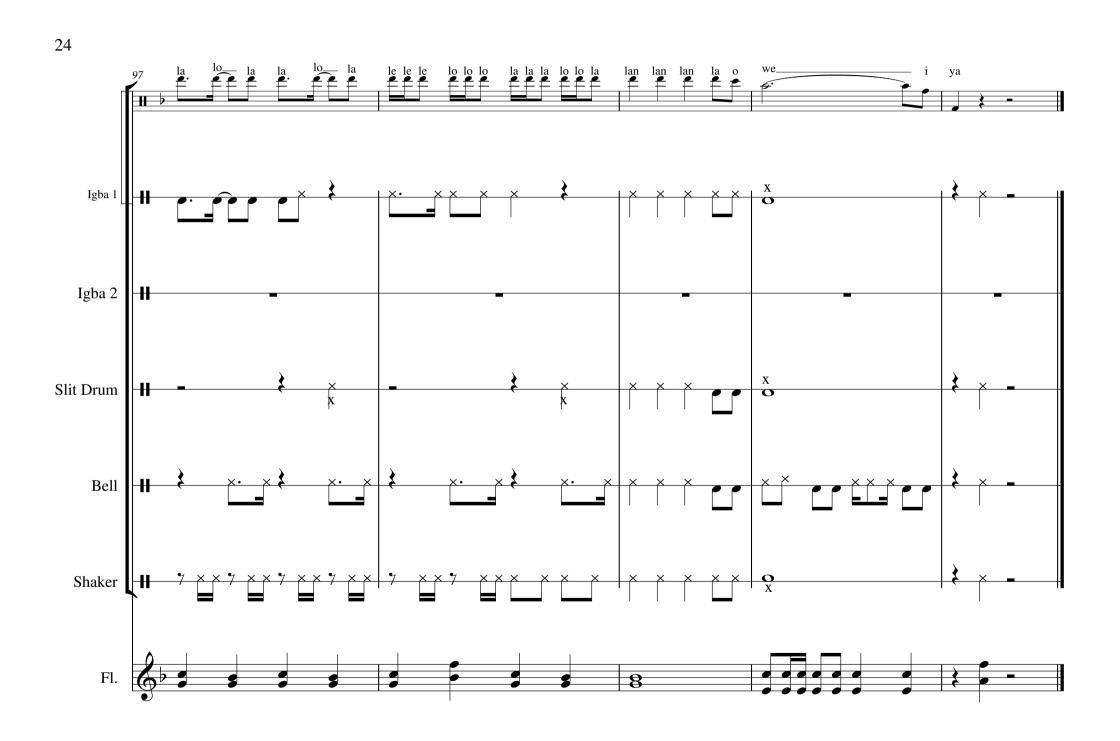












## Mesobeni

Meki Nzewi













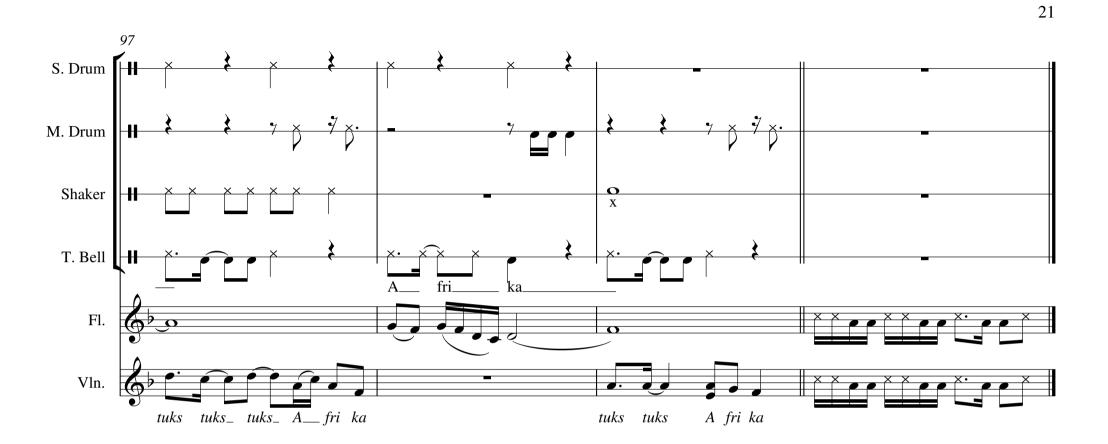






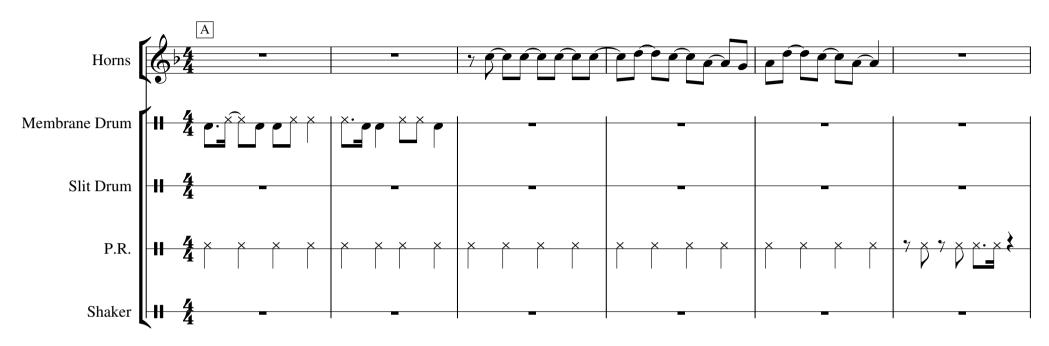


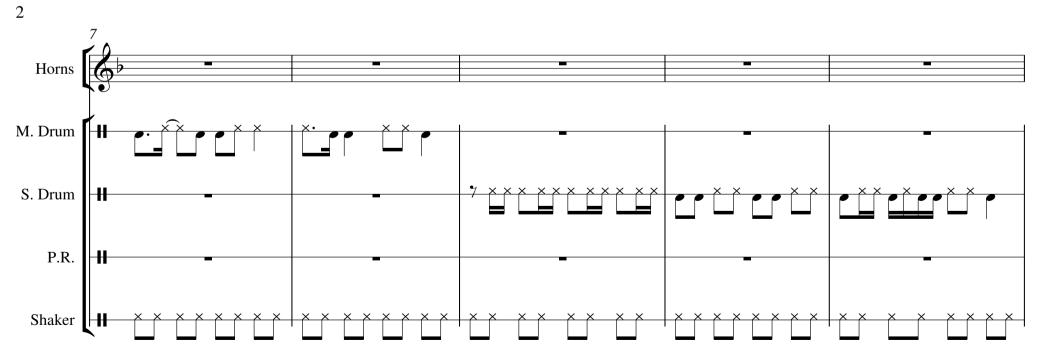


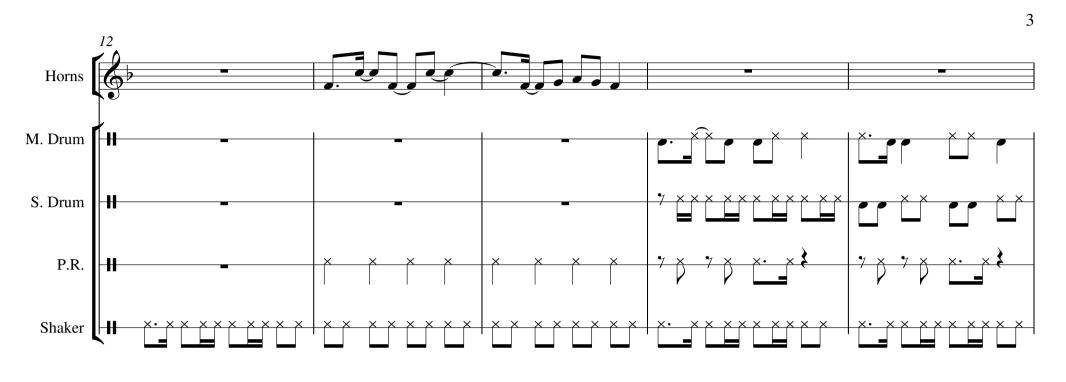


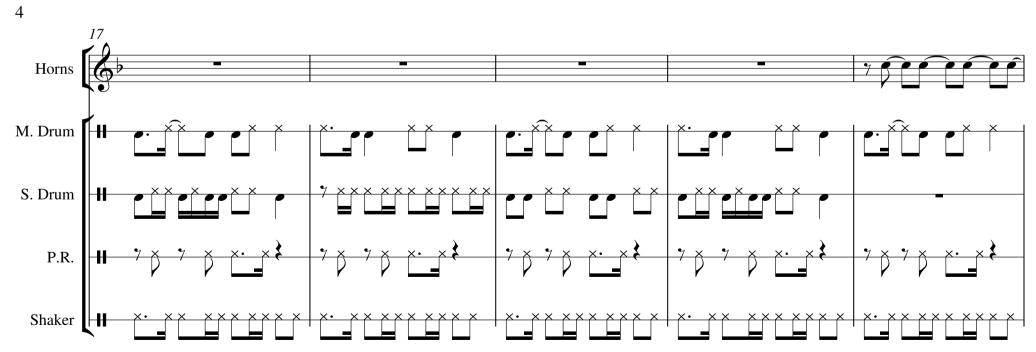
## Ola for Mannheim

Meki Nzewi

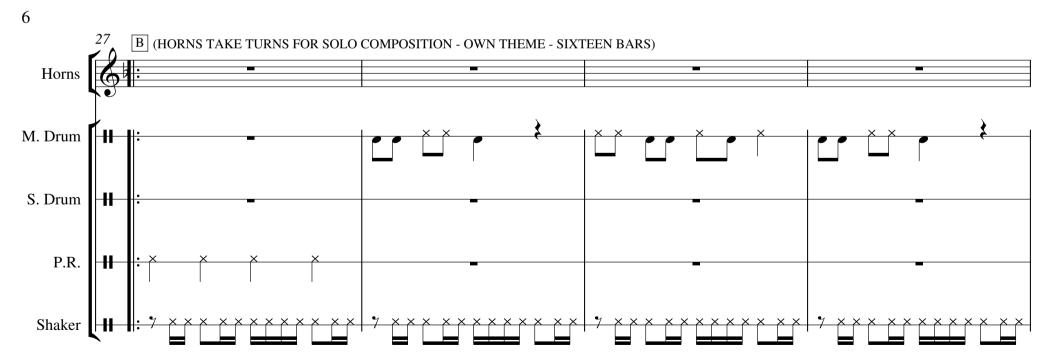


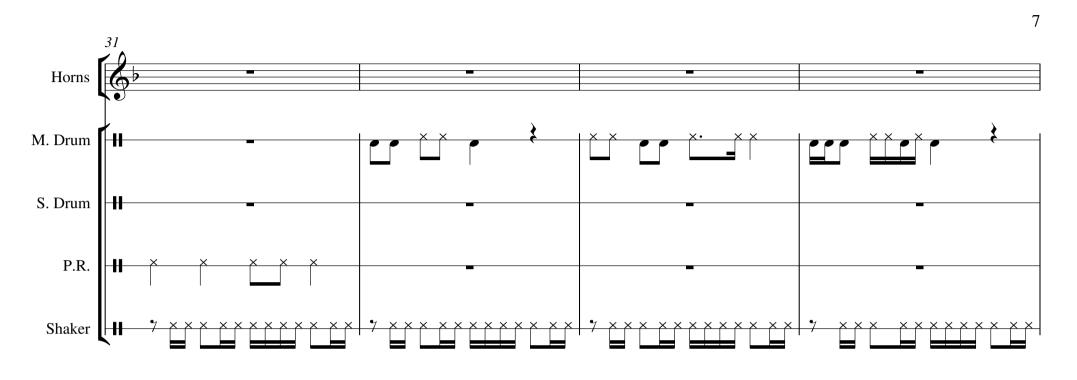






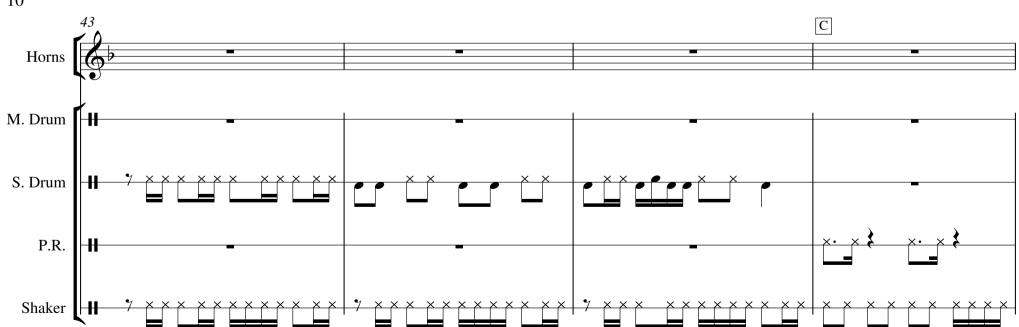


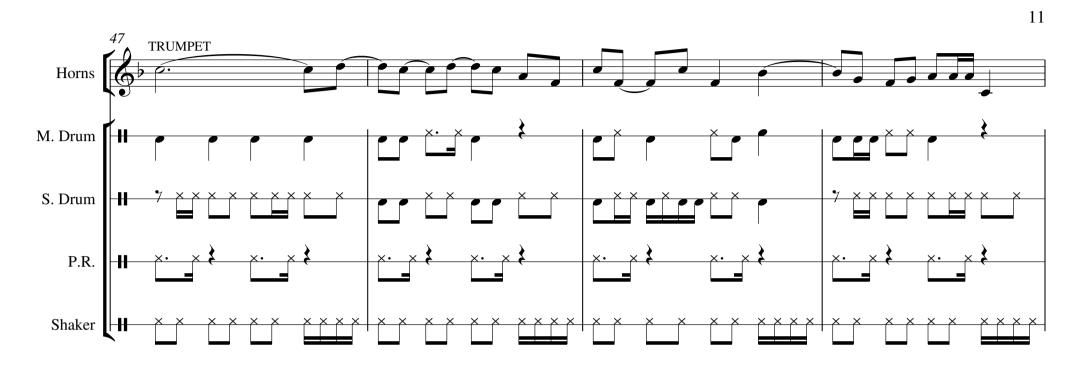


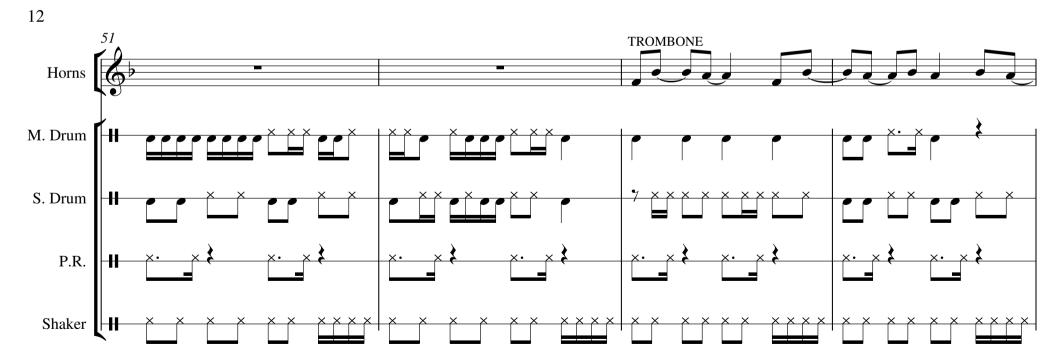


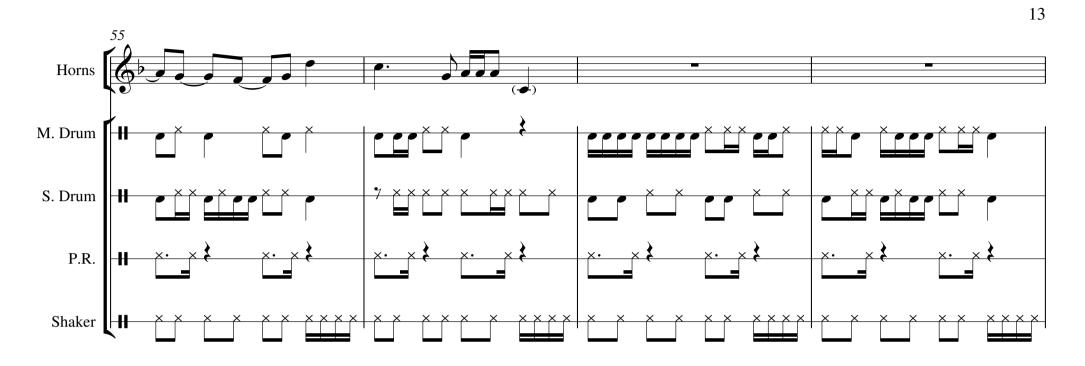


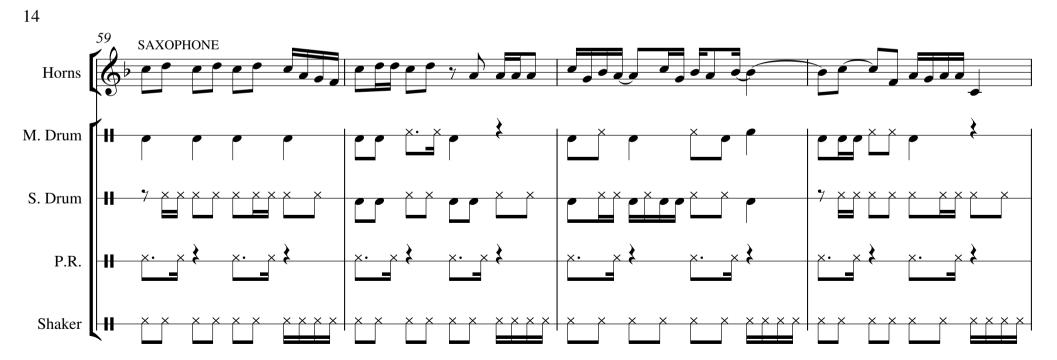






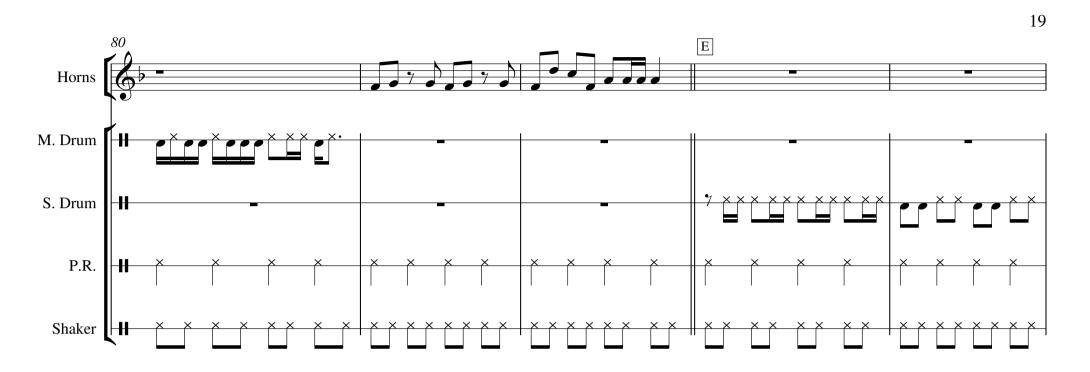


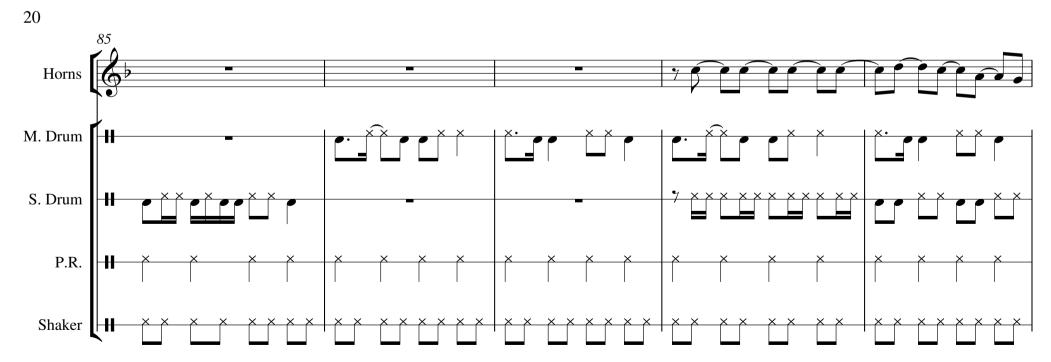


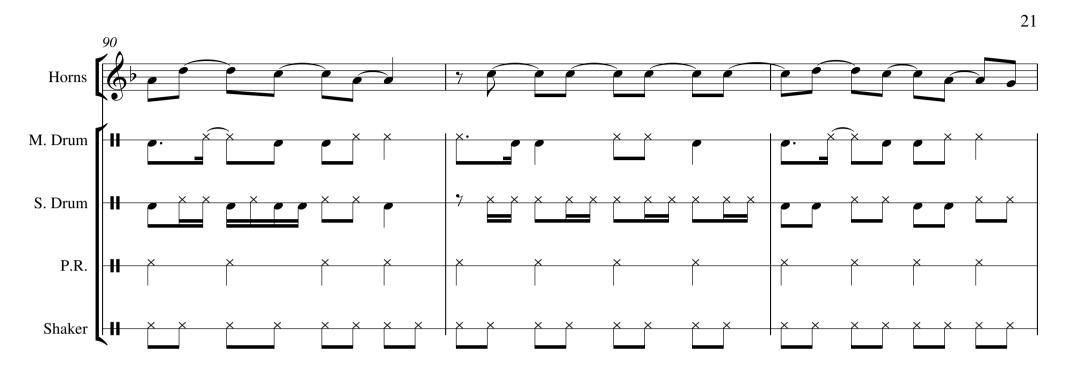


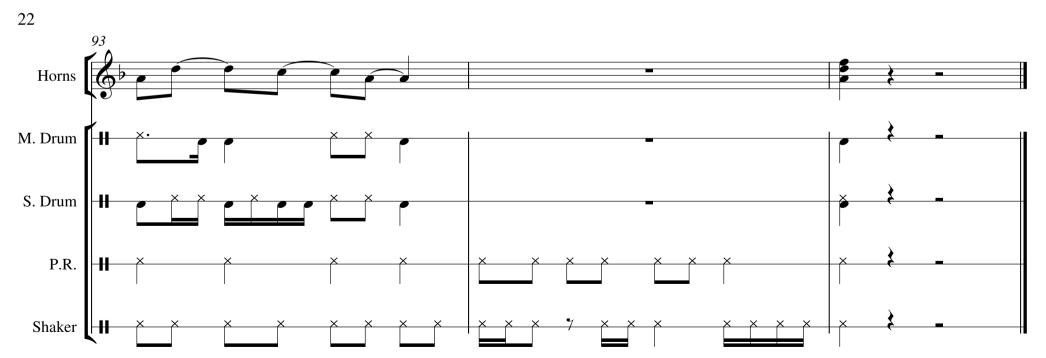


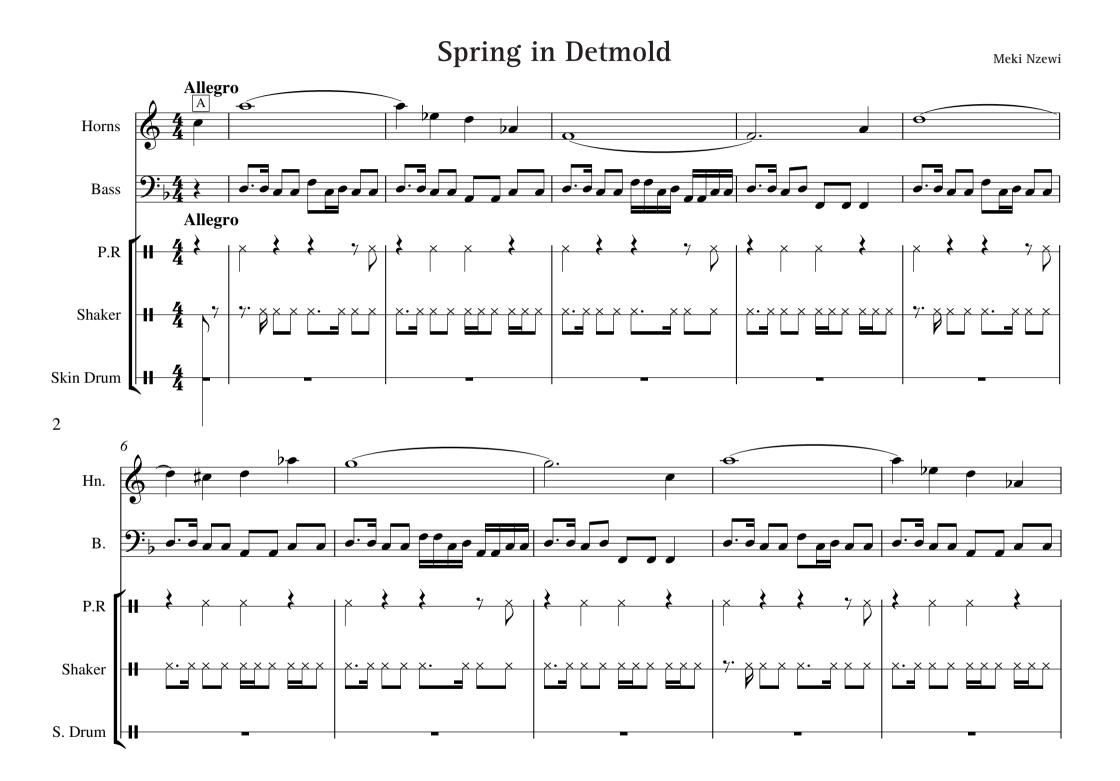




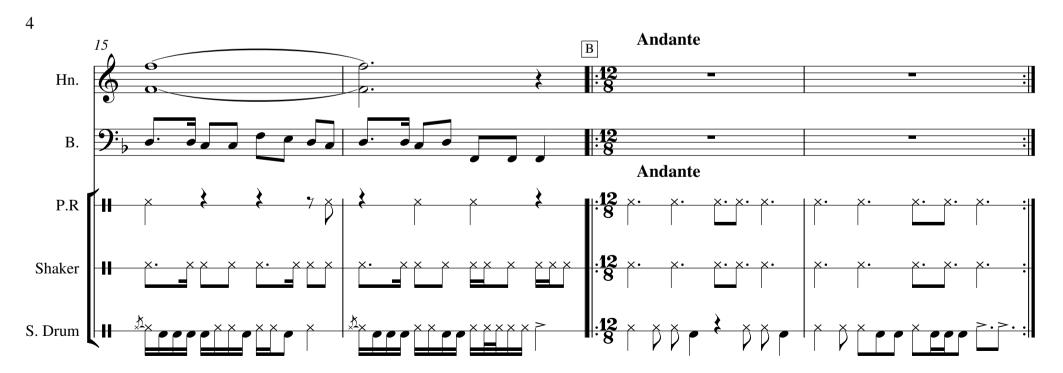








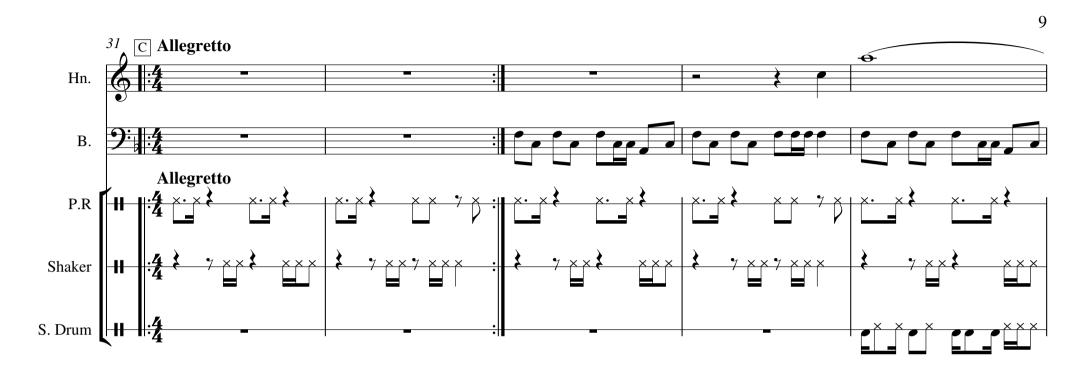


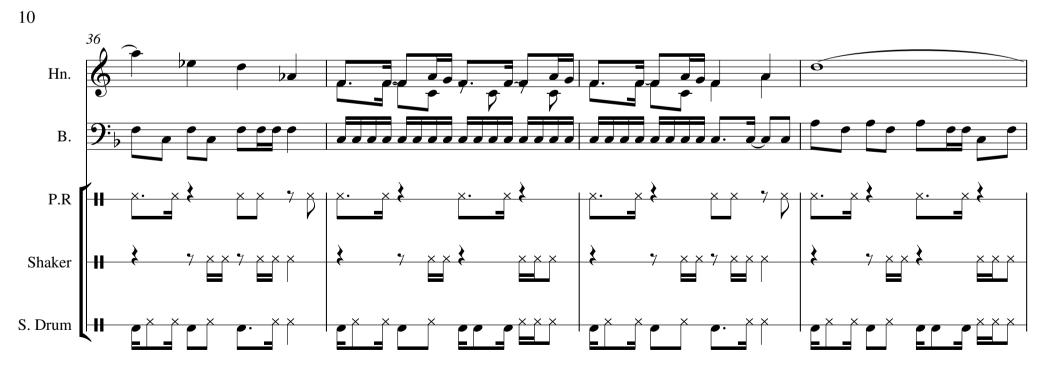


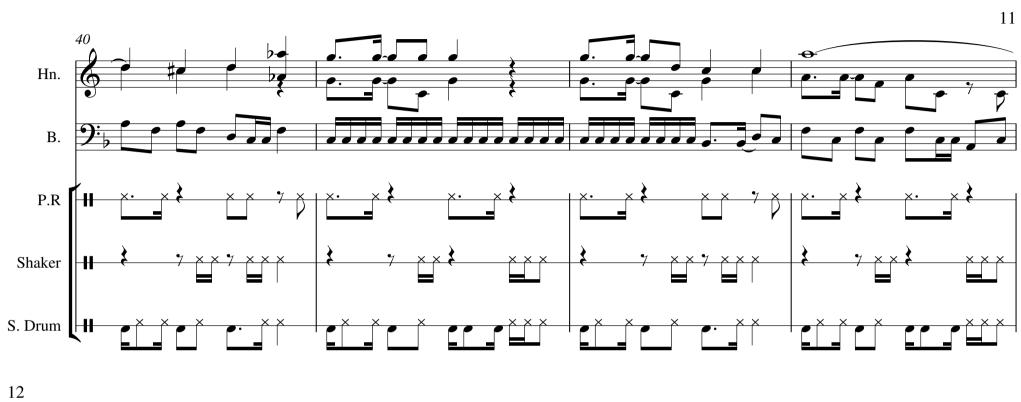


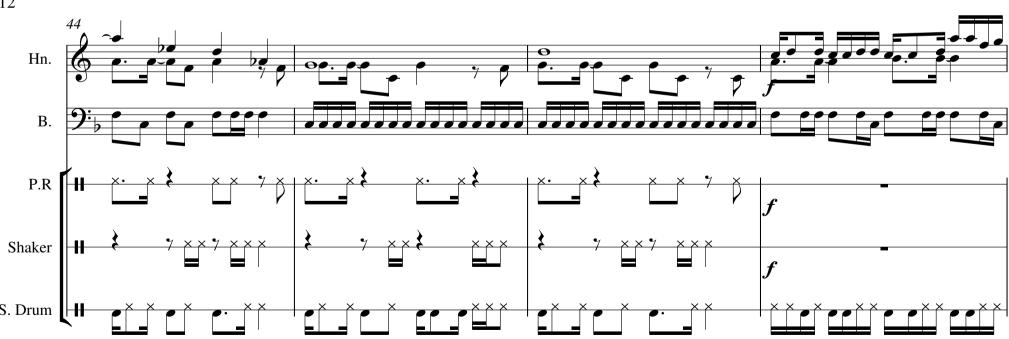












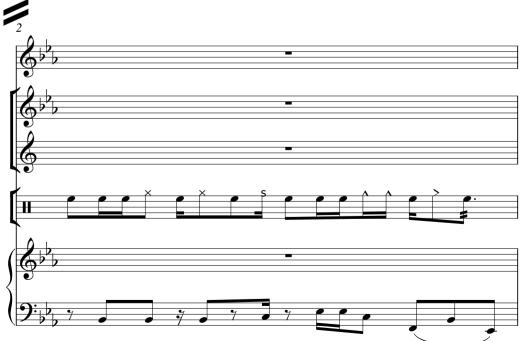




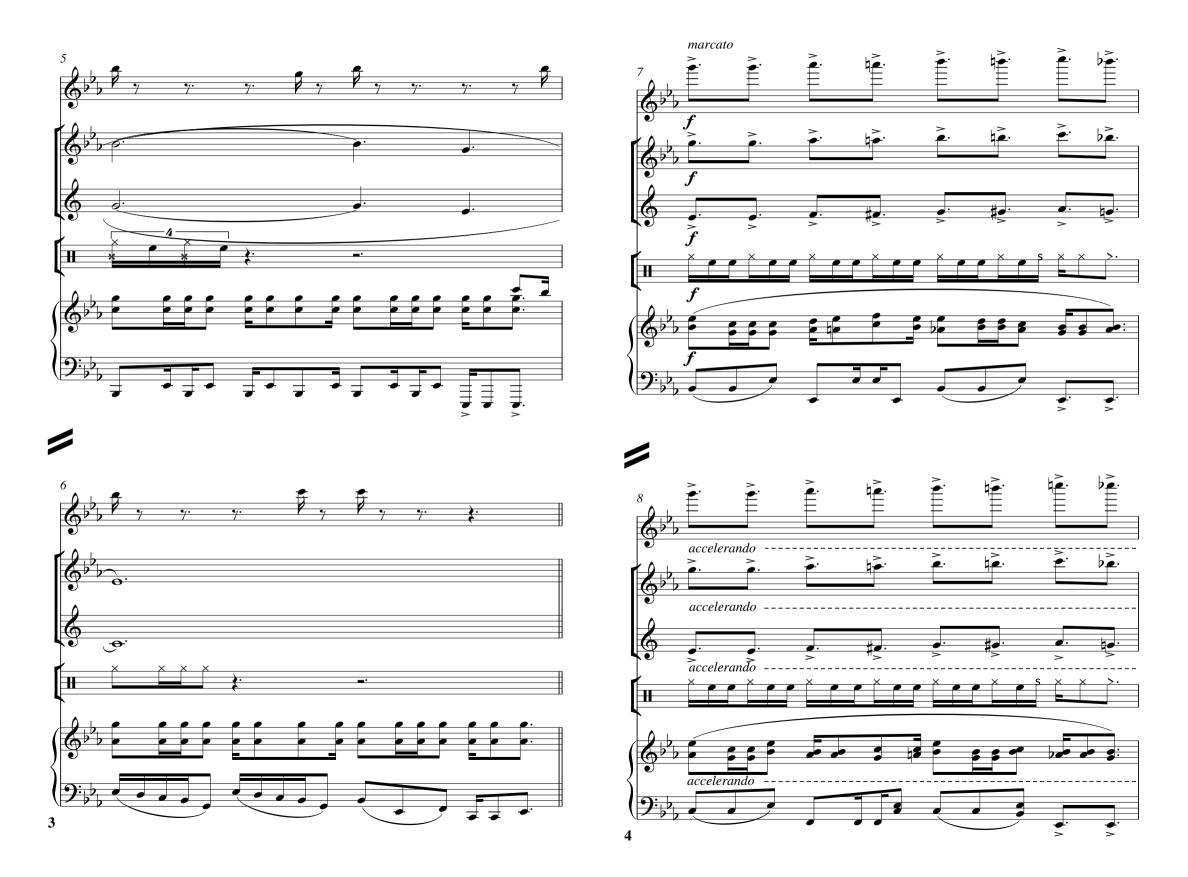
## Irnam quintet

For Violin, Flute, Saxophone, Single Membrane Drum (not Djembe) & Piano









































































\* Flute, Violin & Piano take turns for solo, two or more times. Last time with no solo.





\* Saxophone & Drum take turns for solo, two or more times. Last time with no solo.

**70** 



























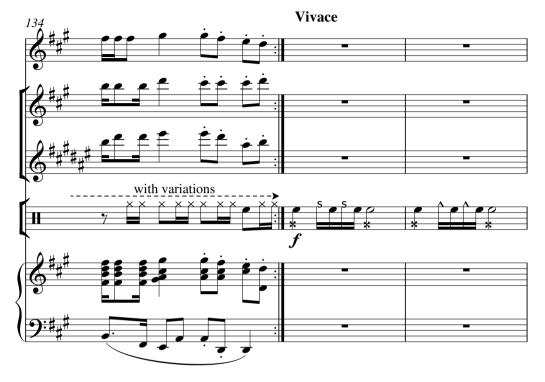






































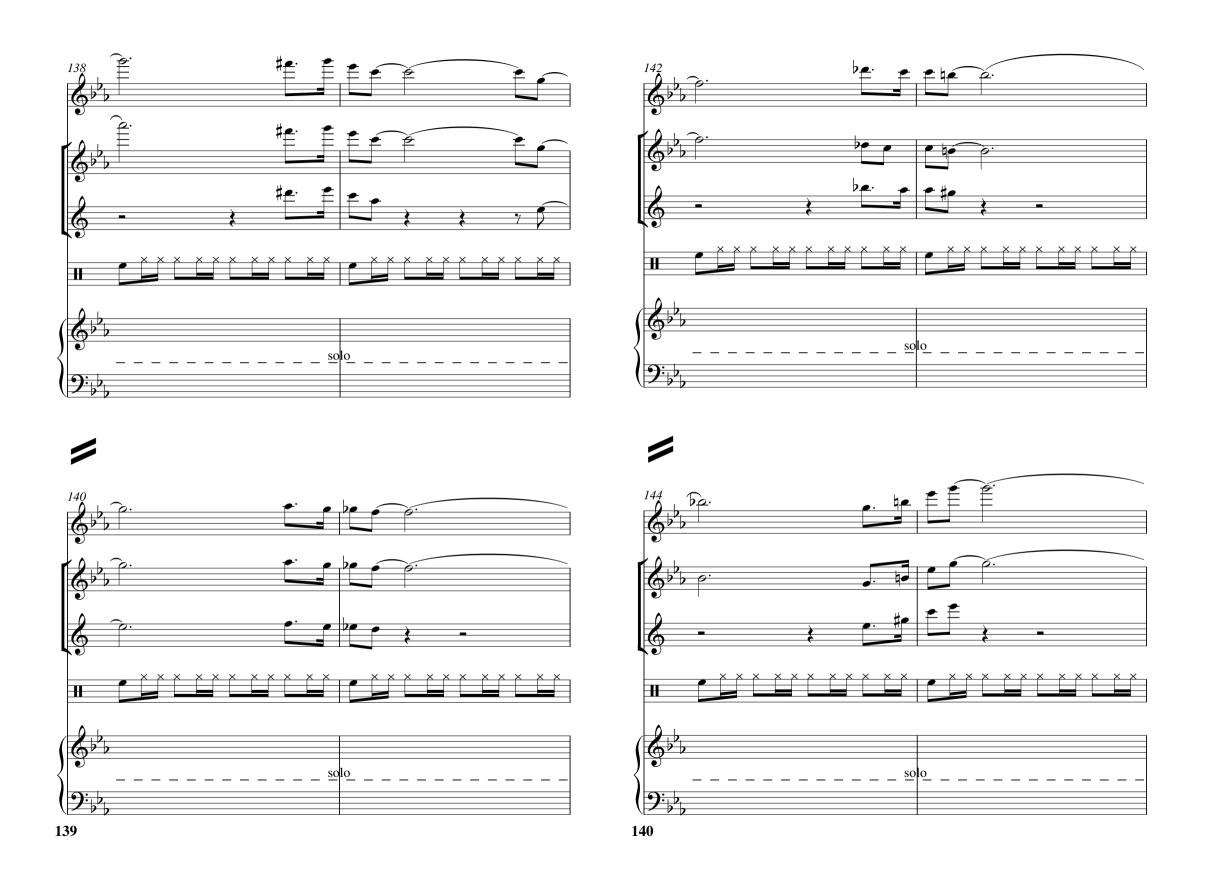
























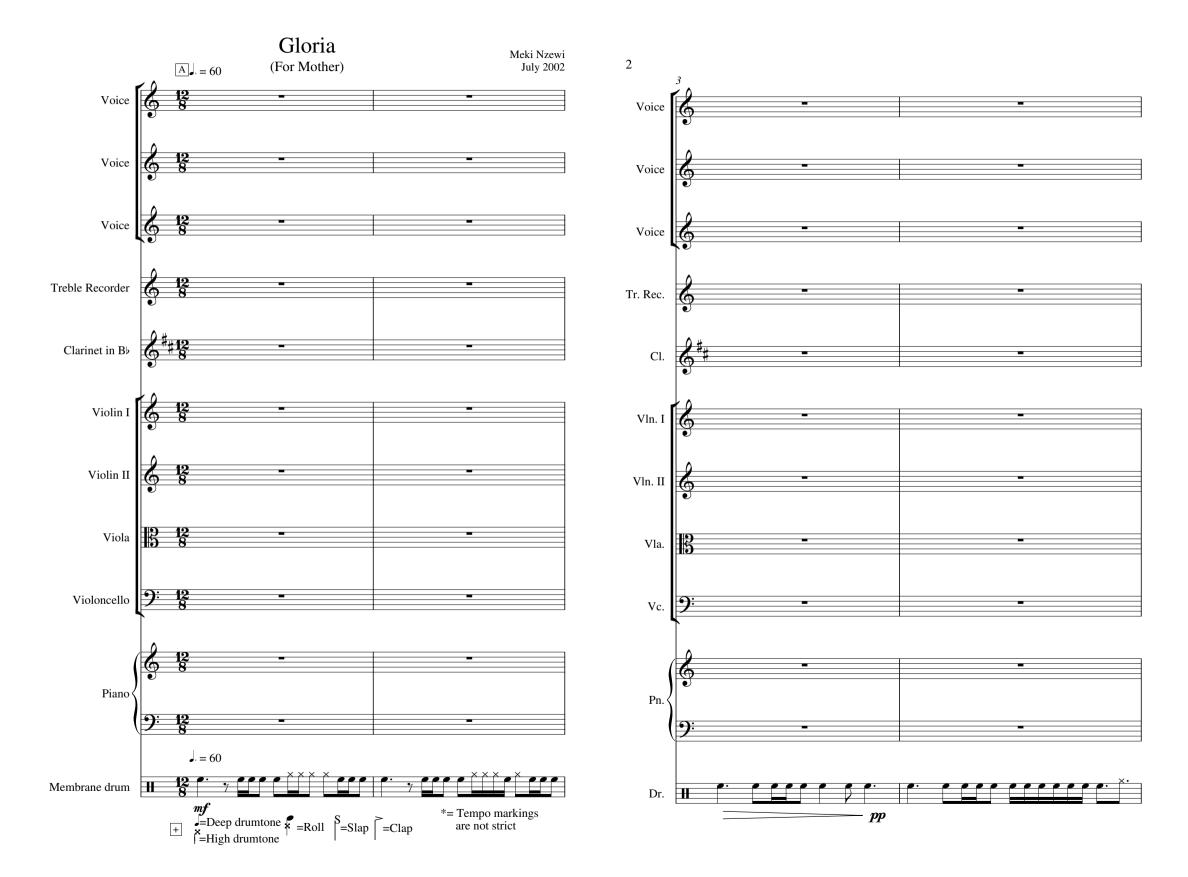


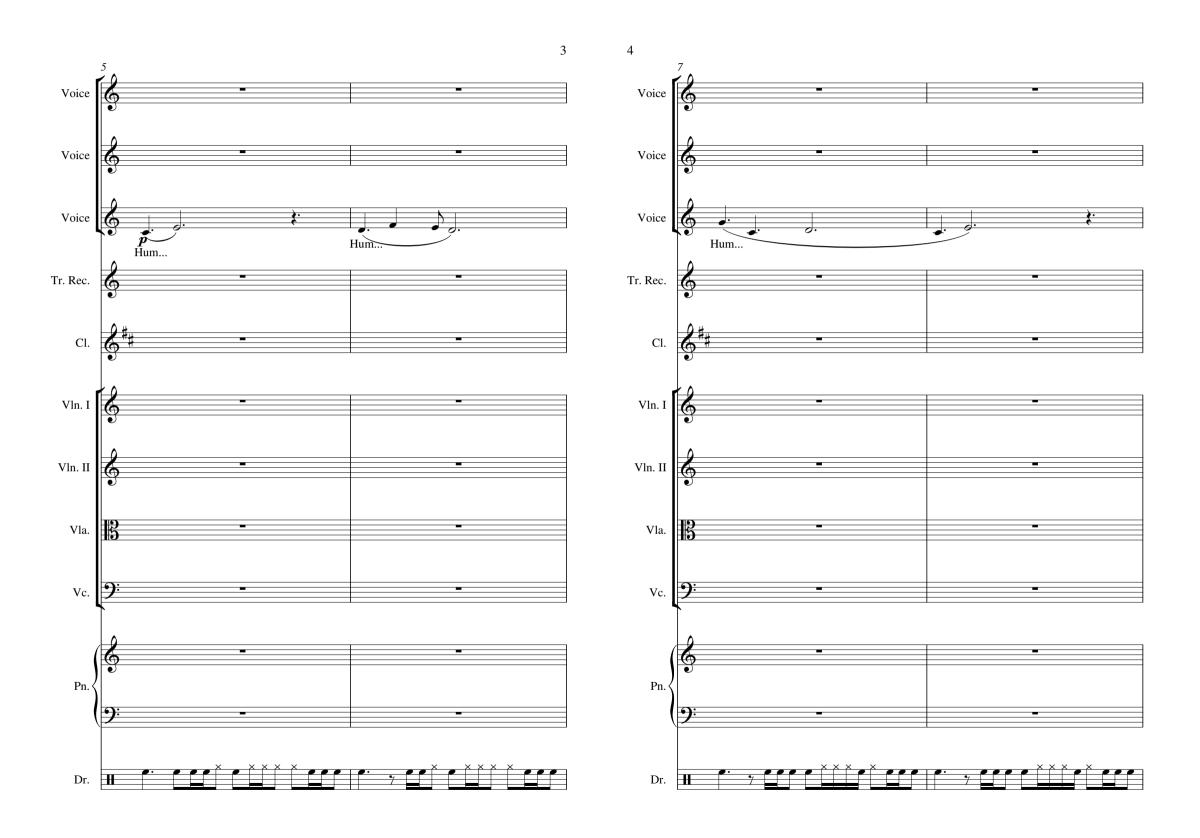


























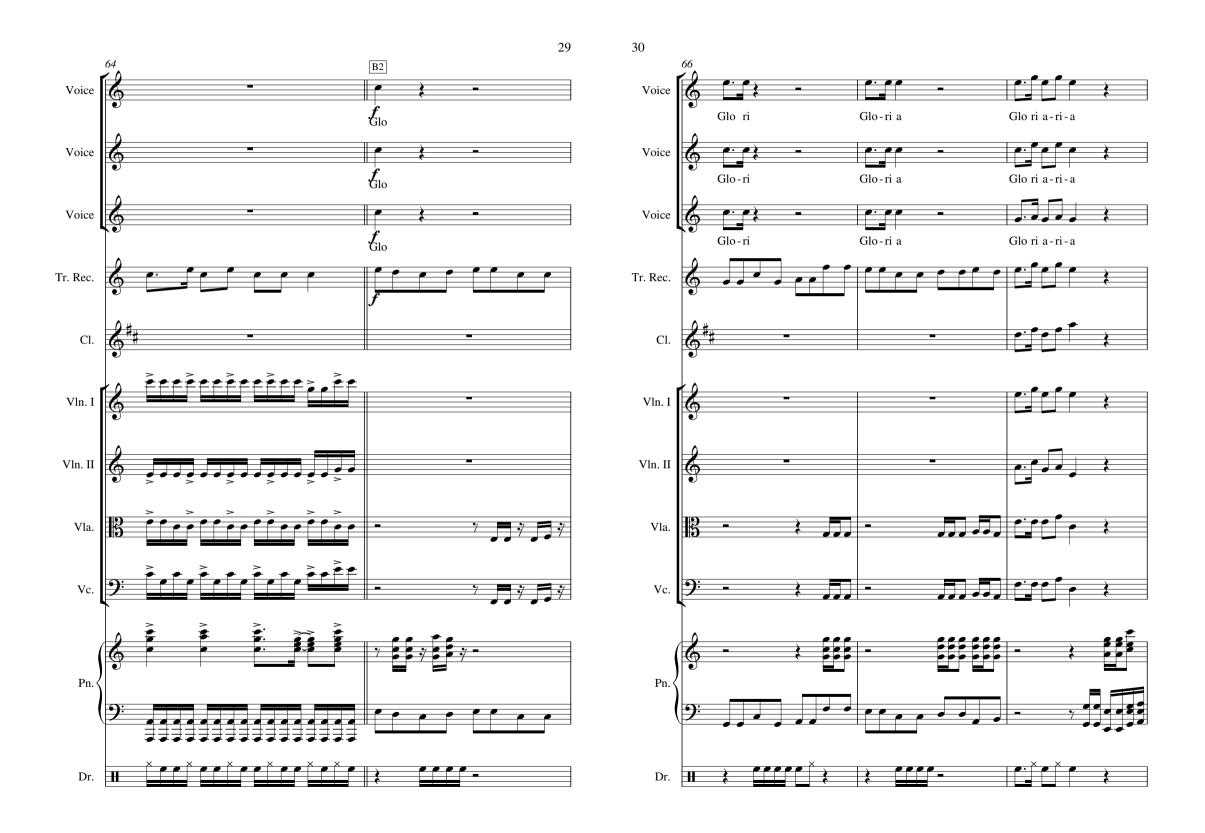








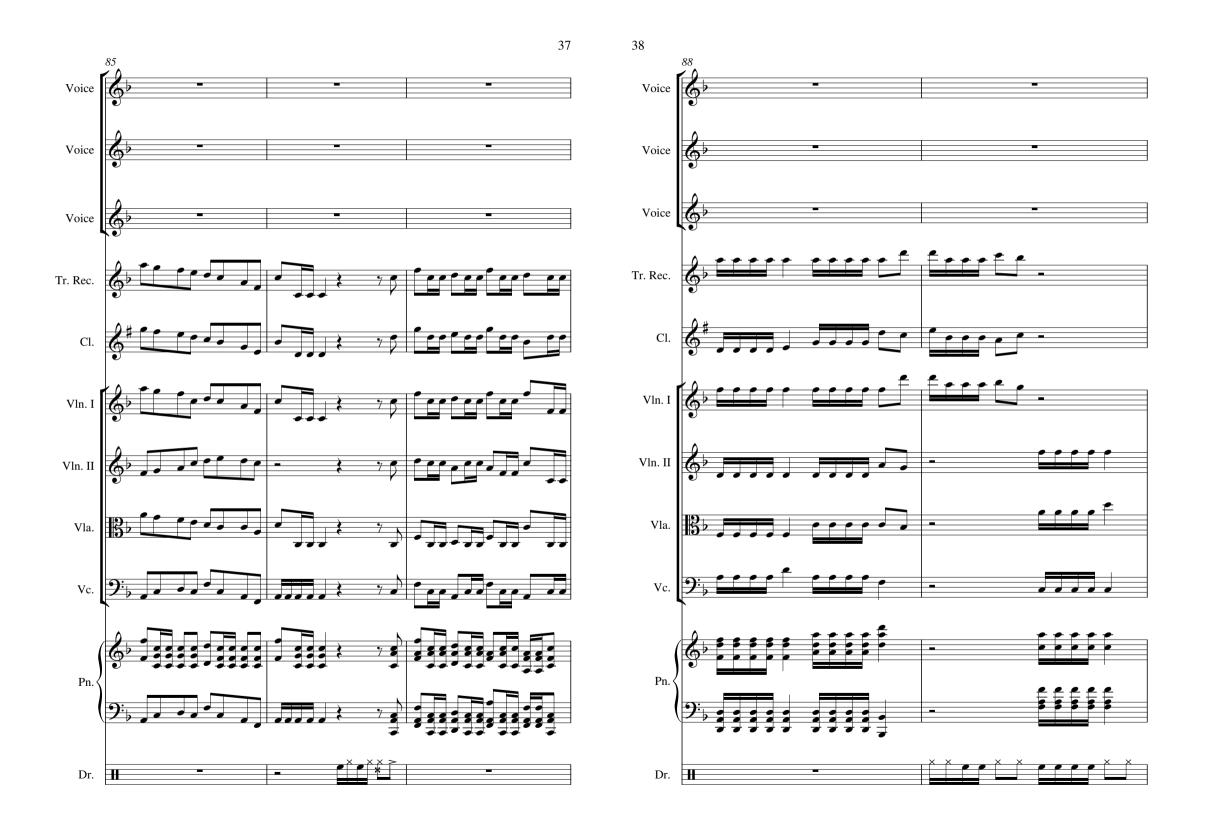




































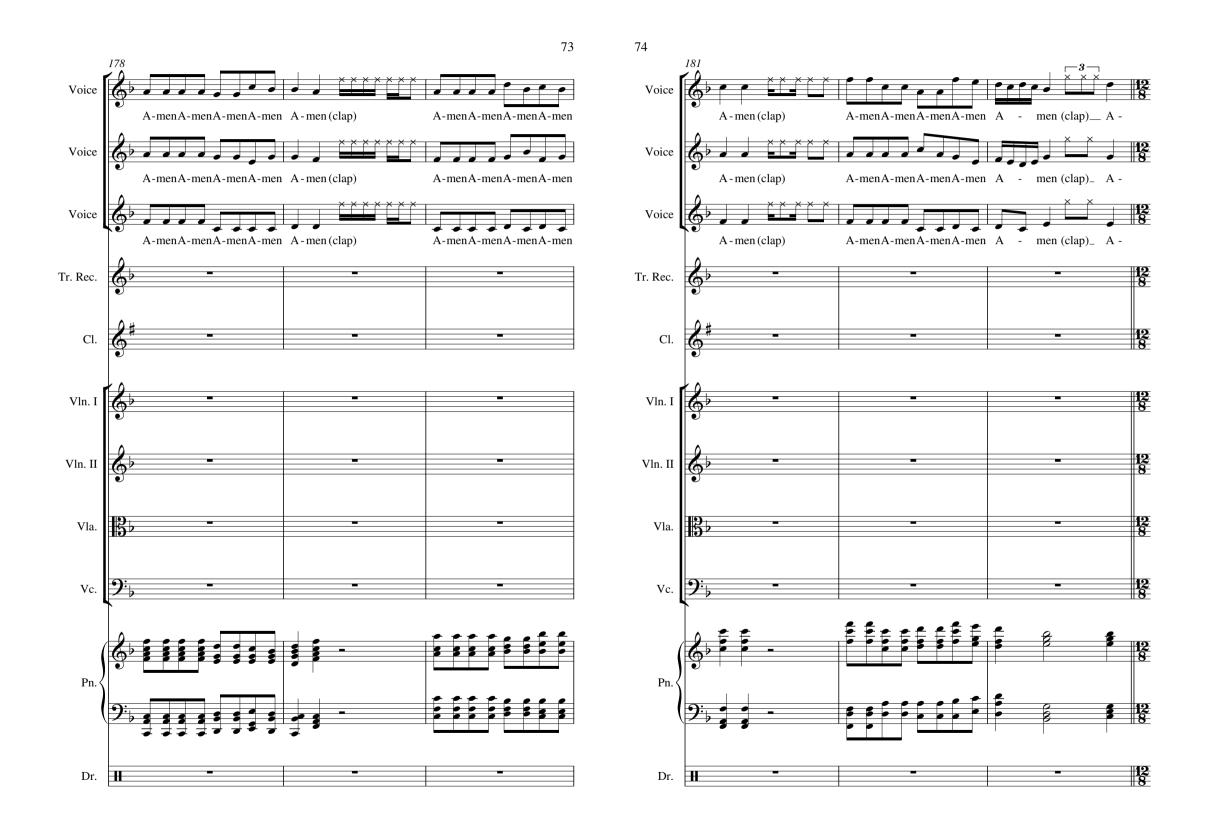




























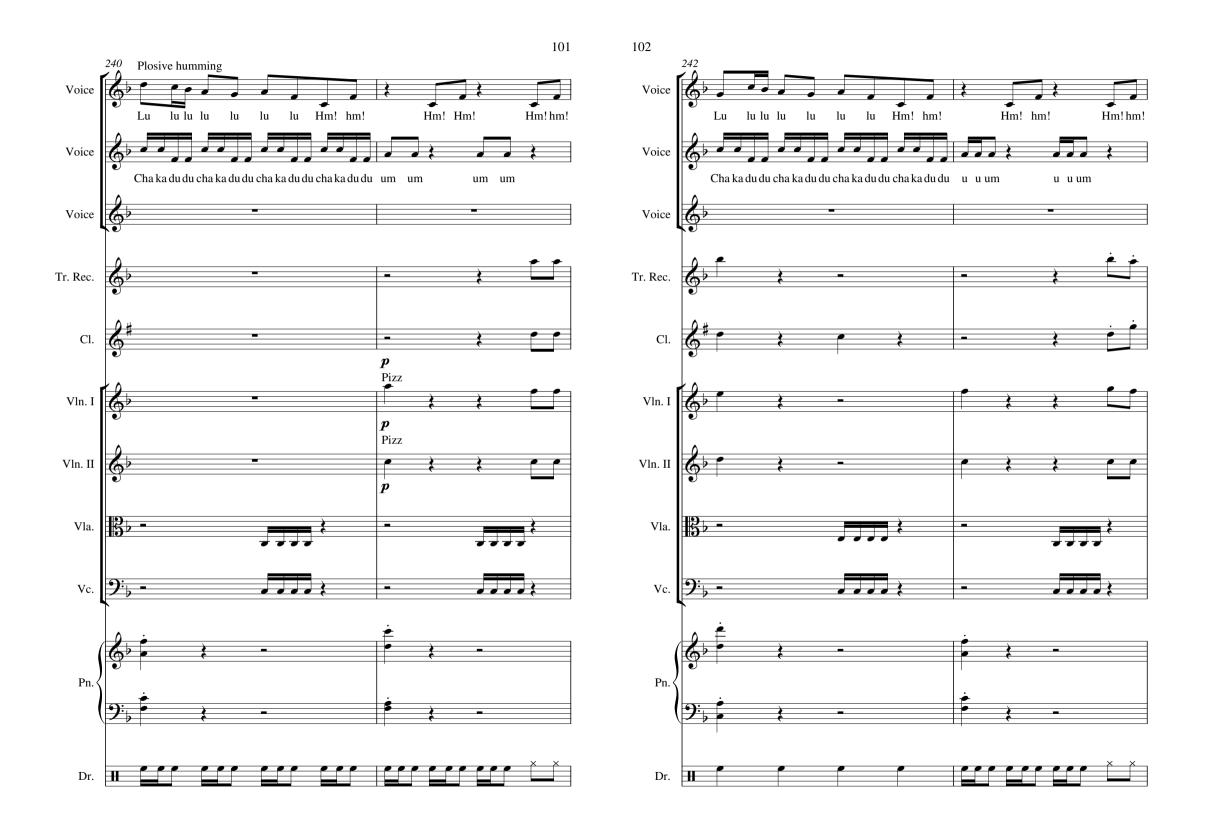






















































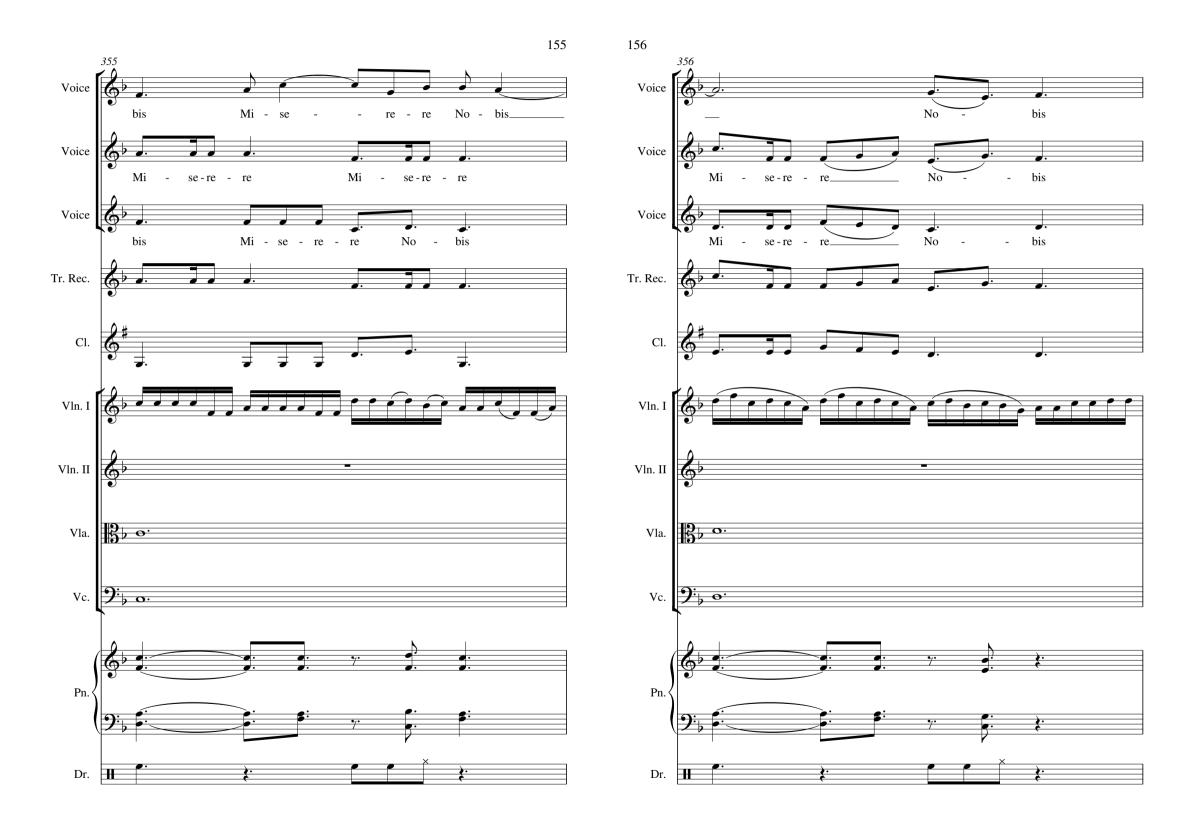












































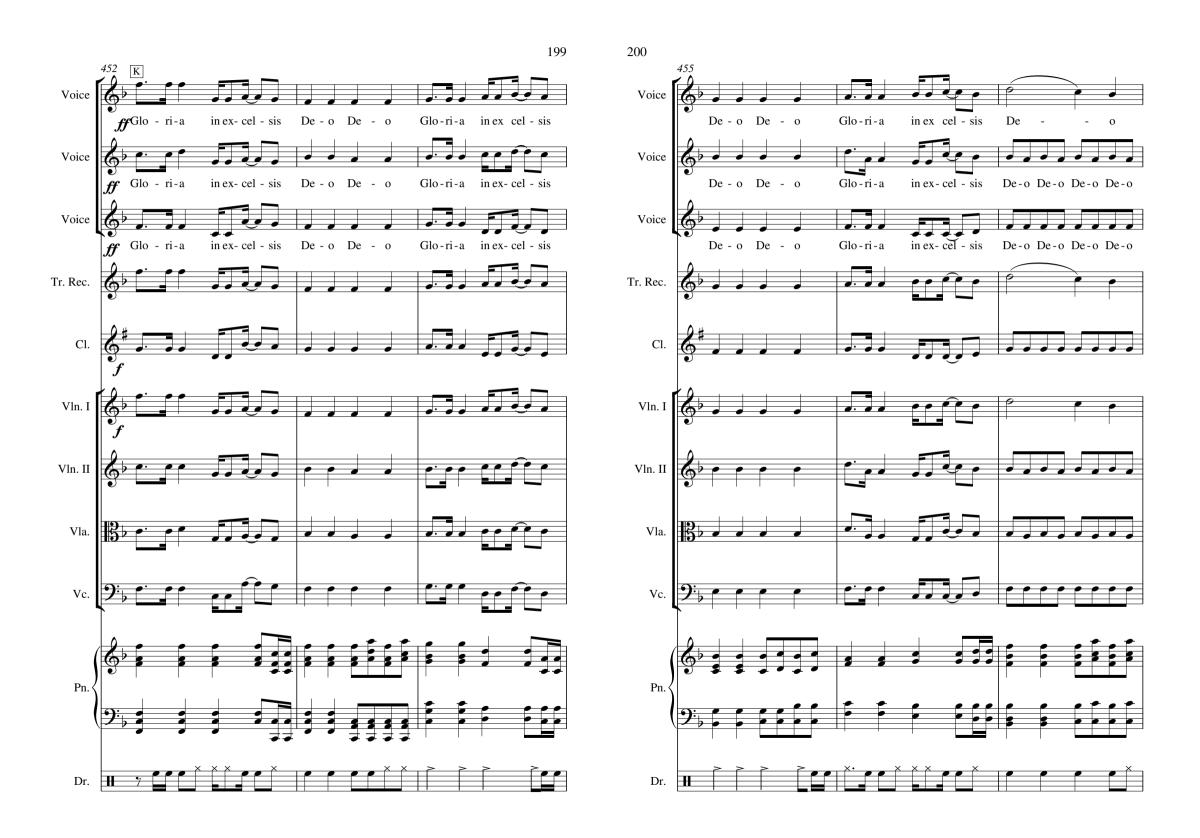
















# Appendix: Testimonies from students who were enrolled for the module, MAM 120: Introduction to African music

The appendix provides a sampling of written testimonies (unedited) from students who took the first-year African music courses at the University of Pretoria in 2004, 2005, and 2006,<sup>2</sup> discussing their experiences in narrative style. Space does not allow the inclusion in this publication of the end-of-course appraisal submitted by the majority of students who have so far gone through the compulsory, semester module since 2004. The students are required to discuss their course experiences in narrative style, and are particularly urged to be as candid as possible in order to guide re-appraisal of the effectiveness of the method and content designed for the Module. Some of the sampled testimonies submitted by the students for their normal final course evaluation are given in full, and excerpts from others are provided. The participating students predominantly were white South Africans, and all had had exclusive European classical music education and practice before being admitted to the Music Department of the University of Pretoria. The pieces played by the three classes are:

2004 class - Ensemble discourse

2005 class - Dancing drums and lilting flutes

2006 class - Dialogues

# Stephen Gericke (2004)

I came into this [MAM 120] class, not knowing what to expect, but I had a preconception that there would just be a lot of banging on drums involved. Not only were my expectations proven incorrect, but [I was] surprised.

The classes started with a lecture on the fundamentals of African music and African culture – that was my first clue to realizing how little I actually knew about the field in question. I was intrigued by what an important, consistent and influential part music plays in an African society, truthfully, feeling a bit jealous, as a musician, as to what we in our culture might have missed out on. The musician is seen as the person with the capability and the knowledge to influence and control emotions, communication, health and productivity. Typically, musicians receive a great amount of respect for that. The other inspiring thing is that all individuals are seen as having musical and creative abilities, it is not just a rare talent with which some individuals are born (Blacking, 1995).<sup>3</sup> Diallo and Hall (1989)<sup>4</sup> wrote that if ten workers were brought together, no work would be accomplished without a musician. Even working alone would be 'considered suicidal'. For example, if it became time to plant the crops, a musician would accompany a worker individually[,] praising his parents, focusing on his beneficial attributes and thus boosting his self-esteem. No one, not even the disabled,

would be criticized for decreasing the work rate. The handling of the elderly in African societies, the manner in which music encourages social interaction, and how music and musicians are respected, are all characteristics of African music that I consider admirable.

Even in our limited experience with African music we have experienced some of these characteristics. In my opinion it was a good chance to witness less spontaneous, more introverted people receiving the opportunity to improvise and be placed in a solo role. In a Western music oriented situation they may either have not had the confidence or not be considered talented enough to be placed in such a role. In this context however, they had the opportunity to create music without the boundaries of being afraid of playing a note out of place while everyone is focusing on them.

The other experience ... was the bonding that formed between the participants in our performance. It was an amazing atmosphere to be part of. One of the second year students even remarked that our group has 'too much energy'. I do not know if it was directly as a result of the music, but something influenced everyone to work together and create a truly enjoyable experience.

Personally, I was also influenced by the African belief that all human beings are creative. By ... 'personally', I mean that the comment was directed at me personally. When asked who has aspirations to become a composer, I replied that I have composition as a subject, but I do not consider myself a composer yet, since I first need to acquire the necessary knowledge. It helped me realize that no amount of textbook information was going to unlock creativity as a means of expressing myself.

From a composer's perspective, this experience of African music had a positive effect on me. It is a different concept to look at music as if it is a forum where every participant contributes to a conversation. It is also different to view music as something that can always be directly transferred to the body in the form of dance. I was under the conception that I had encountered most rhythmic structures and combinations thereof that were possible, yet again my assumption was incorrect. Even though on paper certain of the rhythm's typography may seem familiar, the symbolisms they carried and their usage was new. As an example, I refer to the 'shock rhythm', which at first I had trouble ... playing. It was interesting to learn that such 'shock therapy' was considered necessary for the human psyche. I have an interest in psychology, and I found facts like these inspiring, since as a composer I would like to compose music that could affect the human psyche positively. Speech is considered a right brain dominated element, while nonverbal language such as music stimulates the left hemisphere of the brain. A combination of both will lead to complete human consciousness (Blacking, ibid). This agrees with one of my reasons for studying music, since all music needs intellectual, physical and emotional attentiveness. I felt that my experience of African music contributed to this ideal.

There were also statements discussed, with which I personally do not agree. I do not agree that increased tolerance [of] physical pain can lead to perceiving emotional pain as less hurtful. Perhaps I do not agree only because I have not yet experienced the latter. It is ... concepts like these, which the African drumming class has provided[,] that expanded my view to perceive life differently.

It has truthfully been an inspiring, enjoyable and insightful experience, and not just a lot of banging on drums as I had first preconceived.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> I am respecting the wish of the students who preferred that their names be withheld. Essays or portions of essays by such students are marked NW (name withheld).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Blacking, J. (1995). *Music, culture and experience*. Edited by R. Byron. Chicago: University of Chicago.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Diallo, Y.Y. & Hall, M. (1989). The Healing drum – African wisdom teaching. Vermont: Destiny Books.

# Sonja Phiffer (2004)

In the first two weeks of practicing in the drum ensemble, we had a few workshop-type exercises to help us get acquainted with our drums, the *djembe*. After that I volunteered to play the wooden slit drum. At first I was not sure why I wanted to play any other drum than the *djembe*, because I really did enjoy playing it. After thinking about it, I realized that I am the type of person who likes to develop all my skills, and being able to play more than one type of drum would help me achieve that goal. Reflecting on the whole experience and the performance, I am truly glad that I had the opportunity to play another drum. It gave me insight into the different sounds and tones the different drums produce.

The slit-drum played quite an important role. It was my job sometimes to give the pulse, and at all times to complement the first and second drums. The first and second drums played questions and answers to each other, and I, playing the slit-drum[,] joined in between to form an alternative rhythm. The slit-drum, like the bell, but less important[,] also helped to keep the composition together. It had parts where it took the group from one part in the composition to another, like in the beginning of part D; and parts where it helped to keep the time, like part C in the composition. I think it represented the mother-role in the composition. I had to be in control of the composition in order to keep everything together, and to enable the ensemble not only to play the notes, but also to create music.

At the beginning of the semester, as we got started, I felt quite clumsy with the drum. I didn't know how to hold the playing sticks properly, or how to sit in front of the drum in order to produce the best sound possible. After a while I learnt what worked, and what not, and playing became a lot easier. I held the sticks somewhat in the middle, and gave myself enough legroom to be able to move a little with the beat. It took me a while to coordinate myself in terms of keeping the time with the feet while playing some different rhythms to that beat with the hands. In the beginning my feet played the same rhythms as my hands. I think it must have looked quite funny and silly! Later, still struggling, I stopped using my feet altogether. That also implied that I did not use any other part of my body, I merely read the music and tried to play what is written. That was not a wise decision though. I believe it is impossible to be a co-creator of the music when you do not move with the vibe the music creates.

You can take part, and almost mechanically play your score, but you do not give any energy to the music, and you don't let the energy that the other members of the ensemble radiate influence you. In that way you are not entirely part of the music. I think that is something quite a few people in the ensemble had to learn. For the first month or so we were all stiff and rigid. No one was prepared to make a fool of himself by moving, or dancing to the beat. Later we realized that the music's full potential was not going to be realized if we do not put some energy into the composition. Later we came across self-confident while we were moving, doing our solos convincingly. This movement also lighted a fire in the composition, creating a feel-good emotion. I could not wipe the smile off my face that manifested every time we played the composition, and we actually created music. Creating music is not necessarily about playing the correct dictated notes. It is about playing, and most of all improvising, making the music happen beyond the controlling borders of a written composition.

For me, reading the notes was something very difficult to cope with. All the quavers, semi, hemi and demi quavers had my head reeling every time we practiced. I tried to count it out, going home I'd work out a scheme to play the notes correctly. Despite all my efforts I did not master all the rhythms as they were printed, even at the final performance. What I did learn though is that it does not so sorely matter what rhythms you play. The crux of the matter is that there is no mistake – if you play something different from what is written just make

sure it fits in with the beat. This way you take part in creating the music, not just interpreting someone else's musical thoughts. This also was something important we had to learn. In African music you do not have to play exactly what is written, as is required of you when you play Western classical music. In the Western culture it is seen as disrespect for the composer if you started playing and improvising your own melodies in the middle of a piece. As I struggled with the rhythms I started to listen more intently to exactly what the other instruments were playing. I identified gaps where I could play one of my own rhythms. Eventually, at the performance, I tried to improvise as much as possible, making sure that whatever I play[ed] still answered a question asked by one of the drums, asking one that they have to answer.

The day of the performance was very exciting. We all gathered on the stage an hour before the performance to go through the composition one last time. Everyone in the ensemble attended our 'dress-rehearsal', and that made our spirits rise. It felt like everyone really did his bit to make our performance a success even before we got started.

When we walked on the stage, previous groups playing before us [had] already set the atmosphere. Everyone took his seat and the bell started us into the composition. As each part came in the energy levels rose higher and higher. Yet again we did not play the notes exactly as written, but by now we all had the ability to create music out of mistakes, and improvisation came frequently. Everyone played his part with conviction, and with the end of the composition near, I looked forward to the audience's response to Paula's singing. Her improvisation also lifted the standard of our performance. She was the best person for the job because I don't think anyone else would have had the confidence to sing the way she did. When the last note fell, the air vibrated with energy, and it really felt incredibly good to be part of such a wonderful experience.

After performing the written composition, we had a few minutes to do a drum workshop. I led the workshop. I would never have thought that I had it in me to be able to improvise different, contrasting rhythms, and not only present them to the class, but also a whole audience. I realized that I have a bit of hidden talent that I am surely going to exploit in future.

This course has taught me quite a few valuable lessons, and I will carry these elements with me all through my careers as a classical music performer.

# Paula Fourie (2004)

When I first learned that I had to participate in African drumming as part of my B.Mus. degree, I was very happy. I have always wanted to drum as I thought it would appeal to my impulsive wild side. Besides, I thought, how hard could it be to bash your drum in wild abandon while keeping a more or less steady beat in mind?

At the first class I learnt that it was not exactly so simple. All of a sudden there were specific techniques like the slap, and it mattered whether you used a hollow or flat hand on the drum. I also realized that it mattered where you touched the drum. The rim produced higher sounds than the centre. By the third class I got used to these techniques. They made the beating of the drum more versatile, and by producing these different sounds I felt that I had more control over the instrument. That you had to tilt the *djembe* forwards to set its resonance free was at least a concept that I understood instantly. While clenching the tilted drum between my knees I felt much more part of my instrument, and the music than before.

I also got another surprise. Instead of just being able to beat my drum when I felt like it, I had to learn to play specific motives repeatedly. In between these motives I had to leave enough space for someone else to play hers/his. The product is a complex dialogue between

two forces. It is the interaction between a statement and counterstatement resulting in a colourful, interwoven dance, full of layers.

Then it became difficult. Suddenly I couldn't just get a simple beat in my mind and play it over and over again. Now we had to get our rhythms from sheet music. It wasn't fun anymore. I cannot sight-read music very well, especially not where only rhythms are concerned. I felt like a complete failure because I couldn't play the composition that well. Yet these things improved with time. Soon I felt like I was doing a better job, and that my sense of rhythm was growing stronger every day.

It seems as if African drumming never stops challenging you. I was not even completely at ease with my drumming rhythms when the next surprise came. I was supposed to sing. Even though I am majoring in voice at the university, I am very wary of singing in front of other people. I am always scared that they will think that I am not good enough, and wonder why I study music in the first place if I excel at neither theory nor practical. The part that I got to sing was high, and the rhythmical structures were complicated. To make matters worse, I got a bad case of bronchitis that made me stop singing for more than a month. I was scared of singing, my voice wasn't up to scratch, and I didn't have the time to study the sheet music.

Eventually I admitted defeat, and said that I could really not sing for the composition. Something in me was calling me a coward for not trying my best at it, and seizing the chance for trying something different for a change. So I decided to improvise something, and did my best imitation of a rain dance. I even tried to make a joke out of it so that people would not take me seriously. That way I thought that no one could judge my singing or me. I was told, however, that I had to take it seriously. So I did take the singing and myself seriously, trying my best to convey my message. The message was one of a free spirit weaving around strong rhythms, now rising above and then falling below the beat of the drums. It was about the uncontainable being contained within the boundaries of metre and beat.

I have learnt a lot in this brief semester of African drumming. I learnt that it is a precise art, just like any other musical discipline. The most important things that I learnt can be placed in context with my own life. These things were that it is good to give other people in your life a chance to come in and say something. One cannot dominate the scene all the time, and something as small as a cowbell can play a significant role in the whole process. Most of all I learnt to always try my best, and believe in myself. It is good to stand up wholeheartedly for something you believe in. I thank the spirit of [the] African drum for letting me be a part of its fascinating dance, and for showing me things that I was blind to before.

# NW (2004)

... When looking back at the classes, and how it affected my classmates and me, I am amazed. I can remember sitting in a University of Pretoria orchestra rehearsal one evening, and our conductor telling us that we have no rhythm, and he was amazed at how we could live without it. And this was true. But I think that this lack of rhythm did improve in some people, namely Sonya who was playing the slit-drum. At first I wondered how she was going to manage to play her part, and keep the group together. But at the end of the semester I can quite confidently say that she is one of the best drummers (in my opinion) in the class. And [the] workshop that she led in the examination was really good, and I, along with the rest of the class and the audience really enjoyed it.

I also found the solos that people played very interesting. I know when I first volunteered to play a solo, I was really nervous, and had no idea what to do. And when I was told to pre-

pare for the solo I had no idea what to do. Was I supposed to write something out then learn it, or just play what moved me at the time? The latter seemed more applicable. Yet more nerve racking since I did not have the security of knowing what I was going to do. Then I decided to think of the other drum parts in my mind whenever I was bored, and see what solo could be performed on top of that. So I was able to improvise on the performance stage, and I did not feel half as nervous as I did when I first started playing the solos. ...

But all in all ... it was a great experience. I certainly learned more about African performance culture, and how much I actually do lack in rhythm! As musicians it is vital that we have a good sense of rhythm, yet so few people seem to. I got to experience playing another form of music that I was not used to, and got to learn to enjoy it.

#### NW (2004)

... In African drumming we learnt about improvisation, something I couldn't do at all. We learnt about rhythm and moving our bodies to the beat. At the beginning all of us were really shy to move our bodies to the beat. I must admit that I was the shyest of them all as I just laughed every time somebody had to sway to the sides or shake the head with the beat every time s/he played a solo. At the end I have learnt that that was the only thing that would have taken me through the semester, as I have noticed that African drumming was not as easy as I thought. The drum was all of a sudden a person to me; a child that had to be approached in a gentle way, yet firm enough that it would want to play back to me and still not be provoked! We definitely learned that an African drum isn't just something, which must be hit, but a cat, which must be stroked, or one of our friends whose hand we have to shake and not just hit, or else it might cause ugliness in our music like it might cause trouble in friendship. Farther on we have learnt how the Africans use instruments to communicate and can warn each other when danger approaches; the drum isn't only our friend, but even talks to us and warns us when there is trouble!

I am absolutely glad that we had to do improvisation. I must say that it has really given my self-confidence a big boost as well as my creativity, and it helped me to think quickly when the spotlight is all of a sudden on me and 50 other people depend on me to get the right rhythm and not mess up.

With our practices for our practical examinations everybody ... learnt how to work together in a group as a unity. As everybody played in groups[,] we, a group of 50 people have suddenly become only two people having a conversation with each other, and although some of us made mistakes here and there, the rest of [us] would cover up one's mistake and in such a way support each other, and carry them through their mistakes. I now know that drumming can produce a positive energy towards the performers and the audience ... I have learned about other cultures; but the best and most precious thing I have learned or rather developed, is creativity and self-confidence to boost my performance.

# Friedrich von Geyso (2005)

... Every human, may he want it or not, does change. We all have different phases of our lives, which we have to go through. All of these phases present their own rights, but also bring responsibilities with them.

Each new phase is a phase of unknowing. Thus, one goes through these phases, trying to obtain as much information [as possible] before moving on. To help us gain information we visit various institutions to obtain a certain amount of knowledge before moving on. This is because not all knowledge is known at the beginning, and we have to learn it by going to these institutions. At every new level of education, a student has to face new ideas, trains of thought and material he has never encountered before. It is this lack of knowledge of new concepts that ultimately inspire[s] fear in most of us (although it might turn out to be lots of fun in the end). It is so often fear that hampers the human being to accept new things and fresh information.

Yet the human has an odd way of trying to overcome these problems. We make certain mental pictures of what we will be encountering, so as to be elated with it, if it accords with our mental picture, or to quickly move away from the situation, if it differs from it or if it does not live up to our expectations. The human does this ... to try to lessen the fear of the future – to lessen the fear of the unknown.

This finally brings me to my first point concerning the student, specifically a music student. Any music student will have a certain perception or idea of what he would be doing in the near future, deciding on the best institution for him or her to attend. This gives them the opportunity to try to shape their future, which they now have to start taking into their own hands. The perception, which the individual creates with it, often contains certain requirements but also certain aspirations. As one is the unknowing human in a new field, such as the university, it often happens that one forgets aspects, and/or [discovers] new aspects, which one has not really thought about. Here, I am talking out of personal experience when I first got to the university. I had a, if I may now say so in retrospect, rather warped perception of the institution, which I was going to attend. I did not know [what] the university was going to be like, or how the classes were going to be. In addition, I did not know anybody. These all inspired fear, I guess.

.... One ... class, which was relatively new to me, was the MAM 120 class. MAM 120 being the 'Introduction to African music' class. At first, being of a largely ... Western background, I did not think highly of any class such as MAM 120. I can still remember, as I first heard what MAM 120 was, that I closed my mind ... to it. I did not want to go and do African music. I had no interest in the subject, and initially even showed less interest in it. I had come to the university to further my career as a pianist, and to continue learning [Western classical] composition, theory and history, so as in the end to get my degree and finish off, and to finally go and become a performer. Therefore, African music was far from being any kind of priority to me, and I tried sidestepping the issue by pushing the idea of having any such class as far back into my mind as I possibly could do.

It is with this mental 'blockage' that I first entered the class in the second semester. In the beginning I was quite frustrated with the whole class. In addition, now that I think of it, I was even slightly prejudiced against my lecturer, as I did look down upon the subject. To my mind, I could not understand how anybody could want to teach such a subject. I did not like the way he reasoned, as I did not understand the manner in which he reasoned, which was so vastly different to mine. Added to this fact is that one could not always understand our lecturer, for he had quite a peculiar accent. It made the situation all the worse for me. Therefore, my first two or three lessons were disastrous. I did not enjoy them at all.

At the second or third lesson our class was confronted with concepts such as a 'mother drum' and not a 'father drum'. The mere thought to me seemed laughable. Other concepts such as having 'pulse' also made me wonder why I was really sitting in this class. We talked about finding the 'pulse' in nature, and then trying to find it in African music. Then the con-

nection was made between nature, human heartbeat and the music, which is naturally in us. The concept I considered so natural that I did not spend too much time on contemplating the real connection between the human heartbeat, nature's heartbeat, and the heartbeat of African music with a specific relation to the heartbeat of traditional music. I merely thought the concepts to be ridiculous.

Then something all of a sudden changed in me. Something inside of me woke up. I think the biggest part of this was that our class started playing the drums. All of a sudden the introductory lessons, which I had laughed off (so stupid of me) now started making more sense – and for the first time since the beginning of the second semester, I enjoyed myself and started enjoying the classes. The concept of "pulse" all of a sudden became clearer to me. At last, I think that I began to understand. I began to understand the deeper meaning of the music and concepts that we had discussed in the previous lessons that I so easily laughed off. What I understood then was merely the most upper and broader crust. Suddenly I could see that there were ... much deeper things to these concepts than I could have ever realized. Now, I could feel the pulse rushing inside of me. I think that is what changed me, changed me forever.

I started seeing my lecturer more as a teacher, someone who guides you along the path. He was not just anybody ... giving mere instructions to a class, not worrying whether his students followed or not. It had been I, me, who had been the one with all these prejudices. I actually felt like learning something new, and that this feeling was encouraged by our lecturer's positive attitude. In the end, it was merely a fact of opening one's mind to something new. I now realize that one CANNOT be judgmental of something if one has not opened one's mind to it and tried it oneself.

As the lessons continued, I could not get enough. It all started out that in class we began to play all sorts of different "games". This made the classes even more interesting. I remember that we initially imitated the lecturer, repeating rhythms that he played to us. Then we started doing our own rhythms, alternating between the lecturer and us one at a time. As a final building block students started playing amongst themselves, all after each other – with many I think this started the foundation of gaining more confidence in one's own playing. There was no such thing as a right or wrong. And from there onwards everybody's confidence just kept on growing.

It was interesting enough to realize that in the ten minute breaks that we had, students started staying back after the first hour of class to continue practicing their drums, or just merely to play amongst each other for fun. The enthusiasm I think reached everybody. It was those who had opened their minds to new things, like I did, who probably in the end had a wonderful time, and really enjoyed playing these instruments.

However, I noticed that the group practice sessions produced the greatest impact. It was the concept of unity through diversity (incidentally as South Africa's motto). This was best perceived at the class sessions when students played with each other in succession. Everybody felt a sense of independent stylistic interpretation – i.e. one's own freedom to be allowed to play whatever one wanted (or to play his or her favourite rhythm or the rhythm that just felt right at that time) – yet, without knowing, there was an instinctive sense of unity since there was a kind of predisposition for restriction. Certain "boundaries" were there, and we kept to those boundaries, and enjoyed ourselves [with]in those boundaries.

It is through this sense of unity in diversity that I started understanding the African concept of unity and diversity. If one were to take it merely one step further, one shall also notice that that is the way in which an African society is also built .... This is probably the IDEAL society where people differ in nature and in character, but also in the end work together as a COMPLETE whole. The concept of father-mother-child instruments started making more

sense. Each instrument has its own characteristic, where each instrument now has its specific role. Each instrument is particular and special in its own way, but it is nevertheless also just as important in playing its own part as are the other instruments playing their own parts. It all creates a musical whole in the end.

As I continued thinking further about the subject, about why we had so many problems in the beginning trying to understand what we were doing, it probably had to do with the fact [of the way] in which most of us were brought up, which was most likely to be a kind of European household set-up. To many of us, the Western household structure had taken over. In the European structure, in contrast to [an] African household, the households tend to be "more loose". People still see each other, and still love each other, yet the fixed family idea has been lost. This is due to time factors, since people have less and less time, as more has to be completed in a shorter amount of time. That is what shaped many Western cultures as they are today. It is in such a structure that many of us were brought up. If one could take it one step further, to try to transfer this to Western communities, one will see the following: people rush off to work in the mornings, and come back late. The high walls that we have prevent the individual [from] building a special relationship with his or her neighbour. The irony of it all is that the most natural thing to come to us is to be open, and try to form a community. It is like pulse, which is there but which we do not think about any more. It is with the MAM 120 course that I think that the African spirit has been woken up in the insides of so many of us – well I know indeed of myself. One should just forget one's prejudices, and let that come what feels most natural to us.

I think these "revelations" changed my mood and attitude drastically towards the subject and the lecturer. I now had a certain amount of respect for something that I had previously dismissed so terribly. Something which I now feel ashamed of – ashamed of the way of not letting something grip me because I was afraid, and because of the whole heritage of a kind of mental blockage to music of such a kind. In the end I thoroughly enjoyed it!

This change of heart I also sensed later on when our class was busy preparing ... for the performance examination. As our class leader had abandoned the MAM class, I had the feeling of taking over that role. I saw myself as a competent student who could help the class in becoming the 'one unit'. The music that Professor Nzewi had written for our examination was a demanding composition, full of rhythmic complexities and consisted of various African instruments, such as the slit drum, *djembe*, bell and some kind of rattle-ball. But in addition, flutes were added to give an undertone of European instrumentation. I think this helped the transition for many of us by combining African and European elements.

As already stated, the Professor's composition was not an easy one to grasp. Countless sessions had to be organized to help the students learn the piece. I felt an overwhelming sensation when other students in the end helped me organize other matters for the final performance. I think any leader would be overwhelmed if his fellow men and women were so enthusiastic about the whole situation. In that sense, I think that I did not feel like a leader, but more someone who helped guide a group of people. That community essence really motivated me to carry on doing it. This motivation could also be seen with the students.

One student specifically remarked, after several practice sessions, that she could feel the communication happen between the instruments. The more I thought about it, the clearer it became to me that it was so true. One was not merely just playing one's part, but also rather interacting with the other musicians. This happened at a very unconscious level, yet it was there, which helped us tie the whole thing together.

The practice had a few dips, but in general the whole process continued to improve after every session. It might have been better if students could have practiced their parts at home, but this was sadly not possible. But it still made everyone look forward to every Friday session when we could play on the drums.

With specific regard to the musical item, I think it would have been nicer if one could have had a greater diversity of classical instruments. Sadly so many people were initially not interested or either scared to contribute anything in class, that the composition initially had to limit itself to flutes and the African instruments. The whole thing could have been taken further if the initial fear was not there. As a result the drums were too loud at times, overtaking the flutes, making it difficult to hear the wonderful flute melodies, and the other instrumental conversations between the instruments. But that was quickly sorted out with a few hushes every now and then. In addition, students were motivated to practice difficult passages together, especially the transitional passages. We had ideas, made plans for those ideas. All was sorted out in the end so that everybody knew what was ... expected of him or her.

And so the piece re-transformed itself into something new. Something in the sense of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Added to this fact was that the one girl willingly assigned herself to the part of being a dancer. This allowed for interaction, which she did so surprisingly well, between her and the solo flautists. It became rather amusing and lots of fun. This again helped us bind together even further.

So, as the final performance dawned on us, I think everybody who had participated up until this point, was captured by the African spirit. With a little bit of adrenaline in our blood the performance went extremely well – something worth celebrating.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this whole adventure turned out to be lots of fun. As a leader then I would now proudly say that I was extremely happy with what the class had accomplished, and would gladly do something like this again. We weren't just individuals anymore – but a community, at last.

# NW (2005)

... In MAM 120 no information is hammered into the group's head. Interesting ideas are given and the class is encouraged to think about them some more. This means that the sessions do not take a didactic format. This is a very effective technique, and definitely more productive. Information is also exchanged between the students, and not just given from the lecturer.

It is clear that various misconceptions exist about African music. Most of these can be put right by talking to experts in the field. This was done in the MAM 120 Module, and more understanding was achieved.

A definite focal point was the sense of community present in African music, and [in] the piece, *Dancing Drums and Lilting Flutes*. Another interesting aspect is the way African music is constructed. The principle of starting by stating a basic idea, then elaborating on it is present in the rhythms and the melodies of our performance piece. Our Western background was a bit of a disadvantage with the unusual rhythms. Yet, as in life, everything is possible through hard work. This module offers several life lessons, the most important being openmindedness. We were encouraged to think about problems from other viewpoints than our own. The results of hard work and commitment could be seen[,] as well as the results of an unenthusiastic attitude and of slacking off.

Most of the students realized that it is wrong to view other cultures as inferior. The diversity in the class helped the group understand and appreciate those differences. The last discussion the group had was very enlightening. People attach different values to music, and to hear them speak so passionately about them and defending them was heart-warming.

In a group format there are always different personalities. These include people who step to the foreground, and those who stay behind, leaders and passengers, people who take initiative and those who discourage it. A lot could be learnt of the human race in this Module.

Most importantly the classes centred on sense of community. We had to work together as a group. Yet, the leaders have to sometimes submit to the group. This is clearly seen in the music piece, *Dancing drums and lilting flutes*. The bass drum gives a sense of tempo but is not allowed to dominate it in any way. We had to be aware of the subtle shifts in the mood of the group, and cater for it in the music. Towards the end this started happening. It was more than rhythm and notes; it was a deeper consciousness of everybody in the group. It was amazing to see the group grow. We became confident with our instruments; people who are normally quiet and shy started emerging as serious musicians and leaders. The result is that when the time for the concert came, we were ready and excited, instead of being nervous or self-conscious.

Now for something on a personal note - what this course meant for me. I realized a most important thing. We live in Africa. She provides us with food, shelter and a community. It would be a sin to isolate us from the rest of the continent. As musicians, and more importantly Africans, we have a responsibility to incorporate African trends into our music, and to support local groups. After all, that is why classical composers were popular. (Well some of them.) They were open to foreign influences, and gave the societies they lived in something new and fresh. African music may seem plain to some, but there is a divine beauty in simplicity. Music should, first of all, be a natural means of expression, instead of a well-rehearsed piece of 'perfection'. I now realize why trendy, rich people pay to sit and play drums in groups. It is highly therapeutic. I walked into classes exhausted, but left with vibrancy, an energy that I could not explain.

What will I take from the course? A basic principle – never to shut myself off again! I should not live in my own little world, as has been characteristic of music students. Rather I should be open to other people, to nature, and to myself. I should remain impartial while performing and living this art form. But lastly, and most importantly, I should continue to renew myself day after day.

# NW (2005)

... African music fascinates me in the sense that it sounds ... simple and monotonous, but hidden deep behind the "humming" of the instruments of this music style are sound[s] so great one has to listen and understand deeply to find them and bring them out. I experienced this in my MAM 120 lectures and contact with the *djembe* drums in class. The creative minds behind designing the different instruments used in making African music surely had [a] strong social and political foundation, and incorporated these fundamentals into making the instruments. I now realize how many diverse sounds one can get out of a drum roll, high and low slaps on the drum, and playing in the middle or at the edge of the drum, and many more. I personally experienced unity in the lectures with the other students. We worked well as a group, and were able to communicate to each other when there were disagreements. We built a family like a community, and making African music brought some kind of closeness to our class. We experienced an abundance of joy and freedom in our rehearsals, maybe so much freedom we thought we would never have experienced outside our particular musical style we are busy practicing.

Rehearsals were well attended to an extent, some students may have gotten a bit 'bored' during the rehearsals or the music may have become stagnant because we were practicing one piece for a few weeks. I personally feel that we practiced most of the time in the lectures, and I did not receive as much verbal knowledge as I would have liked to gather. I could not fully understand in the beginning of the lectures why this was so important. But after experiencing all that I did, I now know the true value of the influence this exercise has on a person's wellbeing. The physical practicality brought me the scope to explore my inner being, and for that I am highly grateful. Adrenalin was pumping the last few days before the performance. We all united as a community and unit for our performance. There was great anticipation, minutes before the performance, which may have had a positive influence on us delivering a performance out of this world. Our own individual participation had an equally important part in the music, and not one of the students in our class was less important than the other. The parts played by students on instruments other than the diembe brought colour and variety to the music, and every integral part of the composition made the piece what it is today. Also the piece performed brought together two worlds, both [European] classical and African worlds of music, which in our country can be seen as white and black music. South African history shows that there were not many acts of intertwining different styles and sounds of music with others, which may have left the people of the world of music with a one track mind on who should play what, and may also have restricted many a talented performer to musical instruments not suited to their potential. The two music genres worked so well put together, and I believe it brought out the best in our interpretation of music in an improvisational style. All students grasped this task with enthusiasm and performed well.

Coming from a background of a coloured tradition it was easy for me to adapt to the music, and understand the concept of what this type of music does for one's soul and life in general. It might have not been as easy for the other students, but from what I experienced in the class everyone was able to make this music their own. Spiritually, practicing this art of music has brought back my energy and love for my traditions and culture, which may have been lost somewhere to my classical practices here on campus. I might say that I have neglected my heritage. This is why I am thankful for this subject in our course of study. I do nevertheless believe that it is the individual's choice or prerogative to feel comfortable in whatever genre one fits into. That is probably why we specialize at the end of our B.Mus. course – we consciously choose ... what musical field and instrument we would most base our lives on. For me I choose to incorporate a multitude of knowledge from all spectrums of our musical families, and join them to make music unimaginable. ... We pulled off a wonderful show, and I could feel the rhythms and sounds dancing around in my soul. I will surely keep African music close to my heart, and include it in my musical career in the future.

# Celeste Monteith (2005)

African music has always felt a little alien to me in the past because I did not fully understand it, having come from a Western background. ... From what I understood in the introductory lectures the community is very important when it comes to music. Once people gather to make music together, everyone is equal although there are some leaders. The debates that took place in class made me aware of the fact that people with a strong Western background, or people that have grown up with Western music, do not really understand African music making. I feel that it is a good thing for the students to learn African music ... during the four-year

course because we live in Africa, and no one can really live together if they do not understand each other. I feel that I understand more about African music now.

Even though I played the flute, and not a *djembe* for the composition, I learnt much more than I initially knew about African drumming from the introductory lectures as well as from watching the other students during class. I was intrigued by the variety of sound that can be produced by the *djembe* by hitting the drum in a different way or place.

When the class first started to rehearse the piece, things seemed chaotic because everyone was still very new to this style of music. Once the class started to understand the music and 'feel' the rhythm it felt as though the rehearsals were going better. I do, however, feel that we did not always have the team spirit that we should have had. Previously, the class as a whole had not been involved in something like this, and it was difficult to put all the differences aside. For example, there was initially some tension between the flute players about who plays first flute, and who will play second flute. The composition brought the flautists together, and we eventually communicated as friends. In normal circumstances some flautists will not even talk to each other because there is an ongoing competition between the people. Playing this piece as a class enabled us to make music together, and the tension fell away, which I think was pleasing to everyone...

When the class first started to learn the piece of music it was difficult. Almost everyone in the class has had training in Western classical music, which meant that it was difficult to learn the drum rhythms through imitation. Our minds are not trained to learn music without seeing the notes and rhythms on paper in front of us. Once the class received the sheet music the rehearsals went better because everyone felt confident and assured.

The flute part is very different from the music flute players are used to, which made it interesting to learn. For example, the low register is not often used on the flute because the instruments cannot be heard above other instruments. It was sometimes difficult to be heard above all the *djembe* due to the low notes. I like the way the instruments interacted with each other in the piece. There seemed to be a type of dialogue between the flutes and the *djembe*. The other instruments such as the slit-drum, bell and the shaker added interesting sound and effect to the music.

I definitely learnt a lot from the entire MAM 120 course. It was helpful and interesting to see how the different African instruments are played, and also how they were used in the composition. I understand much more about African music now.

Watching the performers and seeing the way African music was notated was helpful to me because now I can go and compose a piece of African music while using the skills I learnt during the semester. I understand how the music should be approached and understood.

# NW (2005)

... It was a wonderful piece to perform. It was very challenging due to the many changes in time signature and rhythm patterns. I have always seen the drum as a percussion instrument, but I soon found that this was only half a truth. The drum can also be seen as a type of melodic instrument if one considers the different pitches of the drum. It is in fact possible to make a drum 'sing'. I never thought that this could be possible.

On a negative note, I have to say that I did not particularly enjoy the various class discussions. It was very time consuming, and we didn't actually come to a mutual agreement or understanding. I know that some students were upset and offended by some of the things that were said ... Nevertheless, I could honestly say that I enjoyed the drumming class and the

performance in the Musaion. I would like to gain even more knowledge about African music and drumming, and I look forward to MUE 200 next year.

#### NW (2005)

... The introductory classes that we had provided us with short excerpts of information about the African 'beat' and rhythm, and mainly what this culture's art system contained. To me, it showed how individual and unique it is, and how, once your body and heart pick up the beat you cannot do anything else but enjoy it and feel free to move. We had a lengthy debate within the second week of starting the course, covering a range of topics. To many, it was senseless and annoying, but I found it quite amusing and interesting as opinions were lifted and arguments soon arose. We discussed the meaning and importance/unimportance of competition especially. What became clear to me after a while was that each individual who had a chance to lift an opinion was trying to convince the other intellectual of what he or she thought was the truth. Instead, the healthier option would have been to listen and ponder such opinions, reflect one's own views, and eventually agree to disagree...

#### NW (2005)

... This module, MAM 120, has taught me a lot about African music in the way of performance, the inner effects of the music and ... most of all, the group work. This gave me the opportunity to know my classmates better. I enjoyed this module very much. Instead of learning theorems in the form of lecturing, this module offers the practical lessons within which we learn about African music while playing.

# NW (2005)

... I realized that to begin to understand the nature and purpose of African music one has to think outside the 'classical box' ... One could say that there is more active participation in African music: the music is performed and appreciated by the same people who act as both performers and the audience, while classical music is performed by a group of professionals for a passive audience. There is a great sense of community and belonging in African music: Everybody has a part, and each part is important; there does not seem to be such a great 'hierarchy' of parts as in classical music (e.g. first violins are seen as 'more important' than second violins; concertos feature a soloist with the orchestra serving a subservient role). I also got the impression that 'mistakes' are more acceptable in African music. And, since a lot of the music is improvised the word 'mistake' loses its meaning, while in the classical sphere perfection (obtained by strictly following a pre-written score) is the ultimate goal and 'mistakes' (i.e. deviations from what is written) are seen in a very negative light. African music seems to be approached in a more relaxed manner; 'go with the flow' seems to be a pervading attitude.

#### NW (2005)

African music encompasses rhythm, melody and raw spirituality into an expressive whole that can be played and enjoyed by individuals from any cultural background. African music transcends the 'rules' so prevalent in other types of music. It allows for individual expression in balanced and unified compositions that capture the essence ... and vibrancy of African music through various musical techniques. MAM 120 has broadened my knowledge and appreciation for African music, and has opened me to the potential of all ethnic types of music and dance.

The introductory discussions to the course regarding topics such as pulse and rhythm were interesting, informative and necessary to increase our awareness of the differences between traditional African music and Western music. These discussions were not just lectures about the [dis]semination of knowledge but encouraged debate and class participation in topics that were not narrowly based on any one perception.

The relaxed and amicable atmosphere of discussions was instrumental in creating an atmosphere that engendered group work and the spirit of teamwork. It was the foundation in the creation of the MAM 120 community...

# NW (2005)

A good friend of mine once said to me that I should always use what talents I possess; that the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best. And this is what I tried to apply with every effort to do in our MAM 120 class. And after trying very hard to work out rhythms and calculate exact time structures, I found that instead of me conquering the music, it managed to conquer me. I found definite freedom without the 'boundaries' of the rhythm and pulse of the music, realizing ultimately that African music is essentially music of the heart. Thereafter, I found the music and practical lectures to be one of the most enjoyable activities, if not the high point of my week. I believe that the enjoyment of this music might even have come out of the choice that we are given to play or not to play, to dance or not to dance, and to have fun or sit back and watch others do so.

African music is not about one element, one person or one issue. Rather, it brings forward a multitude of factors concerning human life. It addresses social, political and humanizing issues simply in the way that it is played and interpreted. Because of the strong practical approach of the subject, it required us to take from the music what we should, and benefit from the diversity of the class and the music that we were going to play. There was a statement made that African music is very spiritual. I would like to state that I think it is not the music that is spiritual, but rather the people playing, making and writing the music that add meaning and spirituality to the music ... The rhythms, although a bit tricky to grasp in the beginning for a few, tended to compel one to move. During our practices people loved to spontaneously clap their hands, move and dance, and there was an energy unsurpassed and unmatched in any of our other classes. I recognized normally quiet people come to life, and people that are normally shy come out of their shells. There was a definite unity that came with practicing and performing this piece. In fact, no writing of mine will be able to adequately convey the sense of community that was felt amongst us ...

# Taryn Arnott (2006)

Although only a short amount of time was spent learning from practical sessions in the "Introduction to the theory and practice of African music" module, the course has provided a group of young musicians with a powerful, inspiring experience. Wisdom and knowledge gained through the adaptation of students from different backgrounds to a new style of indigenous music was mirrored in the guidance offered pertaining to the practice of African musical systems in traditional African cultures.

During informal practical sessions, the MAM 120 class was given a taste of the functioning of societal structures in African civilization, by using the same methods of communication that would take place in such settings. Although we as a class do not have the complete understanding of the cultural history in African music, we were given a general awareness of the systems of hierarchy, respect and reward, as they are experienced in these cultural settings. The class was often divided into groups that were able to communicate with, and complement each other through listening and playing. Improvisation and self-expression were imperative in learning the social roles of members in a group. In this instance, the class became aware that the expression of one individual is neither correct nor wrong. It is merely self-expression. The voice of each individual should be heard and considered, no matter how small, incoherent or strong.

During these sessions, we were exposed to the different types of instruments used in African societies, and the different types of conversations and debate that could occur between these instruments. Not only were we thus able to function as a traditional group would, with respect to peers, as would be done in traditional culture in informal situations, but the class was able to present their understanding of this culture to an audience with the performance of *Dialogues*.

The composition itself demonstrates the importance of each individual's part in a societal structure. Individuals who failed to contribute time and effort weakened the performance as a whole, and slowed down the process of learning to present such a composition, though at times it allowed us to find patience with one another. The composition also taught us patience with ourselves, when not completely understanding specific parts of the composition. The strength of natural leaders in the group drew together all participants, and motivated the individuals in the group to do and understand better.

The philosophy unveiled was that the role of each person – whether as a part of a small group conforming to the same rhythms and sound of their fellow musicians (playing the same instruments), or as an individual contributing to the absolute product in the form of the performance – contributes to the overall interpretation and thus perception of the piece. The role played by each individual determined the understanding of the final production. When the weight of one person was not pulled, the entire group would be affected. Compensation for weakness appeared just as it is – compensation, rather than complete contribution of all parts. Although the final performance did not clearly demonstrate a complete understanding of the composition – that is, a dialogue between different groups with different strengths – it was successful in the aspect of each singular group fulfilling its own egocentric role. Unfortunately, our presentation was not able to demonstrate the underlying understanding of the composition – that every single voice is important.

An interpretation of the composition as it is written is that each group needs to adapt to even the smallest voice – as was needed in the ideal contrast between the different sound[s] of the different instruments. The soft-spoken flutes should not be overpowered by the aggressive *djembe*, and the conversations between them demonstrate the ideal of equality between

both the weaker and stronger members of society. Though the soft-spoken may not be able to overcome the outspoken ideas of the aggressive, it is sometimes in this softness that one may find true wisdom and beauty. Beauty, in this scenario, was expressed in the form of sound.

The performance of dance in the composition by certain members showed a desire and fulfilment of inner expression that could not have been experienced in any other circumstance. This was enlightening to those who were able to do so, and perhaps even enlightening to the audience who were able to witness this.

An interesting aspect of the production was the incorporation of both traditional African instruments and newer European instruments. Surprisingly, the sound of the saxophone and flute complemented the traditional instruments. Perhaps it is a reflection of the modern day development of understanding between cultures. Although different groups may never truly grasp the essence of other cultures, it is possible for all to co-exist in a global society. As cultures continue to have patience for, and thus understand each other, so may our co-existence grow into a mutual friendship that is not only peaceful, but also beneficial to both side[s]. Each group may learn from these experiences, and may gain knowledge from these partnerships. From this knowledge and experience, we too may develop greater wisdom, which can only cause the character of the soul to grow stronger.

The lesson that the MAM 120 class was able to learn through this production, and during informal class lecture sessions, spanned far beyond an understanding of traditional African culture and society. It allowed each one of us to learn a bit about our own characters, as is so often discovered only when working with others. The roles that we were each able to fulfil as the foundation for a great, altruistic composition and production allowed us to learn of the functioning of members of a group, and thus gave us a glance into the way that we should conduct ourselves as a part of society as we grow into adults who need to function in this society.

# Anina de Villiers (2006)

I must start this essay by saying that I was not too impressed when I learnt that MAM 120 entailed the learning of the playing of the African drum. I have never had a particular interest in drum playing and the various techniques that accompany it. Nor did I think there was much to the art of "just banging a drum". It did not seem difficult. In fact at a glance it even seemed rather mundane. This was all before our very first lecture.

I have always wondered how it is that African people seem to have such a good sense of rhythm. They seem to just naturally have rhythm in their beings. In our first lecture we learnt that the foundation of African music is pulse, which we Europeans wrongly translate as rhythm. This sense of pulse that permeates the everyday living of African people is, I believe, what gives them such a good sense of rhythm. Pulse is central to African musical thought and provides a structure around which everything else is built, so that in an ensemble where solos are taken the whole community of drums supports the soloist, and if you are in tune with your community and its pulse, nothing can go wrong. Our very first task, to play drum solos, was very intimidating – for me at least. At that stage I did not know yet that whatever I played, it could not be wrong because I had the full support of the community's steady pulse behind me. Also, I did not understand that the drum was my voice with which to talk to my community, the whole concept was just very intimidating, even more so because I am a shy person.

Another novel concept that was presented to us is 'community'. As we filed into our lecture hall and collected a drum to 'bang' we seated ourselves in fairly straight rows as we are

taught in Western musical culture, ready to now be instructed. Then, our whole world gets turned upside down when we are told we must sit in a circle, because in African music making everyone is equal but in order to be equal we must have eye contact with everyone in the group. We are all now part of a community, a drumming community, our drums are our voices and in a community everyone must be given a chance to speak in order for that community to function properly. This was perhaps the most difficult concept to understand, since Europeans do not function on the principle of community at all. We tend to stand alone and on our own mostly. We seldom function as a community as a whole. But that also has to do with the independent nature of our upbringing.

I did not realize that the drum is such a symbolic instrument and that so many different meanings, feelings and emotions could be conveyed by how, when and where you play your drum. The way I understand it is that the drum forms the center of the community, and what you play is a musical representation of your emotional wellbeing. That is why the playing of the drum is not a concert in process, but more accurately, a dialogue. Yet another new concept was that, when playing music you should not do it for yourself only, because then the whole aim of music is not reached. The performers and listeners alike should enjoy it.

The rehearsals for our MAM performance were interesting. At first we did not have the community sense, and we could not make very much sense of the music, because it depended so much on the community interpretation that we could not give. But by and by, we learnt to let our drums be our voices, and we learnt to listen to our fellow community members through solos and dialogues. Along with this community sense we first had to let the music speak to us so that we could get the natural flow of pulse going. This took quite a while. But when eventually we had it the whole musical structure started to make sense.

I really enjoyed the performance of our *Dialogues*. It is a fantastic piece of music, and I think [we] as a first year class learnt a lot from it – from pulse and rhythm to community sense, and the art of working together and giving everyone a chance to voice their opinion. I learnt a lot from this class; for one thing, the playing of the African drum does not mean just simply 'banging it'. Every sound you make and every rhythm you play has a specific meaning. I also learnt that having a community to fit into, and being part of the community is essential for every individual, so that we can better understand the world we live in.

# Andrie Drent (2006)

... The approach the lecturer had is unique and refreshing. He taught us to think in less restricted ways. We learned how a community works in the cultures of Africa. We also discovered that for quite some time, African cultures regard a woman as the highest power in the community.

From the moment we started playing the drums and learning the differences between the drums, we were enchanted, and enjoyed every minute of it. The professor taught us to feel our inner pulse and how to attune the rhythmic patterns we played on the drum to that pulse. Being part of a community also means that everyone belonging to the community must keep the same pulse to preserve the harmony between the players and within the community.

In the beginning we just drummed any rhythm given by the lecturer. Each one in the community was then given a chance to improvise a few bars of music while the rest of the community kept the pulse-rhythm. In that way we learned how to respect each other's individuality.

The professor taught us how to feel the rhythm with our bodies, and how, not to try and do it technically, trying to write out each rhythm and practicing it from that. In the beginning it was hard, but the more we practiced the better we got. Near the end of the semester all of us found that inner rhythm...

When we received the piece to play, *Dialogues*, I won't be able to say that I was overly thrilled with it. I just wanted to improvise for the rest of the semester... I struggled with the rhythms, as I was not familiar with the rhythms we had to play. In the end I prevailed with the help of a lot of people around me, and their patience with me.

The piece we had to play was uniquely African and European. Saxophones, flutes, percussion instruments and the different drums were combined to create this awesome dialogue between the different instruments. We did not have enough time to fully appreciate the dialogue between the instruments, but I believe we experience[d] a small bit of the genius of the piece. None of us would ever have thought to mix European and African instruments to create such an effect ...

# Linda Schultz (2006)

My impressions of MAM 120 were very positive. I found the introductory lectures on African indigenous music and culture very interesting. It was fascinating to learn how important the community is in the cultures. I also found it very encouraging, as in today's society the emphasis is more on the individual, whether it is in business or performance. In the Western culture the person with the most money or influence is the most important. In African cultures the whole community sticks together, supporting each other, and through that creating a stronger, united force. It is also good that everyone gets the same pay after a performance, except for the person who just gives the steady beat and does not perform any solos, who gets slightly more money. I found this encouraging as it shows that everyone is considered the same and equally important.

I greatly enjoyed the drumming sessions, and would have like[d] to have played more drum as this was a new experience for me. Because I played the flute in the performance I did not get much chance on the drums. At first the thought of having to improvise and play a solo on the drum was quite daunting. But because the whole class or 'community' was there giving support in the form of the beat, it was an enjoyable experience. It was interesting to hear the different solos, and to see how they fitted with the personalities of the performers.

At first, rehearsals of the piece, *Dialogues*, were rather chaotic, as we are all trained according to the Western style, with "western" rhythms and the "western" idea of having a leader or conductor. Unfortunately this led to a bit of tension, with some people wanting to take on the role as leader. But luckily an understanding was reached, and peace was soon made. Although to a certain extent we still relied on a leader figure, we soon learnt to listen to each other, and feel a common beat, and things began to fall into place. When playing in a circle like we did during rehearsals, it reinforced the concept of the community supporting one another, and everyone working together, not each one playing his own part.

I found it interesting to see how the parts for the drums were notated, with crosses and not using the five lines of the Western stave. This was something I had not seen before, as a classically trained flautist.

I like that European instruments, namely the flute and saxophones, were added to the composition. It gave it an interesting, slightly modern sound while still keeping the traditional African feel. As a flute player I found the rhythms confusing and difficult at first. But with the

help of the other wind instruments I was able to make sense of it, and enjoyed playing with the drums and saxophones, something I had never done before.

The other instruments (bells, bass drum, shakers, and slit drum) gave the composition the final touch, and sometimes were relied on to keep everything together. Unfortunately the drums were over eager, and often the other instruments could not be heard.

# Louise Saunders (2006)

"Dum dum ka ka ka dum." My heart palpitating, in my mind, convinced that I am going to go into cardiac arrest. "Breathe, Louise, everyone is looking at YOU!" Oh no, it is over, and it was too bad to rekindle my reputation. My career as a world famous drummer is destroyed. My first drumming solo, and I have ruined it. My friends are laughing at me, and I can feel my face is a gleaming red from embarrassment.

This was my first introduction to an African music lecture. I was scared, shaky and never wanted to beat a drum ever again. By my second and third lectures, after practically overdosing on rescue remedy before class, I managed to relax more and realized that the art of African drumming is in tapping your foot. I was amazed at the power of the foot. All bow down and worship the foot. Not quite, but from my experience keeping the pulse is the only way that I survived this course.

The day we received our music for *Dialogues* was the day I realized, "I am rhythmically challenged". I knew that to pull off the piece, a miracle would need to take place. For the next few weeks our membrane drum group would suffer the torment of having to follow Charlotte's foot that she would lift to the sky and drop to the floor like a boulder, and we still without fail always got it wrong. We all had a feeling in our group that we were going to be the ones to let the class down, but I did not want to concur. As the African drumming lessons went by more and more concentration and energy went into our part, until two rehearsals before our performance, the miracle we had been seeking came. Our Mozartian background just fell away, and the music became a flowing entity that was almost out of our hands' control. Our feet took control, the pulse of the music beating through our bodies made *Dialogues* a success, well at least in our rehearsals.

The most liberating experience of this course was realizing that music isn't about control, but about fellowship, trust and mental communication. In African music there is no time or space for the power hungry. There is only place in the group for compassionate people who have the ability to endure the journey that we as musicians will go on as a group. In the process, and during this experience it is interesting to identify the soulful people in the group and the materialistic shallow ones. African music is a great medium in which to identify people's true selves. It is a good environment to conduct a judge of character.

# Amore Dippenaar (2006)

On first hearing that we were going to have a drumming class this semester, I thought: "Yeah, at least one class that will be fun and interesting." And so, excited, I went to my first class on African drum.

During the first lecture there was a lot of talking and philosophizing, not really what we expected. What was being talked about didn't seem of any interest to anyone, all we wanted to do was play on the drum. Nevertheless, important things were said in this discussion, things

about the African culture that I, as a white South African, certainly didn't know. So I realized that this was a golden opportunity to hear about the African culture, to better understand it and so, to better understand my black friends.

Through the discussion in class, I learned that the community is very important in the African culture. If you have the community's support, you can do anything. This was demonstrated on the drum. All of us played the same pulse, and then each of us had a turn to play a solo on the drum. Some played very well, really expressing themselves with confidence, and though others made "mistakes", the rest of us were still there keeping the pulse, i.e. the community was right behind that person.

Another thing, since the first lecture we all sat in a circle. This is to show that we are all equal. This brought forth unity in the group and good communication for we could all see one another clearly.

Keeping the pulse with your foot is also a unifying element. The moment somebody didn't keep the pulse, the unity was lost, because someone went faster or slower than everybody else.

Playing on the drum was absolutely great. I love rhythm! Playing on the drum, I could feel the rhythm in my body. That is one thing about black people that I have always admired: their rhythm and feel for the music.

It was somewhat frustrating at times. There was always noise, especially when you first walked into the classroom. Everybody tried out something different on the drum at the same time. It would drive me insane, for every time somebody spoke, somebody else needed to be made quiet.

When we received the notation for *Dialogues* everyone tried out their parts. We acted like small children when they see an instrument. The saxophones, the flutes, the membrane drum 1 and membrane drum 2, the bell, the slit drum and all the other instruments played at once but not together. Frustration! The tricky rhythms in which we had to concentrate so hard to play, frustration! The feeling that some people were looking down on others, big frustration!

One specific rehearsal, I remember that I got so angry over something really silly, actually. We [as] membrane drum 1 were practicing by ourselves, and each person there wanted to contribute to what should be done. It is good that everyone participates, but not so that every second person gets interrupted. So I said: "Can't we please just select somebody to be the leader, who can tell us at which bar to fall in and so on?" And so we did. But that didn't mean anything, because we just carried on the way we used to, I left the class very grumpy.

Nearer to the performance, rehearsals started to get better. Everyone was getting serious about the music, and was trying their best to make it work. Yes, certainly there was still the odd friction. For example, somebody would play wrong, and somebody else would want to help. But the person playing wrongly would just feel offended, and then there it was again... tension.

Oh! The joy of practicing, and there is a difficult rhythm coming along, and you play it faultlessly! We would look at one another, and smile about it, and then we would enjoy the music thoroughly.

Preparing for the performance. Our class representative was ill, oh dear. The organizing of the drums didn't go that well. When we got to the South campus to fetch them, there were not enough *djembe* for everyone. Then we went to the Musaion to see if they were already there...nope, not still enough. Eventually we organized enough drums, but then the setting up on the stage was a problem. Who sits where? Is everybody here? PLEASE EVERYONE JUST BE QUIET. DOES EVERYBODY HAVE A STAND? Where is the slit drum?

In the end everybody was sorted and ready to play.

The moment we started the performance everybody was enjoying it. It was the first time I could really hear what was going on in the music, and it was pleasant. At one time membrane drums 1 got totally lost, but we managed to catch up. Peter's dance caught us a bit off guard, but it made us enjoy the performance even more! In the end what really matters is that we ended together. And that day we worked as a group.

This class has not only taught me about the drum or African culture. I learned to have patience with people, learned that sometimes I must be the least in order for this group to work. I learned that I am not always right; learned that we can laugh about our mistakes.

Thanks for the privilege to play on the drum. Despite the little hang-up, I enjoyed it tremendously!