THE EMIC AND ETIC TEACHING PERSPECTIVES OF
TRADITIONAL GHANAIAN DANCE-DRUMMING:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GHANAIAN AND AMERICAN MUSIC COGNITION AND
THE TRANSMISSION PROCESS

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I became interested in the music of Ghana during my first semesters as an undergraduate student at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia. While auditioning for university music programs, SUNY Fredonia percussion head Dr. Kay Stonefelt encouraged me to seek out study with native Ghanaian master drummer and xylophonist Bernard Woma, who was going to be in residence at SUNY Fredonia beginning the following year. I always was an enthusiast of all kinds of music, including rock and roll, jazz, funk, R&B, hip-hop, and classical – music that I had heard before. Because I had never really heard a great deal of African music, studying African drumming with a master Ghanaian piqued my interest. I was thoroughly ecstatic about attending SUNY Fredonia and eagerly anticipated the arrival of Woma. While his immigration papers were being finalized, Stonefelt taught the ensemble and introduced the basic concepts of SubSaharan African music-making.

When Woma came to Fredonia, I found myself quickly infatuated with “his” music. The layering and interlocking of the timeline patterns and the use of cycles intrigued my mathematical mind, and I was captivated by the intensity of the movements. Woma displayed a light-hearted spirit, I found pure enjoyment in communal music-making in what SUNY Fredonia called the African Drumming Ensemble. Woma quickly recognized my genuine interest and he encouraged me to continue playing and learning. His spirited and infectious personality, along with a mutual respect for one another, prompted us to became close as colleagues and friends. I was honored to sit next to him at our commencement ceremony from SUNY Fredonia.

I had the opportunity to study in Ghana during the summer session in 2007. While studying in Ghana, I really felt that Bernard had welcomed me as a respectful and dedicated
performer of his culture’s music, and he supported me in teaching and performing the music. My deepening respect and appreciation for the people and the culture caused me to want to learn everything I could about African music. I decided to attend Kent State University to study the music and culture of Africa and the African diaspora with Dr. Kazadi wa Mukuna in the ethnomusicology program. I continued to learn the performance practice in the university’s African Ensemble, as I studied ethnomusicological methodology, which allowed me make broader social, cultural, and historical connections.

During my study with Dr. Kazadi, I became interested in issues of bi-musicality and the continuity and change found when music-cultures are learned outside their cultural context. I found the process of becoming a musician of a foreign culture fascinating, which culminated in the selection of this research topic. Investigating the emic perspective through the lens of learning and teaching caused me to feel as if I would be giving back to an international community of ethnomusicologists, musicians of African music, and music educators in a meaningful way. I drew from my experience as a percussionist of different non-western cultures in developing my current research questions: how learning and teaching of non-western music-cultures outside their context occurs and why. During the summer of 2009, I spent four weeks conducting research by observing the Saakumu Dance Troupe’s rehearsals and their instruction of American students at the Dagara Music Center in Greater Accra, Ghana. My research in the United States included the collection of questionnaires, interviews, and observations of both instructors and students in ensemble rehearsals, performances, and workshops.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful for a number of people that made my education possible. Foremost, of course, to my family and their seemingly never-ending support. Thank you to all the students and teachers that have participated in my research and welcomed me to observe, participate, record, and interview. Your continued drive for excellence is creating a culture in the United States that is artistically and intellectually rich. I am also very grateful to the members of the Saakumu Dance Troupe, who have embraced an international audience with the greatest attitude, and have made many friends along the way. Of course, I would like to thank Bernard Woma, who continues to be a huge inspiration to me, both professionally and personally. I would like to thank Dr. Kazadi wa Mukuna for his mentorship and for offering his expertise with open arms. Thanks go to Dr. Denise Seachrist, Dr. Thomas Janson and Dr. Halim El-Dabh for their contribution to the project as well, and Laurel Hurst for encouraging me to sit down and write. The Kent State Graduate Student Senate must also be recognized for generously funding my research in Ghana and in the United States, by way of their International Grant and the Research Grant respectively.
PART I

INTRODUCTION

In the past century, American students have had a variety of avenues in which to study music from different cultures. World music instruction and world music ensembles have become more prevalent at all levels of schooling in the United States.\(^1\) The founding of The International Society for Music Education (ISME) in 1953 marked an early commitment to non-western music in the classroom.\(^2\) Beginning in the 1970s, the Music Educators National Conferences (MENC) progressively expanded their scope to include the teaching of non-western musical traditions into the curriculum.\(^3\)

Since its inclusion in the curriculum, non-western music’s position in education has been a pivotal focus of investigation. In addition to teaching students musical concepts, non-western music education has the ability to enable students to gain an appreciation of another people at a critical point where ethnomusicology, education, and music cognition meet. Because of this, it is imperative that the educational practice be scrutinized. My work here details the continuity and change in Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions through the phenomenon of non-western music

1. Although many educational systems and specific educators continue to use the term “World Music,” I will hence forth refer to the practices as “non-western.” The term “world music” is a Eurocentric, and possibly racial and colonial, connotation. With certainty, the term does not describe music-cultures with any sort of accuracy – are not all human musics “world music?” For these reasons, I will also use terms such as Sub-Saharan (African), West African, and Ghanaian when appropriate.


3. Ibid. 104.
education in America universities, through the lens of pedagogy in “non-western ensembles. For this thesis, I conducted empirical research through multiple case studies, gaining information through observation and active participation in the teaching and learning of Ghanaian dance-drumming music.

Multicultural music education is as evident at the post-secondary level, where ensembles of a variety of non-western traditions can be found. Of these are African ensembles, in which Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions have played a particularly significant role. Factors such as native musicians embracing an international audience, familiarity with the English language, and the existence of an entertainment repertoire detached from local determinants and religious undertones may have contributed to the dominant presence of Ghanaian dance-drumming styles performed by university African Ensembles in the United States. However, these are all speculations that are beyond the scope of the present research.

Through my experience in learning and teaching the Ghanaian dance-drumming repertoire, I constructed my own theories of the differences in the American and Ghanaian teaching perspectives of the music. At the university level, I have had teachers of American, Ghanaian, and Congolese descent, who had all utilized different pedagogical strategies and styles. When deciding my thesis project, I felt like further study into these contrasting pedagogical perspectives was necessary, especially in terms of African music’s continuity and change. It was my hypothesis that different pedagogical techniques would be found in American universities than those actually utilized in Ghana. Furthermore, I expected to find a variety of different techniques in the American universities, based primarily on the ethnic background and educational education of the instructor. Factors I originally considered to affect teaching style were where the instructor was born, his or her Western music education, and whether the
instructor actually studied in Africa. If there were different pedagogical strategies, why was this so?

As an aspiring college professor, I view pedagogical practices as having an astounding affect on students’ learning processes and their understanding of another culture. This produces a cyclical effect, since “the way a musician teaches is likely to reflect the way that the person learned in the first place.” As the learning perspectives and teaching perspectives exist in a constant state of interconnection, I chose to include both realms of the transmission process in my research. As a direct result of teaching strategies, the description of learning perspectives is seen as a direct effect of particular teaching perspectives. In order to better detail the learning process in developing an etic perception, my research included tracing the steps from the students’ beginning to becoming an advanced or even professional player by investigating motivations for learning this music, the students’ development of performance techniques and their negotiation of identity. My hypothesis was that American students would call upon learning approaches foreign to the emic perspective due to their motivations for learning, their familiarity of the Western musical system, and encounters with foreign teaching strategies. I expected to make observations that would suggest an American negotiation process in developing fluency with performing the music. As both realms are closely intertwined, the Conclusions chapter calls upon both through the exploration of why these perspectives possibly exist as they do.

When reviewing the literature on non-western music ensembles, I noticed that an overwhelming number of the authors were instructors themselves who were reflecting on themselves and their students from their own classrooms. While this provides wonderful subjective information, it provides very little objective information based on quantitative data.

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When reflecting on their past experiences, there are vulnerabilities of inflated information, exaggeration, loss of memory and accuracy, and even misinterpretation of the marvels in their classroom. While this provides some justification for my observations and questionnaires of other instructors and students other than my own, I do believe that future studies must completely emerge themselves in quantitative research. The growing popularity of “world music ensembles” in the American educational system is more likely to continue if more objective facts are obtained.
Research Design

The design of the research was to be as thorough as possible in the form of multiple case studies. In order to research the two realms of the transmission process, I took both a hands-on and a hands-off approach to both learning and teaching the Ghanaian dance-drumming style. In order to gain insight on the emic and etic perspectives, I observed the transmission process in both The United States and Ghana. Although this appears to be a very simple and obvious choice, it was also a difficult venture to execute. It required studying in Ghana and comparing and contrasting that study with multiple case studies in the United States, including my own teaching. Due to the existence of serious intellectual inquiry there, the American institution of higher learning served as the primary scope in which the American teaching and learning perspectives could be determined. The methodology I have used in the research is primarily participant-observation. The participant-observation methodology is common in ethnomusicology and African musical study, and began most notably with A.M. Jones’ research in the 1930s, which was further promoted by the substantial works of Mantle Hood and others. It has been argued that actively participating in a culture’s music can illuminate the deepest knowledge otherwise intangible. This may explain the growing presence of non-western music ensembles in university music departments since their creation in the post-world war period.

My participation in the African drumming ensemble at SUNY Fredonia, under Ghanaian master drummer and xylophonist Bernard Woma and American-born percussionists Karolyn Stonefelt and Tiffany Nicely, the Kent State University African Ensemble, directed by Kazadi

5. Ibid., 86.
wa Mukuna, the Bush Mango Drum and Dance Company under Blair Hornbuckle and Colleen Hendrick, and the Eya African Ensemble under Shawn Roberts and Sheron Price, served as the primary means of illuminating perspectives of the West African drumming cultures. Additional observations were made during workshops and presentations given by Obo Addy, Michael Markus, Atiba Rorie, Colin Tribby, and the Saakumu Dance Troupe. To delve into the Ghanaian perspective, I made two excursions to Ghana in the summers of 2007 and 2009, the latter for the express purpose of conducting research specifically for this project. Funded by the Kent State University Graduate Student Senate’s International Travel Grant, my study abroad in 2009 consisted of four weeks at the Dagara Music Center in Greater Accra, Ghana, where I observed classes and video-recorded them for further review. When logistically possible, semi-systematic interviews of students and instructors were completed. Rather than a means of acquiring quantitative data, surveys and questionnaires were only distributed to students and teachers when individual interviews were not possible. A graduate assistantship teaching Ghanaian repertoire to the Kent State African Ensemble and the Kent State Percussion Ensemble was a principal means of investigating teaching pedagogies first-hand, as was my teaching of the SUNY Fredonia Percussion Guild and other workshops. Scholarly articles, books, audio-visual recordings and archival material were used to support, clarify, and even question my findings.

Readers may notice that much of my research is based in the qualitative descriptive approach, which is often characteristic of the discipline of ethnomusicology. When possible, I do offer quantitative data, but this is only meant to support my findings of the research. I would suggest that future quantitative research may solidify some of my conclusions, as well as conclusions of other researchers in the field. Although the strict purpose of the thesis is to explain the transmission process as it exists in the two cultures and to speculate why, I would
hope that interested parties will apply my findings to their own learning and teaching of Ghanaian dance-drumming.

The materialization of this thesis was designed to clearly communicate information to a wide audience. I believe this thesis may be helpful for those well advanced in Ghanaian musical styles as well as those who may be deciding if studying the music-culture is a worthy or logistical possibility. Ethnomusicologists may focus on the continuity and change found when the culture is presented in America, while music educators of all sorts may find useful information from the case studies of Western imitation of the Ghanaian transmission process.

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An explanation of the title of the paper may be a necessary first step. The terms emic and etic were most famously used by Kenneth L. Pike in the field of linguistics. In his extensive writings, Pike defined the emic perspective as one’s view of his or her own culture. For this thesis, this refers to the Ghanaian perspective - how a Ghanaian conceives, perceives, and values his or her own music-culture. Contrastingly, the etic perspective is one from a cultural outsider, one who interprets the culture of another. For this study, this pertains to students of non-African descent studying in an American institution of higher learning who participate in an ensemble that performs dance-drumming music from the Ghanaian culture. Comparing and contrasting the emic and etic concept is the driving force behind this research. I attempt to determine if my original hypothesis, that there would be distinct differences between the emic and etic perspectives of the transmission process based on the presence of pedagogical techniques, were true. Unfortunately, it became clear that the entire scope of the emic and etic perspectives was far too wide to adequately give the content justice in this current study. Therefore, I aimed to focus

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my energy towards the musical cognition of the two perspectives, primarily describing more “surface” level material, such as the perceptions and conception of the musical features.

Consequently, what is ignored in this study are the deep-seated belief systems that are engrained in the traditional Ghanaian perspective, such as religious functions in certain musical genres.

My fieldwork is preceded by a description of the traditional Ghanaian musical style. I call upon as much of an ethnomusicological holistic approach in this description, considering all aspects of the socio-culture and taking information from the great depth of studies on West African behavior as necessary and in the allotment of space. For example, considering the socio-cultural, linguistic and historical features that govern the music will reinforce elements of the musical features. A cornerstone of modern ethnomusicology, Alan Merriam’s tripartite model of the interconnection of behavior, concept, and sound allows for a more intimate and comprehensive understanding of musical phenomenon with the ultimate goal of understanding why the human race exists as it does. Allusion is made to the interobjective approach of African philosophy and to its appropriate use in the analysis of the music-culture. Interested parties can easily find numerous texts on the musical style of Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana specifically. Books and articles that I used for this research and paper are found in the References section of the Appendixes. Consequently, the description of musical style here is very limited, with a rendering of the transmission process in greater detail to follow.

The main section of the paper explores the teaching perspectives of the Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions, partnered with the learning processes viewed as the result of those instructional techniques. In the first chapter, I describe the pedagogical techniques and learning processes of the traditional Ghanaian style. This is accomplished through detailed explanation of the oral method and the informal style. Although these terms are popularly viewed as generic,
the technical methods are actually quite unique in Ghana. Both the general population and those youth selected to be great musicians learn through the socialization method of building a foundation of cultural and historical knowledge. Knowledge and music’s role are learned primarily through active participation in customs, with an expectation that musical skill is developed through the imitation of elders by all members of society. Advanced playing and virtuosity is seen as an exploration of creativity, innate gifts given to the chosen few. An investigation of the socialization method illuminates the purpose of musical education in Ghanaian society by encompassing the technical, social and institutional dimensions of transmission. A short summary concludes this chapter by highlighting the most significant aspects of the traditional Ghanaian transmission process.

This is followed by a chapter that illustrates my observations of the cross-cultural exchange that occurs in teaching the music-culture at American institutions of higher learning. I also explain issues that arise from the context of the American university, which can influence an instructor’s methodology. The design of the research was to observe the methodology found in multiple African Ensembles, as well as to actively examine students’ outcomes in my own teaching space. A glimpse into the learning processes was obtained through interviews and questionnaires of the students in these ensembles. First, students’ early perceptions are explained, and their motivations for studying the music-culture are rationalized. Musical features such as performance techniques, time, rhythm, texture, form and memorization as well as extramusical features such as dance, presentation, meaning and function will be described through my observations and participation in American as well as Ghanaian ensembles. Connections between teaching technique and the learning perspective are made. A short summary section concludes the chapter, highlighting major concepts of teaching and learning the
music-culture outside its cultural context. This is followed by a Summary chapter, which contains a synopsis of the two perspectives of transmission, as well as a description of how the etic and emic phenomenon compared and contrasted.

The Conclusions chapter contains an analysis of key observations, highlighting what I found as the paramount comparisons and contrasts between the two perspectives. This is concluded with my hypothesis which resulted from triangulation of the information from the literature as well as from the data obtained from my multiple case study research. I found that university African Ensembles in the United States that contain a particular focus on the Ghanaian dance-drumming repertoire were constructed with different formats, with a focus on the ethnomusicology-holistic, concert performance, or the building of percussion technique. The formats of these ensembles contrast functionally, as they contain individual-specific views towards their course’s objectives. Each format has a specific goal for the student: what knowledge is to be learned and what skills are to be obtained. Based on the data from my research, the format thereby influenced the instructor’s use of different types of pedagogies. This is a rather novel hypothesis, as previous literature focuses on categorizing the instructors in order to explain the breadth of pedagogies found in university African ensembles. This hypothesis reaches beyond how the emic and etic perspectives relate to infer also why they exist as they do.

My findings regarding this cross-cultural phenomenon based on this research are outlined in the Conclusions. Throughout this work, uncommon terms are italicized and defined at their first occurrence. A concise list of these terms and their definitions are found in the Glossary of Terms. In addition, the References section at the end contains all the obtainable articles, books, and recordings used throughout my research.
Ghanaian Musical Style

Musical style can be defined as a pattern of musical behaviors or habits acquired from the whole experience of life. As a discipline, ethnomusicology seeks to understand cultural and musical concepts through a holistic lens, informing cultural knowledge through a society’s musical behavior. Ethnomusicologists have utilized different models, theories and stresses - because there is no single doctrine of ethnomusicology, one must always recognize Alan Merriam’s tripartite model of considering the music by equally relating concept, behavior and sound. Ethnomusicology posits music simultaneously as a humanity, social science and fine art, existing as a manifestation of collective social philosophy, functional use within communities, and individual’s creative portrayals of how one feels and thinks towards one’s surroundings. Details of a musical system can be obtained not only by study of the “absolute” music, but interdisciplinary approaches to include linguistic, historical and social phenomenon.

Nketia, Chernoff, Meki Nzewi, Kubik and Agordoh have written substantial and rather complete works on Sub-Saharan musical style. Ethnomusicologist Ruth Stone has created

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a model where a specific case study on the Kpelle people of Liberia can represent broad concepts throughout Sub-Saharan African music-cultures. Furthermore, Locke\textsuperscript{15} and Agawu\textsuperscript{16} are just two of the many scholars that have published analyses of particular musical elements found among specific ethnic groups. It is not my intention to duplicate what has been written previously, because the proficient researcher in the twenty-first century certainly will be able to obtain these sources with little difficulty. Instead, I have given a description of musical style as it pertains to this research; only what is needed to comprehend the research and my conclusions are included here. Through this chapter’s description, the actual fieldwork can be rationalized, as that of the continuity and change that occurs in the context of the American population learning the music outside its origin. Of course, the Ghanaian transmission process is significant to its musical style as well, and is explained fully in the two main Parts of the thesis.

\textit{Music in Ghanaian Life}

Social conditions and culture in Ghana are complex. However, at the core of life are the village and the family. Ghanaian families traditionally live under the same roof or very near one another, and are able to sustain themselves and the community by farming as well as selling and trading specialized goods.\textsuperscript{17} In Ghana, a larger family means a more powerful and rich family; it

\begin{itemize}
  \item 17. The colonization in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century has integrated the system of capitalism, causing a trend of Ghanaian migration to the bigger cities, such as Kumasi, Tamale, and the capital Accra.
\end{itemize}
is advantageous to have many children who can perform a variety of duties and provide for the elders. Villages are very closely tied, elder women are customarily called mother, and cousins call each other brother and sister. Marriage is a critical junction in African society, a necessary bond that ties the two families together. Over time, clans and sub-clans have formed within ethnic groups as a result of these complex layers of interconnection.

In Ghana and across sub-Saharan African, the philosophy that each individual is vital to the whole is of utmost importance. In the traditional village, every person has a function in the society that is deemed socially necessary. “I belong, therefore, I am” is a common proverb that illustrates the African philosophy of existence, portraying the concept that every individual has a role within the community. *Intersubjectivity* serves as the African mode of consciousness, describing how individual existence is only meaningful through one’s relationship with others, requiring an interconnection with others.

Musical events in Ghanaian society parallel the African modes of existence and consciousness, as they often integrate the entire community. There is a very close relationship between performer and audience in most musical styles in Africa. Even in the select cases where there are special performers and an audience, the observers are culturally bound to show outward dramatic expression of feeling: shouts, yells, or grunts to show appreciation, singing with chorus, dancing and clapping.18

The traditional Ghanaian dance-drumming ensemble also parallels its social conditions in that every person is vital to the existence of the village; the musical ensemble also requires each musician to be perceptive and sensitive of each and every other musician. Each musical part possesses a necessary role in the texture of the ensemble. As dancing is such an integral part to

the music, each musician must also be aware of the dancers’ movements, capabilities, and level of endurance. No matter how complex or personally gratifying the part, the music is only correct if every performer interconnects into the single objective of the whole.

*Ethnicity in Ghana*

Due to the ethnic diversity of the country, a single definition of Ghanaian musical style can be problematic. The country is home to five major ethnic groups with over 100 different sub-ethnic groups, each distinguished by religion, language, customs, and music, among others. Neighboring ethnic groups have existed in a simultaneous state of interconnection and isolation during their long history, as well as a long history of trade with the Arab world from the east. The complexity of the demographic was only furthered by the presence of Europeans beginning in the 1500s, which worked to further the power struggle between ethnic groups in the region. King Leopold II of Belgium sparked the European imperialistic endeavors by claiming the area of the Congo basin after being told of the area’s rich resources through the accounts of missionaries and eventually through the accounts of the explorer Henry Morton Stanley, whom he sent to the area under the ruse of looking for the missing David Livingstone. In order to partake in the extraction and exploitation of the continent and its people, as well as keep Belgium’s power in check, the other European superpowers entered a race to set up posts throughout the continent. The Berlin Conference of 1884/5 served as a more peaceful way for the European powers to meet about the partitioning of the territories, creating political boundaries without concern for those ethnic group divisions previously in place. African leaders were not invited to participate in the conference, nor were they consulted in any way. Consequently,
political structures and the mapping of nations, such as the Gold Coast, were created with no regard to the people who had lived there for centuries. This forced African ethnicities, many of which were opposing groups, into a common political structure.

Later, during the independence movements in the 1950s, ethnic groups in the Gold Coast finally found a cause that united them, the shared goal of overthrowing the British regime and their independent sovereignty. Interestingly, they found common ground in opposition to the exploitative Europeans who forced their unification in the first place, centuries prior. The people achieved their independence in 1957, renaming the country Ghana. A power struggle has continued in the auspices of the national political structure, since smaller populated ethnicities have smaller representation in the government. However, Nketia explains that “new levels of identification that went beyond those of the ethnic group” has resulted from the European period in Africa. There is now a simultaneous duality in Ghana: a degree of shared Ghanaian identity, a proud identity as an influential leader in Pan-African independence, alongside the people’s deep ethnic heritage.19

The continuity and change throughout the region’s history is apparent also in the musical style. Nketia explains:

[in Sub-Saharan Africa], a network of distinct yet related traditions which overlap in certain aspects of style, practice, or usage, and share common features in internal pattern, basic procedure, and contextual similarities.20

Although Nketia was speaking of musical phenomenon across Sub-Saharan Africa, aspects of the musical style and culture within the ethnic groups of Ghana can be viewed in the same light. Incidentally, Ghanaian independence in 1957 sparked the Pan-African movement

toward independence in part by highlighting the similarity and uniformity of African culture and philosophy in contrast to that of the European colonizers. Although arguably more surface style attributes such as repertoire and instrumentations may differ between ethnic groups, how the society conceptualizes and perceives its music system are often shared traditional concepts, and is treated as such in this thesis.21

Concurrently, there are musical aspects specific to a microcosm, a specific ethnic, family or group of musicians. Hartigan defines musical style as “a recognized instrumentation and way of playing shared by a significant number of musical ensembles or individuals.”22 Accordingly, there are times when it is necessary to articulate an ethnic group’s stylistic features. The heirarchy between local, national, regional and continental cultural features continues to need definition in the works of African studies. For example, Merriam criticizes Nketia’s frame of reference in *African Music in Ghana*, arguing that “there seems to be nothing whatsoever in the summary which points to a distinctively Ghanaian music; most of the statements would apply equally well to the music of many other political divisions of Africa.”23 My frame of reference could welcome similar criticism but with the understanding that the Ghanaian dance-drumming repertoire is my focus as specific materializations of the Sub-Saharan African traditional style of learning and teaching.


“Traditional” in Ghanaian Society

The term “traditional” continues to elude a strict definition, especially in the study of “ethnic” musics. Kubik suggests that the use of traditional as a “euphemistic surrogate for primitive” was a result of the scientific paradigms that assumed the existence of set stages of cultural development that engrossed European thought prior to the 1960s.24 “Traditional” developed as a concept that “came from an ideology that saw Western influence as the major – and sometimes exclusive – agent for social and cultural change” in the African continent.

However, there was contact, exchange and migrations of people within African societies as well as the Islamic and the Asian world well before European contact, which inherently caused changes in cultural and musical features. The Islamic Period of African history and other eras prior to European contact and colonization of the continent in the 1800s are commonly called Africa’s “prehistory,” which showcases the continued Euro-centric view. To gain a better understanding of “traditional,” one must consider the emic perspective that is provided by Nketia:

music associated with the traditional African institutions of the pre-colonial era. It is music which has survived the impact of the forces of Western forms of acculturation, and is, therefore, quite distinct in idiom and orientation from contemporary popular and art music.25 Through this perspective, we can see that “time” does not necessarily contribute towards traditional music. The traditional musical realm remained intact through the period of European imperializan, and has continued, and is still continuing, to exist and develop autonomously.


from their influences. This does not mean that “traditional” music, in terms of authenticity and style, may not be blurred, since cultural interaction and migrations within the continent and with various Asian peoples has existed for over hundreds, if not thousands, of years. On the difficulty of pinpointing exact authenticity, Nketia explains:

A study of our folk music traditions shows, however, that what is happening now [change] is not an entirely new phenomenon. It is but a continuation, though in an accentuated form, of an old process of change.

Issues of continuity and change are notably true in African recreational music, which is a significant component of this thesis based on its independence of strict social customs and, therefore, its freedom to migrate outside the cultural context. Nketia explains that because of the lack of strict social obligations, the entertainment repertoire may be even more adept to change, further challenging concepts of exact authenticity. For example, Michael Vercelli explained that during a summer abroad trip to the Dagbe Cultural Institute and Arts Center in the Volta Region of Ghana, students learned a recreational dance-drumming genre called Togo Atsia, which translates to “how they drum and dance in Togo.” Foreign researchers and performers must be careful with how they interpret authenticity towards this genre, as it could be viewed as (a) a genre from those that actually perform it, the Ghanaian Ewe, (b) actually from of the people of Togo, or (c) an imitation of what the Ghanaian Ewe’s perceive from the style the people in Togo. Since cultural phenomenon such as this have occurred for generations upon generations, perhaps this example helps to portray the lack of decriptive value in such a term as “authenticity”

26. Although frequently used in a circle of ethnomusicologists and educators (Younge 2011: 7), the term “neo-traditional” is obsolete because time of composition is without issue. Another argument commonly made is where to draw the line – exactly how old does a drum-dance have to be in order to forego the prefix?


28. Ibid., 32.

29. Personal communication with the instructor.
in traditional West African music. Interestingly, due to its function of pure enjoyment and its freedom to change, this entertainment repertoire is what is found most frequently among university ensembles and, therefore, is central to this study.

Free from the shackles of time and authenticity, “traditional” music can best be understood as that which simply subscribes to the musical system and philosophy of the African culture that has developed autonomously of Western influence. Despite the Euro-centric view that the continent is stuck in a lower, primitive culture, “African societies have changed; in that respect, they resemble other societies of the world.”

Although the focus is on the traditional music and traditional processes, the topic demands consideration of stylistic changes brought by social changes as well as the innovations and creativity brought by individual musicians.

The Repertoire of Ghanaian Dance-drumming

It has been well documented that music is integrated into every facet of Ghanaian life. This is true of all forms of music in Ghana, both instrumental and vocal, utilizing chordophone, aerophone, and electronic instruments, as well as the membranophones and idiophones of the various percussion ensembles. Although there are many instances of solo or duet performances, ensemble music parallels social value and can function to literally and figuratively bring together

30. Gerhard Kubik, op. cit., 293.

31. For example, transportation and communication systems beginning with the modern-day highway system created in the 1950s have heightened the migration of people and ideas. However, these ethnic groups have experienced cultural interaction with Islamic world as far back as 741 A.D. Although certain cultural practices were adopted in certain areas such as northern Ghana, Nketia explains that “African converts to Islam did not have to abandon their traditional music completely”, and often identified with multiple cultures independently yet simultaneously. Nketia, *Music of Africa*, 10.

32. Interested readers should peruse the References section, to learn more of these other beautiful musics found in Ghana. Note particularly the writings of Nketia (1962, 1968, 1974) and Wiggins (1992, 1999).
the community. Common in Ghanaian daily life, spontaneous musical events can be initiated by the playing of a single drummer. The repertoire in the dance mode of an entertainment function brings together the entire community, in which everyone is expected to participate in some form, regardless of ability.  

The significance of music can be viewed through the many functions that it serves within Ghanaian societies. Drummers and drums function at social, political, economic, and religious events through one of three modes: signal, speech, or dance. The signal and speech modes provide communicative function in Ghanaian society: by short and repetitive rhythms on a single-pitch in the former, and by utilizing two pitches in a steady flow to imitate speech in the latter. It would be incredibly difficult for an outsider to interpret the messages, as “one might need to already know the text in order to be able to recognize it when played.”

It is socially necessary to be educated of the messages, roles, and functions of drumming music, and only the most knowledgeable musicians are esteemed as masters. Social knowledge is especially important in Ghanaian society, as music differs between the customs. Dagara society recognizes three distinct types of xylophone musical repertoire: bagr-bine (funeral), bine (religious), and bewaa (recreation). Drumming music may be used to announce particular events and seasons. In Ga society, it is actually the lack of drumming via a statewide ban that announces the coming of the harvest season. Playing drums during this time is a great offense; it is necessary to seek approval for drumming from the local chief, as Woma did in order to instruct a

33. While integrated communal performance is typical of the African traditional venue, there are examples of a formal musical idiom in Ghana. There were even formal staged traditions prior to Western influence. In which organized groups perform for special occasions or specific customs. In these cases, an ensemble based on a specific population of the community or a group of specialized musicians are hired, in which case the audience’s participation is limited. Refer to Nketia (1974).


35. Ibid.

group of West Virginia University students during a late summer session. On the other end of the spectrum, there are free musical activities in Africa that are not connected with any religious or seasonal ritual, as these are deemed as purely recreational and dependent on the current needs and interest of the community.  

**Instrumentation**

The instrumentation of the traditional Ghanaian dance-drumming ensembles is a visually apparent aspect of the music-culture. There are ensembles of much variance in instrumentation in the country. A duality continues in modern time, where some instruments have been applied or fully integrated across ethnicities, while others continue to be quite specific, unique to a particular ethnic group. The *Ga-Adangbe* people of southern Ghana traditionally use *kpanlogo* drums, a single-headed open drum that is pegged and necklaced. The drum’s predominance for entertainment purposes, as well as its flexibility in performance technique by being able to be struck with hands or with sticks, could be good reason for its diffusion outside its original context. Similarly, twentieth-century Ga society also use *jembe* drums, originally from the Mande tradition of Guinea, Mali, and recently diffused to Senegal, Cote D’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Republic of the Gambia. The spread of the jembe drum is most likely a result of migration of people and ideas, arriving most notably in the metropolitan capital city of Accra, which sits at the heartland of the Ga territory. In addition, the Ga people have

37. Ibid., 30.
38. This classification system is taken from the percussion history textbook: James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and Their History* (New York; Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1970).
adopted many traditions of their neighbors, including the Akan and Adangme, and have already established a preference for single-headed open drums.\textsuperscript{40}

On the other hand, the \textit{Ewe} of eastern Ghana, Togo, and Benin has a very vibrant dance-drumming tradition with its own unique instrumentation of percussive instruments. The ensemble includes drums relative to each other, ranging from the high-pitched \textit{kagan (kaganu)} drum, small enough to easily fit between the performer’s legs, to the \textit{atsimevu} and \textit{gboba} drums, which are so large that they require a special stand and, at times, a podium for the performer to stand upon. The gankogui, an iron double-bell idiophone, provides a distinct timbre and adds an additional layer of sound. This type of double bell idiophone instrument is found in the many drumming ensembles throughout the Guinea Coast.\textsuperscript{41} The axatse rattle is another instrument whose composition can be seen throughout the southern regions of Ghana and the Guinea Coast. Both of these instruments migrated and diffused by “speakers of Ewe, Fo, and Akan [who] have taken the technology with them, wherever they have settled.”\textsuperscript{42} They add an important timbre due to the materials of their construction, and the performance techniques allow them to perform intricate rhythms, adding significant timelines to the overall musical texture.

The ethnic groups of the northern territories of Ghana call upon instrumentations strikingly different than those of the southern regions. The \textit{Dagbambe} of the northern lands feature multiple drums that are played between one arm and the torso: the \textit{lunna (lunga)}, an hourglass double-headed necklaced drums whose strings connect the two heads together, and the \textit{brekete (gungon)}, a large double-headed drum with a single string resting on the batter-side head to act as a snare, giving the drum a buzzed timbre. While the brekete commonly functions as the


\textsuperscript{41} Kubik, op. cit., 315.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. 316.
lead drum in ensemble music, the lunna either take on a supporting function in ensemble music or can imitate the tonal language by altering the pitch of the drum through sensitively applying underarm pressure on the strings that connect the drum’s two heads.

Found in central Ghana, the Ashanti have unique drum ensembles with special social functions. The kete ensemble serves for both court and funeral purposes. Within funeral events, the drum shells are draped with cloths of red and black, colors being traditionally associated with the death of a community member. Traditionally, the Ashanti chief, or Asantehene, is the sole owner of a set of frontonfron, two drums over six feet tall when stood vertically during performance. For royal music, the fontonfrom drums join the kete ensemble of atumpans (also a set of two drums), apentema, apetia, donno, and iron bell. Due to the social significance that the particular instrumentations play, they are not popularly found outside its context. However, there are instances when particular drums are utilized elsewhere; the atumpan may be observed outside the Ashanti in other parts of the Akan region, particularly when imitating speech patterns while accompanying poetry.

Sound Elements

When one reviews the literature on African music, it does not take long to realize that rhythm is the most discussed and most iconic aspect of the continent’s style. Chernoff assumes that the reader of his groundbreaking book *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* already is aware that African music is defined by its rhythm. *The World of Music* is just one “world music”

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textbook giving rhythm a single subheading under musical style, and it is the only sound element discussed within (Sub-Saharan) African percussion music.  

African musicians find that the concentration on rhythm as the most important feature in African music is a Western “overstatement”.  All of the elements of sound are significant to the musical style. Rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre, instrumentation and form interweave to generate the unique quality of Sub-Saharan African dance-drumming music.

David Locke, ethnomusicology professor and African Ensemble instructor at Tufts University, argues that “in scholarly writing, comparing African music with Western art music needs justification since they have little in common.” Since the traditional African society and its music developed independently, it may be inherently problematic to explain African features within the Western standard. In this way, utilizing Western terminology may not be appropriate to the emic conception of Ghanaian musical style.

Descriptive terms such as rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, and form may not exist in the Ghanaian musical style as they do in the Western art musical style. Music in Africa is not considered in isolation, but instead exists in conjunction with props, costumes, dancing, sculpture, crafts, and drama. Willoughby finds that “all these elements increase the opportunities for participation” among members of community. In this way, cultural expression, in which music is a part, creates togetherness in African society, enhancing their philosophy of intersubjective existence. Despite western musicology’s focus on the particular sound elements,

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47. Willoughby, op. Cit., 193.
Ghanaian languages such as Twi and Ewe do not even contain a term for the strictly musical sound. Looking more closely, the Ewe people do not consider rhythm as a lone facet of musical sound, but rather as a set of “overlapping words, concepts, and ideas.” These examples are not to suggest that one cannot describe or consider the aural medium or specific musical elements independently, but rather to illustrate the degree to which the Ghanaian perspective might differ from the Western in conception, perception, and value.

Ethnomusicologists have modeled numerous interpretations of African musical theory in the twentieth century. Rhythm is evidently the most commonly written about element by both African and Western scholars. A most popular concept encompassing both rhythm and texture in African music is polyrhythm, commonly used in textbooks, courses, and ensembles. The *Oxford Companion to Music* broadly defines polyrhythm as the simultaneous use or occurrence of different rhythms within “different parts of the musical texture . . . clearly recognizable through idiosyncratic accents.” Not only may this term be too broad to explain any substance of the music, but it demeans the other elements of their music and the interconnection between them. Hurst believes the West’s persistent use of polyrhythm in reference to African music displays a Eurocentric view that displays little esteem for African community philosophy and consciousness. The belief that African performance of polyrhythm is a symbolic representation of polytheism in African culture has only recently been deemed as gross simplification by esteemed ethnomusicologists and African scholars.

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Similarly, the term *cross-rhythm* has been applied to several phenomena in African music. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* broadly defines cross-rhythm as “the regular shift of some beats in a metric pattern to points ahead or behind their normal positions in that pattern.” However, the cross-rhythm technique is a specific approach to creating textural density through rhythmic interplay. Manipulation of cross-rhythm techniques can be witnessed throughout Ghana, even though the term is commonly applied to the analysis of Ewe musical ensembles. Regardless of any precise definition, this term is irrelevant without a consideration of the emic perspective that cross-rhythm speaks by “simulating the dynamics of contrasting moments or emotional stress phenomena likely to occur in actual human existence.” Without acknowledgment of their role in the cultural context, the value these terms have in describing the Ghanaian musical style may be refuted.

In contrast, *interlocking* is a constructive concept that describes the rhythmic relationship of the percussion parts of the ensemble. Because each part contains figures of different speeds and pauses, an ensemble’s rhythmic time-line patterns act to fill in each other’s spaces, creating a texture like a rich tapestry of rhythmic sound. In this way, interlocking suggests that the different rhythmic parts work together to form one unit. Writers and scholars also have used the term *hocket* to describe the layering effect of the performers of the African percussion ensemble. The term hocket in African music is “a means . . . used for achieving overall effects of continuity, for building up interlocking, and sometimes complex structures, out of relatively simple elements.” Arguing that the hocket is a means rather than an end, Nketia also demonstrates how he

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perceives hocket as the result of functional use of breaks and rests. Although he mentions that the contrapuntal techniques certain drumming music may use the hocket technique to a degree, he also describes that musical “space” is needed to be “filled . . . played in between the beats of the other drum,” making the term more applicable to the homogenous aerophone ensembles. Use of the term hocket, therefore, may be inaccurate when describing Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions, as the emic understanding may not consider any spaces in their playing. The Ghanaian concept is more likely to consider different “note” lengths rather than spaces or rests. For example, the Ghanaian is likely to perceive the adowa bell pattern as “long-long-short-long-long-long-short” (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Emic Adowa Bell Pattern: Long-Long-Short-Long-Long-Short](image)

The pattern is reshaped when Western notation is applied, forcing a perception of spaces (rests) and implied stresses (Figure 2). While the emic perspective focused on the relationship of the linear rhythm in terms of the dicotomy of the two note lengths, short and long, the notation suggests a more vertical perspective by enveloping in the pattern to a foreign framework of implied stresses. In this way, applying the term hocket to the Ghanaian drumming context would be stretching its parameters. Rather, interlocking is an accurate emic interpretation of Ghanaian dance-drumming’s conception of different patterns by relationship and by their perception of musical texture.

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55. Ibid., 50.
Figure 2. Etic perspectives of Adowa bell pattern: (a) 12/8 implies four stresses, (b) 6/8 implies two stresses, and (c) 3/4 implies three stresses.

When considering sound elements in African music, Arom argues, “this music should, despite its polyphonic (and polyrhythmic) nature, be deemed the ‘accidental’ result of a basically melodic intention.”\textsuperscript{57} Considering Arom’s findings, rhythm and melody must be closely intertwined into the Western concept of musical \textit{texture}, the relationship of individual parts or “way . . . [they are] are put together.”\textsuperscript{58} Nigerian ethnomusicologist Meki Nzewi modeled his theory of \textit{melorhythm}, an integral part of the emic perspective. In his description of melorhythm, Nzewi called upon social concepts of intersubjectivity and belonging in the Ghanaian mode of consciousness as well as to the understanding of the music’s sound elements.\textsuperscript{59} The model describes that the interlocking of the ensemble is not only rhythmic, but melodic as well. As the drums are tuned to different pitches relative to each other, their parts fill in each other’s gaps, intertwining to create a melodic component. It is this process that warrants Kazadi wa Mukuna to argue that the resulting ensemble is “conceived rhythmically, but perceived melodically.”\textsuperscript{60} In the African musical paradigm, one does not consider the parts individually. According to Locke,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{58} \textit{The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians} 2/25 (Grove’s Dictionaries Inc.; New York, 2000), 323.
\item\textsuperscript{59} Meki Nzewi. \textit{African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum—The Culture-Exponent’s Definitions} (Olderhaus: Institut für Didaktik populärer Musik, 1997), 34.
\item\textsuperscript{60} Kazadi wa Mukuna, Lecture “African Music and Cultures,” 2008.
\end{itemize}
even “African children always hear the full musical texture.” Although individual musicians consider their part primarily at first, they hear and value the melodic value when the whole ensemble plays. For many Africans, it may be the resulting melody that is recognizable, while the composition’s individual parts are not. Although not specifically labeled as such, Locke recognizes the importance of the melorhythm of the emic perspective when he presents the three-part “conversation” of the response section of the ensemble (Figure 3), which he later calls the “melodic rhythm”.

Figure 3. Locke’s “Three-Part Conversation” in Gahu, recognizing the melody that forms from the interlocking of drums with different relative pitches. This melodic “three-part conversation” depicts the Response Section - the kaganu, kidi, and sogo drums.

Meki Nzewi developed his Ensemble Thematic Cycle model, abbreviated ETC, to define the African musical structure. His initial framework was originally published in the booklet African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum – A Culture’s Exponent Perspective, and consequently he expanded upon the model throughout his career. The model tells us that the individual parts that layer into the melorhythmic texture are of varying length, ranging from one pulse to sixteen or more pulses. As each part contains a relationship to one another, the parts will coincide at a particular juncture and subsequently determine the length of the cycle. In this way, ETC describes a combination of melody and length, most closely

64. Meki Nzewi quoted in Hurst, Drive vs. Vamp, 60.
resembling phrase structure, phrasing, in musicological terms. African musician-composers chronologically arrange sets of different ETCs to create form in larger compositions. African and Western ethnomusicologists alike have heralded the ETC model for its consideration of the emic perspective. Its creator defines his model:

As the significant musical form or module by which a piece of African music is recognised [sic]. It is the aggregate sound of the layers of role-themes [TLPs] in an ensemble. Its length and significant content is the lowest common multiple of the unequal lengths cum differentiated contents of all the compositional themes assigned the various instruments of an ensemble for the purposes of the performance-composition of a piece on any performance occasion or session.65

Hurst presents an evolutionary continuum of the European perspective of African music by analysis of the literature on African musical-cultures under the scope of ethnomusicological theories presented by Merriam and Rice. She describes that Merriam’s tripartite model is “intended for scholars to seek descriptions of musical gestures that reflect cultural relevance in the source culture and to propose models for musical behavior that reveal the cultural concepts giving rise to those musical gestures.”66 A Euro-centric understanding that misinterprets African values has continued through the West’s insistence on analysis through objectivity (“What I think you are”), subjectivity (“What I think I am”), and even interobjectivity (“What we think you are”). A true cross-cultural understanding can only sprout through holistically approaching intersubjectivity (“what we are together”), “a philosophical definition for the sense of belonging in traditional African culture.”67 In Africa, the philosophical statement of belief, “I belong, therefore, I am” suggests that all people affect one another, and that no one lives detached from one’s community. This state of interconnectedness is necessary for the society to flourish, which can be seen in all aspects of African culture from the interlocking melorhythm of the musical

65. Meki Nzewi, op. cit., 44.
66. Hurst, op. cit., 64.
67. Ibid., 73.
ensemble, to working together to bringing home the harvest, to the two-person act of pounding cassava to make *frufuru*, a starchy dish that accompanies a variety of stews.

Through the intersubjective approach of perceiving African interconnectedness, one may postulate how and why African features of melorhythm and the Ensemble Thematic Cycle have endured throughout African history. In North and South America, through the forced migration of its people, one may observe these emic perspectives still. Even through the embracing of foreign ideas into one’s own society, such as the Islamic religious beliefs and Western concepts and technology, the emic perspective of traditional music endures in significant ways. Through this description of musical style nurtured within the emic perspective, the transmission process in the cultural context and its imitation in American higher institutions are prime for investigation.
PART II:

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES AND LEARNING PROCESSES

Education functions as a critical tool for developing citizenship that embodies the ideals of morality and values of the society. In addition to the expansion of new generations’ knowledge base, traditional education strategies in Africa teach behavior, culture beliefs and historical heritage necessary to secure family lineage and traditions. W.E.B. Du Bois viewed the integration of linguistic, culture and historic traditions into educational institutions as necessary for its success, and such educational practices were expressions of “not only their pedagogical process but also the very purposes and life principles of the people.”68 In Sub-Saharan Africa, processes of education are all-encompassing facets that build and maintain communities; the socialization of its citizens reinforces moral and behavioral values through the exploration of their unique history. Traditional African modes of musical education employ technical methods of teaching within the socialization method that stresses these points.

In contrast, the growth of multicultural education in America came out of contemporary need in the twentieth century. It was believed that a change was required in order to build a sensitive population within increasingly diverse communities resulting from urbanization processes nationwide. Although delayed by phenomenon such as white flight, which saw the white population migrate from the urban centers to the suburbs during the middle of the century, 68. W.E.B. Du Bois paraphrased by Reiland Rabaka, “W.E.B. Du Bois’s Evolving Africana Philosophy of Education,” Journal of Black Studies 33/4 (2003): 404.
people of diverse ethnic backgrounds have been increasingly assimilated into American societies over the last few decades. In order to provide for the demographic changes, the education system strove to build an appreciation of African culture and the inclusion of African history into the curriculum. Despite reworking the content of the curriculum to include the African diaspora’s unique history, the American educational system has maintained its focus on formal and written approaches.

The traditional Ghanaian methods found throughout the socialization processes sharply contrasts with Western written and formal approaches. The Ghanaian culture focuses on technical transmission of information through oral and aural processes, while the Western paradigm is presented mainly in a written form, where method books and printed music are the predominant approaches of transmission. However, ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice argues that “in music . . . the distinction between oral and written transmission, while widely used and seemingly obvious, is often murky.” 69 In actuality, both African and Western traditions’ technical dimension, the “manner of which music is transmitted,” are quite complex, containing an array of methods beyond which their labels imply. Matters are complicated even further during the cross-cultural phenomenon of imitating and representing Ghanaian music traditions outside the cultural context.

In addition to the technical methods of passing knowledge, another dimension of transmission includes the specific role of musical development in the minds of a society’s citizens. 70 The social dimension concerns behavioral aspects of the culture, such as what group or groups of citizens to whom the music is transmitted and when they are allowed or expected to play specific musical repertoire. While the social dimension plays a very significant role in the

69. Rice, op. cit., 696.
70. Ibid., 696-697.
emic Ghanaian transmission, because of restrictions set into place for particular musical activities, the etic perspective omits much of this outlook. It is lost along the music’s migration to a society that does not share the same beliefs. Another aspect of the social dimension is the expected behavior that the society enacts during a musical performance. While such reactions such as singing, dancing and clapping are encouraged in Ghanaian music-events, I doubt very much that such behaviour will be tolerated at a symphony concert in the United States. The organizational structures of education, the institutional dimension, are strikingly different between the two cultures as well. Ghanaians are more likely to recognize that significant learning occurs outside of the classroom throughout one’s life, while it is the formal institutions that are fully endorsed in Western culture. Of course, all of these dimensions exist in interconnection. Particular for this study, however, each dimension has direct implications for the younger generations’ perception and conception found in the cognitive dimension of transmission.

The purpose of this section is to compare the traditional Ghanaian method of transmission with how that method is imitated, adopted, adapted and represented by American university African dance-drumming instructors. This will be accomplished by first detailing the traditional methods found in the transmission process in Ghana, followed by a detailed description of my observations of the emulation of those processes in university ensembles. Aspects of musical sound, concept and behavior are considered in both contexts. Based on the data collected, I offer a hypothesis for why this particular cross-cultural exchange exists in the Conclusions chapter. In addition to the ethnographic description, I hope that non-western music educators may find useful ways for creating classroom pedagogies and representations that successfully communicate cultural knowledge and musical skill in a variety of formats, while still employing elements of the emic perspective.
The Traditional Music Transmission Process in Ghana

A main purpose of education is to develop appropriate knowledge, skills, habits, and behavior in younger generations. Constructing a citizenship that will preserve the customs and embody moral values are prime concerns for musical education in Sub-Saharan Africa. As explained by Rice, the technical dimension of musical transmission consists of methods that are utilized by senior members of the community to transfer musical knowledge and skill to younger generations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this is primarily accomplished through active participation and observation of musical events in festivals, weddings, funerals and other community gatherings.

After review of the literature, I noticed a nearly universal use of the terms oral and informal to describe traditional approaches in Sub-Saharan African. These are descriptive words used in the formal analysis of music to target the technical and institutional dimensions of transmission respectively. Interestingly, the same terms are applied to music-cultures around the world, including the music of European folk traditions, the Middle East, India, Asia as well as Africa and the diaspora. Despite this universality the terms suggest, there are nuances and unique features in Ghanaian transmission methods. Similarly, transmission processes in Western societies diverge from the formal written tradition at times, as in the learning by ear through audio recordings found among jazz and popular genres. The presence of divergent aspects of the dimensions of transmission may justify the research in this chapter.

Oral traditions are commonly considered unreliable in most scholarly contexts and have consequently had a contentious place in Western academe. Through the study of African music
in the West, Shelemay notices that the “scholarly discussion of African musical styles has usually relied on systems of music writing to capture aural phenomena otherwise resistant to analysis [my emphasis].”\(^{71}\) This has come at the expense of recognizing the values of emic oral traditions and the “indigenous representations” of their music. Oral traditions tend to rely on memory and performance. This was deemed faulty when compared to Western fixed compositions, whose written transcriptions allow for independent representations that are accurate to the composer’s intention. The written form exists without time and is thereby open to meticulous analysis.\(^{72}\) Through investigation of the reliability of Western art form, Mantle Hood urges for the inclusion of oral transmission analysis methods. He states:

Polynomial and binomial systems of notation stretching round the world and back through all the centuries of recorded musical history depend on oral tradition for significant interpretation. Even our modern monomial notation, including such polynomial vestiges as symbols for the trill and turn, must be interpreted in the appropriate stylistic tradition. . . . We are also likely to forget that in the immediate past of our own written tradition an important part of the measure of the musician was his ability to improvise.\(^{73}\)

The negligible insight into the continent’s history may be a result of Western academia’s own stubborn refusal to recognize validity in oral history. Only in the last few decades has this postulation been contested, as it was previously thought that “oral tradition rarely takes the observer farther back than 200 years.” Ethnomusicologist Kubik developed a methodology using (a) standard historical methods such as testing material sources, (b) observation and analysis of present states of music cultures, and (c) assessment of oral traditions.\(^{74}\) Kubik found that systematic study of oral traditions, even including a single verbal account of past events, could


\(^{72}\) Rice, op. cit., 697.


\(^{74}\) Kubik, op. cit., 295.
allow for some clarity in oral traditions such as Sub-Saharan African history prior to European occupation. This would be necessary for the development of a continuation of African traditions describing how the music sounded and functioned in the past.

Through a closer examination of the emic perspective, we discover that these are unique traditional Ghanaian pedagogies. In the technical dimension, the approach includes not only intricate oral principles of teaching musical information, but also visual and kinesthetic methods that primarily encourage individual achievement through imitation of musical performances. In the institutional dimension, the informal style extends the socialization of all Ghanaian children through apprenticeships for select Ghanaian students with a master musician. Socio-cultural knowledge is simultaneously passed down to younger generations through active involvement in the community customs, presenting close relationships between teaching, learning and experience.

*Informal Style*

Writers of non-western music textbooks and scholars in the field of African music allude to the informal style popular in West Africa. However, no quantitative or qualitative study on the institutional dimension exists, and details of specific oral traditions are fuzzy. Throughout my fieldwork, it was found that some students presumed that the avenues of teaching are simply “different” from those of the West. However, when asked to explain the oral tradition, multiple students defined this aspect of the African context as “less strict”. Because aspects of the teaching process can be viewed as less strict than the Western art style, this perspective of
beginning students is understandable. In sharing my experiences studying in Ghana with students, I often express the informal nature of Ghanaian culture, as these anecdotes are most memorable to me. For instance, my teachers would schedule our future lesson to be “after lunch,” “after church,” or even by telling me “we will have a lesson when the sun is in this part of the sky,” pointing somewhere overhead. While this approach can be perceived as being less strict, I really wanted students to come away from my anecdote with a curiosity of how Ghanaians consider time and situate themselves through their relationships with other human beings and their natural surroundings.

The traditional African methodology of developing young musicians revolves around their general socialization process, learning appropriate ways to conduct themselves through increasing participation in community customs. Ghanaian philosophy views a person’s participation in social events as the primary process in developing musical awareness and knowledge. In this way, Ghanaian citizens are generally given responsibility for educating with the purpose of serving the entire community. Students are required to focus in order to reach their full potential by relying on their own eyes, ears, and memory to develop their own techniques of imitative learning.

This process includes learning within groups of their peers, a strong collective that is continually reinforced through sharing in initiations and other social customs. Extended families live very close by and even under the same roof, strengthening the bond between age groups. Interestingly, Ghanaian extended families reach so far as to not recognize the relationship of “cousins,” but rather consider those as equal to siblings. Young children socialize and learn among each other through attending school, playing sports, doing chores, and engaging in certain customs and other experiences together as a collective.
Active learning through playing games is a common occurrence throughout Africa. Game songs among Ghanaian youth are an integral part of the socialization process by embodying moral teachings and cultural values. Social roles and group cooperation are learned through musical games that integrate proverbs and historical narrations. The Akan game songs “Oboo Asi Me Nsa” and “Sansa Kroma” both convey a message of security and comfort through the circle of relatives and extended family for support during all life instances, while “Bantama Kra Kro” can develop basic battle maneuvers and motor skills necessary for defense through the playful use of sticks. By requiring a coordination between singing songs and synchronized movements, these games are especially integral to the musical training of the youth. Tucker and Abraham Kobena Adzenyah analyzed the function of children’s games as part of musical training, participating in those “inspired by (or actually based on) traditional rhythm patterns which are used by adult ensembles.” Their experience with musical expression develops citizens that “are eased into participation in music and dance during actual festivals, and over time become perfectly comfortable performing in front of hundreds or thousands of people.” Tucker describes how children’s songs and games frequently begin slowly, gradually increasing in tempo to provide a venue for developing coordination and ensemble tempo regardless of tempo. This is unlike the adult ensembles, which are performed at tempo only, because they are just one part of the greater custom that is taking place.

Community gatherings such as these often include storytelling, which convey social values through the narratives that often include individual or family histories. Senior members of the society become actively involved in these multidimensional dramas, and may spontaneously...

76. Ibid., 28.
77. Ibid., 27.
break into songs and dance. Ghanaian folkloric songs are called *mmoguo*, and they often accompany storytelling.\(^{78}\) The communicative ability of music is a phenomenon of certain genres found throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. In Mande societies, certain kora players, called *jali*, perform solo musical epics that tell of their people’s history.\(^{79}\) Through *mmoguo* repertoire, folklore and family history are told with underlying moral messages that explain appropriate behavior in certain situations.

Vercelli describes how the musical sound communicates information about the deceased among those within the Birifor. In addition to recounting the life of the deceased and his family heritage, the lead gyil player directs the event by performing certain repertoire to initiate appropriate moods and responses from the funeral party, such as morning, scorning, or dance. Vercelli concludes:

> By utilizing multiple modes of communication, we can see how the Birifor use these performance opportunities to console their bereaved and educate their community simultaneously. Through oral tradition, or rather, aural tradition, the Birifor use the gyil as their primary method of passing along the cultural myth and history of their people.\(^{80}\)

Appropriate behavior for the Birifor of northern Ghana, such as when to celebrate and when to grieve, is passed down to younger generations by the presentation of particular musical motifs and repertoire. Similarly, the sound of the *kogyil*, a variation of gyil in a pentatonic scale specific to the instrument, communicates to Dagara members that there is a funeral.

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78. Ibid., 65.
There are more formalized structures in place for the musical education of junior members of Ghanaian society, in which mentors aid in furthering their music education. In Ghana, children of professional musicians are inherently believed to continue the tradition. The lineage of expertise is bound to be maintained through generations, and such a musical family is called *akyerema*. The line of descent is maintained in Dagomba society, where each son of an hourglass drummer is required to become one as well. Nketia describes:

> The daughter of a drummer is released from this obligation, but she must send a son to replace her when she has one. If she brings forth only daughters, one of them must marry a drummer, so that the descent line of drummers may continue.

Performance opportunities, quality instruments and knowledgeable musicians in close proximity may allow the children to continue such musical aptitude through their heightened engagement with traditional music. For other Ghanaians, few are selected for the opportunity to concentrate solely on their musical training. Stonefelt recognizes that in Ghana, usually “you are born into a xylophone family. However, in Woma’s case, this wasn’t true. His hands were born; he was born with his hands in a fist.” It was said that Woma was born with hands clenched, simulating the playing style of the gyil musicians. Being left-handed is another extramusical form of recruitment in Northern Ghanaian societies, which applies to Woma and his understudy Jerome Belsab, whose handedness brought the expectation that he was to be a

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81. Tucker et al., op. cit., 125.
successful gyil player.\textsuperscript{85} Those like Woma that are foreseen to be great musicians at an early age are urged to obtain an apprenticeship with a master musician. A master musician is a respected profession in Ghanaian societies, a holder of a special gift that is considered to be a great service to the community.

For these chosen students, observation and active participation are still the primary focus. Younge describes that these selected students learn under “direct observation and participation through a form of apprenticeship to a master musician.”\textsuperscript{86} Apprentices learn under the same processes of observation and imitation, although they are more immersed in music making events through performance in social events in addition those of their own community.

The selection of musicians presents a combination of one’s own autonomy for musical prowess and a strong belief in innate ability, exemplified by the Akan saying, “one does not teach the blacksmith’s son his father’s trade. If he knows it, then it is God who taught him.”\textsuperscript{87} Family members express their gratitude for God’s gifts manifested through Woma’s musical virtuosity. Even though their belief in innate ability is very real, the entire community takes on the responsibility for engulfing all of their people within a circle of education and support. Woma illustrates this philosophy by bringing his brothers, sisters, and family friends to serve as faculty and staff at the DMC.\textsuperscript{88}

In addition to encouraging students’ musical aptitude by participation in various musical events otherwise unavailable, master musicians may utilize formal instruction. Nketia explains:

\textsuperscript{85} Documentation regarding this value of handedness in gyil players in Ghanaian society could not be found, but there is debate of a connection between left handedness (right-brain dominant) visual spatial skills and creativity, both of which are necessary attributes of a gyil player.

\textsuperscript{86} Younge, op. cit., 20.

\textsuperscript{87} Nketia, \textit{Music of Africa}, 59.

\textsuperscript{88} The exception is the resident Ga drummer, Eddie Greene.
Formal systematic instruction is given only in very restricted cases demanding skills or knowledge that cannot be acquired informally [via socialization method], or in cases in which the specific roles played later by particular individuals make it imperative to ensure that they have acquired the necessary technique and knowledge.\textsuperscript{89}

Ziem Tibo shared with Woma the socio-historical knowledge that may be withheld from the general population. Woma’s biography states:

Tibo taught Bernard how to build and "purify" a new xylophone. They played late in the night and Tibo taught Bernard the mysteries associated with the gyil.\textsuperscript{90}

The primary teaching methods employed by Tibo are revealed in Woma’s narrative of his mentor. Tibo actively taught him the history, folklore, construction and customs surrounding the instrument, the mysteries that are not known among all people. These are facets of the music-culture that would not be communicated through mere aural and visual observation. In this way, the Ghanaian apprenticeship may be more concerned with developing knowledge rather than the acquiring musical skill.

\textit{Master Musicians}

Senior musicians are skilled and knowledgeable, a respected demographic within the community. Those that spend their lives making music and leading musical activities are acclaimed as master musicians, often serving the cultural lineage by mentoring young students. While a student traditionally has one mentor during his or her lifetime, a master musician may take on many apprentices. These students never outgrow their mentors, exemplifying the high

\textsuperscript{89} Nketia, \textit{Music of Africa}, 60-61.

regard with which Ghanaians respect the elders’ authority. Similarly, master musicians are bound by honor to use their expertise and skill for the good of the community. In this way, it is a contentious issue among Ghanaian communities on whether contemporary masters should use their skills outside their homes if that is what is best for their region. However, much of the money Woma earns from his tireless professional career in the United States is sent back to loved ones still in Ghana. This provides the school fees for family and friends, as well as a major contribution to the piping project to bring clean drinking water to his home village of Hiineteng.

The education of master musicians is achieved indirectly through the traditional practice of hiring professional musicians from other ethnic groups, particularly if there is not a seasoned musician in the immediate clan. Through Tibo’s mentorship and his performances “at funerals and weddings throughout the Upper West region of Ghana,” young Woma developed a vast repertoire by observing and participating in the customs of those outside his clan, something that he may not have otherwise experienced. A musician is more likely to be granted master status if he is knowledgeable of many people’s social customs. Woma continued learning all of Ghana’s music cultures with his work with the Ghanaian National Dance Company at the National Theatre in Accra, an ensemble that performs various ethnic traditions. Woma’s versatility and knowledge helped him gain the title of lead drummer in 1992.

Local values determine the qualities necessary to achieve the title of master musician. Nketia outlines the qualifications of the master drummers in Dagomba society, as one that must (1) be knowledgeable of the history, customs, and repertoire, (2) have a sweet voice, described as both loud and clear for the purposes of singing, and (3) have great skill to “produce the right

91. Ibid.
kinds of tones and dynamics on his drum.”92 Dagomba society values historical and socio-cultural knowledge and the ability to sensitively communicate through singing more so that percussive ability directly. Performance abilities such as rapid playing and creative improvisational skills are omitted from this assessment. Perhaps Woma’s illustrious saying “every wrong note is just a different style” can be viewed as a manifestation of the focus on knowledge rather than skill. Communicative abilities are especially significant because the designation of master musician inherently includes the role of mentoring talented young students.

Contemporary Continuity and Change

The pressure for Ghana to become a secondarily written society is one example of globalization, further complicating the study of oral transmission. Through the formal education institutions established by nineteenth century European Christian missionaries, Ghanaians in urban areas have access to education in the written Western musical tradition and academic disciplines. Khamis investigated the complex shift between oral, aural, and written means - what he saw as an increasingly common phenomenon throughout modernizing African societies.93 Under the theory that “art must change if it is to survive,” Khamis found that music-cultures are currently in flux, which creates “difficulties of interpretation and appreciation.”94 Because of the

94. Ibid., 211 and 217.
swift fundamental change, studies of the traditional oral African perspectives are more important than ever.

While the instruction in the Dagara Music Center (DMC) presents a formality to international students, it illustrates a traditional teaching perspective of educating Ghanaian youth in the urban area of Accra. Woma finds that a primary goal of the DMC to serve as a venue where young Ghanaians can experience traditional music and learn traditional values. Woma employs the traditional method of showcasing events when the DMC doors are open; the community youth are invited to have a limited role of the events on the outdoor stage. The community youth do not come to the center for formal instruction as does the international audiences, but the local children flock into the DMC during the performances, lining along the inside of the ten-foot walls. They dance among themselves and create bonds through their imitation of performances by international students, the Saakumu Dance Troupe, and guest artists. Although they find the efforts of the obroni Caucasians to be humorous, they are able to observe the foreign passion of their traditional culture, perhaps sparking their own curiosity.

Although music educators have emphasized advantages for the integration of formalized instruction of traditional African music into the curriculum, the approach continues to be absent among Ghanaian basic and secondary schools. Nketia urged Ghanaian secondary schools to integrate formal study of diverse African music-cultures, primarily to contribute to greater Ghanaian and Pan-African appreciation by “creating frameworks that allow differentiated groups to see themselves on national and Pan-African levels as people with the same destiny.”

Although Nketia and Amuah highlight the advantages of integrating traditional music instruction

95. Personal communication with the instructor.

in the formal Ghanaian education system, the former modeling a suggested syllabus, neither suggests doing away with the socialization method by intensively studying one’s own socio-culture music in such a fashion. Formal educational practices continue to be present only in Ghanaian post-secondary institutions, which arguably do not interfere with the traditional socialization methods, since they apply to an already socialized African student body. However, according to Woma:

The Dagara Music Center wants to promote cultural education in the Ghanaian mainstream educational system. When we talk about cultural education, when we talk about music class, our public schools don’t teach dancing anymore because we assume that our children know how to dance. Well, knowing how to dance does not mean they understand where the dancing came from . . . so the idea is to bring cultural education to our young children and the Dagara Music Center have been working with so many schools.

In addition to providing an informal traditional perspective, the Saakumu Dance Troupe provides formal instruction for the contemporary need of urban secondary school teachers to be knowledgeable of Ghanaian music-cultures, with the ultimate goal of teaching traditional culture in the public school system.

Oral Methods

Traditional Ghanaian societies utilize a set of teaching methods commonly classified as the “oral” method. Musically speaking, the term oral broadly describes those cultures that do not

97. The author suggests that teachers in training “should be able to teach effectively, at least, 100 Ghanaian traditional songs and 10 instrumental music types from selected communities of the 10 regions of Ghana” in Amuah, “African Music Education,” 12.

use written means, which is typical among non-Western musical systems. As implied, the traditional transmission process in Ghana does not use written means in direct teaching, method books and printed music in any teaching or performance arena. However, the term may have an implication for oral teaching via verbal explanation, the teaching methods organically build students’ own aural processes of learning through observation, experience, and imitation.

However, senior Ghanaian drummers enlist oral methods of communicating musical knowledge to others. One way that Ghanaian master drummers convey musical knowledge is by speaking the rhythm as vocables. These are mnemonic devices that help musicians learn and remember musical figures. Ghanaian vocables are spoken, onomatopoeic syllables that imitate the sounds of the drum by differentiation between the timbres. Mnemonic devices can be improvised on the spot, most likely when vocalizing an instrument of limited timbres such as a rattle or double bell. These instruments can perform sounds of different lengths and - for the double-bell - two very distinct pitches, which are easily manipulated by an individual’s onomatopoeic expression.

Vocable systems contain a level of individualism and creativity to spontaneously depict drum language. On the other hand, systems may also be standardized by the lineage of family, village, or ethnic group. Those that are well acquainted with teaching are more likely to communicate additional information with a systematic system, portraying such information as which hand is required to perform a task or dampening techniques that thereby determine length of the stroke. Younge devotes a whole chapter of his book to providing descriptive keys to common mnemonic devices among five ethnic groups: the Southern Ewe, Central and Northern Ewe, Ga, Akan, and Dagomba.\(^99\) For master Ga drummer Eddie Greene, *pe* represents a right

tone while *te* is a tone with the left hand, *pa* represents a right slap while *ta* is a slap with the left hand, and *gun* represents a right bass while a left bass is represented by *dun*. Greene’s system is slightly different from that described by Younge. Unlike Greene’s system, Younge’s description does not consistently denote which hand is to perform by the beginning consonant, and the ending vowel isn’t always an indication of the timbre. Kwami Roberts finds that there is no definitive system in the Ewe musical style, although he describes the benefits of creating one. Like much of the Ghanaian musical style, it may be that there is a suggested traditional approach and certain overarching concepts that simultaneously embraces individuality and creativity.

The role in which mnemonic syllables are utilized in Ghanaian society is debatable. Nketia states that master drummers utilize vocables to “convey the same sort of rhythm [my emphasis]” and infers that the method is done after the performance in which the said rhythm was a part. With this approach, the vocables serve as a memory aid by encouraging reflection of the performance, possibly better situating the rhythm in the student’s long-term memory. A vocalization of the skeletal rhythm may build conceptual knowledge of music making. As all parts allow a level of improvisation and ornamentation in actual performance, the skeletal rhythm may provide a foundation in which learners can easily recognize individual techniques of improvisation. In my observation of Woma working with other Ghanaians, his technique of vocables as an actual teaching method involves communicating a part during the performance. Woma would continue to vocalize the part until the musician has internalized it and is comfortable with its kinesthetic movement, leaving the responsibility on the student to discover his or her relationship with other performers and the role within the collective melorhythm.

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100. Maintaining the first vowel while changing the consonant is a common practice in vocables among oral musical traditions, such as the Baneres style of tabla playing, in which case strokes vocalized as *na* and *ta* on the dahina drum become *dha* when an open bayan drum stroke is added to the already existing timbre.

While Ghanaian teachers are expected to mentor and guide young musicians, they are less likely to transmit an analysis. Rather, the emic perspective of senior musicians encourages the student to take responsibility for his or her own learning. For Obo Addy, this means teachers “don't like a lot of questions [asked] over and over again. It means you're [the student is] not listening, not paying attention.”102 Ghanaian teachers such as Abubakari Lunna do not divulge all the information right away “because a student must earn the right to advanced knowledge.”103

Visual Methods

Although disregarded by many scholars of African music and merely alluded to by others, there are indeed visual methods found among the emic Ghanaian perspective’s technical dimension of transmission. As the dance is closely knit to the music, children and adolescents watch their elders dance the traditional repertoire. Through careful observance for many years and their imitation within groups of their peers, they already know the movement of the dance and its corresponding melorythm as well as their relationship to the lead drum rhythms. Because of the dance-drumming repertoire they are allowed to observe, they are also prepared to move in the expected ways, such as the quintessential contracting and expanding of the back common in much of West Africa.

The importance of the dance to the drummers cannot be overstated. During rehearsals of the Saakumu Dance Troupe, Eddie Greene would describe lead drum rhythms in kpanlogo using


vocalizations while portraying the dance at the same time. At times, he got up from his seat to fully portray the dance. When this wasn’t possible, such as while the dancers were taking a quick break to catch their breath, he would remain seated and just provide the upper body movement. Greene would call upon this method even if he were the sole musician acting as lead drummer. The emic perspective is necessary for all the musicians to know and follow the lead drummer’s improvisational tendencies and its relationship with the dance movements. Similarly, in the case of Bayama, which does not contain audible cues for the musical ensemble, Eddie Greene told other members of the Saakumu Dance Troupe to connect by looking at each other in preparation for the variation change. In this case, the master drummer verbally explains how to synchronize visually in order to solidify the musical cue communicated to the dancers.

According to Woma, a skilled lead drummer must always keep an eye on the dancers. Information such as the appropriate tempo and when to change variations is only communicated through watching. Woma realized visual value as lead drummer for the National Dance Company, leading the ensemble of other ethnicities’ drum-dances not as familiar to him, especially in regard to the dance. While learning foreign pieces is not true to the traditional process, Woma’s perspective is. Woma does not compose a strict arrangement of concert pieces and does not predetermine or predict the tempo of his performances. While he may determine an order of events, he continues the emic tradition of spontaneity in performance, improvising by watching his immediate surroundings: the other musicians, dancers, audience, and his own physical and mental state. Woma uses visual indicators in conjunction with his other senses to influence his decisions in determining the music-event. He tells his students to do the same.
Kinesthetic Methods

The emic perspective contains kinesthetic techniques of communicating musical knowledge to student musicians. Dancing is an integral part of developing individual expression within the community. Dancing also develops rhythmic aptitude and a keen knowledge of the musical repertoire. The artistic expression is closely connected with socio-cultural information, with certain movements and expressions being appropriate at certain occasions. Kinesthetic methods are integrated from birth in African societies. Not only does a mother rock her baby’s cradle as she sings, showcasing the relationship between movement and song, but infants are carried on their mother’s back or hips until age two, conditioning them to feel their mother’s movements through her guidance during active participation in traditional dance arenas.\(^{104}\) With this technique, children witness and experience kinesthetic expressions through increasing roles in the society, simultaneously building their fluency with such musical aspects as pulse, meter, and form. Nketia notes that mothers do this “until the children are old enough to take part in the dancing by themselves.”\(^{105}\) Ghanaians dance throughout their lives, and even senior members are praised in the community when they outwardly respond to music, regardless of their flexibility, vitality or endurance. Ghanaians are well equipped with the ability to express themselves to music that is “integrated with dance, or music that stimulates affective motor response . . . [which] intensifies one’s enjoyment of music through the feelings of increased involvement and the propulsion that articulating the beat by physical movement generates.”\(^{106}\)

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104. Agordoh, op. cit., 17.
106. Ibid., 206-207.
In Ghana, this type of physical conditioning continues, even when the student is old enough to play the drum. Nketia describes how a master drummer may tap rhythms on the Akan child’s back in order for him to “get the motor feeling involved.” I witnessed Ghanaians using this pedagogical strategy by tapping the rhythm on another’s arm. This type of approach will send impulses to the central nervous system via the sensory nerves. Although this may seem like an obtrusive technique to the norms of Western education, it directly communicates a message in a way that is difficult for the student to ignore. Likewise, Addy described how his teacher would tap him square on the temple if he continually didn’t pay attention. In this case, it is clear that junior members of society are expected to listen to and respect their elders, and certain forms of physical reprimand by senior members are socially acceptable.

Hugh Tracey depicts a direct kinesthetic method of transmission, which he witnessed during fieldwork among the Chopi of Mozambique. He describes:

A father will take his seven or eight year old boy and sit him between his knees while he plays. The boy will hold the two beaters with his arms well-flexed and pliant while the father clasps his hands over his son’s and continues to play in the usual way.

As I have never observed such a technique, I cannot speak of the validity of the example in the Ghanaian context. I include this example to portray the nature of African teaching methodologies as “unsystematic” and “unorganized,” exemplifying the need for more in-depth study on teaching and learning methodologies with particular communities, families, and individuals. Certain individuals, especially among a musical family, may be willing to apply teaching approaches such as the one above.

107. Ibid., 61.
108. Addy, op. cit.
The transmission process in Ghana involves a variety of non-written techniques to develop younger generations embodying the moral values and behavior of the society. Although oral techniques are the main focus, teachers utilize kinesthetic and visual methods as well. The role of teacher is spread among the entirety of the community: each is expected to guide and mentor the younger members. Meanwhile, master musicians serve as mentors for young musical prodigies. In these instances, mentors convey folkloric knowledge rather than focusing on transferring musical skill, perpetuating the tradition that values cultural knowledge and individual expression.

By actively experiencing entire musical events, conceptual education is emphasized through a constructivist approach. Ghanaians are allowed to make their own connections about musical and other socio-cultural aspects based on their lifelong observations. Experiencing the entire music ensemble prior to imitation prepares Ghanaians to understand such musical elements as pulse, collective time keeping, and melorhythm. The Ghanaian approach to musical education encourages individual expression and creativity based on the observations of tradition. Through the African philosophy of interconnection among human beings, each member recognizes his or her purpose fulfilling a specific role within the community and preserving the musical ensemble tradition.
Teaching and Learning in America

Teaching music-culture outside its cultural context poses complex issues in terms of imitating the transmission process and representing the tradition. Of course, ensemble directors were all students at one time, and methodology is diverse, because individuals incorporate the entirety of their musical experiences into their teaching. Instructors build their teaching foundation through their experience, learning from the successful teachers they want to imitate, while avoiding techniques they considered to be ineffective. Devoted instructors will continue to learn from master musicians and hone their craft as teachers through university assessment tools and reflection upon their teaching endeavors and the success of their students. In addition, non-western music ensemble instructors must approach the representation of authentic music-cultures with great sensitivity, taking cultural appropriation into consideration.

Non-western music ensembles operate within various formats for a diverse student population. Ethnomusicologist David Harnish finds that there is no single doctrine or standard of methodology for these music ensembles. He states:

ethnomusicologists who teach non-Western ensembles are neither instructed by professors at academies nor by their master teachers in the field how to teach the music to students at universities. . . . Methods vary, of course, from teacher to teacher, and perhaps certain strategies are more effective for certain kinds of music ensemble than others . . . we [world ensemble instructors] all practice trial and error, and gradually change our methods and develop a menu of methods for particular occasions or particular students.  

A vast array of teaching styles and pedagogies were found to be utilized among Ghanaian dance-drumming ensembles at American universities. To imitate my presentation of data from the emic Ghanaian teaching methods in the previous chapter, technical methods are explained under the structure of the sensory method. The challenges unique to the university setting are integrated into the prose, with a narrative of how they may directly or indirectly affect an instructor’s approach.

Although it is common practice in describing non-western music ensemble pedagogy, I reject the notion of classifying instructors - as the data did not support this method. My findings conflict with an organizational structure based on instructor background, described through an examination of two previous models. Rather, it was found that both instructors born in Ghana and in the United States have individual beliefs and values, which affect their willingness to deviate from the traditional pedagogical techniques to better suit their American-born students.

Multicultural Music Education in America

Twentieth century globalization has resulted in the widespread teaching of Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions to an international audience. Although the connection between the West and the African continent dates back to the fifteenth century, as a result of Portuguese traders, Eurocentric beliefs prevented respect for African cultures. Early travelers wrote back to Europe about the primitivism they found on the continent, and did not realize that there was something to be learned. By disguising evil intentions with the ruse of saving the African people through the Christian faith, their accounts portrayed the economic possibilities of European occupation, exploiting the people and resources. The blatant racism in European depictions of Africa and African culture continued through the Scramble for Africa and well into the twentieth
multicultural music education could only rise through a breakdown of racist ideals and recognition that African American musical genres were the major contributor to a distinctly American culture.

Multicultural focus in education has increased music programs since the heightened awareness during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. According to John Dewey, the American educational system broadened its scope to recognize the values of cultural studies in order to integrate the ethnic diversity of an increasingly diverse population. Though multicultural education is purported to benefit all regardless of race, class, or culture, the movement emerged from a concern for students of color who were marginalized in schools for their ways of knowing, learning, behaving, and speaking; the Garveyism Movement of the 1920s was a push for better multicultural education to grant greater social mobility of urban blacks. The founding of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) in 1953 was an early breakthrough for establishing non-western music’s place in the curriculum. In the following two decades, the need for multicultural education in public music education was reinforced by conferences at Yale, Manhattanville, and Tanglewood. This culminated in a dedication to a multicultural focus in music education during the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) 1990 meeting. Adopting Dewey’s ideals, these events focused on the socio-cultural benefits of multicultural music education for developing a sensitive and tolerant population in an increasingly multiracial, multicultural and worldly connected society.

Advances in musicology prior to the World Wars prefaced the furthering of multicultural music education in American secondary schools. The early twentieth century was a time when


technological, urban and global issues were in the foreground.\footnote{Nettl describes this time in education and scholarly intrigue as a time where Westerners asked themselves “where do we belong?” Nettl, The Study of Ethnomusicology, 446.} Departments in higher education began to integrate a focus on African-American studies, eventually leading to furthering the study of “ethnic” cultures. In the first half of the twentieth century, \textit{comparative musicology}, a predecessor to ethnomusicology, began the study of non-Western music by comparing foreign concepts to what was already known: the Western musical system. The development of Ellis’ cent system put a demand for musicologists to employ the scientific method. While conducting their own research in the field was still rare, the cent system did allow for transcribers of African music to notate exact pitches found among non-Western scales without reliance to how those pitches relate to the Western tuning system.

In the middle of the century, groundbreaking scholars such as Merriam and Nettl led a revolution for the holistic study of non-Western music-cultures. With an advanced purpose and methodology of analysis of social behavior and concept, some pushed for a new label for this field of describing musical phenomenon: ethnomusicology. As fieldwork became a necessary tool for researchers to successfully utilize interdisciplinary methods to rationalize the interconnection of musical sound, behavior, and concept in individual societies, the field pulled away from the “armchair” predominance. Although Nettl believes the future of ethnomusicology may be unclear, I find that the inclusion of non-western music appreciation courses and the inclusion of ethnomusicologists with a variety of expertise and disciplinary backgrounds serving in university faculties worldwide to be proof of the field’s merit. The field’s approach is further defended through studies such as that by Abril, whose study of 170 fifth-grade children found that the socio-cultural approach to musical instruction produced favorable learning outcomes.
relative to appreciation, attitude and knowledge when compared to a strictly musical framework.\textsuperscript{114}

Charles Seeger and Mantle Hood were leading scholars who advocated for the inclusion of practical performance study into this primarily academic discipline. Seeger first promoted the scholarly benefits of practical performance in the 1940s. Seeger’s beliefs influenced Mantle Hood’s consciousness as he created music ensembles at UCLA throughout the following decade to perform the music being studied. These ensembles served as study groups for students in the ethnomusicology program through the belief that practical performance not only “enhances reflexive, word-based scholarly inquiry,” but also informs certain aspects of the music-culture unreachable by the “speech knowledge.”\textsuperscript{115} Hood’s confidence in active participation met the academic focus favored by Merriam’s followers with mixed reviews. As a result, the place of non-western music ensembles within the field of ethnomusicology and music departments may still be unclear. It is still common for notable conservatory music programs to focus solely on the Western art tradition. On the other hand, liberal arts universities nationwide have constructed credit-earning non-western music ensembles and ethnomusicology programs.

The instruction taught in these non-western music ensembles concentrating on West African dance-drumming and Ghanaian repertoire specifically is my focus here, in which there are just two major ethnicities of instructors: African and American. However, the cultural backgrounds, experience and expertise among these individuals are vast. American musicians and ethnomusicologists began to direct these ensembles after the first of them were directed by native West Africans. At UCLA, Ghanaian visiting lecturers Robert Ayitee and Robert Bonsu


led an informal study group during the 1966-1967 academic year, with the course “Music and Dance of Ghana” officially offered once Kwasi Badu joined the faculty in 1969. The UCLA program led the initiative to bring native musicians to serve as guest artists, visiting lecturers, and artists-in-residencies. There continues to be an increase of native West Africans teaching and performing in the United States to the present. The heightened migration of Mande master jembe musicians in the 1980s was preceded by the musicians from southern Ghana. Cultural ambassadors from the Ga and Ewe ethnic groups have been particularly prominent, such as C.K. Ladzekpo’s residency at University of California at Berkeley since 1973, Kobla Ladzekpo at UCLA since 1976, and Obo Addy’s (Lewis and Clark College) residency beginning in 1978. Meanwhile, Woma was the first northern Ghanaian master to teach regularly at an American university. He first traveled to SUNY Fredonia to teach in 1999 and was an artist-in-residence from 2004-2008.

Disputing the Categorization of Instructors

Upon review of the literature, it is clear that the center of attention for writers describing non-western music ensemble instruction is developing a model that classifies the instructors. This approach serves to organize the pedagogies and styles into groups, which is convenient for structural purposes and broad conclusions. In fact, I subscribed to a similar viewpoint at the onset of my research, believing that ethnicity would be most influential for determining
instructor pedagogies. While certain tendencies may be true among such labels, two different models by Clark and Trimillos will demonstrate the shortcomings of this type of approach.

In describing jembe pedagogy in America, Joe Clark establishes three categories of instructor: (a.) West Africans, (b.) Americans with formal music training and (c.) Americans with no formal music training. Clark decides to focus on the musical and cultural experiences of the individual.  

In respect to cultural experience and ethnicity, keystone ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam found that the primary purpose of the foreign researcher is to communicate knowledge to his or her outside colleagues, justifying such a classification. It may be perceived that American instructors may be more likely to deviate from emic pedagogical techniques, perhaps highlighting comparisons between the two musical systems to best reach their students. American teachers may be better prepared to make connections and comparisons between the Western and African musical systems because they have first-hand knowledge of negotiating their own Western identity through their experience in learning outside the cultural context.

In addition to the ethnic parameters, Clark’s perspective focuses on the foundation of formal Western musical training as another major factor to the contemporary “westernization” process of jembe pedagogy in the United States. Stonefelt stated that those that are not Western-trained musically might be better prepared to succeed in African music, because they don’t need to negotiate the Western conscious. Likewise, Hornbuckle expressed that he would not have been successful in West African drumming if it wasn’t for his elementary school music teacher.

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118. Ibid., 4.
120. Personal communication with the instructor.
discouraging him from studying Western music.\textsuperscript{121} If Western musical training can affect the process of learning an African musical system, it would seem to reason that it might influence one’s future teaching pedagogies. However, while ten instructors who participated in Clark’s study described themselves as having formal music training, only five participants revealed that they use any sort of notation in their instruction.\textsuperscript{122} The validity of this theory is further questioned, because Ghanaians are especially prominent in developing fluency in the Western musical system, making them adept at notational theories and other approaches in that system. There are Africans from all over the continent who are fluent in the Western musical system. However, Ghanaians are especially prepared due to the integration of formal music education in their public school and post-secondary curriculums. For example, the Achimota School has had a music school with a concert hall and practice rooms since the 1920s. The school later created a small symphony orchestra that played strictly European music.\textsuperscript{123}

This does not mean, however, that because instructors are adept in the Western system that they utilize those approaches in the African music classroom. Although Kazadi is a Congolese fluent in Western musical performance and analysis, he does not use any notation or Western terminology during rehearsals. He reprimands students who attempt to make comparisons between the two systems. On the other hand, Woma does use notational devices when describing form in gyil music, even though he is a native upper-western Ghanaian with no formal Western music training. Therefore, despite any innate tendencies, experience in formal music training necessarily does not correlate to an instructor’s pedagogy.

\textsuperscript{121} Interview with the instructor.

\textsuperscript{122} Clark, op. cit., 54. The author states how many of these instructors suggest their students that they independently notate the music outside of class.

\textsuperscript{123} Agordoh, \textit{African Music}, 18.
A second model, presented by Richard Trimillos, perceives instructor pedagogies as determined primarily by the length and the type of disciplinary focus in the cultural context. This model applies a broader scope to describe instructors of all non-western music ensembles rather than African ensembles specifically. Trimillos outlines three types of instructor, the (a.) culture-bearing, (b.) ethnomusicologist, and (c.) foreign practitioner. Trimillos’s culture-bearer is a native Ghanaian that comes to an American university to teach, intrinsically focusing entirely on making musical sound. As a result of his or her interdisciplinary training, the ethnomusicologist maintains a focus on cultural information, approaching ensemble instruction via verbal explanation and conceptualization. Lastly, the foreign practitioner is a Westerner who had a notable performance career in Africa prior to teaching at the university. Trimillos finds that the foreign practitioner occupies a medial pedagogical position by utilizing techniques from the musical performance focus of the culture bearer as well as the holistic focus of the ethnomusicologist.

Trimillos openly recognizes the possibility of great variation within each type, but he does not delve further into the possible divergence of pedagogy that might result. Neither Clark nor Trimillos recognize the growing demographic of African ethnomusicologists in the field. Africans have more access to colleges and universities that have ethnomusicological programs in African, Europe, and North America. African scholars experienced in Western modes of education and ethnomusicology theories have led university performance ensembles as part of their duties for quite some time, such as Willie Anku (University of Pittsburgh), J.S. Kofi Gbolonyo (University of British Columbia), Akin Euba (University of Pittsburgh), Sowah Mensah (Macalester College and University of St. Thomas), and Kazadi wa Mukuna (Kent State

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University) for example. It is unclear whether these instructors belong to the ethnomusicologist or culture-bearer classifications described by Trimillos. Kazadi, for instance, exhibits both characteristics. He focuses almost entirely on musical concepts: most of the ensemble rehearsals are spent actually playing (75 - 85%), while time is spent for the discussion of holistic concepts in every rehearsal as well.

A particularly common background among foreign practitioners would be that of an established Western musician who took up a second musical system later in his or her career. This would depict Clark’s category of a Western instructor with formal musical training. This type of musician is found commonly among professional percussionists and percussion educators who seek out another challenge in their field. This is the case of Shawn Roberts (African percussion), Robert Falvo (tabla), and Scott Meister (steel pan) at Appalachian State University, the latter two beginning their study of those music-cultures and developing their non-Western ensembles at the university after already becoming full-time faculty members. Falvo finds that it is common for “world” percussion instructors to first secure their placement within the Western curriculum and slowly integrate non-western percussion instruction and ensembles into their teaching load. Musician-scholars such as these merit their own consideration, as they have not performed extensively within the cultural context nor are they trained or focused in ethnomusicology. Additionally, these instructors generally have a unique focus on musical analysis and performance techniques, while still building a repertoire in which they can present in concert.

Native Africans teaching at the university are often asked to teach other African music traditions foreign to them, stretching their identity as culture-bearers. While writers recognize

125. Personal communication.
that African instructors are asked to teach beyond their expertise, there has been little information devoted to how the teaching of an African music-culture foreign to them may determine pedagogy. During these instances of instruction, African instructors alter their identity to act as a diplomat of sorts for the entire African continent. A native of the northern territory, Woma’s teaching repertoire includes southern dances from the Ewe, Ga, and Akan drum-dances. Meanwhile, Kazadi’s repertoire reaches well beyond his Congolese descent, including repertoire from the Ga of Ghana and the diaspora in Brazil. His ethnomusicological focus is based on the Africanisms in diaspora musical creations. These instructors were already proficient in Pan-African concepts of musical performance, philosophy, aesthetics, and the traditional modes of musical education, and perhaps had predetermined their method of imitative learning and teaching. Certainly, learning new repertoire can build upon their foundation in African music transmission, but the holistic and musical perspectives may be blurred. Instructors’ musical foundations were constructed previously, perhaps forcing them into negotiating their knowledge base and developing approaches of comparison rather than conception, similar to the processes a Westerner employs.

A prime example is found through Obo Addy’s proclamation that he did not play the donno as it is done in the cultural context, under the governance of linguistics. Instead, he “adapted [playing the instrument] from the traditional music of his people,” the Ga. He describes how he took it upon himself to seek out a master Dagomba donna player who had migrated to the capital city of Accra, and “learned how to play, like many good musicians in America, counting any time signature as 4/4, the dance being in 4.” Similarly, Kazadi teaches the


Ewe music as each musician sharing an equal role of time-keeping, which may be a more universal concept among African music-cultures. However, it is commonly considered that the gonkogui functions as a primary timekeeper in the Ewe percussion ensemble.

The purpose of the above description is not to downplay African teachers’ ability and resourcefulness, but rather to highlight how university expectations for native musicians to extend beyond their own music-culture may frustrate their authenticity as “culture-bearers.” Trimillos alludes to this type of phenomenon in his description:

[culture-bearers are] known for playing particular instruments or perhaps knowing a specific genre. When he comes to the American university to teach, however, he becomes a resource for the entire tradition.  

Trimillos analyzed the tendency of stretching the culture-bearer instructor to master all instruments, dance, singing, and other art forms. I would argue that representing a foreign music-culture might impose further risks by degrading the local traditions whose customs, musical style and aesthetic qualities are unique.

These particular instances reach farther than the mere variations to which Trimillos admits. The numerous exceptions in the case of university instructors present astoundingly different pedagogies. Rather than criticizing these particular models, I hope that the above description denounces the approach of classifying instructors. There has not been a classification system that explains the divergent pedagogy found in non-western music ensembles with consistency. The reason for the divergence in pedagogical strategies must be broad enough in scope, while narrow in such a way that something about the experience is explained. The answer may be found through this investigation.

128. Trimillos, op. cit., 38.
In my observations, all instructors utilized some sort of visual method into their pedagogy. However, I observed certain approaches that are foreign to the emic teaching perspective, such as the use of notational devices. Notational devices are a specific type of visual approach to transmission which is commonly associated with the Western musical system. Interestingly enough, notational devices are not used only in the high art forms in Western society, but have been gradually integrated also into the jazz and popular music genres that were originally conceived as oral traditions. Notational methods have been developed to transcribe the music of Africa as well, but the use of transcriptions in African ensembles has been debated because of issues of accuracy. The depth of sensory detail found in the Ghanaian dance-drumming repertoire makes a concise transcription impossible. More pertinent to this study is the effect of student perception of the music of the “other” when used in the classroom, especially since the pedagogical technique is foreign to the emic concept.

Since the traditions are very complex and full of nuance, transcribers must make choices of what to include in order to accurately analyze the piece. The traditional purpose of notation is for an individual reader to be able to perform an accurate recreation. Even early travelers, who were not musicologists, noticed the problem of producing a transcription. Bowdich notes:

To have attempted anything like arrangement, beyond what the annexed airs naturally possess, would have altered them, and destroyed the intention of making them known in their original character. I have not even dared to insert a flat or a sharp.\(^{129}\)

\(^{129}\) T. Edward Bowdich. *Mission from Cape Coast to the Ashantee, with a Descriptive Account of the Kingdom*. (London: Griffin & Farran, 1873), 197.
A.M. Jones was an early musicologist who addressed the issues of applying the Western approach of transcription to the African music-cultures that exist through oral/aural processes. He argues:

The criterion of the reliability of an analyst’s investigations is that he should be able to commit the music to paper with complete accuracy. That is, he should aim at putting down the music in such a way that the independent observer could, from his score, actually reproduce the music. Thus it is quite useless for the researcher to put down what he thinks the African sings or taps on his drums. That is subjective and valueless for exact study. The music contrives methods by which he can check his transcriptions so as to be able to prove not only to himself but to an independent observer, that what he has written is actually what the African performed.  

Clearly, a standardized approach to notation cannot include the breadth of musical information. Ethnomusicologists in particular contend that transcriptions ignore the social context of the music. Improvisational aspects that are unique to local linguistics and the creativity of the individual also elude notation. At best, a standard transcription can notate the improvisational techniques of one specific performance, which ignores factors of how and why such an improvisation was conceived. Contrastingly, Locke’s *Drum Gahu* is “an analytic and systematic teaching manual” of one version of a particular Ewe drum and dance piece in which he creates a conceptual perspective through the transcription of multiple master musicians’ embellishments of standard motifs. Through a narrative prose that compliments the transcriptions, he presents a focus on the conception and perception of the culture-bearer musicians.

Locke describes how he has taken this information to develop his own musical style as an American lead drummer outside the cultural context, urging that readers perceive his book as a “syncretic style of rendering the piece. . . . While taken directly from African models . . .

particular manner in which the musical material is combined definitely reflects my own [Locke’s] aesthetic choices.\textsuperscript{132} Such an approach highlights an additional function that the process of transcribing the music can benefit one’s own learning. This may be counter to Jones’s findings that transcriptions must transcend to independent observers. The compact disc included with the book presents the musical sounds represented by the symbols, allowing the student to integrate the aural method in his or her learning process if he or she chooses. This multifaceted approach may build conceptual knowledge among researchers of his work.

The presentation of one particular version of a Ghanaian drum-dance using notational and prose description was pivotal to the scholarly study of African music; the format of descriptive is now common for ethnomusicologists and imitated in thesis projects advised by David Harnish at Bowling Green State University, including Unruh,\textsuperscript{133} Campbell,\textsuperscript{134} Lawrence,\textsuperscript{135} and Eckhardt.\textsuperscript{136} These theses case studies have a more holistic focus through the description of the dance with pictures of particular positions, incorporated in, but certainly not a focus of, \textit{Drum Gahu}.

Interestingly, Locke’s notation throughout the book is an adaptation of the standard Western approach. Although Locke notices the perspective of some that applying Western style notation to African music puts our stamp on a culture that is not rightfully ours, he recognizes Kofi Agawu’s claim that “staff notation ceases to be Western after it has been used to write

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 75.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Amy Unruh, “Kpanlogo: A Detailed Description of One Arrangement of a West- African Music and Dance Genre,” (MM Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2000).
\item \textsuperscript{134} Corinna Campbell, “Gyil Music of the Dagarti People: Learning, Performing, and Representing a Musical Culture,”(MM Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2005).
\item \textsuperscript{135} Sidra Meredith Lawrence, “Killing My Own Snake,” (MM Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2006).
\item \textsuperscript{136} Allison Eckhardt, “Kpatsa: An Examination of a Ghanaian Dance in the United States,” (MM Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2008).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
African music.”137 However, he acknowledges that Gahu does not adhere to the bar lines nor to the stresses implied by Western notation, requiring a complex strategy of note groupings to present drum phrases in a more emic manner. In this regard, Koetting explains:

> even at these relatively simple levels a focus on “downbeats,” pick-up strokes, rests, and so on obscures the true character of the patterns as they are conceived and played. And even greater difficulties develop when the metrical approach is attempted with the great body of African drum ensemble music that has a relatively high degree of complexity, diversity, and variation. Increasing complexity of patterns will lead to increasing ambiguity of meter as the gross beats become more obscure. As patterns become more diverse and the gross beats fail to coincide across the ensemble, the metrical approach will show confusion of differing meters among the varying parts.138

Countless models and strategies have been developed to address the limitations of standard notation for African music such as the metrical approach. The most notable is the Time Box Unit System (TUBS), developed by Phil Harland during his tenure as assistant head of the UCLA African Drum Ensemble. Each box in TUBS presents one time unit of the fastest pulse in which a symbol is inserted in a box if such a sound occurs, or is left empty if no sound occurs (Figure 4). The simplicity and accessibility for those who are uneducated and intimidated by standard Western notation is a primary advantage of TUBS. The presentation of the fastest pulse avoids the transcriber’s perception of the gross pulse. However, individuals have since developed ways to present subdivisions in TUBS by using numbers, asterisks, or bold vertical lines to depict a gross pulse that does not exist in the music (Figure 5).139

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139. Clark, op. cit., 28-29.
Figure 4. Example of the Time Unit Box System (TUBS). This particular example contains boxes that represent the fastest pulse, in which sounds are or are not made. The lack of the perceived gross pulse mimics the original intention of Harland.

Figure 5. Example of TUBS Notation with Perceived Gross Pulse. This depiction of the Ashanti Abofoo includes vertical lines that depict the author’s perception of the gross pulse.

Although not universally accepted, there have been other notational systems modeled specifically for the purpose of depicting West African drumming. Serwadda’s unique model uses musical symbols that are pictorials of the hands’ position for each stroke, such as the cupped position for the symbol of a slap stroke (Figure 6). The authors include intricacies of the timbre production: filled-in note heads indicate a muted stroke, while empty note heads indicate an open sound. Bold lines further indicate the stoppage of the sound. These symbols represent a relationship to the kinesthetic activity of performing the sound, which plays a role in the emic perspective. Serwadda recognizes that transmitting information of the dance is necessary due to its importance in the emic perspective. Rather than including Labanotation, the authors merely suggest that such symbols could be integrated alongside the corresponding musical symbols.


Doris Green’s *Greenotation* actually adapts Labanotation symbols to depict the dance movements in conjunction with the musical information (Figure 7). Interestingly, both Serwadda’s notation and Greenotation read vertically, both spatially separating the right hand techniques from the left. Greenotation separated the hands with a line down the center that divides the right hand from left hand. This technique may simulate the kinesthetic and visual point of view of a musician during an actual performance. In Greenotation, note durations are determined by the height of a given box, creating a unique visual viewpoint that bridges the


kinesthetic and aural perspectives. There is also a plethora of pictographs that describe the
drumming techniques. Both Serwadda’s and Green’s notational systems require an extensive
amount of time to become proficient, which likely accounts for their lack of popularity among
students.

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 7. Example of Greenotation. This particular example is Gahu, an Ewe drum-dance
common among university African ensembles.\(^{144}\)

Although each notational system has advantages and disadvantages in accurately
presenting the musical performance, all notations falter in their ability to imitate the emic
philosophy of interdependence. Serwadda and Pantaleoni acknowledge that their notational
strategy does not solve the problem of fractioning the collective ensemble into its composite
parts, an issue innate in all written notations.\(^{145}\) Individuality, not collectivity, is reinforced
through the isolation of instruments on separate staves. African patterns are interdependent of
each other in the Ghanaian concept,proved through Serwadda’s study that Africans have
difficulty in performing the rhythms when the collective texture of the other ostinato parts is

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 424.

\(^{145}\) Serwadda, op. cit., 51.
absent. Transcriptions also are unable to represent the even-tempered nature of African music, but rather present a hierarchy in the instruments by writing one part on top of another. In Western musical scores, this hierarchy is organized by the register of the instrument, with the higher pitched instruments being placed higher in the score. Contrastingly, the lower pitched instruments in Ghanaian music-cultures, such as the gboba in the Ewelands, have more leadership responsibilities and are allowed more improvisation. Furthermore, the Western practice of further dividing sections by chair - creating a seating - has implications when applied to Ghanaian music; dividing parts into “kpanlogo 1” and “kpanlogo 2” implies a hierarchy between them.

Another inherent problem with visual notation of African music is simply that the sense of sight differs from that of hearing. Each sense has specific capabilities and limitations. Understanding the collective ensemble through visual notation in the same way as aurally experiencing it is simply impossible. The human eye only recognizes one piece of information at a time, although at an imperceptible speed. Contrastingly, the human sense of hearing is much more perceptive and sensitive; we can listen to the entirety of our audible surroundings, or we can choose to listen to individual sounds. At best, we can see something through our periphery, without looking directly at it, but this still requires our entire focus. In this way, the visual method of notation inherently cannot represent the emic perspective of collectivity and interdependence, which is created aesthetically into the melorhythm of the musical ensemble.

With respect to African collectivity, Locke presents one example of transcribing a collective ostinato ensemble, what he calls “the time” in the Gahu drum-dance. He utilizes a standard Western five-line stave to portray the different pitches of the drums. Although the drums are placed in exact spaces, Locke explains that they represent relative pitch in the prose.
This notation describes how the parts interlock through time to construct the melodic contour of a particular ETC (See Figure 3). Although a more emic perception of the music, this transcription is limited by its inability to transmit performance information of the musician’s actual part. Therefore, each member’s conception of their individual part is ignored by the omission of other timbre strokes, ghost strokes, and even ornamentation that occurs in practical performance. Regardless of the accuracy of this type of transcription, it lacks the ability to transmit information for the purpose of recreation.

Nettl grapples with American higher education’s continued use of notations of oral music traditions, claiming “the academic musical establishment has made the lay public feel that without understanding the technicalities of musical construction, without knowledge of notation and theory, one cannot properly comprehend or deal with music.”¹⁴⁶ Locke argues that such theory and analysis ignores the local and particular in preference for the synchronic world of ideas, aiding in the “cultural gray-out” of globalization.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, because schooled musicians have notation skills, this discourse disempowers indigenous artists, alienating them from their own heritage . . . technical analysis conveys the impression that neophyte students understand the music better than the experts themselves!¹⁴⁸

Analytical purposes of notation are irrefutable among musicologists. However, there are two main approaches for notational devices in the classroom - as a teaching tool and as a memory aid. During rehearsals, methods of direct teaching with notational scores were observed. By using symbolic representations before experiencing the oral/aural aspect, students are


¹⁴⁷. Locke acknowledges that the cultural gray-out is furthered by his approach to Drum Gahu, which details how his conception and perception of the music differs from the local Ewe style. See Locke, “The African Ensemble in America,” 183.

subconsciously encouraged to skip levels of the learning sequence that is modeled by Edwin Gordon.\(^\text{149}\) Rather, sound before symbol methods sustain the audiation skill sequence as suggested by notable music educators such as Pestalozzi, Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff, and Suzuki.\(^\text{150}\)

On the other hand, instructors who used the methodology of distributing transcriptions to students as a supplement to the lessons may only be encouraging students to revisit the material already presented. In doing this, the students may find they had another interpretation, which will initiate a cognitive process to transfer their perception of the oral/aural lesson. As it requires reflection between class meetings, this type of approach primarily acts as a memory aid in the learning process. Locke explains:

> Later in the academic year, I use various styles of notation, including staff notation, graph paper, and mnemonic vocables, to clarify musical relationships and assist memory. Even then, I talk about the importance of hearing more than one part at once and maintaining a creative way of hearing. We never play from a score.\(^\text{151}\)

The most common transcription models among students and teachers of university African ensembles observed were adaptations of standard Western notation and the Time Box Unit System (TUBS). Locke alludes to his use of both in his narrative above - staff notation and graph paper respectively. A survey administered to students at SUNY Fredonia found that a majority of students (60%) prefer to use an adaptation of Western notation, contradicting Clark’s study, which found that students most commonly used the TUBS notation.\(^\text{152}\) In my study, none of the students who had studied West African drumming for a year or less used a symbolic representation such as TUBS, while 41% of students that had studied more than one year


\(^{151}\) Locke, “The African Ensemble in America,” 175.

\(^{152}\) Clark, op. cit., 58.
preferred such a method. Our studies may have produced different results due to the students’ level of experience, with familiarity with TUBS notation playing a role in student preference.

The issue of downtime between class meetings is a common obstacle for non-Western music ensembles in Western academia, posing pedagogical problems for instructors. At SUNY Fredonia and Kent State University, the ensembles meet just once a week. Writers complain of the lower status of non-western music ensembles when compared to the major (Western) ensembles at the university. Students are foremost required to meet the obligations of the major ensemble concerts, dress rehearsals, and tours, before the obligations of non-Western ensembles. Scheduling becomes an issue given conferences and university closings for vacations and holidays, making weekly meetings difficult. Nicely estimated that the entirety of her African Drumming Ensembles met a maximum of ten times during the semester. This may justify her use of notations in her beginning classes by encouraging daily individual practice. Supplying students with a written score provides the tools necessary to meet and play together outside class. This is especially important with the enrollment of students from across university departments. These students are less familiar with each other at the beginning of the semester as compared to those in advanced classes.

Clark depicts aspects of Western culture that distract students from daily practice as “frantic work schedules, family obligations, and other forms of entertainment.” In addition, when students do not have their own instruments, practice outside the classroom is nearly

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153. During the Fall 2012 semester at SUNY Fredonia, the three African Drumming Ensembles and the Latin Jazz Ensemble were the only ensembles that did not meet multiple times in a week. There are exceptions to this tendency, such as the African Music Ensemble at Tufts University, described by Locke as meeting twice a week for two hours in Locke, “The African Ensemble,” 173.

154. Interview with the instructor.

155. The Intermediate and Advanced Classes are reserved for the music majors in the percussion studio, customarily a close-knit group.

impossible. After lengthy consideration and hesitancy, I decided to provide students of the Kent State Percussion Ensemble with repertoire notations for an upcoming concert. For instance, a university break and a major ensemble commitment prevented a full meeting of the ensemble for three straight weeks. The ability of the students to retain what was previously learned is a prevalent concern due to minimal meeting time and student inexperience with oral/aural traditions.

Despite its common occurrence in American universities, there has not been a study on learning outcomes comparing the use of notation versus strictly non-written methods. While numerous strategies have been modeled, “less attention has been given to the link between the visual technology of notation and its effect on the oral-aural processing of music.”\(^{157}\) With no seminal study on the subject to illuminate its effect, whether or not to use notational devices continues to be the focus of debate. There is agreement among certain ethnomusicologist circles that notational devices demean traditions by belittling true musical performance to mere symbols on a page.\(^{158}\) Shelemay argues, “to achieve a fuller understanding of what may be other indigenous representations of African music, scholars may need to move away from Western concepts of notation as music writing.”\(^ {159}\)

Although foreign to the emic teaching perspective, both Western and African music-scholars have developed notational models to depict African drumming music. Certain Ghanaian

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159. Shelemay, op. cit., 150.
instructors endorse the use of notation in the classroom. Ghanaian instructor Paschal Younge urges:

if you have students who are able to read music, you should consider using that [notation] in your teaching, too. Using a variety of approaches to transmission will familiarize students with multiple perspectives about music and culture.¹⁶⁰

Those that worked closely with Woma in his advanced group remember his attempts at written techniques. When asked about Woma’s notational methods, one student describes:

Bernard did notate stuff but it didn't make much sense most of the time. . . . I think he just did it because he felt like he needed to bridge the "western" gap to make us understand, even though his understanding of western notation wasn't really accurate.¹⁶¹

Since Woma was never trained in the Western musical system, any attempt at meticulous notation was incomprehensible. Attempts such as these were simply disregarded with good humor by his students at SUNY Fredonia. His abilities to notate form in the gyil music of his people were more intelligible and useful. Percussion instructor Tom Roblee (Wooster College) states:

I do remember forms and information [being notated] from gyil classes. Those were the AABA . . . cycles and names of people, styles, and instruments. [Using notation] is helpful because it appealed to another way of learning music; the visual. It was easier to recall when I had visual, aural, and kinesthetic cues. My guess is Bernard was imitating American styles of learning and was trying to incorporate more than just the aural teaching. I use the same ideas when notating traditional African music.¹⁶²

Roblee further expressed that he felt a freedom to use the techniques he observed from Woma during his ongoing study with the master Ghanaian musician. Both American and Ghanaian


¹⁶¹ Personal communication with the student.

¹⁶² Personal communication with the instructor.
instructors express a freedom to diverge from the emic visual methods to accommodate American students’ preference for learning.

I observed other visual techniques in university African ensembles where instructors recommend students use their eyes. For example, Nicely suggests students in her Beginning African Drumming class look at another musician’s hands as a way to connect with their part. This technique particularly contrasts with Kazadi’s suggestion that students look away from the other performers when trying to discover their relationships. On one occasion, Nicely urged students to visually align themselves with the bass tones of a jembe player, which is more visually obvious due to the significantly different hand position on the drum. Even when the relationships are complex, visually relating parts by bass tones can keep the texture interlocking. In the case of the ostinato parts of kpanlogo taught by Woma, the bass tones of what he calls the two “supporting” parts are played in unison (Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Two Supporting Parts in Woma’s Version of Kpanlogo. The two parts play bass tones in unison.](image)

When visually aligning to such a degree as watching and preparing for another players bass tone, there may be a risk that students will completely ignore the aural aspect. This would

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163. The phrase markings indicate where Woma began his instruction of the part upon its isolation. In this particular example, the onset of each part does not align. Interestingly, the “second” supporting part was not taught to the ensembles at SUNY Fredonia until Fall 2007, after I was introduced to the rhythm during my first study abroad.
be detrimental to student development in any African musical system. Nicely’s foreign teaching technique may align with the visual proficiency in Western civilization, but this approach could be seen as reinforcing the aural aspect, helping students realize the emic concept of the relationship between ensemble members. Interestingly, Nicely only uses this approach in her beginning classes, comprised entirely of non-percussionists and some non-music majors. She does not employ this technique in her advanced classes, consisting of percussion majors as well as the occasional student who had taken the beginning class for two semesters.

Visual approaches may reinforce a Western overemphasis on sight. In his book, *The World is Sound: Nada Brahma*, author Joachim Ernst Berendt argues:

> . . . They [modern Western generations] use their ears only when their eyes are not sufficient. The ears are demoted to the role of auxiliary organ. At that point it is almost reflex: the function of the ears is activated only when the information provided by the eyes is absolutely inadequate.\(^{164}\)

Berendt finds that Western culture’s overemphasis on sight and neglect of hearing results from the increasing popularity of television, which forcibly projects an all-encompassing artistic portrayal to the viewer. In addition, the mundane monotony of recordings negates any aural surprises after a few listenings. Interpreting Berendt’s findings, Fritjof Capra sees a revolution away from the West’s visual prominence towards an audible one will inherently generate a welcome “shift from masculine to feminine values, analysis to synthesis, from rational knowledge to intuitive wisdom, from domination and aggression to nonviolence and peace.”\(^{165}\)

New improvisational genres in Western music may be pioneering such a revolutionary movement, and I would argue that inclusion of the aural focus in African music ensembles, imitating the emic perspective, might reinforce this shift as well.


\(^{165}\) Fritjof Capra foreword to Berendt, *The World is Sound, Nada Brahma*, xiii.
Oral Methods

The instructors observed casually called upon oral methods in the classroom. It has already been discussed that syllabic vocables are in the emic perspective. In Ghana, musicians typically improvise their own nonsense syllables, and the systematic approaches are not universally accepted. In the United States, where each institution has one expert African musician on faculty (at most), the syllabic vocables appear more systematic and standardized. At a workshop I gave at Fredonia, students were perplexed and actually stopped me when I began instruction with onomatopoetic syllables diverging from those used by their former teacher, Bernard Woma. Vocable systems can be meticulously created as a learning tool for the Western student. Robert Kwami seeks to catalogue the Ewe vocables in attempts to standardize them into a catalogue as a “structured teaching aid and learning tool.”

In addition, instructors of university African ensembles present longer musical material by creating mnemonic word phrases. It could be argued that these word associations may help student retention, although there is no research on their use in African drumming instruction. In Clark’s study, it was found that 69% of non-African teachers use mnemonic phrases. Interestingly, Clark did not have an African instructor report using such a method. However, Ghanaian instructor Bernard Woma does call upon clever phrases to amusingly portray musical information to his American students. In expression for his love for the drink, Woma uses a memorable mnemonic phrase to end Gahu (Figure 9).

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Teaching Performance Technique

In Ghana, performance technique is not standardized, but rather is individualized to each performer. Personal experimentation is encouraged with each individual discovering his/her best way to produce timbres. Mantle Hood argues that hand drumming especially emphasizes proper sound rather than a standard, precise technique.\textsuperscript{167} Timbre production is very important to the cultural context, for every musician must have a command for producing quality sounds in order to express their musical ideas. The hand drumming music-cultures found in Ghana employ three main timbres: (1) bass (low tone), (2) tone (fundamental tone) and (3) slap (high / overtones). The Ewe music traditions produce further timbres, which A.M. Jones describes in early ethnomusicology fieldwork as “four possibilities of types of African drum beats,” the (a) free beat (b) muted beat, (c) primary muted beat and (d) secondary muted beat.\textsuperscript{168} These sounds can be produced with a musician utilizing a stick in each hand, a stick in just one hand and the other free, or strictly hand techniques. Robert Kwami’s review of the literature found differing


\textsuperscript{168} Jones cited in Robert Kwami, “Towards a Comprehensive Catalogue of Ewe Drum Mnemonics,” Journal of African Cultural Studies 11/1 (1998): 29. It should be noted that there is a typo in the article concerning primary versus secondary muted beats. Shortly thereafter, the author explains the difference between primary (c) and secondary (d).
opinions regarding the sounds of the atsimevu lead drum: Pantaleoni identifying with eight strokes, Locke perceives just seven, and Agbeli a total of ten before modeling his view of sixteen sounds. Robert Kwami develops a comprehensive catalogue of mnemonic devices by (a) playing technique and (b) how such a technique is played (hand, hand/stick, sticks). Through triangulation, he found that the four techniques of sound production (open, muted, sequential, and simultaneous), a degree of specificity as well as general shared approaches in mnemonic devices in Ewe drumming make such a standardized catalogue possible. Few non-Ewes place high priority on the timbre of striking the drum shell with the stick, a unique musical quality in Ewelands of which they are particularly proud. Since the music-scholars cannot even agree on the number of sounds, it is safe to assume they will not agree on the specific techniques to produce said sounds. Ensemble such as those at Wesleyan University and SUNY Fredonia also utilize brekete and lunna drums from the Dagomba music-culture, which especially require unique kinesthetic movements and muscle strength in order to accommodate for carrying the weight of the drum and to manipulate the curved stick to strike the drums.

In my research at universities in the United States, instructors can spend rehearsal time explaining to students what he or she considers to be “proper” technique. For her introductory classes, Nicely describes the jembe technique, plays the timbre, and narrates adjectives for the quality for which students should hear. The slap timbre is a particularly difficult one to master, and equally as difficult to teach. Tribby explains that “to play a slap on the jembe you have to open up your fingers” as the sole difference between the tone and slap technique. Horbuckle finds that opening your fingers is not a way to create the slap timbre, but to better “fill the

170. Ibid., 33, 36-37.
171. Workshop with the instructor.
sound,” or make it sound better. To actually create the sound, Hornbuckle tells students to “send a focus of your energy to the pads of the fingers.”

Foreign attempts to define “proper” technique are also found in the ethnomusicological literature and percussion method books. It is very common for descriptive words and pictures demonstrating technique to be included in these sources. For example, ethnomusicologist Eckardt describes the slap as “one of the most difficult to master because of the snapping of the wrist that is required.” While teaching this technique has been observed in university ensembles, professional musicians warn against over using the wrist, viewing it as a beginner technique to be avoided. Instead, these educators explain that more arm movement is needed to create the volume and to endure the amount of playing necessary to fill the entire performance space and to lead dance groups.

In terms of producing distinct timbres, Ghanaian teachers Bernard Woma and Kazadi wa Mukuna never analyze the concept of a “proper” technique with their students. Rather, both instructors stress to students that they listen to the sounds they produce. Woma commonly adopted an emic technique by having the advanced students demonstrate certain rhythms during rehearsal, urging beginning students to listen and emulate. Woma integrated one particular exercise at the onset of each class to develop significant musical skills within the Ghanaian musical style (Figure 10). This particular exercise consists of a simple rhythm and accessible kinesthetic motion, which provides an opportunity for students to focus strictly on producing distinct timbres. Woma leads the ensemble in a gradual acceleration, building student endurance

172. Interview with the instructor.
174. Blair Hornbuckle, Shawn Roberts, and Atiba Rorie all individually warn of this common technique.
175. However, I have observed other African musicians model and describe their technique as more definitive, but they would not label themselves as music instructors per se.
by encouraging them to keep up with him. Since each student plays in unison during the acceleration, this exercise develops his or her notion of ensemble time keeping. In this way, at least three attributes are mastered during this seemingly simple exercise which took an inconsequential amount of class time.

![Figure 10. Woma’s Exercise Led in Rehearsal](image)

However, there are some predictable ways in which students find difficulty in producing the different timbres. Students tend to move too far into the center of the drum when producing bass tones, which not only worsens the quality of sound, but also affects their ability to move fluently and quickly between the different timbres. This can become a habit that needs adjustment when the student progresses and begins performing more difficult repertoire at faster tempos. Students’ tones timbres are typically weak at first, a result of not placing enough of their fingers on the drum because their fingers are curved or because their fingers are too far off the edge of the drum. Students also may leave their hands on the surface of the drumhead too long after striking, which restricts the vibrations of the head. The slap timbre is the most difficult timbre for a beginning player to produce. Beginning students often begin to attempt the slap by performing a louder tone timbre, easily recognized by advanced players and instructors as improper. Clark’s study found that most instructors believe it takes students one (33%) or even

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176. In the performance technique common to the kpanlogo drum, as in conga drums, the hand may locate a fraction of an inch closer to the drum-head center for the slap timbre when compared to tone technique. In authentic jembe technique in the Mande tradition, the position of the hand is exactly the same in tone and slap production.
two years (33%) to clearly play tones and slaps.\textsuperscript{177} If students have a difficult time hearing the difference between slaps and (loud) tones, it may necessary to continue demonstrating timbral difference for students. Interestingly, more students articulated that they considered the slap (56%) and bass (33%) timbres as most significant to the musical texture, compared to those that considered the tone timbre (11%) primary. This is particularly interesting because the emic perspective may consider otherwise, as the fundamental tone of the drums have the largest divergence and therefore more administer an active melorhythym. The slap and tone timbres need to be treated as separate entities to reach further levels of musicianship and Ghanaian understanding.

\textit{Views of Entitlement}

\textit{Appropriation} is a major issue in the field of ethnomusicology, defined in its negative state by Ziff and Rao as “the taking – from a culture that is not one’s own – of intellectual property, cultural expression or artifacts, history, and ways of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{178} Do outsiders have the right to perform another’s music? Does anybody “own” the music? If so, to what degree can it be stolen? Is it ethical to make financial gains from performing or teaching a music-culture not one’s own? Are American instructors taking opportunities away from native musicians? These questions raise issues that must be considered when performing foreign music outside its cultural context.

\textsuperscript{177} Clark, op. cit., Appendix: Summary of Teacher Questionnaire.  
\textsuperscript{178} Eckardt quoting Ziff and Rao, “Introduction to Cultural Appropriation,” 1.
Appropriation appears to be a concern for university instructors, exemplified through the instructor’s responses and the published literature. Entitlement issues may have a direct influence in how the culture is portrayed in the classroom, as well as in public performances. As an instructor foreign to the cultural context, Nicely views the objective of the university ensemble as education, which conceals the entitlement issue that is primarily an issue for professional ensembles. 179 Meanwhile, Locke’s perspective is that politics cannot be ignored when considering the Western legacy of oppression, extraction and exploitation of the African people. This would make anyone wary of a Westerner’s right to perform African music, perhaps to be perceived as a claim on yet another African commodity. 180 With these issues in mind, Locke continually reflects upon how he is presenting the music traditions and reworks intricate details that can influence student and audience perceptions. For example, Locke tells of inner turmoil with wearing traditional costumes: “when we put on unfamiliar garb, my students and I risk alienation from our normal selves.” 181 Locke’s view of appropriation and entitlement warns against Americans that neglect their own experiences and pretend to be African.

Ghanaian music educator Bernard Woma often tells of his love for teaching the Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions to international students with a genuine interest in his people’s music. Woma expresses ease from the foreign interest in his people’s music, which he feels will keep the traditions alive well into the future. Furthermore, he finds that the growing international consumption may stimulate an interest in the younger Ghanaians to appreciate their culture and keep the traditions alive. Agordoh finds that twentieth-century urban societies have bred a younger population that does not “make and enjoy music in the traditional way, [nor] possess all

179. Interview with the instructor.
181. Ibid., 178.
the basic skills or concepts of their country.” Since both colleagues were teaching in SUNY Fredonia’s School of Music from 2004-2008, Woma’s view of entitlement may have a direct influence on Nicely’s perspective.

Interestingly, there was no discussion of entitlement by ensemble students within the interviews, discussions, or questionnaires. Twenge has labeled the population actively enrolled in colleges and universities as Generation Me (GenMe). She states that younger Americans tend to expect everything to be handed to them “right now,” factoring into the Associated Press label, “The Generation of Entitlement.” Paralleling this view of entitlement is Cornelius’ findings from a case study of Santeria ritual drumming students in New York:

at first the drummers had little understanding of, or interest in, the religious implications of the performance . . . musician’s early considerations dealt primarily with performance practice, but for those who played in ritual settings, this merged with a focus on ideology and community.

Interviews with my students supported Cornelius’s findings, in which 85% of the beginning students ignored cultural aspects of the music completely, instead focusing primarily on practical performance aspects. Interestingly, one newcomer to West African drumming did describe “knowledge of the past” and an “extensive repertoire” as necessary in order to become a respected African musician. This particular student was an experienced jazz drum set player, who looked to the African-American jazz drummers’ dedication to their African roots, such as the great Art Blakey.

Instrumentations

Instrumentation can determine the role and format of the university African Ensemble. It is my view that Western society’s predilection towards maintaining “cost-effectiveness” is a main influence upon the instrumentations. Many courses in music programs have a low teacher-to-student ratio, compared to the other disciplines, most notably in private performance lessons. As a result, ensembles serve as a way for music schools to bring in semester hours and stay financially afloat. Solis believes that cost-effectiveness affects the purchasing of equipment by the university department in favor of instruments that have “the ability to communicate with as many as possible in a recognized music lingua franca rather than a local language,” and for ensemble repertoires to gravitate toward cultures that are more recognized and can attract a larger student body.\(^{185}\) This may have influenced the appearance of the Ewe music repertoire in the universities in the United States; much of the Ewe repertoire is easily adaptable to involve many students. The elements of the sound are accessible to foreign audiences, and the musical aesthetic “yields to systematic analysis and transcription without significant degradation.”\(^{186}\) Nettl may very well regard these aspects as primary factors to why the Ewe repertoire has been adopted by the Western academe.\(^{187}\)

For those instructors who wish to maintain the ensemble at the university, a common way to establish favorable cost-effectiveness is to have high numbers of students enroll in the ensemble. While this may be common knowledge, how university African ensemble instructors

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187. Refer to page 77.
negotiate a way for every student to participate is complex and individual. Percussion instructors rarely have a dance expert with whom to collaborate in every rehearsal. More rare are those instructors that are also dance experts. It is common for dance classes to integrate live musicians, such as the Sankofa African Drum and Dance Ensemble (DNS 489-491) at SUNY Brockport and World Dance at Appalachian State University. However, these musicians are either paid professionals or student volunteers not receiving credit. Interestingly, dance instructor Sheron Price allows any student interested in the music to join the accompanying musical ensemble rather than dance.\(^\text{188}\)

The most common way to incorporate more students in the musical ensemble is by putting multiple musicians on the same rhythm. However, traditional Ghanaian instruments are not tuned to specific pitches, but rather are tuned relative to each other based on the musicians’ preferences. Since they are not tuned alike, more than one drum on a part creates an obscurity of pitch, which consequently blurs the melorhythm that the interlocking produces. More drums on a part can blur the melorhythm beyond recognition, diminishing the musical elements exclusively to rhythm.

In addition to obscuring the melorhythm, having multiple students on one rhythm also may deteriorate the emic view of responsibility. In African society, the belief that each person is necessary for the survival of the whole applies to the musical ensemble, and it is inherent in the philosophy of interconnectedness expressed by the proverb “I belong, therefore, I am”. Meanwhile, students may come to believe that they are not a necessary element of the ensemble when there are other students playing the same part. Less is expected of the individual student in terms of his or her precision of time and timbre distinction, which are both reinforced through

\(^{188}\) Personal communication with the instructor.
the collective. Students could conceivably be convinced that they could stop playing their part with little change to the musical aesthetic. One may notice that rotating musicians in music events is common in Ghana, notably when one musician gets tired. However, this emic phenomenon places responsibility on everyone involved, and there is typically no doubling of parts.

While these etic methods may be necessary evils, there are other ways to establish favorable cost-effectiveness for performance ensembles. Some examples might be charging admission for concerts, performing for local schools and community events, creating self-sustaining ensembles, as the steel bands at the University of Akron and Appalachian State University have done. Of course, such an approach brings up ethical issues suggesting that the students are experienced and knowledgeable musicians, the presentation is accurate, and that the music-culture is separate from cultural values. Performing extensively also interferes with the educational objectives of the Mantle Hood-esque study group, which focuses on the process of music making, not the preparation of a concert.

To rationalize how the Kent State African Ensemble negotiates issues of cost-effectiveness, we return to the discussion of instrumentation. This particular ensemble generally rehearses and performs with conga drums, typically known for their Cuban origins and diffusion into many twentieth century worldwide music genres. However, the social history of the drum’s origin indicate that the construction and musical roles are based on the African concept. Cuban historian Ned Sublette explains that the first slaves in Cuba made instruments from codfish crates taken from the shipping docks.\textsuperscript{189} The slaves took the slabs of wood and tightly assembled them into box-shaped drums, disguising them from the white powers that prohibited the use of all

African instruments. When the slaves began stretching skins on the drums, they had to disguise them with names such as the *mambisa*, from the word for a soldier of the Liberation Army (mambi). They were known not as African drums, but rather as patriotic Cuban barrel drums. Later, to appear as a creolized Christian people and less African, the black Cubans exchanged their rope-rigged drums for those with metal screw threads. Strapped congas disseminated from the Afro-Haitian *bocu* played on the street at Cuban carnivals were manipulated into the *tambores de rumba*, drums played sitting down for the purpose of the rumba. Sublette emphasizes that the instruments of the African slaves in Cuba were not chosen or performed haphazardly, but were able to “produce a variety of timbres according to long-established African orchestral principles, filling clearly defined rhythmic roles.”

Although for a society of different composition, hierarchy, and resources, these drums were new adaptations based on concepts from their homeland. Kazadi describes his perspective of the processes that occur as forced racial mixing resulting from the slave trade. An assimilation process was required to occur among societies in the new world, as slaves from diverse African societies, often even rival groups, were forced into a shared community. The social concepts engrained within these people entered a process in which common experiences were adopted into their new community. In this way, communities can be seen “as extensions of African cultures,” and those aspects of life that crossed African borders were expressly embraced in the new world. Therefore, the conga drum can be viewed as the construction of what diverse African societies considered to be most important, a Pan-African instrument of sorts. The conga’s diffusion into the orchestration of contemporary African styles, such as *highlife* in Ghana and

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190. Ibid., 266.
soukous in the Democratic Republic of Congo, may prove the authenticity of its Africanisms, also.

In the university African ensemble, the conga drums mass production allows for easy maintenance for musicians and teachers. Those that perform on traditional African instruments know how difficult they can be to repair. There are relatively few African drum makers and instrument specialists in the United States, a possible deterrent from using authentic instruments. Mass produced Remo and Toca drums have heads that demand little skill to be changed, easily done in just a few short minutes. Replacement instruments and heads can be found in retail stores in practically every town in America. The construction of the modern conga drum makes for clear tone production. The tuning of the drums is very fast and easy with the simple use of a wrench, allowing for quick manipulation of pitch. Since the different sizes of drums and drumheads still are made with the same material, their pitch is easily perceived, because there is no issue of timbre differentiation. Although I have not witnessed such a practice, I suggest that an ensemble theoretically could utilize the same sets of conga drums and tune them in such a way that the emic practice for melorhythm is maintained even with multiple students on one ostinato part.

Another problem evident in music departments is what to do with instrument collections after a particular teacher leaves the university. The percussion department at SUNY Fredonia had to consider what to do with instruments when Bernard Woma left the university to attend graduate school at Indiana University in 2009. While it was predetermined that percussion faculty Tiffany Nicely would take over the ensembles, her expertise was in the Mande drum and balafon, not the Ghanaian traditions. As the department head, Stonefelt expressed concerns that the impressive collection of Ewe and Kete drums would go unused, making the drumheads
brittle and unusable. To address this issue, Nicely began leading study abroad programs not only due to student interest, but also to gain a command of the music-cultures of those particular instruments.

*The Isolation of Instruments*

How to introduce a new drum-dance to students is a particularly frustrating challenge when outside the music-culture. The most common method involves presenting each individual part, one at a time. According to Eric Beeko, this method of introducing the musical information in succession isolates each instrumental part, presenting a contrasting perspective from the authentic learning process.\(^{193}\) The Ghanaian mode of learning begins with the whole, as children first hear the entirety of the ensemble in an actual custom. Only after experiencing the whole might they try to dissect the musical information away from public performance. Rarely are individual parts played without the accompaniment of another, and much of the repertoire simply does not have meaning without the interlocking of the entire ensemble.\(^{194}\) When teaching the Gahu to the Kent State Percussion Ensemble, I began our first rehearsal with the performance of the gankogui bell pattern, knowing full well that performers of the Ewe traditions position themselves according to the bell pattern. However, by isolating the instrumentation one at a time, the Western concept of individualism is reinforced rather than emphasizing the understanding of the African philosophy of interconnection. My presentation at the Society for Ethnomusicology’s

\(^{193}\) Personal communication.

\(^{194}\) Eddie Greene only played independently when he said he needed to build his strength and endurance. Even on these occasions, he eagerly welcomed others to grab an instrument and join in.
Niagara Chapter Annual Meeting in 2009 led to a discussion among attendees whom ultimately hypothesized that a viewing of an authentic performance, either by guest artists or an audio/video recording, might be the only way to establish some sort of foundation of the collective ensemble, while later isolating particular aspects.\textsuperscript{195}

\textit{Approaching Form}

The transmission of the concept of form in African music is of particular interest. It was observed that students commonly have difficulty remembering the sequence of events in the oral tradition. Clark recognizes that African ensembles in America typically have the ostinato parts remaining consistent while one musician performs solos. Clark’s observation is certainly applicable, even in professional and semi-professional ensembles that accompany dancers and dance classes such as Eya and Bush Mango. However, Bernard Woma builds an emic foundation in his students by having supporting parts change slightly throughout the performance. In Kpanlogo, the supporting part mimics changes in the lead drum variations by alternating between two patterns (Figure 11). In so doing, the students executing the supporting function were engaged in the form during the performance as well, and were required to pay attention to the lead drummer(s) rhythm in order to provide the proper accompaniment. This small variation in the supporting part requires those students to remain aurally engaged and to listen for visual and aural signals. This approach showcases an example of a minute change in the ostinato parts that are encouraged in the emic perspective. This seemingly slight change provides a large change in

\textsuperscript{195} Mitchell J. Greco, “The Emic and Etic Teaching Perspectives of Traditional Ghanaian Drumming” (Presentation at SEM Niagra Chapter Meeting, Kent State University, March 27, 2010).
the kinesthetic motion and movement towards the bass tones. Filling the pattern by adding ghost strokes, the dropping or collapsing of the fingers onto the drum, also changes the musical motion (Fig 11).

Figure 11. Woma’s Variations of “First” Kpanlogo Supporting Part. (1) Variation 1, with one slap with the non-dominant hand after the bass tone (2) Variation 2, with two slaps after each bass tone, beginning with the dominant hand and (2b) Variation 2 with ghost strokes, as it is played in the emic ensemble context.

Another approach of Woma’s that keeps the whole ensemble engaged in the form is the establishment of a break, or signal, by the gonkogui double bell (Figure 12). This pattern in the double bell aurally signals the drummers to play their break in unison (Figure 13). This is foreign from the emic perspective, where only the lead drummer directly communicates to the dancers in Ghana. This technique allows all the students to gain experience in the communicative function, necessary in the cultural context. Since this drum break utilizes just one timbre, all of the musicians perform the rhythm, regardless of instrumentation.
Learning to Sing and Dance

Of all the art forms involved within the musical medium in West Africa, singing and dancing may be the most significant and widespread. Although singing is an integral part of all Ghanaian music-cultures in the cultural context, its place in the Western culture and the educational curriculum is vague. In higher education schools of music, there is an obvious separation between the vocal and instrumental concentrations of study. This perspective appears to transfer to the student perspective of vocalizations in African music, evident through the interviews and questionnaires of students. Rather than asking what qualities are necessary to make a good African “drummer” or “percussionist,” I asked students, “what makes a good African musician?” Nevertheless, not one student included one’s singing ability, knowledge of songs, or clarity of voice.

Figure 14. Woma’s Song to Accompany Kpanlogo. Pitches are relative, and can begin on any pitch. The response contains the same text, rhythm and intervals transposed down to an agreed upon pitch.
Interestingly, all university African ensemble instructors integrated some form of singing in rehearsal and performance. Woma does not focus on a large repertory of songs to accompany the drumming. Rather, he reuses simple songs that portray African musical style (Figure 14), such as the call and response approach as well as the process of singing while drumming. On the other hand, he does actively teach students bewaa songs of his people. The gyil accompanies bewaa songs, and the meaning and dialect are fundamental to their function. Contrastingly, Shawn Roberts explains how Paschal Younge required that he first learn to sing a large repertory of Ghanaian songs over bell patterns before showing him the drum parts.\textsuperscript{196} Locke integrates several songs early in the “first phases of learning” the Ewe drum-dance Agbekor to discourage the tendency of his students to fixate on the percussive elements, which encouraged a more equivalent view of the two sound mediums.\textsuperscript{197} At Kent State, Kazadi devoted much time to actual singing, but not in conjunction with the drum-dances. Instead, the ensemble takes a break from drumming and sings accapella or along with his guitar accompaniment.

As in music, active participation is the best way to conceptualize dance movements. However, throughout the twentieth century, the place of dance in modern Western societies is trending away from social activities. The American student can find it nerve-wracking when met with the expectation to dance in front of friends and colleagues. According to Tiffany Nicely:

\begin{quote}
dancing [is] really hard for some people, a lot of the students felt really uncomfortable . . . it was usually the guys that didn’t want to do it. [The African men] all dance . . . because you can’t be a good drummer without knowing the dance, because it’s all a communication between [the drumming and] the dance.\textsuperscript{198}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{196} Personal communication with the instructor.
\textsuperscript{198} Interview with the instructor.
Nicely requires all students in her beginning class to participate in dance for at least one selection, both in rehearsals and performance, a pedagogical technique she shares with Michael Vercelli of West Virginia University. In this way, there are at least a few dancers during the rehearsal of select pieces, which constantly reinforces the connection between the music and bodily response. Without observing the communication between drum patterns and dance movements, a student will have difficulty reaching an advanced level. The performance may not be charged to spark energetic dance, which is crucial in the cultural context. However, Nicely suggests that the students who participate in the dancing activity will improve their musical ability.

On the other hand, certain university African ensembles do not practice dance alongside drumming, believing that students can develop appreciation and knowledge of music and culture through the isolation of musical instruction. At Fredonia, volunteers from the dance department and students who studied abroad in Ghana would join the musical ensemble for concerts. Dancers might only attend one rehearsal or a run-through before the performance. For the music students, memorizing form can be especially challenging in instances where dancing is not integrated into rehearsals. Observing and participating in dance are visual and kinesthetic aids to memory.

**Public Performance**

The university African music ensemble today is almost always required to perform publicly every other, if not every, semester. Contributors to *Performing Ethnomusicology* find that university administrators require a public performance as an assessment tool for the ensemble and instructor. Vetter believes that forcing non-western music ensembles into the
Western concert paradigm, the canonical ensemble paradigm, is “the central pedagogical dilemma in and the greatest frustration of my ensemble teaching activity.”\textsuperscript{199} To Vetter, students are not ready to display their skills until they have been engaged in the foreign music for at least a year. Presenting a concert with ill-prepared students makes Vetter feel like an illusionist, “creating for the audience a false impression that the performers in front of them are competent and fluent in the musical tradition they are presenting.”\textsuperscript{200} The main objective of many non-western music instructors is to introduce students to a foreign musical system and for students to conceptualize another people and their culture. These are certainly more difficult to gauge without a public performance. As an ensemble in a study group format, the Kent State African Ensemble is one of the few that do not regularly engage in an official public concert on campus. However, even this ensemble performs for public and private community events each semester. If it is true that public performances are necessary, either from administration demands or to establish favorable cost-effectiveness and assessment, perhaps time would be better spent investigating how public performances are, or can be, presented.

The perspectives of a public performance in Ghana and America are remarkably different. In Ghana, public performances involve the entire community; everyone is expected to participate in some way. Traditionally, venues for public performance are common areas of social activity, not permanent structures but rather open areas where people can gather and closely engage in the experience.\textsuperscript{201} Contrastingly,\textit{ folkloric} ensembles emerged in Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s to meet the demand for formally staged performances, resulting from

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{201} Nketia, \textit{The Music of Africa}, 31-32.
Ghanaians’ migration to the cities of highly mixed ethnicities. These groups performed in the ballet style, altering the village-style of drum-dances so they could better entertain a passive audience. One example is the incorporation of new variations and an entirely new section of Kinka into the village arrangements of Gahu.\footnote{Locke, \textit{Drum Gahu}, 115.} Nketa explains that there were venues for this style of performance even before a European presence on the continent. These activities have increased over time.\footnote{Nketa, \textit{The Music of Africa}, 13-20, 31-34, 234-238.} Folkloric ensembles occupy the concert halls and university ensembles in the United States, thereby influencing their perception.

\textit{Audience Participation}

It is necessary for the director and musicians to initiate audience participation. This is a mandatory skill for ensemble directors in Ghana, where the leader must choose appropriate repertoire for the right occasion. Of course, Ghanaian citizens are aware of the occasion and socially accepted actions, and will organically dance, clap, sing and react to the music as they see fit. Contrastingly, Western audience members are more reserved, conditioned by their experience in orchestral and jazz settings. African ensembles are generally staged in formal venues of the university that hold orchestral concerts and recitals. Because of this phenomenon, encouragement to participate in a Ghanaian fashion may be necessary, either before the performance or during it.

Most would agree that Bernard Woma is a master entertainer, well adept in manipulating the atmosphere and creating an excited audience. Woma encourages audience members to
express themselves during the performance, to honor their feelings rather than restrain them. He often tells them, “if you dance, the ground will not complain,” encouraging them to dance even if they feel like they do not know how. He usually accompanies the saying with a shake or twirl that spins the underlying hem of his smock around him. At SUNY Fredonia, he would make several percussionists break from playing to enter the audience’s space, dancing similarly to the “chicken dance” that is popular in America, welcoming the audience to express themselves. Woma’s sense of humor resonates well with the audience. This encourages the audience members to dance, even if they do not know the authentic movements and perhaps think they look silly. Woma would temporarily leave his post as master-drummer during a performance, providing a couple of brief movements of dancing, singing and encouraging the audience to clap in order to keep them engaged during longer pieces.

Stage Arrangement

The arrangement of the ensemble has significance in the perception of student participators and the audience. A straight line and a semi-circle are two possible arrangements for a staged setting. When a straight-line is formed parallel to the audience, the performer-audience barrier is reinforced. The audience may interpret such an exhibition as a showcase of a far-away tradition. On the other hand, forming the ensemble into a semi-circle may make the audience feel welcomed as guests into the music-making process through their inclusion within the circle. Locke prefers the semi-circle arrangement, because it encourages an interconnected perspective. However, it may be more appropriate to form a straight line if the objective is to showcase a student’s work and ability, such as in percussion recitals.
Circle-dances offer another logistical challenge for the ensemble director. Many social dances are traditionally formed around the instrumental ensemble, frequently among Ewe and Dagara bewaa repertoire. For circle dances especially, Locke gives the audience a mini-lesson at the onset of the performance so they can participate.\textsuperscript{204} At the 53\textsuperscript{rd} Society of Ethnomusicology National Conference at Wesleyan University in 2008, Ghanaian dancer Sulley Imoro and others gave a mini-lesson so attendees could join the festivities.

\textit{Motivations to Learn Ghanaian Music}

There are crucial stages that must take place before a student begins the study of Ghanaian music. The introduction to the culture is central to the student’s progress. Having been introduced personally to the culture through the brilliant and animated Bernard Woma, I can say that an enthusiastic instruction can foster an immediate love for the culture and is a critical step in the desire to pursue bi-musicality. In the West, African music became increasingly popular in the latter half of the twentieth century. Performance of world fusion genres brought African artists to America’s popular stage, including Paul Simon’s \textit{Graceland} album and Peter Gabriel Secret World tour. These performances and recordings introduce African traditions through popular genres with which Western audiences can easily identify. Many students at the university setting have experienced an African performance at an on-campus concert or other event.\textsuperscript{205} Of course, only when students are aware of a music-culture can they choose to pursue its study.

\textsuperscript{204} Locke, “The African Ensemble in America,” 177.

\textsuperscript{205} Interviews with students at Appalachian State University.
There are a variety of motivations for students to want to learn the Ghanaian musical tradition. Students expressed an interest in the Ghanaian style of learning, including learning “by rote” as well as “learning until you get it”.  

My students had a hard time describing what they found intriguing about the West African dance-drumming traditions, but their focus on enjoying the music-culture makes me believe that they enjoyed the light spirited and participatory nature of some of the repertoire they witnessed. Students often find a romantic appeal of participating in something completely foreign, including the appearance of the drums. All students find something intriguing and fun about the Ghanaian dance-drumming traditions, sparking an interest to learn the music themselves. To take the first step to begin learning, students must have an avenue to learn and must feel welcome to participate.

According to Teel, “there exists an expectation that most Western-trained percussionists should possess some facility on a variety of non-Western instruments.” In my research, practicing musicians expressed the belief that participating in African drumming can help with their sense of rhythm and overall musicianship. As previously stated, one student’s motivation to learn the traditional Ghanaian style was based on his favorite jazz drum set player who was very knowledgeable about traditional African rhythms. Another student thought experience in Ghanaian drumming would help her hand-drumming ability, which she saw as obligatory for a classical percussionist. Another student believed that learning and performing West African music teaches skills and concepts such as groove, rhythm, and ensemble playing. When

206. Ibid.


208. Interviews with students at Appalachian State University.
questioned whether the student thought learning African drumming would transfer to their abilities in Western musical styles, one student stated:

absolutely yes, in the context of playing within an ensemble and knowing and respecting your role . . . in the ensemble I think it transfers directly to our wind ensemble and orchestras. . . . I see it as the same thing, as far as the discipline of learning songs as well as working within a groove to create one [voice], so yeah I think it transfers to any musical setting. 209

Music teachers and students from a variety of musical backgrounds commonly believe this idea of transferability of skills from studying African drumming music into the Western system. Hill suggests “adding world percussion to your music program helps students become better rhythm readers . . . and [improve their] ensemble groove.” 210 Another student expressed his belief that studying West African music will “expand your groove and understanding of music.” However, there has not been a study that validates this assumption, and there is no proof that mastering one musical system would transfer to another.

There have been very few research studies done on the effect West African drumming instruction may have on the musical achievement of students in general. A rare exception was a study by Perry, who investigated the effects of Mande music instruction on the achievement of middle-school band students. 211 In his study, a control group participated in the normal band rehearsals for the program while the focus group integrated a portion of the time to performance-based activities and instruction in the Mande dance-drumming music. The researcher found no significant difference between the groups’ scores in performance tests, although the focus group did score more favorably in terms of knowledge, attitude, listening and analysis. Pembrook and

209. Ibid.


Robinson conducted a similar study, but could only conclude that students who were instructed with authentic instruments and live instruction methods scored significantly higher in performance tests than those who used mass produced instruments and recording methods.\textsuperscript{212} The majority of multicultural music education research continues to focus on student appreciation aspects such as attitudes and perception, rather than the acquisition of knowledge or the development of skill.\textsuperscript{213}

\textit{Student Reliance on Sight}

While the Western musical tradition develops musicians who rely on sight, the Ghanaian’s emic perspective demands a command of hearing and feeling. The conductor and sheet music are Western idioms absent from Ghanaian musical system, requiring a different set of skills to become a proficient musician. In order to adapt successfully into a competent performer of the Ghanaian drumming traditions, it may be necessary for American students to negotiate visual techniques, such as using notations while playing. In the Western orchestra, reading sheet music promotes a heavy concentration on oneself, one’s own part and the sound produced from one’s own voice. For example, it is commonplace for students to count the measured time until their own musical passage begins, different from listening to the musical production and adding their own part. The former is inwardly focused, while the latter in outward. In Ghana, musicians play for the benefit of the entire community, which is why African


teachers tell students to smile and interact with the audience in the university ensemble performance.

The African Ensemble student must become familiar with the role of director and master drummer in this foreign context. In amateur ensembles of the Western art tradition, the role of conductor is not only to run and direct the rehearsals, but also to visually establish tempos, portray sentiments, and coordinate the musicians’ entrances. The conductor as a figure is an esteemed position, acting as a communicator, but also as a barrier between the audience and the musicians. On the other hand, the conductor does not audibly contribute with the ensemble.

Students must negotiate their reliance of the conductor in the Ghanaian musical context. Each musician of the university African ensemble must absorb the responsibility of timekeeping and portraying appropriate sentiments. The director is simply another musician found among the ensemble, who transfers visual to audible cues, which must be recognized by each member of the African ensemble. With the director in the ensemble and the absence of music stands, the visual barriers between the students and the audience are eliminated. Musicians are forced to engage with the audience and to interact with each other. This can be stressful for shy performers or those that are overly independent. Watching others may encourage students to use their eyes to determine such musical elements as pulse and entrances. However, it should be noted that students who use this technique are likely to be behind the collective time. Listening to the collectivity and adding one’s own part is a better technique for interlocking, “grooving” or to be “in the pocket” to use jazz terminology.

**Physical and Mental Hurdles**
Students encounter many physical and mental obstacles as they progress toward Ghanaian musicianship. First-time hand-drumming students can expect to be able to play for about half an hour, as the skin on their hands is not accustomed to continued striking.

Throughout the first few years of performing Ghanaian hand drums, hands and fingertips repeatedly become calloused over time. Only with consistent playing will hands become more permanently calloused and hardened. Holding single-headed drums with open bottoms can also be difficult, as knee and leg pressure is constantly needed to hold the drum in place. During hand striking, students often forget about holding the drum properly, causing the drum to slip away from them. Men will notice that the drum slips away when they are wearing formal slacks, which is quite challenging for first time performers.

The unexpected in African performances can cause emotional and physical distress. As stated earlier, Woma determines many aspects of a performance based on the dynamic of the immediate environment. If Woma feels confident in the performers, as he did in his final semesters at SUNY Fredonia, he waits until the concert to determine the program, sometimes waiting for the conclusion of one piece to decide the next. At times like these, beginning students often frantically move about the stage, stressing over what they see as “unprofessional” concert logistics. Woma also determines the length of pieces and their tempos based on the immediate environment, creating physically challenging performances that can last for fifteen minutes or more. If the audience is energetic, Woma takes patterns far faster than previously rehearsed, requiring vigor and bodily efficiency for a student to play during the entire piece. In certain instances, performances of a single piece could entail playing the pre-determined form three or four times in succession. In this way, students are required to give complete attention and focus
to the director and maintain an even pace, perhaps pushing themselves to give more than they thought possible.

*Negotiating Points of Reference*

Negotiating the Western musical framework of “one” can be difficult for the students. Tiffany Nicely explains the Western reliance on the concept of “one” while learning African music:

> The African teachers that I have had will almost never tell you where the downbeat is, so they’ll start a pattern, you jump in [but] you’re not exactly sure where the one is. So what I find as a Western trained musician [is that] I’ll assume there’s a “one” in there, and I’ll be thinking of it that way, but if they show me later with the break and I discover that I was wrong, it’s very hard to relearn it. I feel that American musicians are hooked on the downbeat: “where does it start, where does the pattern come back around”, [while] Africans seem to be able to start anywhere.\(^\text{214}\)

Through observations and semi-systematic interviews, it was evident that students involuntarily form a structural system that makes sense to them. For those new to the West African musical system, this meant inserting a sense of “one” into what is a very thick musical texture. A student can establish his or her perception of stressed beats (downbeats), and even a maximum stress of a “one,” because they are introduced to the individual musical parts in isolation. When such an ingredient is treated individually, away from the full context, students are allowed to subconsciously analyze and formalize an organizational structure to better understand the material. Needless-to-say, This mode of transmission does not happen in the Ghanaian context. An interesting phenomenon regarding meter occured in the rehearsals and

\(^{214}\) Interview with instructor.
performances of Gahu at SUNY Fredonia. To cue the entrance for the sogo players half-way through the gonkogui cycle, the advanced students would actually yell in excitement on what they viewed as beat “one.” This would serve to get the attention of the less experienced students and guide them to enter their drum part more cleanly on what was perceived to be beat “three.”

Based on their experience in Western popular, folk, and classical music, this involves developing a mental time signature. During a workshop I gave at SUNY Fredonia on *Fume* Fume, the class had opposing views when a discussion of the drum-dance’s time signature emerged. The more experienced students were less eager to claim a definitive time signature, while the beginning students were more certain the ostinato parts were in 6/8 or 12/8. Advanced students were more aware that Western concepts of rhythm and meter, such as the belief that music is in either simple or compound time, are obscure in the African musical context, especially in the more “challenging” repertoire where the hemiola style, common in Sub-Saharan African music, is ever present.215 The individual parts can be easily perceived as having one particular downbeat, although it may be contradicted when other parts are added. Negotiating this technique of internal analysis is very difficult, but the answers are given with patience and eventually experiencing with the whole ensemble. Rather than a focus on one’s self and beat-by-beat analysis, listening to the musical material for what it is may break this habit.

In this respect, African instructors Kazadi and Bernard Woma describe individual parts in terms of *relationship* to another musical part in their classrooms. Typically, Woma focuses on the patterns of the double-bell, while Kazadi will ask any two musicians to play to highlight their relationship. When rehearsing, Bernard explains that he wants the students to enter after a certain amount of cycles of the bell-pattern, establishing a form that he may use in public performance.

Kazadi would not attempt to control this, but rather have one student play, with the complementary student joining in when he or she feels comfortable and confident.

Contrastingly, American instructors are more likely to count off to initiate a musical entrance from the students. This may reinforce the extramusical frame of reference for the students, who tend to focus upon their perception of the implied pulse rather than the music actually being produced. Bernard occasionally attempts to count off entrances for students when rehearsing a shorter particular pattern over and over again. However, he would do so in another tempo, causing students some agony. This technique was an attempt to adapt to his international students. However, Woma only used this technique to prepare the class to repeatedly perform an isolated pattern, clearly not to establish the tempo. Since this phenomenon also was observed in lessons with Abou Sylla, master balafon player for Guinea, it may be a common challenge that students should grow accustomed to when learning from African teachers.

Western Improvisation

Improvisation is a natural element of African music, creatively responding to the energy of the ensemble, dancers and the observers’ encouragement. In the university African ensemble, students display different conceptions of the place of improvisation in the music. Both African and instructors foreign to the cultural context referenced specific sections of the a compositional form as time for improvisational “solos.” Simply calling these moments “solos” suggests that

216. Interview with the instructor.
this is a time when the student performer has the spotlight, a showcase of their ability. In the Western concerto and jazz genre, the soloist stands separated from the ensemble and receives praise and applause from the audience for his/her individual performance.

Soloistic ideals influence students’ perceptions that these designated improvisational opportunities are for them to present virtuosic and free musical ideas. Many of the “solos” observed resembled an avant-garde style in terms of rhythm, pulse, phrase structure, and even performance techniques such as muted slaps, bass slaps, and multiple bounce rolls borrowed from the drum corps idiom. I noticed that students felt a freedom to recite rhythms from other pieces in that ensemble’s repertoire.

According to Michael Markus, student misconceptions of improvisation result from their concentration on the beat or pulse, rather than the emic approach that focuses on the melodic contour of the musical texture. In the Mande drum tradition, improvisation is limited to emphasizing the melodic rhythm, developing a question and answer of ostinato parts by playing in the empty spaces, or to play in connection with the dancer or dancers by using fast, repetitive patterns that extend over the ETC. Markus describes that the latter technique is often used to highlight an “obvious and aggressive dance movement.” He finds that reference to the melorhythm presents a structure with limitations to musical creativity. Beginning students typically need to negotiate from constructing their own implied pulse to improvise against, making the recognition and reference to the melorhythm a major step in becoming a more advanced player.

Nicely describes that students have different familiarity and comfort with improvisation. Students have different aptitude and fluency with improvisation, especially when music

217. Personal communication with instructor.
education is so vast. Those that are familiar with the jazz tradition tend to borrow from the jazz structure and naturally improvise in multiples of four beats, especially when asked to develop improvisational material without the accompaniment of dancers.

**Studying Abroad**

There is some agreement that students should study abroad after a few years of study in America. Teachers and colleagues will consider students who study abroad as having greater dedication and even a better command of the musical system. Since its creation in 1999, the Dagara Music Center has welcomed hundreds of international students. At the Dagara Music Center, group lessons in drumming, drum-making, dancing, xylophone and other cultural traditions are given. Their busy seasons are during winter and summer breaks in the American University system. Studies abroad such as those to Ghana can be taken for college credit, usually diverging from strictly musical study to include travel across the country. The DMC is located in a small town in Greater Accra, with an authentic Ghanaian feel that emulates the pre-colonial institution of traditional music. Yet it is in close proximity to services such as hospitals and internet cafes that Accra can offer. The safe and welcoming environment encourages students to immerse themselves in a foreign way of living. By devoting their entire stay to the participation

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218. Consider the non-standardized place of jazz programs in public education, as well as Orff, Delcroze, and Kodaly approaches. Although far from universal, there are self-serving Montesorri schools which utilize improvisational methods of instructors to toddlers through adolescents.

in a true Ghanaian experience, students are more likely to appreciate the Ghanaian way of life and their concept of music.

**Recordings as a Learning Tool**

Joe Clark’s view of the “westernization” of jembe pedagogy includes audio and video recordings, suggesting that American instructors use recording devices in their instruction. I did not observe any instructor in American universities that used recordings as a teaching tool in their ensembles. However, I did come into contact with students that used such approaches as an aid in learning West African music. Whereas Ghanaian children commonly encounter live music, Green found that American learners encounter music through recordings and broadcasts.\(^{220}\) In her research of young people learning popular music style, she found that “informal music learning and formal music education are not mutually exclusive, but learners often draw upon or encounter aspects of both.”\(^ {221}\) Informal learning practices, most notably by imitating recordings, was much more common than conscious, formal learning. Her “impression was that . . . many of them [research participants] had not considered this practice to be a part of learning, viewing it rather as something private, unfocused, or unworthy of discussion.”\(^ {222}\) Although not considered by those that practice it, learning by recordings is a very common occurrence in our society.

Unfortunately, recordings inherently suggest perspectives that are foreign to the traditional Ghanaian concept. Recordings suggest that a piece of music is standardized, that a

\(^{220}\) Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn*, 60.

\(^{221}\) Ibid., 59.

\(^{222}\) Ibid., 61.
particular performance is the proper rendition. Students can revisit the same recording over and over again, further reinforcing their perspective that the elements of the music such as form, accompanying songs, and improvisations are fixed. The recording is just one given performance during one particular occasion, but the perspective that results may be that this is the original recording, a prototype with which latter versions are compared. The repertoire eludes recording, because the songs and dance exist with great regional variations in West Africa. Variation exists through time and space, and little value is given to the original composer and performers, even if they can be determined. The music belongs to the society instead, and praise is granted to live musicians.

Of course, audio recordings ignore the dances of West Africa, instead isolating the audible aspects of the music-culture. Commercial recordings may indirectly impact the music as well, since the presence of dancers is omitted in the recording process because of the undesirable audible noise that results. This could affect how the drummers perform, especially the lead drumming that depends so much on the interplay with dancers. Similarly, commercial recordings that use modern technology may require that the performers maintain the same tempo, as any fluctuation make the editing process difficult. However, video recordings such as Agbekor Drum and Dance Ensemble’s two-volume set showcase visual aspects of the music-culture and instructs upon the music and dance.

Meanwhile, the intention of field recordings is to depict the musical culture as authentically as possible. Ethnomusicologists are especially trained in ethnographic techniques, minimizing their affect on the music-event, hoping to record the natural and organic occurrence. Hugh Tracey was the first traveler to record the authentic performances of African people, recording Bantu music-cultures that he came into contact with in the 1930s. In Ghana, the
ethnomusicologist James Koetting recorded a significant number of authentic music-performances in the 1970s. The worldwide web has created new modes for sharing musical ideas, events, and even instruction. Koetting’s 142-audio reel and personal log notebook has been available online through Brown University since 2002. Countless videos of Ghanaian performances and American university representations can be easily found and accessed by searching Youtube.com. Wesleyan University has recently begun the Virtual Instrument Museum, a digital series of information on folk instruments from around the world. Oberlin professor emeritus Roderic Knight continues to digitize his instrument collection with the hopes that the information could provide useful information to the ethnomusicological community.

Students have had mixed results with using recording devices to document their experiences in the Ghanaian musical context. Clark found that 43% of students use recording devices in class. During study abroad in Ghana, less than half of the American students diligently recorded their lessons. However, many of the students who did not record lessons expressed an interest in accessing their fellow students’ recordings. Woma permits students to record their lessons at the DMC, and often suggests such as approach. One student of Abou Sylla records his lessons with his iPhone, later downloading the files to his computer. When revisiting the material later, he uses a program called the Amazing Slowdowner to slow the speed of the recording, making it easier and “faster to dissect what he [Sylla] is playing.”


227. Interview with the student.
obvious example of a “westernization” of West African music pedagogy, both Clark and I found that the majority of the students do not use notational devices, mnemonic sayings, or recording devices, perhaps preferring to emulate the emic learning process as much as possible. This supports Hess’s findings that fourth through eighth grade elementary students prefer being taught Ewe drumming with instruction that emulates the oral tradition, initiating aural learning processes rather than visual.  

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A vast array of teaching pedagogies was found among instructors of university African ensembles. Contrary to the prevailing thought, there was not a clear and concise way to categorize pedagogies by the instructor’s cultural or musical background. How instructors use visual, oral, and kinesthetic methods varies by the individual, whose attitudes regarding their divergence away from the emic teaching perspective were complex. Regardless of their ethnicity, certain teachers support the use of notational devices while some do not. The specialty of the instructors may determine which music-culture(s) are represented and the degree that dancing and singing are a focus. Certain ensembles practice purely the percussive elements, stressing that there is not a standard approach to teaching the traditional drum-dances of Ghana.

The perspectives of the students are directly influenced by their experiences, of which the instruction in university African ensembles contributes significant. It was found that beginning students adapt knowledge from their previous musical experiences and adopt new skills in order to further their understanding and ability in the traditional Ghanaian musical style. The learning curve when acquiring this new skill involves not only developing the technique to make distinctive tones and learn Ghanaian rhythms, but progressing their conceptual knowledge of the

Ghanaian musical style. Relying on Western musical concepts can be a barrier to their progress in the Ghanaian musical style, such as relying on notation and recordings that are standardized resources, learning from individual lessons to engaging in collective learning and observation of others. Visual learning preferences may be habits that can be broken, especially since students verbally express their preferences of learning African music through oral instruction. Students progress further in the musical style when they simultaneously listen to the sounds that they produce individually, as well as, the collective of the ensemble. Rather than applying their implied pulse, students should hear the melody of the interlocking drums and add their parts to the musical texture. They also develop an emic perspective when they dance and sing, which often is seen as a daunting activity to do in front of others. Most importantly, negotiating one’s identity through the continued study of traditional Ghanaian drum-dances can build an emic perspective over time.²²⁹

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²²⁹ Pike’s theory that an etic perspective can eventually become emic through negotiating one’s Western identity is supported by Murray’s research of a select group of Americans who perform Indian music-cultures in Eric Murray, “Emic / Etic Negotiations in a Cross-Cultural Learning Process: American Perspectives on Hindustani Classical Music,” (MA Thesis, Kent State University, 2003), 5.
PART III

CONCLUSIONS

Through the study of Ghanaian musical transmission and its counterpart in the ensembles in institutions of higher learning in the United States, unique teaching perspectives and learning processes emerged. Ghanaians are exposed to the music traditions of their culture from birth, and are surrounded by drumming daily. By participating in traditional activities in full or with a limited role, younger generations experience the whole of the artistic expressions, easily expressing themselves in a variety of oral and kinesthetic modes. Based on the evidence that surfaced, Americans are more reserved when it comes to dancing and singing. Instructors in the context of a foreign university have a tendency to reinforce student preferences by downplaying these types of responses. While the emic perspective develops from socialization in the community, the absolute musical aesthetic and the analysis of the musical style occupy the focus in the foreign context.

It is not possible to imitate the entirety of the Ghanaian teaching perspective, built from a lifetime of authentic experience. In a class that meets once or twice a week and experiences turnover every semester, one can never accomplish the Ghanaian immersive approach. All instructors at the university level face restrictions due to assessment requirements as well as logistical and scheduling issues. These obstacles have an astounding effect on the quality of learning in an African ensemble. The objective of music education in Ghana is for future generations to continue the traditions and values of the society, an alien concept in the foreign
context. A broader objective for all ensembles may be to build an appreciation for the “Other.” Delving deeper, however, we find many unique goals and objectives for university African ensembles, reasons for the specific ensemble to exist in the specific university, program, and community. All instructors must make choices of what to include and what approach to take, and this study has revealed a few of those choices. As credited courses taken by students as part of their programs or electives, course goals and objectives have primary roles in determining the ensemble’s format and the pedagogy.

There was a great deal of variation within these ensembles, which at first glance appear to be the same. However, the nuances among ensemble names may serve to clarify the course objective. The African Ensemble at Kent State University may suggest attributes such as a varied repertoire (African), and varied genres, since it does not specify instrumentation. When registering for the ensemble, students enroll in Chamber Ensemble, suggesting that the enrollment is low and possibly implying that it is a study group. The African Drumming Ensembles at SUNY Fredonia similarly suggest varied repertoire (African), but with a concentration on drumming. Although the focus was certainly Ghanaian while Bernard Woma was in residence, the ensembles do currently survey across the continent under the direction of Ms. Tiffany Nicely. On the other hand, Sankofa at SUNY Brockport, Kiniwe at Tufts University and others create formal names, seemingly to aid to their objective of securing off-campus performance opportunities. Some ensembles do not have a name at all, a likely occurrence when an ensemble arises within the Percussion Ensemble. One example is the University of Akron, where a graduate assistant typically teaches Ghanaian drumming and gyil in conjunction with the percussion ensemble. Bill Sallak, who currently serves as Dance Music Director at Kent State
University, initially created the African ensemble in 2000 by encouraging the purchase of authentic instruments.

The study group model has its origins in Mantle Hood’s first non-western music ensemble at UCLA. At that time, the UCLA study group was a collective union of like-minded graduate ethnomusicology students. The students gathered informally to actively participate in the music making activities of the music-cultures they were studying. Ethnomusicology programs across the United States adopted this model of non-western music ensemble. Many of the study group African ensembles in universities were created by Hood’s former students who acquired teaching positions, such as Kazadi wa Mukuna at Kent State University. Due to the specificity of the ensemble roster at Kent State University, Kazadi focused on the process of music making, emphasizing emic musical values of interlocking, melorhythm and ETC. Without the pressure of building a repertoire for a concert, these ensembles were able to focus on the music making process through a holistic lens. At the University of Pennsylvania, the ethnomusicology faculty constructed an interesting approach for the African Music and Performance course (MUS 253). Possibly influenced by the lack of a performance degree at the university, there is no assessment of a student’s performance skill or progress. Although there are graduate degrees in ethnomusicology, the primary objective is for students to acquire knowledge and to transmit their learned knowledge to public school students in West Philadelphia.\footnote{230. Carol A. Muller University of Pennsylvania Department of Music: West Philadelphia Music., <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/music/westphillymusic/syllabuses/Music_253.html>}

The increase in ethnic diversity and racial integration in American communities throughout the past half-century has fostered performance opportunities for non-Western ensembles. Today there is a significant audience for non-Western musical performance, allowing some ensembles to operate with the purpose of performing in surrounding communities, in
contrast to the function of the self-sustaining study groups at UCLA. Larry Snider at the University of Akron may have been the first to create a steel pan ensemble to generate funds for his percussion department, which in turn created other percussion instructors to do the same. In the 1970s while the status of percussion in Western art music was still unclear, percussion departments found it particularly difficult to fund the vast array of instruments and their continued upkeep. Although the majority of their rosters tend to be percussion majors, directors consistently allow students outside the major to participate if they possess the requisite musical skills.

In addition to the ethnomusicology study group and performance-geared ensemble, university percussion ensembles have included an increasing amount of music from non-Western traditions. The percussion ensemble as a genre traditionally performs the music from innovative composers of the 1930s: John Cage, Lou Harrison, Henry Cowell, Edgard Varese and Joanna Beyer. While these composers were very interested in foreign music (Lou Harrison’s influence of Indonesian gamelan for example), their compositions exist in their own genre. However, faculty, graduate assistants, and guest artists have integrated the instruction of traditional West African drumming into the percussion ensemble. The objective is focused on the percussion student in this format. These types of ensembles may serve as a medial point between holistic approach and performance, focusing on musical analysis while still building a repertoire to showcase in performance. While African Drumming Ensembles at SUNY Fredonia operate apart from the Percussion Ensemble, the percussion students are required to enroll in the

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231. Conversations with University of Akron professor Larry Snider and Appalachian State University professor Scott Meister, who began the Steely Pan Steel Band via Snider’s suggestion.

ensemble each semester. Stonefelt suggests that the ensemble’s purpose within the percussion department is to develop the students’ drumming techniques, particularly the use of their hands, and to present a perspective of music making different than that of the Western art form. Similarly, Woma’s primary objective is to introduce students to his musical culture. Their objectives are neither ethnomusicological or performance based, as there is excessive doubling of students on a single part for example. Instead of focusing on developing a large repertoire, time is spent on exercises that develop better sound production.

The divergence of ensemble formats may suggest different objectives based on what the administration and instructors want the students to learn. How will the African ensemble benefit the program, the students, and the community? I would argue that these are necessary questions that must be answered before the creation of any ensemble, and may influence the administration’s desire for an instructor with a particular cultural, musical, or academic background. The objectives of an ensemble is generally established first, with such choices as the faculty instructor and the format of the ensemble subsequently decided upon to achieve those goals.

In earlier stages of learning, American students consciously and sub-consciously translate what is learned in order to grasp and understand the framework of Ghanaian dance-drumming culture. They therefore mold the new knowledge into what is already known – the Western musical system and its focus on visual means. If Ghanaian perspectives of perception and conception towards the music are ignored, a student’s progress towards fluency is stalled. In order reach an advanced level, student must negotiate their Western concepts of music-making, such as their preferred type of learning, the function of improvisation, spontaneity, proper timbre

production, the musical texture of melorhythm, their points of reference, and the crucial link
between the instrumental music, singing, and dance. When instructors do not include the
development of an emic perspective into their objectives as goals for their students, they diverge
from traditional Ghanaian teaching methods. Many times, this is a conscious decision. All
instructors wish to be more successful in reaching their classroom objectives, building their
pedagogy from their teaching experiences and reflections of their own learning processes.

When teaching and representing the musical “other,” instructors refer to their master
teachers for approval of their techniques. From my fieldwork and other research, I suggest that
instructors simultaneously keep a watchful eye on their students’ progress, and utilize any
technique necessary to best reach students in accordance to the course objectives and goals of
their particular ensemble. These pedagogical techniques may not conform to the emic
understanding, which consequently work to develop and reinforce students’ concepts, beliefs,
and techniques foreign to the emic Ghanaian understanding.
Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Adowa: Funeral dance of the Ashanti people. The dancers are draped in a white linen, which they hold in their hands. The dance is accompanied by a large percussion ensemble, with the atumpan serving as the lead drum.

Agbadza: War dance of the Ewe people, accompanied by a large percussion ensemble, with the atsimevu serving as the lead drum.

Akan: The largest ethnic group in both Ghana and in the Ivory Coast that occupies the southern regions of the coast and inland. It is believed that the Akan migrated to the region between the 10th and 12th centuries. The sub-groups are tied together by a similar language, called Twi or Fante. The largest such sub-group of Akan is the Ashanti of central Ghana.

Appropriation: The use of borrowed elements in music.

Ashanti (Asante): A sub-group of the Akan, the Ashanti is a large ethnic group in central Ghana, centered around the city of Kumasi. The Ashanti has historically been a politically strong nation in Ghana, expanding even further throughout the independence movement in the twentieth century.

Asantehene: The absolute monarch of the Ashanti nation. The Asantehene is enthroned on a golden stool, which symbolizes the nation.

Atsimevu: The lead drum in Ewe percussive ensembles. A long cylindrical drum four feet tall that rests at ~45 degree angle when played.

Axatse: A rattle idiophone, a hollowed out gourd with a net of beads along the outside. Provides a buzzing-like timbre that is appreciated throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

Bamaya: A Dagomba harvest dance. The dance is traditionally led by a man dressed in a woman’s costume.

Breketé (Gun-gong): a low pitched drum with a thin snare running across the diameter of the batter head, used among the Northern groups of Ghana, such as Dagomba.

Emic: The internal perspectives from culture bearers, who actively participate in the culture. In this study, this includes Ghanaian teachers who had been socialized in the Ghanaian culture during the formative years of infancy, childhood, and adolescence.

Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC): Meki Nzewi’s model of the recycling effect of each time-line pattern in a West African ensemble. A cycle is determined when all the time-line patterns with a simultaneous converge and conclude at a single point in time.

Ethnomusicology: The ethnography of music, an interdisciplinary approach to studying the human species’ use of music.

Etic: The perspective of someone who is an observer or simply does not participate in the culture. The etic is in contrast to the emic, cultural insider. In this study, the etic
participants are the instructors and students of American descent, although reference is made to those African instructors from different ethnic groups from those they may teach.

**Ewe:** A large ethnic group that occupies the Volta region of east Ghana, Togo and Benin. The Ewe share a similar language.

**Extramusical:** Pertaining to features outside the music realm, but may inform musical aspects (aesthetic, function etc.) and vice versa.

**Dagara:** An sub-ethnic group of the Dagaaba people of northern Ghana and Burkina Faso who share a similar language (Dagaare).

**Frontonfron:** The largest drums in the Ashanti kingdom, which are played while standing erect. Traditionally, they are played in the royal courts. To own two of these drums was restricted to only the chiefs.

**Fume Fume:** A particularly aerobic drum-dance of the Ga, traditionally performed in the religious setting to call down the god Futrema.

**Ga-Adangbe:** A major ethnic group of southern Ghana and Togo. Their primary lands in Ghana have seen great change in the twentieth century, as people from other Ghanaian ethnic groups and from throughout the continent, and even the world, have migrated to the region for the opportunities available in the Ghanaian capital of Accra.

**Gahu:** A recreational drum-dance of the Ewe people of Ghana and Togo. Seemingly, the dance is a newer construction from the twentieth century. The dance satirizes on the modernism of the African continent in their compliance with the western culture, including the portrayal of airplanes through dance movements.

**Gboba:** The gboba is a single headed drum that is played with the hands. It is the widest and deepest sounding drum of the Ewe percussion ensemble and often serves as a lead drum in certain musical genres.

**Gankogui:** A double bell made of iron used across the percussion ensembles in West Africa. It is held with one hand while struck with a stick held in the other. The name gankogui is from the Ewe language, where it may serve as the only idiophone producing the only iron timbre. In these instances, it is more likely to be perceived as the chief time-keeper.

**Gota:** A social drum-dance of the Ewes, primarily for the community youth to dance with the opposite sex. The dance is accompanied by the Ewe percussion ensemble, as is best known for its sudden freezes or stops.

**Gyil:** The xylophone idiophone of the people of northern Ghana and Burkina Faso by such ethnic groups as the Dagara, Birifor, and Lobi.

**Hocketing:** Linear technique of alternating sounds and rests, subsequently sharing one melody between two or more voices by filling in each others’ gaps (see interlocking).

**Interlocking:** The process of filling in the musical gaps of others in a musical ensemble. There may be points where simultaneous sounds occur in two or more voices (see hocketing).

**Intersubjectivity:** One perspective or philosophy of existence and being involving shared meanings and beliefs among a group of people, “what we are together”.
**Kagan (Kaganu):** The smallest drum in the Ewe percussion ensemble, which has the least amount of improvisation allowed in the emic perspective. It generally consistently plays off the dancers stressed pulse.

**Kete:** Set of drums that make up an ensemble in the Ashanti nation. Kete is also the drum-dance they perform in the Ashanti courts.

**Kidi:** A medium size drum that performs an ostinato rhythm in the Ewe percussion ensemble.

**Kpanlogo (drum-dance):** Recreational drum-dance formulated in the wake of Ghanaian independence in 1957. It was first constructed among the Ga in Accra, but has since moved throughout West Africa, although with great variation, as a symbol of Pan-Africanism and African independence.

**Kpanlogo (instrument):** A single-headed drum of the Ga people of southern Ghana. The drumhead of the kpanlogo is affixed by first necklacing the antelope or goat skin around a wire ring. A set of rope is tied into the skin, which is then pegged into the shell of the drum for tuning purposes.

**Kpatsa:** Traditional dance symbolizing a coming of age song for girls to enter into womanhood in the Ga ethnic group. It is currently a social dance in most contexts. It is commonly used to introduce foreign students to the music-culture because of its simplicity, relative to others in the repertoire.

**Kuor:** The kuor is a membranophone drum made from a large hollowed-out gourd with a reptile skin stretched and affixed by buttoning, typically played with the hands of one player. This basic construction is found throughout the people in northern Ghana and southern Burkina Faso, and can be found as far south as the Ashanti under different names. The Dagara kuor accompanies the gyil duet ensemble that performs for numerous ceremonies and recreational events, with the specific function of initiating dance.

**Lunna (Donno, Dondo):** An hourglass shaped drum used primarily among the Dagomba and Ashanti in Ghana, but whose basic construction can be found throughout West Africa. The drums two skins are connected by leather straps, allowing the pitch to be altered by applying pressure of the underarm. The drum is often incorrectly designated as the “talking drum.” Although the drum can imitate speech, there are many other constructions of membranophones with multiple pitches and imitate their people’s tonal language as well. In addition, not every scenario applies such a function to the lunna – it does not always imitate speech.

**Melorhythm:** The melodic aspect that occurs when drums of different relative pitches interlock in a time line pattern.

**Polyrhythm:** The occurrence of more than one rhythm in a given musical texture.

**Sogo:** The largest support drum in the Ewe percussion ensemble. The drum often “responds” to the lead atsimevu drum, thereby occupying a level of improvisational freedom. In cases where the large atsimevu or gboba drums are not present, the sogo typically serves as lead drum.

**Twi (Tshi):** A principal language of the Akan people, especially prominent in the Ashanti kingdom.
Appendix B

Further Readings


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