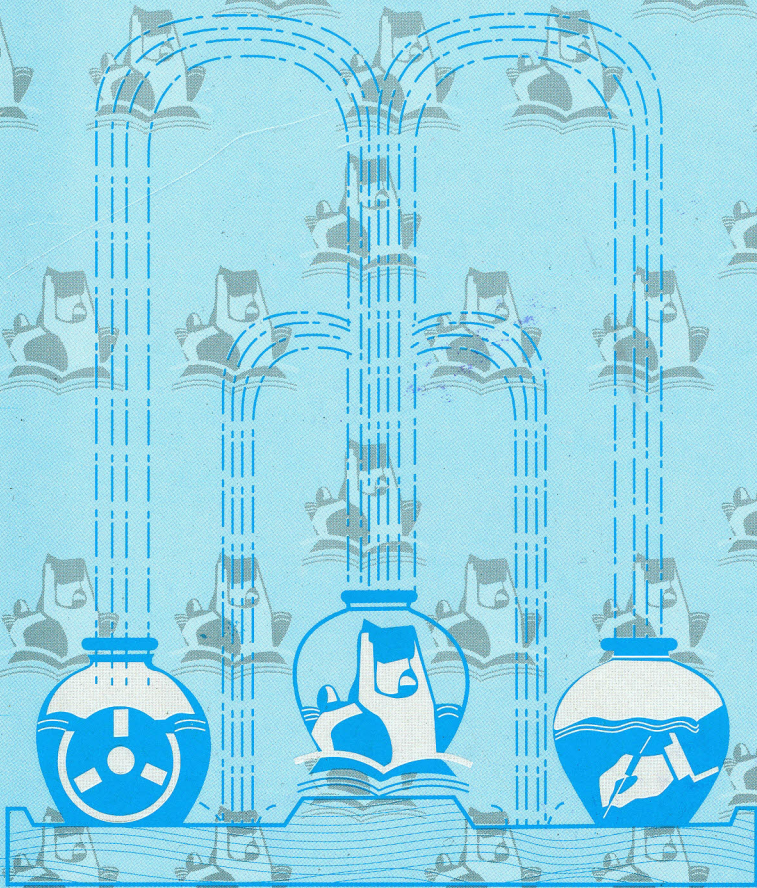


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MILA: EXPLORING MUSIC EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL PROMISE OF SELECTED KENYAN FOLK SONGS.

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Abstract:

Teaching Music with a Multicultural Approach has received significant scholarly attention as contemporary society seeks increased diversity avenues. Invariably multicultural instructional material is drawn from folksongs and material from world communities, which traditionally have received periphery instructional attention. This article examines the instructional opportunity presented in the rich cultural heritage of Kenyan folk songs in response to current music education trends. Choksy (1999) argues that one of the basic ingredients of Kodaly's (a Hungarian music educator, composer, 1882 —1967) method advocates for singing as the basis for music instruction, specifically the use of folk and art music. That since folk songs build on native speaking ability and therefore appropriate for early instruction. As the dawn of twenty-first century begins, the effects of global economy, world politics, technological advances, supersonic travel, media developments have turned the world into a seemingly global village. Nevertheless, the place and role of traditional music of various people of the world remain crucial to help us understand our roots and social identity. These are important links not only for music education but also in forging the way for future social cohesion and solidarity.

Introduction

There are many social characteristics analogous with well rounded, culturally competent individuals. Primary among them (characteristics) are; (a) valuing cultural equity while maintaining critical thinking, (b) the ability to appreciate, value, and involve people from many cultures, (c) willingness to expand ones cultural horizons and adopting mental paradigm that embraces cultural values that may be different or unfamiliar, while maintaining individual respect in ones social values. Apparently culture plays an important role in social interactions be it collective or at a personal level. But what is culture and what are some of the implications. Hoopes, (1979) defines it as;

...the sum total of ways of living, including values, beliefs, aesthetic standards, linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms and styles of communication which a group of people had developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment. Culture and the people who are part of it interact so that culture is not static. Culture is the response of human beings to the valid and particular needs of its members. It, therefore has an inherent logic and an essential balance between positive and negative dimensions.

Without a doubt, regard of ones cultural values—or “mila” (tradition / cultural norms) fits well within the paradigm of social norms and expectations both at home and in public, including educational institutions. In some countries such as United States of America, a land of immigrants efforts to cater for students from different cultural environments have received both public support and condemnation as stake holders dialogue on expenditure of public funds. Where community resistance is significant multicultural provisions have

received government-mandated support to provide for inclusive school environment. While some countries are endowed with many cultures, there is probably no country on earth with only one community. Kenya is one such country that is culturally very rich including her diverse musical cultures. Researchers have been fairly vocal about multicultural approaches to music education in schools. In a study conducted by Robinson (1996) the practice of multicultural music education in today's schools was described as;

superficial, oversimplified, and sporadic. While the educators were both personally and professionally concerned with multiculturalism, that concern was not translated into consistent school policies, curricula and classroom practices... Multicultural music instruction focused primarily on musics connected to world holidays and celebrations often without attention to cultural context and matters of authenticity--most notably language.

Nevertheless, many people remain convinced that music has the potential to transcend physical, linguistic and cultural barriers to develop well informed world citizens. This belief is shared by the cultural organ of the United Nations (UN), through the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Many advocates of internationalism in music education maintain the belief that multi-cultural experiences should be incorporated in the standard music curricula from elementary to college level. Unfortunately, research indicates that multicultural music does not always receive the attention it deserves (Volk, 1998; Griego, 1997; Hallback, 1996; Stellaccio, 1995; Stainback, 1995; Klinger, 1996; Moore, 1993; Bauman, 1992; and Campbell, 1991). There are many reasons for apparent apathy in music education internationally, notwithstanding lack of use-friendly teaching material, funding, lack of support in the schools and communities. Writing about United States of America Robinson (1996) observes;

Data showed a wide gap between educators' beliefs and attitudes about multiculturalism and their classroom practice. Factors identified as contributing to this wide gap include lack of training in multicultural education and multicultural music education, lack of opportunity and guidance to fully explore beliefs, values and attitudes about multiculturalism, lack of time in an already full curriculum coupled with reduced contact hours, lack of appropriate instructional materials, lack of guidance and support from school administration, and confusion and concern regarding the goals and possible strategies for implementing multicultural education.

Regularly, teachers are compounded with demanding instructional and non-instructional chores making it almost impossible to squeeze any extra material in an already crowded school schedule. With this background in mind it is no wonder that multicultural music receives casual attention at its best. However, at a time when the buzz word is diversity and multicultural education, it cannot be denied that collaborative activities for capacity building on multicultural teaching materials ought to occupy a high premium for teachers and practitioners and other stake holders committed to multicultural music education. Like other communities whose social demographics change frequently from migration, Kenyan schools can socially benefit from a steady flow of immigrants and international

visitors some of who spend a considerable time in the society. These visitors represent great human resources, but as in all soundly constructed contacts with mutual collaboration forms a good prerequisite to successful interactions. This article benefits from this perception as it is an outgrowth of Njoora's (2000) doctoral work, "Guidelines for Incorporating Traditional Folk Music in the National General Music Curriculum of Kenya." The research was a part of a long academic journey and interest in multicultural approach to music education. One of the significant contributions of the study to ethnographic information dissemination pool was the transcription of thirty folk songs from several Kenyan communities each with long history of migration from many parts of Africa, and other parts of the world. The ever-present diverse social composition is usually on display during national days when the people celebrate social, economic and political history.

It is a commonly held view that the long oral tradition of many communities in Kenya owes its sustenance to elders who proudly are willing to transmit the information to younger generations. Unfortunately, in the absence of well-coordinated documentation of oral history, transmission efforts by elders often lead to loss of large quantities of historical and social-cultural information, and such a trend cannot obviously augur well for the community. In the not-so-distant past, social constructs and musical heritage were shared through folk songs, stories, narratives, dances and other mediums. Arguably folk songs capture the activities of a people as they expressed the body, soul, social landscape, and the historical origins of the people. The power and place of folk songs cannot be denied. In the history of Western music folk songs were said to be inseparable from art music as composers freely borrowed from their melodic, rhythmic and Bel Canto traditions. They (folksongs) were also used to signify community and national solidarity and identities. In a country such as Kenya where modern "art music" styles consistently borrow from folk traditions, the use of folk songs as a basis for art music makes it easier for the average person to identify with the "stylistic space" claimed by musical art works and compositions.

Traditional music of many communities in Kenya is characterized by communal participation, call and response in the celebration of the deep-rooted customs and traditions. While the notion that music is principally to be enjoyed is broadly based in contemporary society, many world cultures (including those in Kenya) perceive music as having purposes far beyond enjoyment. In some cultures music is used to communicate important messages to and from the supernatural, enhance communal solidarity, identify clans, facilitate religious functions, cure the sick, alleviate boredom, and sustain working pace. Therefore the musical life of the society is a complex phenomenon that can be perceived from many perspectives. To understand each culture's ideas of what constitutes music requires appreciation of what its powers are, how it relates to various aspects of life, how people interact with it, how it reflects important facts about its people and their view of the world.

This article examines the instructional promise presented by the rich cultural heritage of selected Kenyan folk songs. Instructional promise is described as the potential inherent in the folk songs to teach a variety of music concepts such as melodic shape, range, form, scale, rhythm and so on. It is anchored on the premise that many of the technical aspects

taught using Western art music—melodic contour, main rhythmic features, vocal range, song context and meaning, background information and so on can be taught using traditional folk songs. Assigning the music of other cultures in the periphery limits students' overall musical understanding. It has been argued that often music of non-Western cultures offers different experiences and major musical elements otherwise not found in Western art music. While the study of (world) folk songs is not new, in Kenya this area has received insufficient scholarly attention. At the dawn of twenty-first century when global economy, world politics, technological advances, supersonic travel, media developments have turned the world into a seemingly global village, the place and role of traditional customs and music of various people of the world remain crucial to help us understand our roots and social identity. These are important links in forging the way for future social cohesion and identity. The study of world folk songs, customs, traditions, material culture, oral history and other relevant resources gives us a good understanding of a number of communities besides our own. Osowski (1993) argues that;

To understand other people, we must first understand ourselves. And nothing will accomplish this better than through knowledge of one's native folk songs. Later he (the learner—*Italics mine*) may proceed to comprehend other people through their folk songs (p. 7).

An equally strong argument for studying folk songs is the belief that when students know their social values, their folk songs, they can use the information to understand more abstract ideals and concepts in music such as form, texture, stylistic signatures of composers from some regions, the role and power of folk music in development of music nationalism, the influence of folk songs in art music and how various composers have used folk material in their works.

Source of Data and Transcription Method

In today's world many indigenous communities are loosing the battle for oral transmission of important customs and traditions through urbanization and modernization challenges, and Kenyan communities have not been spared this trend. While honoring the long-established oral tradition folk song collection and transcription process utilized conventional western notation. Some thinkers have argued that this approach interferes with the folk songs themselves by subjecting them to unconventional treatment (that of transcribing songs drawn from oral tradition). Yet in contrast the response and mandate from the Permanent Presidential Music Commission (PPMC) advocates for transcription and documentation of traditional music for posterity and use in education institutions. An article such as this one contributes immensely to information pool, not to mention contributing to posterity. Some of the musical material used in this article was collected over a seven-year period (1986—1993) during music study field trips to various parts of Kenya. In the dissertation (cited on page 3, the folk songs were drawn from the three ethnic groups (Gikuyu, Luo, Luhya. Maasai, Turkana) were transcribed and compiled according to their instructional promise for a Kenyan general music curriculum. Data for the study consisted of video and audio tapes of Kenyan folksongs and dances performed mostly in rural and less in urban settings. Additional materials were secured from Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E). Most of these recordings were in their raw state, and

they capture to some degree the relatively natural setting under which the music was traditionally performed.

The intensity of research varied at different times of the seven year period, but the central mission of collection and documentation permeated the research period with interactions on several levels. On one hand as a culture bearer, the knowledge of some the folk songs from the Gikuyu community as member of the community. On the other hand the research benefited from many colleagues from Kenyatta University and elders from other ethnic communities in describing folk songs outside the researcher's community.

The transcription procedure involved several stages converting video tapes from PAL-system (which is the system used in Kenya) to Betamax (American video system), listening and viewing the audio/video tapes many times to internalize the information, all along guided by the instructional promise of the folk songs. The most demanding stage was transcribing the tradition folk songs from their settings using conventional Western notation. I used a Yamaha keyboard model PSR-320, the MIDI capability of a Power Macintosh G3 Mini-tower Computer, and notation and sequencing potential of Finale music program from CODA industries.

To maintain to transcription fidelity Musical Instruments Digital Interface (MIDI) transcriptions were matched with folk song melodies and the two versions were checked for accuracy of melodic lines. To further check for accuracy melodies were member-checked via collaborators and assistants (especially folk songs outside the researcher's language bracket), through personal interviews, telephone conversations, e-mail contacts, postal contacts. When all the necessary work was done the songs were analyzed and classified based on their instructional promise. Eventually, appropriate guidelines for incorporating Kenyan folk songs in the general music curriculum for Kenyan were suggested, consistent with guidelines suggested (later in the article) using the selected folk songs. Multiple sources of classification of traditional Kenyan communities were used to give balance and ensure relevance of the material to school situations. Folk songs from the Gikuyu community, (researcher's ethnic community) were analyzed in detail within the context of national music curriculum. Some of the folk songs were used as models for suggesting teaching strategies and to reflect the national curriculum requirements. Suggestions were also made for appropriate pedagogical ordering. For the current article, space will not allow the sharing of all the for all songs transcribed, rather four selected folk songs will be used. It suffices to say that the instructional suggestions given form a fair basis for transfer of knowledge to other folk songs.

Instructional Promise (Connections): A Look at four Kenya Folk Songs

This section presents four folk songs, two from Gikuyu community (Figure 1 and 4), one from the Luhya community (Figure 2) and one from the Maasai (Figure 3) community respectively. It is important to note that classroom teaching is dynamic, sometimes spontaneous, often unpredictable, and its not easy to provide a comprehensive list of activities or information categories applicable at any given time. What is given below are merely suggestions on which the teacher can use as a framework while allowing for individual input and creativity. For each of the folk songs cited four pieces of information

are provided as follows; (a) title of the song and identification of social community, (b) background information of the community from which it was drawn, (c) essential translation of the text (except for “Londe, Londe whose translation is not available), (d) some instructional suggestions (promise), “links” or “connections” presented by the folk song.

- (a) Title of the song and social community: Ndumaga Kondo Gakwa (This is the way I weave my basket, a Gikuyu people childrens’ game).
- (b) Background information of the community: Social Context. Gikuyu (Bantu) People once occupied the area around Mount Kenya, now a dormant volcanic mountain more than 17,000ft high. There were four administrative districts: Nyeri, Mura’nga, Kiambu and Nyandarua. For a long time they had affiliations with their neighbors from Embu, Meru, and Kirinyaga districts. They also had affiliations with Maasai and the now defunct Ndorobo people. Politically they (among other groups) had a major influence before and after Kenya’s independence. . They were instrumental in the famous “Mau Mau” rebellion which was largely responsible for the ouster of the British colonizers. However the Gikuyu people have a long colorful history of migration, regional trade, mythological legends, and deeply held traditions. Politically, the first Kenyan president Mzee Jomo Kenyatta came from Gikuyu people and in many ways they have remained fairly active in modern politics,

Figure 1

Ndumaga Kondo Gakwa

(I Weave my Basket)
Gikuyu Children's Game Song

Transcription by
Timothy K. Njoraa

Moderato
Leader's Call

Soloist

Ndu - ma - ga ko - ndo ga - kwa - ii

Group Entrance

Chorus

Ndu - ma - ga ko - ndo ga -

Solo

Ndu - ma - ga ko - ndo ga - kwa - Wo - ne ngia -

Chorus

kwa ii - ndo ga - kwa ii

Solo

mba ii Wo - ne ngia - mba ii

Chorus

Wo - ne ngia - mba ii Wo - ne ngia - mba ii

- (c) Essential translation of the text: This was a role-playing folk song, whose main objective was to re-create basket-making activities which were so central in the lives of the Gikuyu people. Translation of text is provided below along with the description of the children's game. I can remember with vivid memories the multiple colors and sizes of baskets made by mothers in the village where I grew.
- (d) Instructional "connections:" The song offered several opportunities for following instructions, physical coordination, call and response activities, socialization. Beyond the purely musical activities in which pleasure can be derived merely through singing, it was usually an accompaniment to a fun game of follow the leader, which I describe later.

Description of the Game

The song was sung by groups of children (about 15 to 20) of varying ages. Apart from the adult role-playing (basket weaving), the accompanying game utilized a leader who (as the song evolved) lead the group through a series of circular windings, often with obstacles placed along the path. The aim was to maneuver around obstacles observing perfect formations, and most importantly making sure no breaks occurred anywhere in the semi-circle. In case of any breaks the two children on either side of the break must leave the game and this would go on until only a few diehard performers remained in the game. While there are some regional variations, the following description and sequence serves well as a model:

- (a) Required anywhere between twelve and twenty children, but even more many take part.
- (b) A leader begins singing "Ndumaga kondo gakwa ii" (I weave my basket), generally with accents on the first beat.
- (c) The leader gradually invites other children by touching or looking invitingly at them.
- (d) The children join hands as they connect with the now moving (line), but more often in a form of a semi-circle.
- (e) When the line is long enough or when all the children have joined, the leader begins to sing "wone ngiaba ii" (see me weave).
- (f) The leader begins a series of movements between other children, passing under the already joined arms as the other children "follow the leader."
- (g) When the formation gets too tight or when the leader decides, he/she begins to sing "wone ngiabura ii" (see me un-weave) the children now back-track their steps, with a view of going back to original semi-circle. Hopefully without any breaks.
- (h) To make the game interesting, some obstacles such as carton boxes, two children holding string in such a position that everyone must step-over the rope without tripping and other ideas. These items would be placed in the path of the leader and other children.
- (i) A successful run through from initial weaving back to semi-circle marked the accomplishment of the game. Otherwise a run through with fewer children leaving the game was favorable.

The next song I explore is a Luhya lullaby "Ndolo, Mbombela Mwana" (Be Quiet Child).

This song has many lessons for young persons and adults alike. On one hand it portrays the social support provided for children in the Luhya community. While children are born into a nuclear family, social support comes from the extended family and even distant neighbors as raising a child was a collective responsibility.

Figure 2

Ndolo Mbombela Mwana

Luhya Lullaby

Transcription by
Timothy K. Njooira

Moderato ♩ = 80

Soprano

Ndo - lo mbo - mbe - la mwa - na Ndo - o - lo

7

Sop

mbo - mbe la mwa - na li - bwa - ni sa - na mbo - mbe - la mwa - na

13

Sop

Ndo - lo mbo - mbe - la mwa - na Ndo - lo Ndo -

20

Sop

Ndo - lo

- Title of the song and social community: Ndolo Mbombela Mwana from the Luhya people of Western Province.
- Background information of the community: The Abaluhya live in Western Kenya near Lake Victoria. Farming is an important activity and they grow crops like finger millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, peas, sesame seeds, and a variety of nuts and bananas. They immigrated from the neighboring country, Uganda, because of political pressure and disputes. They have a variety of dances including the observation of first fruit rites or harvest festivals. These are observed by the majority of the Luhya people and may be occasions for elaborate dances.

The Abaluhya people value livestock for reasons beyond their economic worth. Livestock establishes interpersonal bonds and was always a good indicator of one's social value. Some groups practice traditional rituals which were used as age-grading systems for the men. Sadly, some of these days cultural traits are fast disappearing. The study of folk music would certainly promote the study of the past heritage, (c) essential translation of the text: This lullaby from the Luhya community has several regional variants and translations, but the given version is one among several variants from neighboring communities. Three keywords are Ndolo (Sleep), Mbombela o mwana (Lull my baby),

Lipwoni (potato). The caretaker tells the baby that he/she will be given a potato when she/he wakes up. These are words to provide positive reinforcement for the child.

Essential English translation

Ndolo (Sleep)

Mbombela omwana (Lull my baby)

Lipwoni (potato), representing positive reinforcement for the child to sleep.

Common instructional suggestions or strategies.—This information (strategies) apply to all the four folk songs, with individual variations where necessary. While there are multiple approaches to teaching any song for the first time, some sequential steps for teaching this song are;

(i) The teacher leads the students in singing an extract like “Ndolo Mbombela Mwana” or a lullaby from another community, (ii) the students role-play and use the movements used in lulling a child to sleep among Luhya people such as gentle side to side while rocking the baby with the arms or using gentle twisting motion when carrying the baby on the back, (iii) students work with partners to create an environment for a lullaby, (iv) students sing the song by rote, followed by a performance of the entire song in a group, (v) students improvise additional verses around the theme, and (vi) they discuss various aspects of music like tone set, time signature, melodic range, timbre of the song.

Other viable instructional ideas may include; (a) Description of the geographical and historical settings of the community, (b) compare and contrast the treatment and/or relationship with the land in relation to neighboring communities, (c) an opportunity to discuss the traditional music and dance, formations, costumes, communal response to music. (d) discussion of important historical information on early kingdoms such as the “Kingdom of Wanga 1598 – 1895, (e) some of the effects on Abaluhya people under the British rule from 1894, (f) the place and role of children in the community. Figure three presents (a) “Londe, Londe” a folk song from the Maasai people of the Rift Valley. The song presents its own unique instructional challenges and opportunities.

Figure 3

Londe, Londe A Maasai Story Song

Transcription by
Timothy K. Njoora

The musical score for 'Londe, Londe' is written for Soprano voice in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics in Maasai and English. The lyrics are: Lo - nde Lo - nde en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pai e - taa - nao sam - puoi - bor; lo - lo - re - re - lang Na - pe - til - ki li - no - no en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pa - i Hi - yio; Ho - yia Ho - yia en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pai en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pai Lo - nde; Lo - nde Lo - nde en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pai en - ti - ki - yiae Pa - pai.

Brief social context of the Maasai

The Maasai of Kenya are Nilotic community with deep cultural traditions tenaciously held by the community even in modern day urbanization. Their ancestral home was around lake Turkana and the surrounding areas, some people say as far as Sudan.

However, history shows that while in search of good pasture they moved to many places in the East African countries. One earmark of their lasting legacy is that many towns in Kenya and Tanzania were named by them, and they have maintained these names to this day.

The Masai (or Maasai) are traditionally known for their cattle which freely grazed across the highlands of Kenya. Some historians (Ochieng, 1990, Ogot 1967) report that at the height of their power in the mid-19th century they suffered from the British colonization of Kenya and the resultant ecological and political changes. The large herds of cattle which characterized their social group were almost wiped out by riderpest, infectious insects, and disease, but also from severe restrictions by British rulers. These herds were sources of milk, blood and meat which are the typical food for the Maasai. In 1904 and 1912-13 the British government forcefully relocated the Maasai population to distant southern Kenya and Tanzania, where they lived until the countries became independent.

The life cycle of a Maasai is a round of celebration in which the entire community participates. Their traditional belief is such that each new day is a significant change in their lives. They are famous for their dances and traditional costumes for both men and women. The religious basis of the Maasai toward cattle is founded in the belief that in the beginning Enkai or Engai (Sky, and therefore sky god) was one with the earth. At some point the earth separated from the sky and, to sustain the tribe, Enkai sent down cattle to the Maasai by means of the aerial roots of the wild fig tree. The Maasai consider this tree a 'holy' one, and they interpret this belief literally. Any pursuit other than a pastoral one was considered insulting to Enkai and demeaning to the people. No Maasai was willing to break the ground, even to bury the dead, a factor that would later haunt the community, especially as grazing land was reduced considerably in 1990's. A common greeting among them goes something like, "I hope your cattle are well," which is understandable given their practical as well as mystical attitudes toward cattle. Cattle are used to pay fines, and to establish social harmony and are used as sacrifices on important ceremonial occasions.

As far as connections between property and its implications—the size and quality of one's herd determines the position in the society, but the owner must constantly be aware of seasons and food change to maintain a healthy heard. They also consider the role and place of important traditional festivals such as "eunoto" (ceremonial erecting of age-group) as the climax of passing from youth to adulthood. Furthermore, the role of women in the community has both social and mystical implications. Beyond everyday shores and responsibilities Spencer (1988) argues that "...their fertility is seen as a vital force that links women uniquely to God, it provides them with an inviolate arena where they act collectively,"

Instructional links

This folk song provides several learning opportunities. For example the teacher can focus on; (i) the lessons that can be drawn from the Maasai story: A boy sings of imminent danger of attack from wild animals but nobody seems to hear his cries, and so he loudly calls for his father, (ii) the song's social context—what is the role of stories in the community, what types of activities accompany story telling, (iii) the song's unique characteristics: its use of vocables and short melodic lines accompanied with hearty guttural sounds, (iv) the development of an appreciation for the history and literature of music as it expresses ethnic and cultural heritage

Lastly, Figure four presents a Gikuyu song whose popularity during late 1950's and early 1960 elevated it to radio signature tune in Gikuyu Vernacular Broadcasting Station

- (a) The title of song "Munjiru Ndiguka (Munjiru" I have come) is a fond reference to the age-group of a person, I have come). This pentatonic folk song Melodic range: an octave, (c) Time signature: five-four, a fairly usual time signature among the Gikuyu. Division of irregular beats (3+2, 2+3) were punctuated with Kigamba (percussive leg shakers) worn by the lead singer, (d) performance style: Basically call and response. Sometimes the soloist would sing an uninterrupted melody line but sometimes the soloist would begin the line and the chorus would complete it, (e) unique rhythmic activity: use of opening rests to set the mood of the song and rhythmic accents by kigamba, (g) Form: AB with each section repeated twice and marked off by solo and chorus entries.

Musical beats are grouped into 3+2 or 2+3, while in some cases the arrangement is 2+2+1. Other teaching strategies including the ability to sing alone and with others, the role of chorus response, accompanying a dance, use of the Kigamba (a large shaker tied to the right leg requiring significant skill to shake and dance at the same time).

Figure 4

Munjiru Ndiguka

A Gikuyu Ceremonial Song

Transcription by
Timothy K. Njoera

Allegro $\text{♩} = 200$

Soprano

1. Li mu-nji - ru ndi-gu - ka ii nde-ra - gwo ndi-go -

Sop

ka ii ndi-ku - re - hwo ni nde - ge ii mu-nji - ru ndi-gu -

Sop

ka na nde-ra - - - ka ii ndi-ku - re - hwo ni nde -

Sop

ge ii mu-nji - ru ndi-gu - ka na nde-ra - gwo ndi-go - ka ii ndi-ku -

Sop

re - - - hwo ni nde - ge

Other Verses

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 2. Ii ndirithagia Baba ii Na muthigi wa iregi Ii Tugithui kugurima | 3. Ii Karuiuki wa Nde deru Ni nii waumithua ngu Na nyama itari nyone ku | 4. Guku kwa mwari witu ii Nguarara na ndinde Ii ngaiyirwo na marua |
|--|---|--|

This song can be used to teach grouping of notes in irregular time signature. The song can be used to teach political and historical events between 1940's and 1960's, use of songs in traditional education, singing in another language, appreciation of another culture.

Social context and meaning of text

This Gikuyu folk song was popularized in mid 1950's and early 1960's when the first Gikuyu vernacular radio station was introduced and it was later adopted as a signature tune for the radio station. In the song a young man announces his return home after long time. While away rumors were passed on that the young man would never return, that he had abandoned his family. On other occasions the song was used to correct the impression that the singer had a low social esteem.

Announcing his grand return, he mocks those that insinuated that he would never return. Not only does he defy the rumors, but he comes home in style aboard an aircraft, the ironic pride of young men and women who pioneered international studies. Apparently, some students failed to return home after their studies, prompting community outcry. Failure to return home was usually equated with destroying the community morale's and expectations. Traditionally the song addressed several other issues like pouring praise on the sister's house, which is beautifully thatched (the roof made of nice flowing reed), respect and honor for elders. One of the verses says that whenever the young man walks with his father, he provides a walking stick to assist his father so he does not trip and fall. The song was sung to teach responsibility and respect of cultural roots by young people.

Young people sang this song on several occasions and each of the verse addresses a slightly different social issue. In the first stanza...On one hand a young person accompanied by his friends arrives in pomp to dispel rumors that he was never going to return from his sojourn overseas. He says that those who had rumored that he would not return will be put to shame. Furthermore, he says, he arrived aboard an aircraft, which in the early days was viewed with wonder. He goes on to narrate how much he respects his father, pleads with his sister to uphold her dignity until such a time that she is legally married, praises the beautiful house of his sister.

Use of Folk Material: Implications for Curriculum

It has been suggested that multicultural teaching should represent the cultural context from which the material originates (Banks, 1991). Since pedagogical techniques are often intertwined with learning objectives, knowledge of social context is an important issue to control for cultural sensitivity and basic understanding. Folk and composed music have been used in social studies and reading and language arts programs to enhance the teaching of these subjects. In the realm of multicultural music the word "authentic" has been used to describe music that is considered to best represent the culture from which it is derived.

Authenticity is at best illusive as there are very many issues associated with it. For example when is a performance considered authentic? Is it when it is performed live by culture bearers or are recordings of performances sufficient? What about social-cultural

information, how much of it is needed and how detailed does it need to be? I feel that authenticity is very important, but it must be viewed realistically within the context of cultural sensitivity and availability of resources, be they human or fiscal. It is an issue that should be considered dynamically and sensitively.

Lesson Assessment and Closure: Indicators of Success

Some general indicators of success might include, students demonstrating the ability to: (a) sing the song alone and in a group, (b) demonstrate the vocal flexibility called for in the song, (c) improvise new verses, (d) act out the song, and (e) have an informed frame of reference about the people from where the folk song is drawn.

Other viable Instructional ideas might include (but not limited) to the following;

1. What types of music (instrumental or vocal) predominate in the community?
2. How frequent are public musical activities?
3. How are important messages passed on to the community?
4. Are there gender or age-specific songs or performances?
5. What are the connections between music and dance? Are they usually combined or can they be separated?
6. How are regional musical instruments distribution?
7. Do neighboring regions have similar instruments?
8. How important are musical activities to life's rituals?
9. What is the relationship between communities and nature? (life stages, important occasions, birth of a child)
10. Are there any distinctions between the birth of girl or boy child? What about twins? Who perform music traditionally? Who may not perform?
11. Beyond a child's birth are there other stages which are celebrated?
12. Which important stages in an adults life are celebrated? How are these celebrated?
13. What type of rituals were used to mark various seasons?
14. How was illness perceived in the community? Are there established medicine persons and how are they perceived in the community?
15. Are there songs for working activities? Who performs them? Are the songs for specific tasks?
16. Are there songs purely for entertainment, and if so who performs them? 16. Is there music specifically for leaders? 17. Is there music to remember the ancestors?
17. Are there religious songs? How are religious celebrations carried out?

Music has both intrinsic and extrinsic values and meanings (Meyer, 1967; Schwadron, 1966). For the music specialist a fundamental decision must be made about whether to place emphasis on the internal characteristics of the music, or on the external benefits of the music, or on other aspects that the music may represent. For instance, a music teacher may select a song for intrinsic instructional reasons. Perhaps the song exemplifies a specific melodic contour or structure. On the other hand the same song may be chosen because of the specific function it serves in one world culture compared with another culture (Klinger 1996, p. 21).

In his advocacy for inclusion of multicultural music in the music curriculum Moore (1993) argues that, To include new, and perhaps different styles of music with strikingly different cultural intent in the curriculum, suggests that teachers would have to stretch beyond their current academic boundaries and independently explore new instructional territory (p. 102).

The benefits of using folk songs in the Kenyan general music curriculum far outweighs any perceived disadvantages. Many students in Kenya are familiar with folk songs in social contexts. While it is true that many folk songs undergo numerous variations, basic information can be useful for relating historical events to social development of the people, exploring comparative studies between music and events of the day, and studying art and sculptures in appropriate contexts. These are some of the ways that folk songs can be used to reinforce teaching areas through topics addressed by the songs, or stories associated with the songs. All the folk songs selected for the study are part of the rich Kenyan cultural heritage of many tribal communities. The national general music curriculum mandates that teachers provide in equal measure musical information on Western and Kenyan (or African music). Music teachers make important decisions daily regarding what music materials to study. The choices they make are largely affected by teaching materials (music) accessible to them, especially those officially recommended by the Ministry of Education.

Furthermore, many scholars argue that to omit folk songs in the curriculum is to ignore the rich cultural heritage that exists in traditional cultures. For a long time folk songs have been overlooked as potential teaching material. Like modern pop and rock songs, the practice of traditional folk songs is as universal as the human condition. They explore situations at home, in the field, during war, and other lonely and happy times. There are songs to fit almost every occasion. However the use of folk songs is directly related to teachers' access to them, especially in user-friendly formats. One of the obvious educational advantages of using traditional folk songs is that of broadening the base of the learners' knowledge of the target culture(s) within the school locality and even further in the region.

The study of historical developments in art musical styles and performance practices, areas which have not received sufficient scholarly attention, could benefit from these efforts. I concur with Osowski (1999) in her evaluation of the contribution of folk songs. In a country such as Kenya where influences of folk songs have been relatively strong, their use and adoption should flow relatively well.

Folksongs are important link in this chain connecting us with the past...By studying the music of other people, it makes the history come alive and much easier to remember...Folk songs offer such a rich variety of moods and perspectives, that the child grows in human consciousness and feels more and more at home in his country. (p. 6).

The Role of Music in the Traditional Culture

In many Kenyan communities music interacts with social activities at every stage of

life from birth to death. Traditionally, there was music to celebrate the birth of a child, marriages, the inauguration of chiefs and other leaders, the marking of important events in the community, and festivals. Highly ceremonial music is used to mark occasions such as death, circumcision and other important community activities. While purely entertainment music is less frequent, there are occasions such as communal games, age-set meetings, and other leisurely activities when music is performed purely for entertainment part of the ceremonies.

Many indigenous world communities depend on oral traditions for recording important historical events and Kenyan communities are no exception. Music serves this role well as expressed by Ekwueme (1988),

music serves as a medium for recording history, myths, and legends. Music also assists in social control and in admonishing against ills by citizens including those in authority (p.5).

Famous minstrel singers narrated accounts of special events in the society, acts of courage or good deeds by individuals, and heroic events. In some cases music was used to communicate public concerns to the leaders of the day. More often than not the message was given in the form of a riddle and other indirect means, all the time confident that a wise leader would be able to decode the message and take the necessary administrative action to rectify the situation.

Among the youth, music was used to teach moral values and norms. More important, music is used to provide information on such matters as genealogy of prominent families, historical events during the struggle for independence from British colonizers, migrational history of the community, accounts of persons who committed social taboos (which served as lessons for future offenders) and the mode of punishment meted to those guilty of such offenses. One of the most important educational features is the use of music to intensify the drama in story telling. The stories usually revolve around legendary characters and tell of heroic/symbolic acts with deep rooted cultural lessons, strong enough to conjure lasting memories for the young people. Ekwueme (1988) argues that,

The tales are presented with a purpose to educate and assist children in their thinking process, making value judgments in their choices and decisions as a guide throughout their life experiences (p. 7).

In addition she presents a good background to how the story songs were used to reinforce the message and provide continuity to the story. Most of the folk tales have songs interspersed with the narration. The songs in the tales have special roles, such as increasing tension or interest in the story, creating a variation in the structure of the story, or sustaining attention by involving the children

On a wider community level, music performance was taught through apprenticeship as informal singing lessons, instrument playing and construction. These are offered by skilled musicians whose leadership in the society have passed the test of time and their

performance is earned through many public performances. The lessons are offered to young people (usually boys) who have distinguished themselves with their character and have shown proven ability and interest in music.

Concluding Thoughts

It can be argued that the development of multicultural music will not come without corresponding social, political and economic ramifications and that while there are very many countries which may be poor economically, but are often very rich in musical heritage. It has been said that sixty million people or 1.2% of the world's population live in countries where they were not born. Baumann (1992) observes that there are 15,000 different cultures of the world and 5,000 indigenous cultures scattered all over the world. The integration of this cultural ecosystem can be said to be analogous to the geographical rain forests, with their extremely diverse flora and fauna. The destruction of rain forests attracted the attention of preservationists, national and international organs committed to raising peoples' awareness through civic legislation and demonstrations. They usually employed dramatic measures to attract local or international attention on the destruction of these biologically rich regions. Some of the reasons advanced against annihilation of the rain forests were that biological activities of the species in the forests contribute to human survival and also help in reducing carbon dioxide and other gases responsible for depletion of the ozone layer, the medicinal potential for some of the plants species to provide cure for myriad diseases and other unique benefits that are yet to be discovered. There is need to study and document facts about musical, traditions, dance, oral culture of various peoples. In the end the success of multicultural music education would require a "Harambee," (Lets pull together) spirit, the essence of collaborative comparable to Jomo Kenyatta's national motto.

Clearly world cultures are extremely diverse and it is unrealistic to imagine one place where all cultures are on display. But, as so well expressed to allow ourselves the experience and the music of other people makes us richer and well groomed as students, scholars and global citizens. On the other hand to deny ourselves this experience leaves us poorer in a number of ways primary among them being cultural deficiency. Advocacy for multicultural music education is based in the belief that each of the musical cultural ecosystem has something to offer to our overall well being. Hall (1992) argues that;

music, through music education, can offer some solutions to what is generally regarded as the problematic nature of multiculturalism in general. This problematic nature includes poor definition, philosophical vagueness, and pedagogical infancy."

Furthermore he suggests that pre-service teachers should receive a wide range of music training from various musical cultures in order to prepare them (teachers) for a life long interest in music from world cultures. When appropriate attitudes are formed and internalized by the teachers, they will easily be passed on to the students. Teachers are asked to encourage their students to collect, study, and transcribe music from other cultures for their own lifelong edification.

Worldwide, many music educators and international bodies insist that music education should be a lifelong process exploring multiple sources of teaching material. In support of this view, the International Society for Music Education contends that all learners should have the opportunity to develop abilities to comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of the music they encounter, make relevant, critical judgments about music and performances and analyze with discrimination and understanding the aesthetic issues relevant to the music. Supporting similar view Campbell (1995) argues that;

World musics should be taught at all stages of the music curriculum for students of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Musics of non-western cultures should be taught not only in elementary music classrooms, but also as part of the repertoire of secondary school choirs, bands, and orchestras. This can be done by teaching incrementally, that is by adding more complex principles at various stages of learning, just as we do in teaching western art music. If students are taught the aesthetics of non-western music early in their learning cycle, they can use this knowledge to make informed decisions later in their learning cycle

Folk music is a very powerful tool for multicultural education. Through it students share in experiences and arts of other people of the world. Cultural diversity that respects other people will open wider horizons for the learners. Music education policy makers in Kenya could borrow a leaf from Music Educators National Conference (MENC) position on multicultural music education as expressed by Anderson (1996);

The establishment of formalized curricular guidelines for multicultural approaches to music education, as presented in the MENC publication of the National Standards for Arts Education, is an important step toward the implementation of more globally conscious and culturally sensitive approaches to music pedagogy, and thanks to the availability of a host of recent publications and other educational materials resulting from large-scale collaborative projects between music educators and ethnomusicologists, implementation of standards with rewarding results has become a realistic goal for music educators at all levels.

Working with folk music of Kenya is beneficial as it helps in articulating salient sociological, historical points. As Burnim (1994) argues, one of the benefits of an insider in research is shared identity as the insider role provides significant advantages towards solicitation and procurement of relevant research information. One of the byproducts of nationality and “ethnic identity” is unquestionably the joy of contributing to posterity and dissemination along with the bond, spiritual and emotional, established through participation in music activities (at personal or collective levels) which opens more avenues to secure research information.

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