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Volume I
The Integration of African Musical Elements
into Western Classical Music

Volume II
*Sankofa: a Symphony for Wind Ensemble*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Music

by

Jamie Marie Thierman

2015
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Volume I
The Integration of African Musical Elements
into Western Classical Music

Volume II
Sankofa: a Symphony for Wind Ensemble

by

Jamie Marie Thierman
Doctor of Philosophy in Music
University of California, Los Angeles, 2015
Professor Ian Krouse, Co-chair
Professor David Samuel Lefkowitz, Co-chair

Volume I
In the last several decades, composers of classical music have been looking for inspiration from music of non-Western cultures. This dissertation explores the music of six different composers who have been influenced by African music and incorporated their studies and recordings into new works. Four of these composers have Western backgrounds: John Cage,
György Ligeti, Steve Reich, and David Fanshawe; while the other two composers, Joshua Uzoigwe and Kevin Volans, were born and grew up in Africa. This study examines how these six composers use African musical elements in their own compositions, and why they chose the specific elements they did. This dissertation can be used as a reference for other composers and musicians who wish to understand this type of cross-cultural synthesis and inspiration, and create it themselves.

**Volume II**

*Sankofa* is a piece of music that was inspired by my studies and practice of West-African drumming and song. In the first movement, the wind ensemble embodies the three basic sounds (low, medium, and high tones) that can be produced on hand drums. The sparse texture in the first half is gradually filled in piece by piece, until a whole idea is formed from a patchwork of components from the individual instrumental sections, much in the way a West-African drum pattern is made of the polyphony from several individual parts. The second movement was inspired by the idea of Pygmy singing in Central Africa. These polyphonic Pygmy songs are comprised of many simultaneous vocal lines, seemingly unrelated by time, producing a blend of pitches and pulse. The music of the second movement explores this timeless effect by metrically modulating from section to section. The third movement consists of two forces, a drum ensemble and a wind ensemble, which at first oppose each other, but gradually each finds a way to live within the other force, leading to an overlap of the two forces at the end. The entire work is approximately twenty minutes long. The instrumentation is for standard wind ensemble, including auxiliary instruments, piano, harp, and djembe drums.
The dissertation of Jamie Marie Thierman is approved.

Travis J. Cross

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015
This work is dedicated to my husband, Eric Passarge, for his encouragement and support, and to my parents, Susan and Phil Thierman, for their unwavering faith in me.
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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, Western composers of classical music have been fascinated with the popular, folk, or tribal music of indigenous peoples around the world, incorporating aspects of these musics into their own compositions. Often these influences are geographically near to the composers, as many composers have drawn inspirations from their culture’s own folk traditions (Frederic Chopin, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Béla Bartók, Heitor Villa-Lobos), their neighbors’ traditions (Felix Mendelssohn, Johannes Brahms, Georges Bizet), or their own background and experiences (George Gershwin, Gabriela Frank). Other composers have looked farther for their musical inspiration, especially as travel has become easier and information more accessible. Indonesian gamelan has served as inspiration for composers such as Claude Debussy, Francis Poulenc, and Benjamin Britten; elements of the tango have been integrated into the music of Eric Satie, Igor Stravinsky, and Milton Babbitt; and most recently, African musics have been added to the list of non-Western influences that classical musicians are incorporating into their compositions.

African music is rich in diversity, and varies greatly by region. Some of this music even has origins of importation from other cultures. In this paper, I will focus mostly on the indigenous musics of Africa, originating on the African continent. While there is still great diversity among these indigenous African musics, there are also common threads of polyphony and structure which have inspired Western composers to explore these aspects in their own music. African music offers a unique perspective on time and rhythm that is not inherent to classical music and many other world musics. It is simultaneously simple and complex. Structures based on polyphony, interlocking parts, and cycles have encouraged new styles of
classical music. The rustic sounds of drums and mbiras have inspired new instrumental inventions. Some composers are attracted to the exotic scales or traditional songs of the North, while other composers respond to the complex system of layered parts and pulses of West-African drums. Some of the African-inspired compositions sound very similar to traditional African music as a lay-person might imagine it, while others, though steeped in African techniques, sound nothing like the music that has influenced them.

As a composer, I am most interested in how composers have incorporated this fascinating music into the Western classical tradition. On which elements of African music have they focused and why? In what ways have they merged these elements with their own voice? The answers to these questions can lead other composers who are also interested in integrating such music to make successful and innovative compositions that neither copy the original source nor neglect it. In this paper, I will discuss the compositions of six composers of very different backgrounds who have done just that: John Cage, György Ligeti, Steve Reich, David Fanshawe, Joshua Uzoigwe, and Kevin Volans. Each of these composers has been drawn to different elements from African music, incorporates the elements in completely different ways, and creates music that is not solely African, is not solely classical, but a unique alliance of the two worlds, blending with his unique personal style.
CHAPTER 1. THE BEGINNINGS OF AFRICAN INFLUENCES IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Western composers, such as Antonin Dvorak, Giuseppe Verdi, and Camille Saint-Saëns, began drawing inspiration from the music of Africa in the late 19th century. To understand how these early composers were incorporating African musical ideas into classical music, I will briefly discuss a few pieces by the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. Saint-Saëns frequented Algeria and Egypt, visiting the two countries on more than thirty occasions between 1873 and 1921. He went not only to avoid the Parisian weather, but also to compose, spending large amounts of time in isolation from the people and the country. However, Saint-Saëns also traveled to several cities and villages in North Africa, gathering and transcribing much of the indigenous music. Thus several of his later works, such as *Samson et Dalila* (1877), *Suite Algérienne* (1880), *Africa: Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* (1891), and *Piano Concerto No. 5* (1896), contain noticeable North African influences. These pieces are filled with syncopations, augmented seconds, pentatonic scales, melismas, and cadenzas (Ex. 1.1). Many of the themes are based on or are transcriptions of African folk songs (Ex 1.2). In *Africa: Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*, for example, the opening theme is based on a tune Saint-Saëns heard in Biskra, and a closing theme is from a Tunisian song. These melodic and rhythmic techniques fit especially well in his passionate orchestral style and the embellishing grandeur of his piano concertos. “I’ve tried to put on display an Africa that is original,” Saint-Saëns wrote to his publisher after finishing *Africa.*

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was another significant European composer who incorporated African techniques into classical music. The son of an English woman and an African man, Coleridge-Taylor was half black. He grew up in London and eventually attended the Royal College of Music for violin performance and composition. He became a young success, especially after writing *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* in 1898. His explorations of his race and background led him to collect “Negro melodies” which he infused into his compositions, in pieces like *African Dances* (1904), *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* (1905), and *Symphonic Variations on an African Air* (1906). “What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk-music, Dvorak for the Bohemian and Grieg of the Norwegian, I have tried to do for the Negro melodies,” Coleridge-Taylor states in the forward of *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*.³ The melodies come from both African-Americans as well as Africans, and through Coleridge-Taylor are transformed into Western classical music. “He has collected and arranged many negro

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melodies of various localities, presenting them as European national melodies have been presented. In Coleridge-Taylor’s settings, these melodies, which originally had been very repetitive and tonally narrow, now embody wide dynamic ranges, developing motives, pianistic flourishes, modulation, and European harmonies like secondary dominants (see Ex. 1.3 on page 6).

Camille Saint-Saëns and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s African-influenced music is often categorized under “exoticism.” Though the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians defines exoticism as, “The evocation of a place, people or social milieu that is (or is perceived or imagined to be) profoundly different from accepted local norms in its attitudes, customs and morals,” the meaning has, over the years, taken on a strong connotation. In music, exoticism is most often associated with the usage of such techniques as modes or non-Western scales like pentatonicism, unconventional harmonies such as parallel fifths or drones, and certain types of ostinatos, syncopations, and portamentos. Around the 1900s, evoking distant places with these techniques began to elicit negative reactions.

One reason for this response was that these distant lands were becoming more accessible and less shrouded in mystery. Journalists, travelers, and researchers documented and recorded detailed knowledge about the arts and culture of foreign places, giving a much wider range of people the ability to detect inaccuracies. Meanwhile, a general disdain was developing for European entities trying to change or “civilize” the supposedly-barbaric nations, causing the public to shy away from stereotype-highlighting exoticism.

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Ex. 1.3. Coleridge-Taylor: Twenty-Four Negro Melodies, p.1 “They Will Not Lend Me a Child”

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Twenty-Four Negro Melodies

They Will Not Lend Me A Child

Op. 59, No. 4

From M. Henri Jamod’s
“Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Benga”

South East Africa

Andante lamentoso

a tempo
Today, inaccuracies and misrepresentation are still issues affiliated with exoticism. For example, shortly after the publication of *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, Percy Grainger noticed that two of the tunes in this suite were originally Irish tunes (“The Angels Changed My Name” and “The Pilgrim’s Song”). Though musicologist D.C. Parker openly admires Saint-Saens’ music, he admits a confusion over *Samson et Delilah*:

But what do we find in his dramatic masterpiece? The opening choruses of Hebrews derive their idiom from Bach and Handel. The entrance of Delilah and her flower-maidens is full of a grace that is typically Parisian. The celebrated *Mon coeur s’ouvre à ta voix* is French in its inspiration. The "Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon" and the "Bacchanale" carry us off to Palestine. The chorus of aged Hebrews reminds us of the music of the synagogue. In his art, as in his life, Saint-Saens has been a great traveller, but despite the cleverness and beauty of his score, and both are great, the opera as a whole suffers from a lack of homogeneity.

Coleridge-Taylor has also been accused of misrepresentation. “Are the *Variations* a service to his paternal race?” says Geoffrey Self in his book about Coleridge-Taylor. “It has to be admitted that there seems little difference in approach between the white Delius writing his variations on a slave song and the coloured Coleridge-Taylor writing his on a negro air: both are in the main European stream.”

Recently however, defenders of exoticism or cultural appropriation have emerged. Instead of assuming that all instances of exoticism should be condemned, artists and scholars are beginning to look at each instance individually:

Sometimes the very act of engaging in cultural appropriation can be wrong because it is profoundly offensive. But then other acts of cultural appropriation are morally benign. Some works of art are aesthetic failures precisely because an artist has appropriated content in a clumsy and ineffective manner. Other artists appropriate content and create

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7 Self, *The Hiawatha Man*, 166.
...cultural appropriation is important to the flourishing of the arts in the contemporary world.\textsuperscript{10} Some scholars have created criteria for the quality of appropriation, such as the extent of material borrowed, how the artwork or music creatively engages with the appropriated material, how stereotypes are handled, or how imaginatively clichés are used.\textsuperscript{11}

Additionally, it is recognized that certain circumstances in music are inappropriate without allusions to exoticism. “For example, if a character (or chorus) in an exotic opera does not “sound foreign” (in musical style), some complain that the composer has neglected the ethnic/national element of the characterization.”\textsuperscript{12}

Exoticism, or evocation of another culture, is only one way to include inspiration from African music into Western music. Perhaps the most famous example of combining these two cultures in music is a merging of the two styles into a brand new genre: jazz. The roots of modern jazz music can be traced back to the songs of people who were taken from West and Central Africa and sold into slavery in America in the 15th through 19th centuries. These people, who were accustomed to singing during most significant and daily events in their lives, continued that tradition as slaves. The syncopation, rhythmic polyphony, ostinatos, and call-and-response from their homeland worked its way into their field hollers, work songs, and spirituals that they sang during their labor, which in turn, paved the way for blues, ragtime, gospel, New Orleans jazz, swing, and even rock and roll.

This synthesis of African and Western music into jazz is seen plainly in Scott Joplin’s piano rag music. Joplin’s music is saturated with syncopations. Each hand on the piano performs a different function, which combined create rhythmic polyphony: “The right hand functions

\textsuperscript{11} Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 32, 72, 81.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 31.
conversely as a melody instrument, playing in a flagrantly syncopated manner, generating cross-accents against the left hand rhythm (very similar in fact, to what happens in Africa when accents of song and underlying rhythm purposely do not coincide). Finally, the two hands together produce a ‘combination rhythm’ that is more than each hand’s individual rhythm considered by itself.”\(^\text{13}\) Even call-and-response is represented by repeated sections where the first few measures are marked *piano* for the call and the next few measure marked *forte* for the response.\(^\text{14}\)

Ex. 1.4. Joplin: *The Entertainer*, measures 5-8

There is now a new movement of composers who are writing African-influenced classical music without trying to evoke African cultures, but also without merging the two styles into a new genre. These Western classical composers are enhancing their own music and their own styles with their knowledge and research of, and fascination with, African music.


CHAPTER 2. THE THREE WESTERN AFRICAN-INFLUENCED MAVERICKS

In this section I will discuss the compositions of three Western composers of the 20th century who are the most well-known for incorporating African musical elements into their music. These composers have each been influenced by different aspects of African music and they incorporate their influences in a variety of ways. Additionally, these three composers are generally accepted as having successfully incorporated African musical elements into each of their particular styles while preserving, or even nourishing, their personal compositional voice. As will become evident in the following discussion, these composers tend to be drawn to use specific African elements that are already inherent to their personal style, enabling them to create an organic synthesis of the two traditions. Analyzing their music gives us insight into the process of creating unique music from cultural inspiration and helps us to understand the synthesis of Western tradition, African tradition, and compositional voice. The following analyses are examples of different methods for this synthesis.

1. Cage

The story behind the development of prepared piano began with a need for an African inspired piece of music. John Cage, composer and accompanist at the Cornish College of the Arts, was asked to compose a new piece of music for the dance student Syllvia Fort, in 1940. Fort’s choreography was rooted in Africanist gestures, and Cage was interested in reflecting the “African character” in his music.15 Though he desired a full percussion ensemble, there was not enough room on the stage for more than a grand piano. As a previous student of Arnold

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Schoenberg, Cage’s first attempt at writing this piece was to base the music upon an African sounding tone-row. After failing to create a tone row that sounded sufficiently African to him, Cage focused his second attempt solely on African sounds. His explorations in the subject directed him to alter the piano in order to obtain those sounds, adding papers, screws, and other objects to the piano strings to specifically mimic an African lamellophone or thumb piano. Thus, not only did John Cage develop the prepared piano with his Bacchanale, but it was the first significant modern synthesis of African and Western music.16

As we look at Bacchanale in more detail, we find that a significant part of the story is Cage’s first and failed attempt at an African tone-row. In several interviews, Cage admits his adversity to harmony and tonality: “Harmony, you see, is not itself a sound; it’s a connection between sounds that doesn’t exist in the sounds themselves, but the theory books all say it does.”17 He discusses his argument with Schoenberg, in which Schoenberg doubts whether Cage could ever compose without some sort of harmonic structure: “According to [Schoenberg], I would never be able to compose, because I would always find myself in front of a wall, harmony, through which I’d never be able to get. So I replied to him that I would spend my life banging my head against that wall…”18 In the course of an interview with Daniel Charles, Cage becomes quite defensive when asked if he felt as if he had lost something after giving up tonality. Cage replies, “On the contrary!...Tonality was what was a loss. To my eyes it represented a waste. A closed door!”19 Harmony just wasn’t an inherent part of his compositional language.

19 Cage and Charles, For the Birds, 73.
The idea of music as organized sound, however, was perhaps the essence of his language. “Sound became important to me—and noise is so rich in terms of sound.”\(^{20}\) Cage devoted his life to discovering new sounds, playing on everything from furniture to Oriental and African instruments. He stated in his lecture *The Future of Music: Credo* that the future of music would be a move away from music, and a focus toward sound, even perhaps separated from musicians. This “abandon” of tonality is what led him to his strong tendency toward percussion music. Furthermore, he considered piano a linking instrument from the lyrical world to the percussive world, concluding that, “Percussion music is a contemporary transition from keyboard-influenced music to the all-sound music of the future.”\(^{21}\)

In light of this reluctance towards harmony and his fascination with sound, it makes sense that Cage would abandon his first idea of African tonality and turn to the second idea of African sound when choosing which elements of African music to influence this new piece. However, there is debate over whether or not *Bacchanale* was actually inspired by African music. Many listeners have declared that *Bacchanale* sounds more like it was inspired by Indonesian gamelan than by African lamellophone. Indeed, in the same story from Bonnie Bird’s point of view (the dance professor at the Cornish School of the Arts in the 1930s and 40s), Cage’s initial inspiration from Syllvia Fort’s dance was gamelan: “[Cage said,] ‘I have to have a gamelan orchestra.’ I laughed at him and said, ‘John, you’re absolutely crazy—we can’t even afford fifty cents!’ We had no budget whatsoever. He said, ‘But she’s done an absolutely beautiful work called *Bacchanale*, which has many textures that would be so right with the gamelan.’”\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Dickinson, *CageTalk*, 70.
Bird goes on to explain how she brought back a small piece of a brass fireman’s pole as a failed attempt for one of her own choreographic ideas, saying to Cage, “Well, you can't have a gamelan; I can’t have a brass pole.” Placed in a tray on the piano, the pole happened to fall inside the piano as John Cage was playing. Cage was instantly fascinated at the sounds it created and continued to experiment until the prepared piano was solidified.  

Other scholars of Bacchanale, such as musicologist Tamara Levitz, are unconvinced of the Indonesian similarity. “Many have erroneously associated this sound [of Bacchanale’s prepared piano] with Indonesian music, which would have been a poor match for Fort’s Africanist dance, and which Cage claims not to have known in the late 1930s. Cage owned several marimbula and performed pieces that included them.”

Cage himself makes the comment that African influences were not a part of his compositions during that time, because he was focused purely on sonority. “As I mentioned, I attended some of Henry Cowell’s classes in New York where I heard some music of that type [Javanese, Balinese, and African]. If there were any influences, I was not conscious of them: anyway, at that time I had not seriously studied the theories of Indian or Indonesian music.”

Still, it’s important to remember that Cage’s goal was never to replicate African music, but instead to write a new piece of music that fit Syllvia Fort’s Africanist style. When Steven Monague asked Cage in an interview if he was trying to re-create African or oriental music in regards to Bacchanale, Cage (with his stream-of-consciousness conversation style) instead repeated his description of the process of composition for that piece, ultimately leading to the

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23 Dickinson, CageTalk, 71.
25 Cage and Charles, For the Birds, 75.
development of the prepared piano. This leads me to believe that even though the sound of *Bacchanale* was rooted in African inspiration, Cage was fundamentally focused on inventing a new sound entirely.

He eventually settled on screws, bolts, and weather stripping to create this sound. When these objects are placed approximately three inches from the damper on the strings inside the piano, the resulting pitches heard are slightly out of tune, and shimmery, almost as if two slightly out-of-tune notes are being played simultaneously. In addition, the note has a harder attack, *reminiscent* of a more percussive instrument. The African *mbira*, an instrument most often made of metal plates attached to a wooden box, has a sound that also can be described by these same terms of shimmering pitches introduced by a hard attack. Additionally, for the majority of *Bacchanale* Cage utilized only a small number of pitches at one time, often pentatonic or heptatonic in nature. This mimics the inconsistent tuning (most often based on five, six, or seven tones) and small number of metal plates attached to traditional lamellophones. Similarly, there are long passages in which no more than two notes are heard simultaneously, and often only a single melodic line is played, mimicking the lamellophone performer’s ability to play only one or two notes a time.

Though we are unsure of how familiar Cage was with music from Africa, there are other African elements besides sounds that have found their way into *Bacchanale*, whether they were placed there purposefully or only as a reflection of Fort’s Africanist choreography. For instance, the constant quarter-note pulse and regular beat is very prominent in African music (though in most African music the pulse does not change tempo as it does in *Bacchanale*). Keeping a quarter-note pulse was a conscious effort on Cage’s part to match Fort’s choreography. “I took a metronome and a chronometer, and I asked Syvilla Fort for the measures of the dance; having

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26 Montague, “John Cage at Seventy,” 207.
taken its measurements, I was able to write the music...based on the structure of her dance.”

Cage also matched the asymmetrical phrases of Fort’s choreography. Asymmetry is another common element of African music (which I will explain more in depth later). *Bacchanale* is a three-part work, in which each part is divided into sections of different lengths (in ABA format), separated by ritardandos and fermatas. The number of quarter notes in each phrase in the first section respectively are: 30, 20, 30, 20, 10, 30, 30, 43. Even more importantly, in certain moments of *Bacchanale*, Cage captured the simultaneous duple and triple pulse that is a strong characteristic of African drumming. Beginning right away in measure three, Cage grouped the left hand sixteenth notes by the quarter-note pulse, while the right hand sixteenth notes are accented every dotted eighth note (Ex. 2.1). Essentially, the right hand plays four beats over the left hand’s three beats.

Ex. 2.1. Cage: *Bacchanale*, measure 3

![Ex. 2.1. Cage: *Bacchanale*, measure 3](image)

Cage continued to exploit this multi-metered idea, writing six quarter-note triplets, six straight eighth notes, and four dotted eighth notes in the right hand part, over the steady quarter-note pulse of the left hand.

Ex. 2.2. Cage: *Bacchanale*, measures 28, 36-37

![Ex. 2.2. Cage: *Bacchanale*, measures 28, 36-37](image)

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Another aspect of music in common with both African techniques and Cage’s interests was simultaneity. This was also another point of diversion from tonality: “Harmony is an attempt to understand [simultaneity] and to make it good rather than bad, whereas a true simultaneity is not concerned with things being beautiful or ugly but is rather concerned with an openness to whatever and particularly to freeing [things] from prejudices of the mind.”  

Cage’s quest for true simultaneity allowed him to discard harmony and tonality and focus completely on sound.

In his conversation with Daniel Charles, Cage admits that his only musical interest in his pre-war years was sonority in connection with rhythm. Not only was sound important to him, but Cage felt obligated to it. “The role of the composer, as Cage saw it, was to serve as an explorer who discovered appropriate sounds and reproduced them on available materials,” says Levitz.

Before writing Bacchanale, Cage had already begun to write pieces that explored sound, including his first Imaginary Landscape (1939), which explores the soundscapes of variable-speed turntables, frequency recordings, muted piano, and cymbal; and First Construction in Metal (1939), written for metallic percussion instruments. Years after Bacchanale, Cage was still exploring sound in works like Water Walk (1959), which incorporated the sounds of everyday objects; and the famous 4’33” (1953) which explores the sounds in silence.

Cage’s interest in sonority, and subsequently simultaneity and percussion, made him sympathetic to—and thus easily inspired by—African music. He ignored the aspects of harmony and melody, and instead focused on creating a synthesis of African and classical sonority, solidifying a new performance practice (the prepared piano) in the process. Cage’s realization of a synthesis of African and Western music in the prepared piano is now a monumental new sound

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28 Dickinson, CageTalk, 203.
29 Cage and Charles, For the Birds, 75.
in the history of classical music. Cage himself, and several other composers including Arvo Pärt and George Crumb, have since composed works for the prepared piano or extended piano techniques.

2. Ligeti

Forty-five years after Cage wrote *Bacchanale*, the Hungarian composer György Ligeti finished his first African-influenced piece. Ligeti became interested in music from Africa when he met Simha Arom at the suggestion of a friend, after Ligeti expressed interest in polyrhythm. Arom was an ethnomusicologist who had devoted himself primarily to the study and recording of the music of Central Africa. Ligeti was intent upon studying Arom’s material and recordings, and openly incorporated the techniques he found into his own compositions. His *Piano Études*, published in 1985, was his first major piece that integrated African musical elements into solo piano music. Soon after, Ligeti also incorporated his studies of African polyrhythm into his *Piano Concerto* (1988) and *Violin Concerto* (1992). Ligeti’s approach to incorporating African techniques was very different from Cage’s approach, but similar in the idea of attraction to techniques that were already inherent to one’s own style. Though Ligeti became more interested in the sonic qualities of African music in his later works (experimenting with quarter tones and unconventional tunings), his earlier works are much more focused on the rhythmic and structural components, and polyrhythm of African music. Ligeti’s interests in both indigenous African music and Western music can be grouped under one fundamental concept: paradox. Ligeti explained these elements of paradox in the forward to Simha Arom’s book, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm*:

Gradually, through repeated listening, I became aware of this music’s paradoxical nature: the patterns performed by the individual musicians are quite different from those which
result from their combination. In fact, the ensemble's super-pattern is in itself not played and exists only as an illusory outline. I also began to sense a strong inner tension between the relentlessness of the constant, never-changing pulse coupled with the absolute symmetry of the formal architecture on the one hand, and the asymmetrical internal divisions of the patterns on the other. What we can witness in this music is a wonderful combination of order and disorder which in turn merges together producing a sense of order on the highest level.\(^{31}\)

Numerous African musical techniques exist under the umbrella of “paradox”: the asymmetry of inner layers and the symmetry of outer layers (as will be discussed later), the clear pulse and yet often indistinguishable meter, and individual parts coming together to create a new voice, or the “illusory outline.” Ligeti was a master at using these techniques to enhance the paradoxical nature of his own music. Even in his other compositions which contain influences from several other parts of the world, Ligeti’s music still sounded like himself. One does not get the sense that Ligeti is quoting other literature, or attempting to recreate music that is not his own. In this section I will work through examples of African influences in some of Ligeti’s compositions, and also explain more in depth some of the elements of African music.

The first of Ligeti’s compositions credited with containing African influences are his two books of piano etudes and, more specifically, the etudes *Désordre* and *Fem* (Book 1, No. 1 and Book 2, No. 8 respectively). The name *Désordre* refers to chaos theory, and reflects the “combination of order and disorder” that Ligeti appreciates about African music. *Fem* was inspired specifically by Banda-Linda polyphony from the Central African Republic.\(^{32}\)

The basic foundation of African music is a regular pulse, which Ligeti referred to as “fast pulsation.”\(^{33}\) Ligeti often translated this micro-level pulse into Western notation as repeated eighth notes or sixteenth notes. Sometimes the eighth-note pulse is a constant motor in each

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voice, as in *Désordre*. Other times, this regular pulse is made up of a composite from two voices, as in *Fem*, where hockets fill the moments of rest in each part. Almost every etude and countless other works of Ligeti’s employ this continual pulse, which opens up a world of other polyrhythmic, time-related, and balance elements for Ligeti to explore.

This pulse builds the foundation for cycles, which in turn act as the basic structure of most African music. Especially evident in African drumming, the individual parts are made up of repeating smaller cycles that align with other cycles of different lengths, creating larger phrase-level cycles, building complexity from simplicity, which Ligeti admired. We can thus speak of sub-phrase-length cycles and phrase-length cycles (and even hyper-phrase-length cycles). The example below is a popular drumming piece from the Temine people of Sierra Leone, called *Djolé*. The transcription below depicts the piece in traditional Western notation.\(^3^4\)

Ex. 2.3. Traditional West-African piece, *Djole*

Only the bell, the three main Djembe drum parts, and an alternate Djembe part are included in this example. The notes placed on different lines of the staff indicate the placement of the hand on the drum. The bottom line indicates the middle of the drum (producing a low tone, referred to as “bass”), the middle line indicates striking the side of the drum with flat fingers.

(producing a middle tone, referred to as “tone”), and the top line indicates slapping the side of the drum with the finger tips (producing a high tone, referred to as “slap”). The different colors indicate the repeated patterns, depicting the layers of simultaneous cycles. The larger four-measure phrase-cycle is repeated until a lead drummer signals the other musicians to change parts or insert a break. Looking at the bigger picture, we can already see three different layers of music: the macro-layer—in this case every four bars—where all the smaller cycles align to create a phrase-length cycle (Simha Arom refers to this as a macroperiod\textsuperscript{35}); the inner layers, made up of many sub-phrase-length cycles (often of various lengths); and the micro-layer, which is the continuous pulse that is heard from the different cycles weaving together—in this case represented by the eighth note.

Ligeti used the idea of cyclical layers in his music, but fit them into his own style. \textit{Fem} is an excellent example of a work based on interwoven cycles. The right hand plays a rhythmic pattern consisting of 18 eighth-notes. This pattern repeats 22 times without changing (plus an additional few more times with slight variation). Similarly, the left hand also plays a repeating rhythmic pattern, this one consisting of 16 eighth notes. This pattern cycles without changing 25 times (again varying slightly in a few subsequent repetitions). However, Ligeti adds the element of phasing into this piece, by making the cycles similar but not equal lengths (18 and 16 eighth notes respectively). The difference of the two eighth beats pulls the two patterns farther and farther apart with each repetition, until they slowly come back together again, finally aligning in a much larger cycle of 144 eighth notes (eight cycles of the right hand and nine cycles of the left hand). This macro-cycle is repeated almost three times before expanding and varying into new music.

\textsuperscript{35} Duchesneau and Marx, \textit{György Ligeti}, 114.
Ligeti’s own compositional style is present in the variations. Starting at the end of the third macro-cycle, occasional notes are exchanged for rests, and rests exchanged for notes. Soon, chains of notes or rests are inserted or deleted, until measure 44, where the music from the original cycles has completely changed. Composer and music theorist David Lefkowitz notates the rhythmic patterns of the cycles by representing notes with X’s and rests with O’s. The original right-hand cycle can thus be described as, “XXOXOXOXOXXXOXXO,” and the left-hand cycle as, “XXXOXOXOXOXXXOXXO.” Lefkowitz’s diagram of the third, fourth, and fifth macro-cycles is below.

Ex. 2.4. David S. Lefkowitz’s chart of measures 22-57 of Fem\textsuperscript{36}

![Diagram of rhythmic patterns]

After this period of deviation from the original cycles, Ligeti closes the fourth macro-cycle by briefly returning to the original opening cycles, and opens the fifth macro-cycle again with more dramatic changes and deviations. Ligeti closes the fifth macro-cycle by changing enough of the notes and rests in the cycles to bring both hands into rhythmic alignment. This piece shows how Ligeti was interested in expressing order and disorder in music. “In effect, Ligeti gradually introduces more and more disorder (or chaos) into his process, until the moment in mm. 56-57 where the two patterns become so perfectly aligned that they evince ‘perfect’ order.”\(^{37}\) He often based his music on simple concepts and structures and would break them down over the course of the work. In this case, he started with the cyclical structure of African music and molded it from order to disorder, and back.

Related to cycles and pulse is the concept of meter. In his book, Arom discusses how meter is often hard to distinguish in African music, contrary to the unmistakable pulse.\(^{38}\) Indistinguishable meter is also explored in *Fem*, where the phasing and asymmetry of the smaller cycles completely disregard the bar lines. Ligeti even stresses this point in the instructions for the piece: “There is no real metre here; the bar lines are only to help synchronization.”\(^{39}\)

A balance between symmetry and asymmetry was another element of African music that Ligeti studied from Simha Arom’s work. While larger phrase-cycles in African music sound very symmetrical, the inner sub-phrase cycles are often created with distinct asymmetry. Arom notes that phrases or cycles that consist of an even number of beats are often divided asymmetrically, made up of pairings of five and seven, or seven and eleven. Arom refers to this sort of


\(^{38}\) Duchesneau and Marx, *György Ligeti*, 114.

asymmetrical trait as the *rhythmic oddity*. Below is a very common West and Central African rhythm.

**Ex. 2.5. Common African rhythm**

![Common African rhythm](image)

The top line shows the original rhythm, and how it is divided into seven beats and five beats. The second two lines show just how complex this rhythm is. This rhythm can be heard simultaneously in a compound meter (the second line, written in 12/8) and a duple meter (the third line, written in 6/4). Ligeti also used this asymmetry in several of his etudes. The strongest example of this technique is the beginning of *Désordre*. Ligeti divided an even number (eight) of eighth notes into asymmetrical groups of three and five.

**Ex. 2.6. Ligeti: *Désordre*, measures 1-3**

![Désordre, measures 1-3](image)

In the following measures, Ligeti once again transformed this African technique into his own style. In measure four, he begins to add or subtract eighth notes in different places, breaking the evenness of the cycles as well as pulling the two hands out of synchronization with each other.

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One aspect of polyphony that fascinated Ligeti is the idea of the illusory outline: the rhythmic counterpoint between the voices combined to make a new composite pattern, or a “foreground melody,” that is not heard in any one voice. Ligeti says about African lamellophone music in his interview with Benoît Delbecq, “When listening to those marvelous recordings, I was fascinated by a music that didn’t have an initial melody, but in developing would create subterranean melodies: hidden, interior, always ambiguous. They appear, disappear, return.”\textsuperscript{41} The composite rhythm is easy to see in the \textit{Désordre} example above. Ligeti emphasized the melody in \textit{Désordre} by doubling the eighth notes that contain the melodic line. In the first few measures the melody is played simultaneously in both hands, but soon the eighth-note shift causes the melodic notes to be played at different times. The listener then hears a composite melody in which each hand is contributing at different times. (Ligeti used this same idea as a main staple of his \textit{Concerto for Piano and Orchestra}.)

Curiously, Simha Arom disagreed with Ligeti’s reason for his interest in polyrhythm. “One of the things which interested [Ligeti] was polyrhythm and the other one was the effect of polyrhythm – ambiguity...And this has nothing to do with the illusory patterns which Gerhard

Kubik says he found in African music. Ligeti liked to quote this but I never agreed with Kubik’s theory that the superimposition of different rhythms produces illusory patterns.\textsuperscript{42} Arom notes that the ambiguity that comes from polyrhythm is produced from the lack of release in African music. Without rests or any tonal tendencies (like leading tones) the music is in a constant state of tension. Strong and weak beats disappear, evoking the meterless quality I discussed earlier, and accents change depending on which parts are heard in the foreground. This is particularly the case in \textit{Fem}, where the two hands, acting as two different voices, blend seamlessly in a plethora of composite eighth notes.

Ligeti explores composite melodies further by integrating tonality. Richard Steinitz describes \textit{Désordre} in \textit{György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination}: “The allocation to each hand of complementary scales creates what might be called ‘combinatorial tonality’ (i.e., the illusion of a third or resultant tonality produced by the interaction of different modes).”\textsuperscript{43} In \textit{Désordre}, the right hand plays scales on the white keys while the left hand plays pentatonic patterns on only the black keys. By the third measure of the piece, the combination of these two parts has resulted in all twelve notes. Another clear example of this concept is in \textit{Fem}. The individual hands are playing open fifths often found in African tonality, while the combined harmonies create major seven and major nine chords found in jazz. Additionally, the roots of each chord, Gb, Ab, Bb, Db, and Eb, again refer back to the African pentatonicism.

\textsuperscript{42} Duchesneau and Marx, \textit{György Ligeti}, 12.
\textsuperscript{43} Steinitz, \textit{György Ligeti}, 281.
All of these examples are related to paradox: a distinct pulse but unrecognizable meter, cycles of different lengths creating larger balanced cycles, asymmetry in inner layers creating symmetry in outer layers, and the fight between ambiguity and “illusory outline.” I believe that Ligeti was attracted to music from Africa because of its inherent paradox, a concept he was already interested in. Likewise, he was able to maintain his unique compositional voice because paradox was an inherent part of his personal style as well. His later compositions are filled with elements that are not only African of origin, but that also give him the ability to exploit paradox. “On the surface [Ligeti’s] music is wonderfully homogeneous,” writes Richard Steinitz. “Underneath are hazardous currents where orderly phrase structures grow wayward, and complex systems race towards destruction.”

In the interview with Delbecq, Ligeti mentions that before becoming interested in African music, he was already exploring some of the same elements: “Even before, in 1968, I wrote ‘Continuum’ which works on the idea of great speed and abstracting an elementary pulse. The varied rhythmic figures are fast and short, and inside them, hidden rhythms and melodies appear by chance. I discovered this intuitively: it was not all based on a precise knowledge of African or Latin American music.” Ligeti was not writing European music in the African style, nor was he writing African music with European flare. He created an entirely new sound that was still within his own style, from combining ancient and

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44 Steinitz, György Ligeti, 282.
contemporary, African and European. “For Ligeti, the non-Western…serves as the foundation of a new compositional practice; one that will supplant exhausted nineteenth-century forms, the futile abstraction of the avant-garde, and the trivial pastiche of post-modernism.”

3. Reich

The final major contemporary composer of African-influenced compositions is Steve Reich. Reich first became interested in music from Africa through reading A. M. Jones’ *Studies in African Music* in 1963. After corresponding with Dr. Jones, collecting recordings of the traditional music, and receiving lessons from an Ewe drumming master in New York, Reich finally decided, “it was important to go to Africa myself and learn some drumming by drumming.” He studied for five weeks in Ghana in the summer of 1970, recording all of his lessons and transcribing them every evening. “I couldn’t really remember them until I could understand exactly what was going on rhythmically between the drum and bell patterns,” Reich said about his learning-by-transcription process.

African drumming contains the building materials of Reich’s greatest interest: music as a gradual process. Reich was fascinated with composing music that materializes from a gradual (“By ‘gradual’ I mean extremely gradual; a process happening so slowly and gradually that listening to it resembles watching a minute hand on a watch—you can perceive it moving after you stay with it for a while”) but perceptible process (“The use of hidden structural devices in music never appealed to me”). It began with his compositions *It’s Gonna Rain* in 1965, and *Come Out* and *Melodica* in 1966. These pieces explore phasing, and are comprised of identical

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47 Reich, *Writings on Music*, 56.
recordings on tape, which are looped again and again for a long period of time. The loops are played back at imperceptibly different speeds, so over the course of the piece, the recordings gradually shift out of unison until a very different effect is produced.

Reich continued to use this process in later pieces like Piano Phase and Violin Phase (1967). Both of these pieces realize the same process of the phasing tape loops, but on acoustic instruments (Piano Phase is written for two pianos, and Violin Phase is written for four violins, or one violin and a recording of three phasing violin parts). In each piece, one instrument plays a constant cycle of a one-measure phrase until the piece is over. The other player cycles that same measure as well, at first in unison with the first player, but then accelerates just slightly to move out of alignment with the first. The second player continues to slowly pull away from the first player in the same manner of the two tape loops, until his or her loop is starting exactly halfway through the measure. In Piano Phase, this process continues until once again, the two instruments are aligned in unison.

Ex. 2.9. Reich: Piano Phase, measures 1-3

These pieces are based on the same repeating cycles and perpetual pulse that is the foundation of African music; thus, Reich was able to draw influences from this aspect of African music in a way that was compatible with his personal style. Additionally in Violin Phase, the violin that is not participating in the phasing aspect of the piece instead doubles the resultant patterns that are heard from the combination of the phasing parts (or the “illusory
outline” as referred to by Simha Arom). It is very possible that this idea could have stemmed from Reich’s early studies of African music and recordings, and was revisited in several pieces upon his return from Africa (as explained later).

Reich was captivated by the idea that African drumming is based on fixed parts (as opposed to Indian and Balinese music which allow for more improvisation). This idea of fixed cycles was an integral part of his compositions even before his African studies, appearing as numerous repetitions of a section of tape or a measure of music. Because he was able to study music that shared the same structure of his own music, he was opened to a whole world of new ideas.

A year and a half after Reich’s return to America, Drummimg was premiered. It was the longest piece that Reich had composed up to that time, consisting of a large group of percussionists and singers. The piece is divided into four parts, the first consisting of bongo drums, the second of marimbas and singers, the third of glockenspiels with whistling and piccolo, and the fourth containing the entire ensemble. In Africa, Reich reaffirmed his preference for the richness of repeated patterns played on instruments rather than electronic tape, and in Drummimg he explored that richness, experimenting with timbre. “The sections are joined together by the new instruments doubling the exact pattern of the instruments already playing….the same rhythm and pitches are maintained with a gradual change of timbre.”

Maintaining the same pitches (i.e., staying in the same key or introducing little tonal variety) was another influence from African music. Tonality in African music is often limited to an unchanging small number of notes, often a pentatonic grouping in melodic instruments, though even “unpitched” drums are tuned to high, medium, or low tones. Reich used this concept to bring attention to other elements of music: “The sections are not set off from each other by

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50 Reich, *Writings on Music*, 65.
changes in key, the traditional means of gaining extended length in Western music. *Drumming* shows that it is possible to keep going in the same key for quite a while if there are instead considerable rhythmic developments, together with occasional, but complete, changes of timbre to supply variety.”

The voices, whistling, and piccolo serve two purposes. Firstly they are meant to serve as another layer of timbre, imitating the sounds of the instruments that are playing with them. This imitation likely stemmed from Reich’s fascination with music in connection with language. In Ghana, Reich was taught that the African people associate certain nonsense syllables with the different sounds of the instruments in order to help teach and remember the rhythms. While composing this piece, Reich found himself using his own nonsense syllables, and so he found ways to write them into the music, matching as best he could the syllable, range, and timbre to the other instruments playing at the time. Secondly, the voices, whistling, and piccolo help to bring out the “illusory outline,” the resulting patterns from combinations of the same instruments. The voices and piccolo double certain melodies that Reich could hear in the interlocking sounds. “By exactly imitating the sound of the instruments, and by gradually fading the patterns in and out, the singers cause them to slowly rise to the surface of the music and then to fade back into it allowing the listener to hear these patterns, along with many others, actually sounding in the instruments.”

Reich describes *Drumming* as the composition in his musical career which ended his exploration of phasing, and began his exploration of other techniques that he would focus on for several years after. Some of those techniques are the gradual change in timbre and the use of human voices imitating instruments that I described in the above paragraph. Another significant

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52 Ibid., 64.
53 Ibid.
technique is the gradual substitutions of beats for rests (or rests for beats) in specific patterns. Reich adopted the African technique of cycling a fixed pattern, but added an element of his own: the pattern starts as a single note, and instead of cycling as a fixed pattern, eighth notes are gradually added, building up the pattern from scratch as it cycles.

Ex. 2.10. Reich: *Drumming*, measures 1-15, omitting duplicate measures

The full pattern is finally presented in measure 15, and is utilized as the basic material for the remainder of the piece. “There is, then, only one basic rhythmic pattern for all for *Drumming*,” Reich says in his program notes for the piece. “This pattern undergoes changes of pitch, phase position and timbre, but all the performers play this pattern or some part of it, throughout the entire piece.”\(^5\) In building the pattern this way, Reich took a basic African technique (the fixed pattern) and infused it with his own style and ideas.

*Clapping Music*, composed in 1972, was composed in the same way, only this time the full pattern remains constant throughout the piece. In fact, one of the two performers does nothing but repeat a one-measure long pattern until the piece is over, much like an African drummer or bell player would. Instead of altering the pattern itself, Reich alters the timing of the pattern. The second performer, while still clapping the same pattern as the first performer, shifts

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the pattern by an eighth note every cycle (each cycle repeats the one-measure pattern 12 times).

Ex. 2.11. Reich: *Clapping Music*, measures 1-3

With this process, Reich incorporated another African element which intrigued him (an idea which is also related to the idea of phasing that he was exploring in his compositions for tape and *Piano Phase*): the idea of an inconsistent downbeat. As explained earlier, African music often has a very strong pulse, but not necessarily a very distinct meter. Especially to the Western listener, each part in an African ensemble seems to have its own starting point and accents. Reich explains the two main bell parts in *Gahu*, a standard West-African dance: “Both of them begin their patterns in different places, and neither of them begins on the first beat of the atoke [another bell-like instrument] pattern. This simplified miniature is the essence of African rhythmic structure: several repeating patterns of the same or related lengths and each with its own separate downbeat.” Reich found a way to meld this idea with his personal style. The shifting patterns in *Clapping Music* not only reflect his phasing techniques, but also the African techniques of blurring meter with multiple downbeats.

Reich took this idea a step further in *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976). He acknowledges two different rhythmic structures in this piece. The first is the underlying pulse of eighth notes in the piano and mallet instruments that continues throughout the entire piece. The second rhythmic structure is what Reich refers to as “the rhythm of the human breath”.⁵⁵ the voices and wind instruments play or sing certain pulsing notes for as long they can comfortably sustain them on one breath. The result is a gentle rising and falling of different chords, gradually progressing or

⁵⁵ Reich, *Writings on Music*, 87.
developing without a distinguished downbeat or meter. Reich was conscious about this phenomenon as he was composing. “If I compose music that is to use repeating patterns and is also to remain interesting I must build in rhythmic ambiguity to make it possible for the ear to hear a given pattern beginning and ending in different places depending on slight differences of accent and on how one listens. This is a lesson one can learn from African music.”

Another African element that Reich utilized in this piece was much more technical in nature, and arose from a performance problem. Reich wanted the ensemble to be able to perform the piece without a conductor. However, since the music moves from section to section based on the breath capacity of certain players, and the barlines are sometimes blurred, Reich needed a way to signal the group when it was time to move on to the next section. Instead of having one of the performers give a visual cue, Reich composed an audible cue into the music. “Audible cues become a part of the music and allow the musicians to keep listening.” A moment before a change to the next section, a metallophone will play the new pattern one time only, as a call to move on. “That was an idea I took directly from Balinese and African music, where the drummers—as you know—will make the [call]. Everybody knows, when these guys start going fast, you go with them. In African music there are what they call ‘changing patterns.’ Very simple patterns that sort of stick out because they’re so simple. That means, ‘Get ready, and off we go!’ Everybody changes on a dime to something else.”

Reich’s studies of African drumming shaped the rest of his music. For years to come Reich would implement the techniques of unchanging tonal areas, shifting downbeats, and

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56 Reich, *Writings on Music*, 150.
57 Ibid., 90.
rhythmic ambiguity into the cycles in his compositions. In essence, African music only gave him permission to take a path toward which he was already inclined. He explains:

The question often arises as to what influence my visit to Africa in the summer of 1970 had on Drumming? The answer is confirmation. It confirmed my intuition that acoustic instruments could be used to produce music that was genuinely richer in sound than that produced with electronic instruments, as well as confirming my natural inclination toward percussion. I chose instruments that are all now commonly available in Western countries...tuned to our own tempered diatonic scale, and used them within the context created by my own previous compositions.59

Reich was very conscious about how he was influenced by African music. In an essay about his studies of Balinese and African music, Reich states that there are two different ways one can use these non-Western influences. The first way is by recreating the sound (he gives the example of using the non-Western instruments in a band, or mimicking a certain vocal style). Reich considers this method of non-Western incorporation to be “the simplest and most superficial way of dealing with non-Western music,” and likens it to exoticism and “Chinoiserie.” Instead, Reich advocates for constructing compositions based on non-Western structures, while still using familiar instruments and scales. “This brings about the interesting situation of the non-Western influence being there in the thinking, but not in the sound...Instead of imitation, the influence of non-Western musical structures on the thinking of a Western composer is likely to produce something genuinely new.”60

Reich recognized that he used African influences to enhance his own music. He commented in an article that he didn’t transcribe African vocal music because it wasn’t interesting to him. What was interesting was the accompaniment.61 “It is in the precise rhythmic blending of the ensemble that the virtuosity lies. Not being a virtuoso, not being interested in

59 Reich, Writings on Music, 67.
60 Ibid., 70-71
61 Ibid., 57.
improvisation, and being thoroughly committed to my own ensemble that performs music I have composed with repetitive patterns combined so that their downbeats do not always coincide, it may be natural for my interests to run strongly toward Balinese and African music.”

4. Fanshawe

There is a fourth, still significant but lesser known composer who incorporated African influences into his music in the 1970s. While Cage’s compositional interest was in sound, Ligeti’s was in paradox, and Reich’s was in patterns and cycles, it is more difficult to verbalize what David Fanshawe’s compositional interest was. Fanshawe took it upon himself to mash the multiple traditions from Africa together with the Western classical tradition in sound, music, and spirit. It is important to note that David Fanshawe adopted a far more inclusive approach to the question of ‘what is African music’ than those implicitly adopted by Cage, Ligeti, and Reich, including Arabic Muslim calls to prayer and improvisatory song of Christian peoples.

David Fanshawe was born in 1942 in England, and, despite turning in the entrance exam blank because he couldn’t answer any of the questions, he was admitted to the Royal College of Music in London in 1965 on a Foundation Scholarship. During his first summer vacation, Fanshawe traveled to the Middle East, where he witnessed an unintentional blending of two very different religions, which would musically inspire him several years later:

One day, I went to a service at St. George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem and as the choir sang, I heard from the City outside ‘those other recitations’ [calls to prayer] blending in from the Mosques all around...With an inward longing for peace and harmony and with the sudden realization that Muslims and Christians were praying at the same time within earshot of each other, a new seed was sown from which future compositions would rise.

62 Reich, Writings on Music, 70.
In 1969 Fanshawe received funding from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to continue his expeditions in Northeast Africa. His goal at the time was to experience and record traditional African musics, although the expedition turned out to be not only educational but also a religious experience for him. (It was significant to him that the map of his journey formed the shape of a cross—from Cairo, Egypt to Northern Tanzania, Western Sudan to the coast.)

Ex. 2.12. Map of David Fanshawe’s journeys through African from 1969 through 1973

He was submerged in several different African religions, including larger global religions as well as smaller traditional ones, and often found himself reflecting on his own place in religion, or the religion’s place in the world. Each distinct experience inspired another movement of what he would eventually call his *African Sanctus*. Fanshawe’s desire was to merge his own Christian European world with the Muslim and traditional African world. His method was to write a new version of the Christian mass, with African recordings interwoven throughout the music.

I told the clerk in the Anglican Bishop’s office about my plans for writing a Mass combining the Christian and Muslim faiths - he was shocked. ‘Why not use the Coptic Mass?’ he asked with a saintly expression. ‘Because,’ said I, not quite knowing what to say next, ‘because I am more of a musical journalist and I like the thought of flinging Latin and Arabic together.’ ‘Who wins?’ [he laughed]. ‘God I suppose’ said I…”

The quote above reveals a second reason for his method of compositions: through these travels and again in subsequent travels retracing his steps, Fanshawe realized that this traditional music was getting harder to find and even disappearing. In his book *African Sanctus: a Story of Travel and Music*, Fanshawe describes his composition as a “musical documentary,” saying, “Sadly, so many of the songs, rituals and dances of Africa have to end, for the world is changing. Again this is why I have felt the urgent need to preserve what I have been privileged to hear in Africa, and why I was inspired to write *African Sanctus*.” I would like to describe a few of the specific experiences that inspired the different movements of *African Sanctus* and discuss how Fanshawe wove these experiences into his music.

The second movement of *African Sanctus* is the Kyrie. This movement was conceived in Cairo near the beginning of Fanshawe’s journey. Fanshawe had recorded a private performance of a *muezzin*, the man who calls Muslims to prayer from a mosque. Fanshawe states that when he

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**Footnotes:**

67 Ibid., 194.
wrote the *Kyrie*, he used the *muezzin's* vocal line as a cantus firmus for a four-part harmonization, in the same manner of a Bach choral. The choir that sings the Kyrie remains for the most part homophonic, weaving in and out of strict traditional 18th-century counterpoint and a looser, more contemporary version of counterpoint. Most of the phrases end in very neat authentic or half cadences, and the text remains true to a traditional Kyrie sung in Latin. The *muezzin* recording is, of course, sung in Arabic, and it fits rhythmically more loosely with the meter of the choir. However the two parts do stay in time together, and intertwine tonally. In Fanshawe’s interpretation of the *Adhan*, or the call to prayer, the end of the call lands on the dominant, followed by the entrance of the choir on the tonic.

Ex. 2.13. Fanshawe: Kyrie from *African Sanctus*, first choir entrance

Both of the traditional texts are repetitive, and the piece is written to allow the moving notes of the call to coincide with the held notes of the choir, and vise versa, in order to maintain clarity of the individual languages. Fanshawe was able to preserve the two distinct traditions while simultaneously creating a unity between them.
Many of the movements are composed in a similar manner, with the choir accompanying or alternating with the music in the recording. Another example of this is the sixth movement, *Et in Spiritum Sanctum*. In the North-West corner of Uganda, Fanshawe met a family of Christian refugees that had fled from persecution in Yambio. The family had composed a song about their recent flight through the bush. The song is accompanied by a “thumb piano” (a type of lamellophone), marimba, and a bottle that was used as a drum by pounding it in the ground. Fanshawe associated the lyrics to this song with certain lines in the Credo, and he set the two texts together in his own composition. “In *African Sanctus* you can hear the ’Song of Flight’ harmonized with a setting of *Et Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem* which simply means - I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. I chose to set these words from the Creed slightly out of context because their meaning is virtually the same as that expressed in the ‘Song of Flight.’”

In this case, the “Song of Flight” has a very consistent rhythm and pacing, so Fanshawe used this piece more like the accompaniment to the four part choir singing in Latin. I noticed that the call and response that dominates the recording of the “Song of Flight” is also reflected in numerous staggered cannon-like entrances of the choir. Like the Kyrie, the recordings and the live choir take turns coming into the foreground, but are united by the key and the pacing. Fanshawe was particularly happy to have the frogs and mosquitoes in the recording as part of his music. “In the same way that one is trained to analyse Western music, I was analysing another kind of natural symphony going on in the background as the Zande family were singing… millions of frogs croaking, ‘moqsuowtoes’ buzzing and the intoxicating night roar of Black Africa. At last I felt I was really there!”

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69 Ibid., 168.
The other movements of *African Sanctus* continue in this manner, merging the recordings with live music, synchronizing the tonal centers and pacing, but preserving the independence of each part. To match the wide geographic and religious variety of music he discovered on his African journey, Fanshawe also incorporated a wide variety of classic Western music as well. The mass setting with soloists and a chorus is a long-standing classical tradition, while the *Lord’s Prayer* movement is set as an indisputable pop ballad with the use of a drum set. The fifth movement *Love Song* consists of a Hadanduan soloist and a piano soloist, matching the Hadanduan’s phrygian-like scales with a post-tonal atmosphere, while the tenth movement, *Chants*, opens with slow chains of parallel fifths and fourths, reminiscent of simple organum. Some movements are dominated by the live performers while other movements consist almost entirely of recordings. Fanshawe’s self-designation as a music journalist might be the most accurate description of his role in this piece.

“I believe the World’s destiny is predetermined by some kind of Force. I would not want to change what I see. I can only be grateful for the privilege of being able to see it in my time and of being able to Praise it as I feel it.”

In the accounts of his travels, Fanshawe speaks often about his desire for peace and harmony, and about how music could achieve that for him personally. (“No one knows what it’s like to be possessed by horrid demons who push and push from within to attain soul and peace in music.”) For David Fanshawe, uniting two divergent cultures, but also celebrating the uniqueness of each tradition, was his own attempt at bringing peace to the world.

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71 Ibid., 175.
CHAPTER 3. AFRICAN COMPOSERS

Of course, Westerners are not the only musicians interested in the blending of African and European traditions. Western influences were introduced to Africa with Catholic missions as early as the fourth century. In the nineteenth century, Western presence in Africa greatly increased with the establishment of institutions like Christian churches, mission schools, and military bands, all of which encouraged Western music. Africans learned to sing hymns and four-part anthems, and play instruments suitable for the church such as the organ. In schools the music curriculum consisted only of Christian hymns and European folksongs. Education at established colleges included piano playing and the history of Western music. Military bands were created, and Africans were recruited to play Western instruments such as clarinets, trombones, trumpets, tubas, and saxophones. These bands provided entertainment for the colonial officers and traders living in European forts and castles, often playing at garden parties and clubs.

As Western music became more prominent, African were discouraged from playing their traditional music, in part because missionaries feared the traditional music would pull the Africans back to their traditional religions. Though some Western songs were translated into native African languages, Africans still had difficulty grasping them. This was due in part to the extreme differences in speaking rhythms of the two languages, as well as the fact that many African languages are tonal, which when set to music, would distort the meanings of the words. It wasn’t until the post-independence period in the middle to late twentieth century when
movements began to bring back African music in churches and to combine the traditional instruments and folk melodies in the bands.\textsuperscript{72}

\section*{1. Uzoigwe}

Joshua Uzoigwe was one African composer who grew up living a Western-influenced life. Uzoigwe was born in Umuahia in Eastern Nigeria in 1946. Growing up, Uzoigwe was exposed to Western music through singing in a local choir, and also to indigenous music through traditional events, such as playing in music groups for wrestling matches. He began his formal musical training in 1960, taking lessons in theory, harmony, and history of Western music at Kings College in Lagos, and took private piano lessons. Uzoigwe also studied traditional African musics, and wrote his dissertation on \textit{ukom} traditional music at Queen’s University in Belfast Ireland in 1981.

The effect of Uzoigwe’s studies in ethnomusicology in Belfast is evident in the music he was writing at the time. At that point in his musical career, his style solidified as one that synthesized Western and African music.\textsuperscript{73} In much of his music, Uzoigwe concentrates on using musical elements common in the music of his own tribe of the Igbo people, much of which can be drawn from his \textit{ukom} studies.

\textit{Ukom} music is primarily associated with a woman’s funeral. An \textit{ukom} ensemble consists of ten different mortar-framed drums. The drums are played by only two performers. The first performer plays the first five drums, known as \textit{ikwukwe olu nkwa} (‘responding musical voice”), and the second player plays the second five drums, known as \textit{agugu olu nkwa} (‘singing musical voice”). The performer on the “singing” drums plays the leading or melodic part, while the

performer on the “responding” drums plays an accompaniment part, often an ostinato. These ten drums are tuned to ten distinct pitches (CBAGE and DCAGE).

Ex. 3.1. Pitches of the ukom ensemble

The Igbo people do not recognize octave equivalence, so each note is considered a different pitch, and Uzoigwe often refers to this set of notes as a “drum row.”

In 1992 Uzoigwe wrote a piece called Talking Drums, consisting of four movements. The first and fourth movements reflect the idiosyncrasies of ukom music, particularly the tonal aspects of the music. The first movement is entitled Ukom, and is based on motives of the ukom drum row. All of the melodies and harmonies in the first movement are constructed from these specific notes. Though Uzoigwe didn’t strictly separate the notes according to melody and accompaniment like a traditional ukom ensemble would do (his accompanimental patterns are mostly comprised of the same accompanimental notes of the ukom ensemble, but the melody utilizes all the notes of the drum row as well as octave displacement), he did combine the notes in the same way an ukom drummer would to create harmonies. “In keeping with the ukom tradition of interrelating alternate drums and tones during a tuning session prior to a musical performance, tones of the scale are paired in order to reflect two types of intervallic relationships; that is, the intervals of a third and a fourth…” By skipping every other note in the drum row (much like triads are constructed from the Western scale), the ukom scale creates new types of chords.

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75 Uzoigwe, "The Problem of Tonality and Atonality," 105.
Ex. 3.2. Typical chords of *ukom* music

These harmonies can be seen in the selection from Uzoigwe’s *Ukom* in example 3.3 below.

Ex. 3.3. Uzoigwe: *Ukom*, measures 9-12

In an *ukom* ensemble, the accompanimental drums often play ostinatos, which are also reflected in Uzoigwe’s piece (as seen in the left hand piano part above). In fact, ostinatos (a common idiom in most African music), are found in many of Uzoigwe’s other works. Another interesting African element to note is the descending melody in measure 12 (the last measure of example 3.3). This piece has many descending melodies, and Godwin Sadoh points out in his book about Uzoigwe that the descending melodic line is another common trait found in Igbo folk songs.\(^6\)

Though the fourth movement, *Egwu Amala*, is based upon this same drum row, Uzoigwe has changed the original guidelines. Uzoigwe kept the idea of two pentatonic scales, but spaced the scales apart by a tritone.

Ex. 3.4. Foundational pitches of Uzoigwe’s *Egwu Amala*

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\(^6\) Sadoh, *Joshua Uzoigwe*, 47.
This new scale gave Uzoigwe ten out of the twelve notes of the Western chromatic scale. He adhered to this scale a little more loosely, occasionally writing the missing two pitches (an F-natural or B-natural). The harmonies as well are less strict than in the first movement, and are loosely based on fourths and seconds. This movement is highly original because it is a combination of a specific tonal system from a specific African people and Uzoigwe’s Western alteration and exploration of that tonal system. However, the new scale and harmonies have so much flexibility that the recognizable African tonal quality is all but lost. This is an issue that Uzoigwe struggled with: “this [problem] is due to the fact that, at the point of material construction or creative synthesis of elements, Western/European musical elements such as notational and instrumental techniques, and concert-hall performances, tend as a whole to overshadow the African elements.” In this case, however, Uzoigwe’s solution to this problem was to write very distinct African rhythms. He wrote this movement in a 19/8 meter, and split the measures in combinations of twos and threes in the same way that many African patterns are organized. Additionally, many of the rhythmic patterns are based on the metronome rhythms that a bamboo slit-drum would play in a traditional Egwu amala dance (also indigenous to the Igbo communities living along the river Niger in Anambra and Delta States of Nigeria). The strong syncopations and interlocking patterns bring out the African qualities to the listener.

The form of Ukom is also derived from an African musical concept. Akalaka nkwa, which literally translates to hand-in-hand music, is an Igbo formal structure that is the foundation of many of their pieces. Uzoigwe described this structure as a ‘chainsong,’ in which several different songs or pieces are strung together to create one large extended composition. Uzoigwe states: “The aptness of this description, lies in the fact that the pieces are permuted the same way

77 Joshua Uzoigwe, Akin Euba: An Introduction to the Life and Music of a Nigerian Composer (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 1992), 61.
78 Uzoigwe, ”The Problem of Tonality and Atonality,” 109.
phrases or motives within a given piece are ordered and reordered." He described his first movement’s form similar to how Westerners might describe the form of a rondo: ABACADA.

Motives and motive permutation are also very important to both Igbo music and Uzoigwe’s music. Uzoigwe describes his music in an analytical essay: “Motives are employed both rhythmically and melodically, in every possible combination and permutation, in order to capture the elements that constitute the extra-musical ideas in the piece.” Over the course of the piece, Uzoigwe subtly changes the rhythms, pitches, and placement of the motives, carrying them into different sections of the music. Just a few of these permutations for one of the motives is listed in example 3.5 below.

Ex. 3.5. Chart of select permutations for a motive in Uzoigwe’s *Ukom* (written in 12/8)

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80 Ibid., 107.
The syncopation of the pattern and the placement of the motive on the third eighth note of the beat are retained throughout these iterations, as is the quick repeated-note gesture first heard in the ostinato. Other elements such as pitch, contour, and length are developed similarly to how motives may be developed in Western classical music.

Uzoigwe was a champion of a genre that is known as “African art music” (also known as “neo-African art music”) This genre consists of many pieces by African composers who are attempting to incorporate their own traditions into the Western music they have spent years studying. Uzoigwe wrote several essays instructing how to write this type of music:

What composers of African art music therefore need most is to establish a language which is comparable to that of African literature. It should be noted, for instance, that even though the latter may be in English, French or Portuguese, in essence it still retains its African identity, that is, it reflects not only the source of material but adopts a style of presentation that is peculiarly African. We may therefore establish a relevant tonal language for modern African music by borrowing a leaf from African traditional music. 81

Uzoigwe goes on to say that composers writing African art music should derive their tonal and rhythmic patterns from not only traditional African musical language, but also from the tone patterns of their speech. He advocated for Africans to use their cultural experiences to create a true synthesis of the music that would be unique to each composer.

2. Volans

Kevin Volans is a white South-African composer (who eventually became a naturalized Irish citizen) who does not fit in either category of Africans incorporating their own traditions into Western music, nor Westerners incorporating foreign traditions into classical music. Born in Pietermaritzburg in 1949, Volans was raised to think of himself as European. “I had no contact with African music at all except that I used to walk home from school every day and hear Zulu

guitar music and people singing and sitting on the streets. I'd walk past all these people playing African music and go home and play Chopin,” Volans said in an interview with Dorothy Wyatt. However, when Volans went to Germany in 1973 to study composition with Stockhausen, he discovered that he didn’t belong in Europe either. “I know Volans well enough to be aware that questions about nationality are not among his favourites,” says Bob Gilmore in an article in The Journal of Music. “When he was growing up in South Africa, he tells me, white people thought of themselves as Europeans. When he came to study in Köln he realised quite clearly that he didn’t feel European at all. Returning to South Africa, he discovered he wasn’t really African.”

It was during his time in Germany studying serial music that Volans acquired an interest in the music of his past. African music was different from serialism in ways that Volans was craving, especially in regards to form:

That’s why I was interested in African music, because it was a kind of music that had no perception of form, no perception of time as we know it, no guilt about change, was free from guilt. In the 70s we had serial guilt, and then in the 80s it was guilt about change, an anxiety about change; the minute a piece of music started you felt it had to change. In African music that feeling doesn’t exist. I was interested in trying to write music that was in a sense formless.”

He made several trips to South Africa to record traditional music, and soon after, began compositions he referred to as his African Paraphrases. These compositions contained quotations of the traditional music Volans was interested in, and were even named after African

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84 Gilmore, "Wild Air."
song titles.\textsuperscript{85} The pieces have since been the cause of much debate in the Western musical community. Interviews and articles about Volans have either been geared toward his social and political intentions, or toward a critique of his appropriations. The controversy has been fed by the fact that over time, Volans’ own views had changed. In the late 70’s and early 80’s, Volans spoke of uniting African and European traditions. He wrote an article for \textit{Leadership} of Cape Town which called for “a reconciliation of African and European aesthetics, of the Western and African spirit,”\textsuperscript{86} and told Timothy Taylor in an interview, “I thought it was important to have a reconciliation of African and European aesthetics. I thought this was essential, because I feel that nearly all the political problems are aesthetic problems. Real racial problems are aesthetic ones.”\textsuperscript{87} In the late 80’s, however, Volans began to talk about these pieces very differently. He stopped using the term \textit{African Paraphrases} and began to declare that critics were listening to these pieces in the wrong way. In an interview on BBC radio in 1992, Volans explained, “I have found, for example, with these so-called African pieces, that there has been a tremendous misunderstanding, not really so much on the part of the public but the critics, as to what you’re trying to do, because they see it as an attempt to bring Africa into Europe….And people then have completely overlooked what the music may be about. I mean, for example, the fact that \textit{White Man Sleeps} does have some African elements in it seems to work against people listening to it as a contemporary string quartet.” Volans declared that he thinks of those pieces as strictly Western.\textsuperscript{88}


\textsuperscript{86} Taylor, "When We Think about Music and Politics," 511.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 512.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 518.
Though Volans seemed to recant the reconciling intentions, other music critics have since defended Volans’s choices to quote African melodies. Martin Scherzinger argues that recognizing the original tunes allows the listener to hear beyond them, and focus on the new context: “It is precisely because of the immediacy of this recognition that the African dances themselves recede from earshot and our listening is drawn to something else...Volans encourages *hearing* the borrowed image in itself, apart from its original source; the immediately recognizable taken as a handhold for the ear, that might guide us into the unknown, the purely aesthetic.”\(^89\) Timothy Taylor writes that Volans was interested in elevating appropriated music to the same level as composed music. “That of course is central to Volans's goal in his *African Paraphrase* pieces, to write music in which the African musics were not dominated by the Western European ‘art’ music but instead questions or effaces European hegemony.”\(^90\)

Whether these pieces are about African and Western reconciliation or are purely about the contemporary string quartet, they were at the time of composition created with both Western and African influences. I am interested in one particular piece composed by Kevin Volans because there are several different arrangements. The piece was first written in 1982 for two harpsichords, one percussionist, and viola de gamba. It was transcribed that same year for four guitars and the again for the Kronos String Quartet, which is the most famous version of the work. The string quartet was revised in 1986, after the second movement was arranged into a work of its own for two pianos in 1984, called *Kneeling Dance*. Subsequently, *Kneeling Dance* was revised in 1987 and then was finally transcribed for six pianos as a commission for the Piano Circus. Over time, this piece goes from a much more literal appropriation of African music in its earliest version, to a true synthesis of African and Western by its latest. Deciphering which

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\(^89\) Scherzinger, "The Form is/in the Function," 162.
\(^90\) Taylor, "When We Think about Music and Politics," 514.
elements Volans decided to retain or discard can tell us how he listened to the music and especially how he moved away from “appropriation” and toward the creation of an entirely new sound. I will focus mostly on the original harpsichord version, the revised string quartet, and Kneeling Dance for six pianos.

Kneeling Dance, the second movement of the String Quartet, and the third movement of the original version for harpsichord, percussion, and viola de gamba are all based on a specific dance ritual of the Nyungwe people in Mozambique. The music was transcribed and analyzed by ethnomusicologist Andrew Tracey in 1971, in the article The Nyanga Panpipe Dance. Volans based his music on the information in this article.

The traditional dance is performed with several panpipes, vocalists, and ankle rattles. In the case of the performance on which Tracey based his article, 29 different panpipes were used, each with a unique part to play. Most parts consist of patterns of only three to four notes on the panpipes with some additional notes filled in by voice. Each part individually is filled with rests and pulses at different times, but together the parts interlock in a very intricate and complex pattern, producing a strong sense of chords as well as disjunct melody lines. The entire pattern is 24 pulses long before it repeats. After a few repetitions, the panpipes take a short break and only the ankle rattles are heard, occasionally accompanied by one or two singing voices. Traditionally this break gives the white landowner a chance to sleep, which is where Kevin Volans derived his title, White Man Sleeps.

The original composition inspired by this music is sometimes described as a transcription. The instruments Volans chose were ones that he had chosen in previous compositions to mimic the “African sound.” Matepe, named after a type of mbira (part of the

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91 “Nyanga” refers to both the type of panpipes as well as the ensemble in which the panpipes are played. “Nyungwe” is the name of the tribe where these ensembles are found.
lamellophone family of instruments, which has a twangy, metallic sound) was also written for two harpsichords tuned to African scales, and rattles. The opening notes in *White Man Sleeps* come directly from Andrew Tracy’s chart showing a condensed version of the pipe and vocal parts of the *nyanga* music. Volans even attempted to incorporate the non-Western tuning of the original African pipes (in his article, Tracy explains that the tuning of the panpipes can depend upon the weather and individual preference or chance) by detuning certain strings in the harpsichords. In fact, the only real change Volans made was to split Tracy’s reduction of the music between two harpsichord parts.

Ex. 3.6. Andrew Tracy’s reduction of the pipe and vocal parts from the *Nyanga* Pan Pipe Dance
True to the African cyclical form, the performers are instructed to play this first measure six times. This is a notable difference from the String Quartet edition. Volans retained the consistent pulse and the general notes of the 24-note cycle in the String Quartet arrangement, but he instead continues to write out the cycle, changing many of the notes while generally keeping the chordal outline. The audible result is a strong sense of a cyclic pattern, but with constant morphing.

The original opening notes have also changed dramatically from the original version. As he converted twenty fingers into to four bows, Volans didn’t seem concerned with keeping the notes in the same order or register. The chords are loosely followed as well, and much less triadic. For instance, the very first chord of the piece has changed from a root position C chord to a second inversion C chord, with no third. Sevenths and ninths are added in different places.
Ex. 3.8. Volans: *String Quartet No. 1*, Mvt. 2, measures 1-3

These few changes drastically shift the feeling of this piece from transcription to inspiration. The new instrumentation is a large component of this shift. The switch to a Western ensemble in traditional Western tuning gives this piece a much more Western feel. The flexibility of this arrangement is very impressive. As the music moved from a more African-sounding ensemble to a more Western one, Volans felt the freedom to change the music accordingly. The piece proceeds to evolve into something that is more like a theme and variations or a chaconne.

Similar changes occur in the opening of *Kneeling Dance* for six pianos, elevating the original transcription to an even more complex mixture of appropriation and inspiration. Volans strays further from the *nyanga* dance ritual by once again writing more idiomatically for piano and ignoring the order and register of the string quartet notes. While still adhering to the same vague chordal structure of the original dance, Volans now adds clusters in almost every chord, and accents certain pulses with pounding half-note fifths in the lowest voice.
There are important aspects of each arrangement of the opening that stay the same.

Besides following the same basic chord structure of the original dance, the driving pulse is present in each piece, as well as the interlocking polyrhythm. Though there are fewer rests in the string quartet (because there are fewer voices to play all of the notes), interlocking polyphony is expressed by large registral leaps and voice crossing.

Certain aspects of form also are retained or removed between arrangements. The cycles where the panpipes pause and the rattles are heard by themselves are retained in the version for harpsichord. Without rattles in the string quartet arrangement, this section was discarded; however a new section took its place. This section has the same pause effect by dramatically
slowing the pulse and note durations. Starting at rehearsal C in the second movement of String Quartet No. 1, this slower section is still derived directly from Andrew Tracy’s *nyanga* panpipe article. Tracy describes how intricately interlocked the panpipe melodies are, and as an example, dictates the resultant pattern of just three of the 29 parts (parts 20, 21, and 22). The string quartet at rehearsal C plays interlocking octaves based on the vocal notes of those three parts, varying only slightly from Tracy’s dictation, especially during the stagnant repetitions of the note C in the second half.

Ex. 3.10. Andrew Tracy’s dictation of resultant pattern of parts 20, 21, and 22

Ex. 3.11. Volans: *String Quartet No. 1*, Mvt. 2, rehearsal C. Differences noted by red boxes.

These interlocking octaves are reprised and expanded in the String Quartet’s fourth movement, and then are arranged into *Kneeling Dance* and expanded even further. The interlocking octaves are spread to all six pianos. The slow sections are lengthened and new notes are added, as well as quintuplet flurries and triplets, and even a brief grand pause which alludes to the original rattle solo.
Volans incorporated other combinations from Tracy’s dictations into the String Quartet. The melody at rehearsal F and K is a transcription of the women’s chorus vocal part. This melody sneaks its way into the polyphony at measure 270 in *Kneeling Dance*. At rehearsal F in the fourth movement of the string quartet, Volans chooses other panpipe and vocal parts, such as part 5 and part 29, to create a fast lilting waltz section, still loosely based on the original chords and melodies. Even so, these parts follow Andrew Tracy’s article much less strictly, and stick to the chaconne idea established in the second movement.

In the earliest versions of *White Man Sleeps*, Volans seemed to be very attached to the notes and rhythms of the *nyanga* dance, even trying to capture the inconsistent tuning of the pipes. However, it seems that the more Volans matured as a composer, the more dissatisfied he became with a compositional style that was too much like transcription, and he began to rewrite...
the piece to express more of his personal style and interests. In his later arrangements of this piece, Volans used the same material in a much more fluid way, making the music his own, even while keeping certain quotations. In every arrangement, Volans held fast to the interlocking aspect of the piece, finding a way to use interlocking melodies without the use of the fast underlying pulse. In these later pieces it is evident that Volans found a good balance between the repetitiveness of African music and the “anxiety about change” he felt so strongly in the 1980s.
CONCLUSION

We find from studying these six composers that the incorporation of African musical elements into their compositions fall into one of two categories: sonic elements and structural elements. Both John Cage and David Fanshawe were primarily interested in the sounds created by indigenous Africans. Cage’s approach in Bacchanale to incorporating those sounds was “Western normalization”: fitting non-Western sounds into strictly Western instruments and scales. Cage altered a Western instrument (the piano) to match the timbres and approximate pitches of African lamellophones. By contrast, David Fanshawe’s approach was preservation and simultaneity. Fanshawe wasn’t interested in specific elements of African music so much as he was interested in the music as a whole, and what it stood for. Instead he wrote Western melodies and ideas right into the African musics he recorded.

György Ligeti, Steve Reich, and Joshua Uzoigwe were more interested in structural elements of African music. Ligeti and Reich added aspects of interlocking parts, perpetual pulse, and cycles that they had learned from African music into their compositions, using a more technical approach of enhancing the structural levels in their own music with these specific techniques. Uzoigwe, by contrast, incorporated the elements of the pitches and drum-functions of ukom music with the Western normalization approach. He found a way to translate those techniques into the classical Western scale and piano instrumentation.

Kevin Volans crossed the borders of these categories with his different arrangements. In the original White Man Sleeps, Volans focused on the sonic elements of the panpipe dance, incorporating the traditional music using the Western normalization approach (mimicking the sound of the out-of-tune panpipes with detuned harpsichord). In his later arrangements, Volans abandoned the sound of panpipes and rattles, and instead focused on the interlocking parts and
cycles of the music, technically incorporating them into the structure of his own music. It is interesting to note that the different aural results of using sonic vs. structural African elements are audible; *Bacchanale, African Sanctus,* and early *White Man Sleeps* have more of an “African sound” to the listener, while pieces like *Fem, Music for 18 Musicians,* and the later arrangements of *White Man Sleeps* sound more like contemporary classical music. (A summary chart of the composers and their incorporation methods can be found on page 62.)

Without doubt, however, all of these pieces are instantly identifiable with the composer who wrote them. None of the composers sacrificed their own personal voice for the African musical techniques. By choosing African elements that were already consonant with their inherent style, they were able to create a new sound, still in the realms of their compositional expression, pushing the boundaries of classical music.

I, too, have been captivated by African music and drumming and have felt compelled to work the techniques and acoustics into pieces of my own. Like Cage, I am inspired by the sonic aspects of African music, and have recently focused on the timbres of their hand drums, especially the most famous *djembe* drums. These drums produce high, medium, and low tones (known as slaps, tones, and basses, respectively). I have been finding ways to reflect these timbres, and the interplay between the timbres, in non-drums ensembles. I am also inspired by structural elements of African music, and I, like Reich, am fascinated with cycles and how Africans use rhythmic ambiguity and interest to create long periods of tonally-unchanging but engaging music. To do this I have been studying unmetered melodic polyphony in the music of the Pygmies of Central Africa, incorporating their use of rhythmically-interlocking cycles of different lengths to erase downbeats (as shown in Ex. 4.2 on page 63), and combining it with my own Western understanding of metric modulation. Like Ligeti and Reich, I am exploring
interlocking patterns and “illusory outlines,” and have constructed passages where the ensemble slowly builds one musical idea by adding more and more interlocking components within each instrumental group until the idea is complete. My studies in African music have allowed me to produce new sounds and concepts in my music that before I could not have conceived.

We are far from reaching the limits of inspiration from African music. Even within the sonic and structural categories, the realm of possibilities available through the exploration of polyrhythm, shifting downbeats, and ambiguous meter and pulse is endless. Composers have yet to explore the possibilities of embodying the idiosyncrasies of lead-drum improvisations in melodic classical instruments. So much has not yet been explored about the satisfaction of stasis or the intrigue of perpetuity. The more we continue to stretch our knowledge beyond the boundaries of our own immediate cultures, the more wondrous and unique voices we will find within ourselves.
Key to color: light and dark blue—incorporation method, red and yellow—incorporated elements

Ex. 4.1. Summary of the African musical elements incorporated into the works of Cage, Ligeti, Reich, Fanshawe, Uzoigwe, and Volans
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Volume II

Sankofa: a Symphony for Wind Ensemble

by

Jamie Marie Thierman

2015
PROGRAM NOTES

This piece was inspired by my studies and practice of West-African drumming and song. The title *Sankofa* refers to the adinkra symbol that represents a remembrance of the past, as one looks to the future. This work integrates ancient ideas into modern music.

African hand drums have three basic sounds (low, medium, and high); these sounds are embodied by the wind ensemble in the first movement. The sparse texture in the first half is gradually filled in piece by piece, until a whole idea is formed from a patchwork of components from the individual instrumental sections, much in the way a West-African drum pattern is made of the polyphony from several individual parts. At that moment, the music abruptly switches to new material, still embodying drumming patterns, reflected in the drums themselves.

The second movement was inspired by the idea of Pygmy singing in Central Africa. These polyphonic Pygmy songs are comprised of many simultaneous vocal lines, seemingly unrelated by time, producing a blend of pitches and pulse. The music of the second movement explores this timeless effect by metrically modulating from section to section.

The third movement features the idea of drums and pulse that I fell in love with when I first learned of West-African drumming. Here the two forces of a drum ensemble and a wind ensemble at first oppose each other, but gradually each finds a way to live within the other force, leading to an overlap of the two forces at the end.
Guide to the Adinkra Symbols:

Each movement is marked with an adinkra symbol. These are ancient West-African symbols which represent certain concepts, and are still found in Africa today, most commonly in Ghana. Though the meanings are similar throughout West Africa, there are different connotations and subtleties associated with the symbols depending on the region.

– *Wo Nsa Da Mu A* – "If your hands are in the dish" – This design symbolizes pluralism (and also democracy), the idea that two systems or concepts can occupy the same time and place.

– *Mpatapo* – “knot of reconciliation” – This symbol represents the act of making peace or unity, or binding individual parties in a harmonious way after a period of strife.

– *Sankofa* – “reach back and get it” – One of the most popular adinkra symbols in West Africa, it represents the importance of remembering your past, and learning from it, while looking to your future. The symbolic bird is facing forward, but looking back.

Key to Playing Djembe

1. Bass – bottom line – Hit the Djembe in the center of the drum with an open and somewhat loose hand.

2. Tone – middle line – Hit the outer 6 to 8 inches of the Djembe with strong, flat fingers (the heel of your hand should not have contact with the drum).

3. Slap – top line – Strongly hit the rim of the drum with your palm, causing the tips of your fingers to slap the outer edge of the drum surface.
INSTRUMENTATION

1 Piccolo
3-4 Flutes 1
3-4 Flutes 2
1 Oboe 1
1 Oboe 2
1 English Horn
1 Bassoon 1
1 Bassoon 2
1 Contrabassoon
3-4 Bb Clarinets 1
3-4 Bb Clarinets 2
3-4 Bb Clarinets 3
1 Bass Clarinet
1 Contrabass Clarinet
1 Alto Saxophone 1 (doubling on Sop. Sax.)
1 Alto Saxophone 2
1 Tenor Saxophone 1
1 Tenor Saxophone 2
1 Baritone Saxophone
1-2 Bb Trumpets 1
1-2 Bb Trumpets 2
1-2 Bb Trumpets 3
1-2 Bb Trumpets 4
1 Horn 1
1 Horn 2
1 Horn 3
1 Horn 4
1-2 Trombones 1
1-2 Trombones 2
1-2 Trombones 3
1 Bass Trombone
2-3 Euphoniums
3-4 Tubas
1 Contrabass
Timpani
Percussion
Triangle
Susp. Cymbals
Crash Cymbals
High Hat
Glockenspiel
Crotales
Chimes
Vibraphone
Xylophone
Marimba 1
Marimba 2 (5-oct.)
Djembe 1, 2, 3
Field Drum
Tom-Toms (5)
Bass Drum
Whip
Harp
Piano
Division of Percussion by Movement and Part

MVT I
1. Susp. Cymbals, Crash Cymbals, Djembe 1
2. Djembe 2
3. Djembe 3
4. Glockenspiel, Vibraphone (A3 key only), Whip, High Hat, Susp. Cymbals, Optional doubling Djembe
5. Tom-toms (4), Marimba
6. Bass Drum
7. double any Djembe part

MVT III
1. Djembe 1, Susp. Cymbals
2. Djembe 2, Crotales
3. Djembe 3
4. Field Drum, Xylophone, Vibraphone
5. Tom-toms (2 high), Marimba, Chimes
6. Tom-toms (3 low), Marimba (5-oct.), Chimes
7. Bass Drum, Vibraphone, Xylophone, Crotales

Performance Notes

In Movement II, Bass Clarinet, Soprano Saxophone, and Harp are TACET. If individual movements are performed alone, the following alterations to instrumentation may be made:

MVT I
1. Harp – optional
2. Percussion 7 – optional

MVT II
1. Oboe
2. Bassoon
3. Contrabassoon (doubling on Bassoon)
4. Contrabass Clarinet (doubling on Bb Clarinet)
5. Percussion 6 & 7 (Djembe) – optional

Duration

I. ca. 5:00 minutes
II. ca. 6:30 minutes
III. ca. 8:30 minutes

Total time: ca. 20:00 minutes
Transposed Score

Sankofa: Symphony for Wind Ensemble

I. ☞

Jamie Thierman

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