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CULTURAL DYNAMISM IN PROCESS: THE KENYA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Jean Kidula

Introduction

Scholars of African music have always been concerned with continuity and change in the traditional musics of Africa. There are those who would like to see traditional music maintain its status, without overt influence from the rest of the world. Such studies emphasize those elements that are considered African and isolate elements that have been "borrowed." More recently, a number of scholars have been interested in the study of "modern" music phenomena, usually concentrating on the study of popular musics, which is usually seen from a syncretic perspective.¹ The most interesting aspect about popular music students and writers is their approach, tending towards the socio-economic.² Avorgbedor raises the issue that one of the sources and inspirations for new music genres in Africa is "folk" music.³ Modernity has raised many fears regarding the continuity of African indigenous music styles. While folk elements can be identified in modern music practices in Africa, there are several institutions and processes that help to shape modern music practices and processes in Africa by acting as repositories of folk music and as a training ground for future musicians.

This paper will examine one of these repositories of folk music, The Kenya Music Festival, which plays an essential role and place in shaping, articulating, promoting and reinforcing modern music practice in Kenya. The festival is, on the one hand, an institution and agent for

¹ Mosunmola Omibiyi-Obidike, "The Process of Education and the Search for Identity in Contemporary African Music," in *African Musicology: Current Trends: A Festschrift Presented to J.H. Kwabena Nketia*, Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje and William G. Carter, eds., 2 vols. (Atlanta: Crossroads Press, 1992), 2: 27-44.

² Christopher A. Waterman, *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³ Daniel K. Avorgbedor, "The Place of the 'Folk' in Ghanaian Popular Music," *International Society for Music Education (ISME) Yearbook* 10 (1983): 179-188.

preservation and creativity. On the other hand, as Kenyans seek to articulate their cultural heritage, it is shaped and expanded by the very practices it seeks to conserve. I will examine the dialectic relationship between the festival as an institution and as an institutionalizer.

The Kenya Music Festival

The Kenya Music Festival is an annual event that until 1990 was affiliated with the British Federation of Music Festivals. It takes place between May and October under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. All residents of Kenya may participate, and it is administered by the government with a form of dual participation. One type of participation is geared towards students, including students at: grade schools, high schools, colleges of all sorts, and universities, as well as their teachers and workers. The other form of participation is for members of the general public who can participate as part of their work or private environment, such as banks, offices, and religious institutions, to name a few. The festival's program includes: African, Western, and Oriental Vocal, Instrumental Music, and Dance, as well as Elocution in African and Western Languages.⁴ The festival's four main objectives are:

- To encourage the study and practice of Music, Elocution, and Dance
- To guide pupils, students, and teachers with helpful criticism by qualified adjudicators
- To bring promising performers before the audience
- To promote the preservation of Kenyan cultural heritage.

Contestants at the national level of the festival have to be winners at various provincial levels to be eligible to compete, hence the long duration of the festival. While national level competition takes

⁴ African languages, for the purposes of the festival include: all indigenous languages and *linguas francas* of Africa, while the Western languages are English, French, and German. Oriental refers mainly to the sub-continent of India and its neighbor Pakistan, whose natives have become citizens of Kenya through the colonial process.

place during the August school holidays, the lower level competitions are held during the school term. Adjudicators are mainly music teachers and professors at higher institutions of learning. This paper will mainly address the music and dance aspects of the festival.

Background

In November 1959, an article appeared in the *New York Times* entitled "Folk Music is Fading in Kenya."⁵ The author, Ingalls, had interviewed a musicologist in Kenya, Mr. Graham Hyslop, a British national, who had found various kinds of instruments from around the country and was worried that Western impact was turning the younger generations from the pursuit of African forms of music making. Hyslop therefore organized workshops in an attempt to document the instruments. One of his comments was that "the principles that give shape and form to African music are the same as those found in Europe at the end of the 19th Century."⁶ His statement, at the eve of Kenyan independence, reflects the prevailing paternalistic attitude at the time that African music was evolving towards a higher form, namely, towards a European Classical form. On the other hand, his statement is important in the sense that it was from peasant musics of Europe that national folk styles were modeled. Hyslop is considered by Kenyan musicians as being seminal in an attempt to consolidate folk elements, especially instruments, to establish a standard tuning system and to archive the musics produced.

By the time Ingalls' article appeared, a body aimed at promoting general musicianship in the country had already been set up with branches in three regions of Kenya. This was the Kenya Music Festival. In fact, it had been set up as early as 1941 in one part of the country for the benefit of European students, but by 1952, it had incorporated Africans and African music.⁷ It was originally intended as

⁵ Leonard Ingalls, "Folk Music is Fading in Kenya," *New York Times*, 8 November 1959.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Hyslop indicates that the Festival was set up around 1941 but the Kenya News Agency (KNA) indicates that the Festival was having its 60th anniversary in 1987. Graham Hyslop, "Choice for Music for Festivals in Africa," *Africa Music Society Journal*, 1 no. 2: 53-55. KNA, "Music Festival Starts Wednesday," *The Standard* (Nairobi), 22 June 1987, p. 14. I

an educational tool, but was expanded to become an archiving method. The music festival, as an adjunct to the British Festival, took place in the British summer, which happens to be Kenya's coldest months. The festival was initially scheduled both to permit the participants to go back home to Britain for the summer holidays after the festival and to allow adjudicators, initially from Britain, to come to Kenya at a convenient time. Even with independence, this practice and timing continues.⁸ Originally, there were three festivals at different locations (West, Coast and Nairobi) which were totally unrelated in administration and participation. The primary aim of these bodies was to promote and enhance music practice in Kenya.

Initially the festivals had only two items for competition: the European set piece and the African folk song. The original aim in the early 50s was to allow for "choice treatment of African songs for performance at a festival and the selection of the best music from the West."⁹ An examination of some of the recommendations by Graham Hyslop, first music and drama officer, shows that the festival was carefully orchestrated to expose the African to Western music and to allow the African to sing an item called a "folk song" in order to promote African music. Hyslop set out to train African musicians, who in essence were to become the new breed of musicians, as they were literally choirmasters. He invited them to workshops conducted before the festivals in order to train them to interpret the music correctly. He aimed at:

raising the standards of musicianship... to study the choices of African music... to train them to read and write music correctly... to raise the standards of performance... to allow them to measure their music knowledge against some recognized body like the

am not sure if this was the anniversary of the British Federation or of the Kenya Music Festival.

⁸ The practice is justified because this is the middle of the academic year for Kenya. The first third of the year sees the admission of new students to schools and the last third of the year sees the graduation of school leavers who also have to take national exams. The most convenient time for effective practice and travel is in the middle of the year.

⁹ Graham Hyslop, "Choice for Music for Festivals in Africa," *African Music Society Journal* 1 no. 2 (1955): 53-55.

associated board of the Royal Schools of Music in Britain... to guide them in the selection of an appropriate folk song....¹⁰

Hyslop had recognized that the diversity of musical practices in Kenya made it impossible to pick any particular ethnic group to represent the African folk song style. Hyslop therefore formulated what has come to be referred to as the African folk song in Kenya, defined as the solo and ensemble articulations of song, instrumental pieces and dance by indigenous peoples of Kenya, recognized as having no borrowings from other, non-African civilizations, such as Western, Eastern, or Arabic civilizations.

Hyslop did not view song, instrumental music, and dance as forming a composite of African music. Instead, he divided folk music into categories of song versus instrumental music. He organized for a separation between the two genres as could be done in the Western classical musical context, by allowing for song to be performed at the music festival while holding a separate workshop for instrumentalists.¹¹

Zake's analysis of instruments may shed light on this.¹² Instruments were as varied as the peoples, and there was no standardization in tuning or size even within the same ethnic group. There was also variety in the playing techniques, the number of strings, and the attitudes of the people towards the instruments. For example, in some cultures instruments were highly venerated while other cultures saw them as children's toys. There was also the question of cultures without instruments. In addition, instruments were usually relegated to the role of accompaniment of song or dance, or both. Thus the issue became how to separate the song from context because there was a general consensus that instruments were specific to cultures in performance and style, as well as in function.

¹⁰ Graham Hyslop, "Kenya's Colony Music and Drama Officer," *African Music Society Journal* 2 no. 1 (1958): 38-39.

¹¹ See Graham Hyslop, "Choice for Music for Festivals in Africa," pp. 53-55 regarding music festivals. See Graham Hyslop, "African Music Festivals in Kenya," *African Music Society Journal* 2 no. 1 (1958): 31-35 for information regarding musical instruments.

¹² George W. Senoga-Zake, *Folk Music of Kenya* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1986), pp. 135-136.

The festival provided a new forum and relocated the song to a new venue and a multi-ethnic audience. The festival further gave guidelines to what should be considered a folk song by prescribing a performance limit. Hyslop prescribed that:¹³

- the best songs were those responsorial in character and style.
- since songs were in local languages, interest was to be created in melody and rhythm, rather than in text.
- short songs were not to be performed unless they were adjoined to others but be performed in an ABA format or a rondo. The group must always end in A.
- harmony should be organum (as was practiced in Europe one thousand years ago), and combined with unison, as thirds and sixths were tedious, and too much associated with popular music.
- participants could add instrumental accompaniment for color, maybe a drum or rattle, but not guitar.
- there should be no elaborate dancing but some movement.
- there could be the addition of dynamics, such as ending with a crescendo, but there were to be no liberties on rhythm.

Essentially, Hyslop not only advocated for the transplanting of the folk song, but the creation of a new idiom. In addition to organum, canonic singing was encouraged in folk singing even to the extent of the 1400 AD European motet style. Any other type of harmony was discouraged, even if it was indigenous, especially singing in thirds and sixths. Instrumental accompaniment was to be provided by rhythm instruments and movement severely limited to foot tapping. Otherwise, the song would be classified as a dance. According to Hyslop, dance did not deserve to be studied and was excluded from his workshops and from the festival.

Choirmasters were trained in preparation for the festival in order to raise performance standards. The objective of the inclusion of the African folk song was to promote respect for African music and to preserve African cultural heritage. The training by European trainers, on the other hand, included music theory from the Western perspective

¹³ Graham Hyslop, "Choice for Music for Festivals in Africa," pp. 53-55.

and encouraged the African choirmasters to learn solfa and staff notation so that they could learn the set pieces and also transcribe African songs, although it was acknowledged that this was a rather ambitious idea. In addition, choirmasters were taught to sing correctly, to train choirs, and to conduct. They were taught Western music history and Western music appreciation and were shown films on the instruments of the orchestra, voice of a choir, and music in Europe or America. They were encouraged to write song books of their traditional songs.

Not surprisingly, the African pieces were badly performed. According to one report, choirmasters conducted the African pieces and had to be discouraged from doing this, as their initial reaction:

was to fit indigenous words to a well known tune...
 [they] s[a]ng songs that were merely dance
 accompaniments... did not include African melody
 instruments... or any percussion... had no costumes...
 [and] stood still with their hands behind their backs
 while they s[a]ng¹⁴

The Kenya Music Festival Assessed

In order to discuss the Kenya Music Festival as a transformative agent, it is necessary to state that the festival is a government institution. At the same time, there are various agents and players in the transformation process. Since its inception, the participants in the festival have included the organizers, who have for the most part been affiliated with the education system. In reviewing newspaper articles, I found that radio and television first aired the festival as a children's program, or as an education class. This emphasizes the festival's role as an educator, and a replacement of the traditional music exposure in the education system. The organizers also state in the festival objectives their desire to propagate cultural heritage through the performances. At the educational level, most regional and provincial officers were co-

¹⁴Hugh Tracey, "Music at the Third Eisteddfod Bulawayo," *African Music* 1 no. 2 (1955): 60-61.

opted into the planning committees and money was allocated for the festival from the government's education funding.

The students and their teachers are the other players whose participation shapes the festival. They choose those festival activities they want to participate in, and their interpretation of festival rules sometimes causes both the introduction of some categories of competition, and the removal of others. The participants are manipulated by the system, but at the same time, they manipulate the system. Music teachers and educators also augment their power and interaction in the festival through adjudication, as they direct new understandings or reinforce old practices related to performances. Other adjudicators may include non-musicians or non-Kenyans who articulate their desires and hopes for the festival and therefore shape future trends.

The audience plays a fundamental role in expressing approval or disapproval either by their presence or absence, and by their comments. In some categories of competition, the audience is made up mainly of students and their teachers. In my own observation, this is the case for most set pieces. The other members of the audience who directly affect the festival are invited government officials whose comments sometimes shape future trends, as the general public seeks to look good in the eyes of the government.

Concerning the pieces and repertoire, there is little in the available literature about the European set pieces. My experience, however, as a participant and adjudicator, indicates that most of the winning schools have expatriate teachers who are familiar with the European tradition, or Kenyan teachers who have been enculturated into European traditions. The other teachers read the music and have trained at the various centers, but are not otherwise extensively exposed to European music and its practices to do it justice. As a result, the choirs generally receive higher marks in folk songs than in the European set pieces.

Henry Anyumba, in 1970, critiqued the assumption that the choir was the best medium for the performance of the folk song. Furthermore, he critiqued the limitations imposed on the songs and dances by the performance practices of school choirs and the

organizers, especially since the members were mostly school children.¹⁵ The folk songs were wrenched from their social setting and adapted for use on a concert platform. They were also separated from their normal performance practice in traditional society, not just functionally, but in prescribing accompanying instruments and movement; there was a difference between indigenous style of singing and the choir form. Furthermore, the members were expected to produce an "un-indigenous" tone color and blend.

As opposed to articulating what music is, the choir was being used to define what music should be in society. Movement was restricted, so that folk song movements based on some traditional models were substituted for the real thing. The prescription of a responsorial style limited the choices and misrepresented the variety of singing styles in the country. The stylized performance practice denied indigenous participation by the audience and denied spontaneous improvisation by the performers as in a traditional context. Paul Kavyu adds that sometimes the accompaniments were not indigenous to the group, for example, the drum had been used by very few groups in Kenya but there was a demand for it.¹⁶ In addition, some of the drum rhythms were badly synchronized with the song, as they were imposed rather than traditional. The idea of joining several songs together and contrasting them sometimes lead students to deceive the adjudicators by singing songs from two different cultures. If adjudicators were unfamiliar with the languages, they had no idea if different languages were being combined. Some of the adjoined songs could have been related rhythmically, but not contextually or textually, and in this case they misrepresented the ethnic group and its practices. Other criticisms focused on the adjudicators' preferences and understandings of some cultures that biased them towards specific song and performance styles.

The venue was unnatural for performance in the traditional context. Limited movements were sometimes changed from circular formations to single line files, as the main singer, who traditionally would have been in the middle of the circle, has to be seen by the

¹⁵ Owuor H. Anyumba, "Performing African Songs and Dances," *East Africa Journal*, 7 no. 4 (1970): 37-42.

¹⁶ Paul Kavyu, "Problems of African Music in Kenya Music Festivals," *Mila* 5 no. 2 (1974): 66-71.

audience or adjudicators. Movements on a wooden board, especially associated with foot rhythm articulation, were criticized for being too loud and had to be made softer. The movements were oversimplified in the name of the song, whereas sometimes, the dance provided impetus to the song or the song to dance. Tone color and vocal quality was criticized as being too African or too loud. Whereas a particular vocal production was acceptable in the open air, the closed room platform provided a new dimension and problem for the performers. Instrumental accompaniments were reduced to accommodate the venue so the whole traditional effect was lost. Instrumental interludes were avoided, as the emphasis was on song, and in this way the whole effect from the traditional context was lost.

Hyslop had already foreseen the importance of the adjudicator in formulating future trends in festival practices and performance.¹⁷ What he did not foresee was that the adjudicators would be limited by their language skills and that they would not be able to understand all that was sang in the folk song category. It was therefore impossible for them to verify that the paper they were given with the translation reflected the performance. The adjudicators may also have been limited by their ethnic background, exposure to music, knowledge of other cultures, and subjective stylistic preferences. Kavyu comments that when adjudicators judged a performance to be the best, the next year's festival would contain many elements that resembled the winning format of the previous year.¹⁸

The selection of the adjudicators was a crucial choice. Hyslop originally used examiners sent by the British Associated Board, who, in essence, had no respect or liking for African music. The preference of the adjudicators was such that at one point, only a few languages were represented in the festival, and particular types of songs from those ethnic groups were performed. One report states that some songs were repeated every year in Western Kenya along the same themes, so that every Luyia song was for mourning, every Kalenjin song for war, every

¹⁷ Graham Hyslop, "Kenya's Colony Music and Drama Officer," p. 39.

¹⁸ Kavyu, *op. cit.*

Luo song about beer drinking, as if these were the only activities of these three ethnic group.¹⁹

According to the festival rules, folk songs are "traditional songs... without a known definite composer."²⁰ As a participant in the festival, I remember our teacher making up several praise songs about individuals that he knew or current events and we were never disqualified from the festival, because the song was in traditional style. It was very hard to be an adjudicator in later political situations, when organizers insisted on having one first position and relegated a choir to second position on that basis, that particular context. This was especially problematic because in some cases, after adjudication was completed, the administrators engineered the promotion of one choir over another when moving from one stage to the next.

The Kenya Music Festival Redefined

The festival has come a long way in the last thirty years. At first, it was generally supported by the private sector and the participants. In 1969, it was taken over by the government and almost immediately changes began to take place regarding the number of participants. It is not clear when Oriental music began to feature, but in 1979 the number of participants in the Oriental classes rose to 2,000 and a whole section had to be set aside for them.²¹ The number of entries continued to expand each year, sometimes motivated by the number of participants as in the case of Oriental music, and sometimes as the festival saw the need. For example, in 1977, one class commonly referred to as the Open Choral class had an interesting development. Since this was an open class without age limit students could compete, and in this case, a student group was competing against their teachers. The students won. Socially, this was a disgrace to the teachers, yet at the same time, the teachers had no other alternative class to compete in.

¹⁹ KNA, "Festival Seeks New Songs," *The Standard* (Nairobi), 17 June 1974, p. 1.

²⁰ Kenya, Ministry of Education, *Kenya Music Festival Syllabus* (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1976, 1981, 1989, 1991-1994)

²¹ Nick Ayub, "High Standards at the Kenya Music Festival," *The Standard* (Nairobi), 13 July 1979, p. 15, and Nick Ayub, "Let's Sing a Song for President Moi," *The Standard* (Nairobi), June 15 1979, p.15.

As a result, the class was divided into two sections, one for teachers and one for students, but with a semi-professional requirement.

The Set Piece

The set piece, on the other hand, inspired some musicians to compose pieces in the style of these set pieces. A new class had to be created to accommodate the compositions. This group of music may have led to what is now known as patriotic songs. One way in which these songs were encouraged was through the sponsorship of bodies such as the Soil Conservation Movement which commissioned festival organizers to select a winning choir based on a given theme. The song is then adopted by the sponsoring body, and sometimes the choir is paid. Increased patriotic statements from the government also prompted the composition of patriotic songs, mainly in Swahili. Dealing with city themes and current affairs, simple and easily learned, accompanied by electronic instruments, these songs could easily be classified as the urban folk song. At first, some popular groups participated in the festival, but the government created a new venue for professional groups under the Ministry of Culture.

Musicians who compose in African languages were discouraged by adjudicators who were not sure if the music was really composed by the musicians or if it was a borrowed folk song. A new class was set up to accommodate compositions in African languages other than Kiswahili. The interesting thing about this class is that it is referred to as Adaptation of an African Folk Song, although many of the pieces are compositions in indigenous languages. It is also from these songs that new set pieces are selected. This provides an incentive for composers.

A pivotal year in the establishment of original compositions and adaptations as set pieces in the style of European arrangements was 1981. Ciira's 1981 report "Festival Comes Home" states:

'He promised to buy me, A bunch of blue Ribbons to tie up my bonnie brown hair.' This is what we used to sing in my primary school days as set pieces for the Kenya Music Festival. We had no brown hair, and our black hair needed no ribbons, nevertheless we sang. We also

s[an]g our African folk songs but in those days, no African song or African inspired song was a set piece... this year, six African compositions are set pieces.²²

Most of the compositions and arrangements were done by festival organizers. As such, they established a trend and set an example for other musicians to follow. Currently, there is a mixture of African arrangements and adaptations as well as standard "festival favorites."²³

The Folk Song

The folk song has become an ideological fixture in Kenyan music. The folk song style has tended to be static in performance, but it has forced the festival organizers to create new categories that better represent Kenyan understandings of folk music ideology by incorporating dance and instrumental accompaniment. This style has shifted focus to the communal aspect of music and seeks to portray dramatizations of life in the village where music in all its expressions: song, dance, and instruments, are integrated. Instrumental music is encouraged from a traditional viewpoint, for example, a fiddle player who sings and dances as in traditional context, and thus instruments have been added as accompaniment. The idea is expanded by some choirs who adopt the role of the singer with the instrumentalist serving as the lead. This is a more traditional African articulation. Movements have ceased to be just foot tapping, although they are still the worst representation because of the restrictions.

The folk song also serves as a repository of traditional songs that are now used as compositional models for the new African musician and composer. This has been incorporated in the festival under the Adaptation of Traditional Melody section. This may be the best way the folk song has been used as a conservatory, and at the same time, it ensures dynamism in the adaptability of folk song to changing musical and societal expectations. Most of the songs retain

²² Joyce Ciira, "Festival Comes Home," *The Standard* (Nairobi), 11 July 1981, p. 11.

²³ This refers to songs that are performed very often at the festival but may be distributed among different performance groups. For example, "I bought me a cat" was performed in 1984 by Upper Primary choir, then again in 1989 by the same group.

their original language and so can be traced to their original function even if the practice no longer lives. The texts are sometimes changed and adopted for use in political situations or religious meetings. This also shows a transfer of usage in the light of changing expectations and the adaptability of the folk song style to changing situations. The folk song adaptations are now also used as set pieces and arranged in the formats presented by the Western set pieces, as in the: ABA, Rondo, Theme and Variation, or Stanza with alternative harmonizations for each verse forms.

The Kenya Music Festival has created a separate song, dance and accompaniment category and has increased the time allotted for each performance that draws from the African folk song idea and presents a more realistic approach to music making in traditional society. In the 1980s, performers began to realize that there was less time to warm up the dancers by using song as in traditional contexts. A separate group of singers, therefore, began to be used while the dancers concentrated on the movement. This way the dancers can quickly get into the essence of the motion and communicate the singers' message through dance, and the trainers can better choreograph the movement. The festival organizers have also realized that dance is shaped by changing societal conditions and inter-cultural exchanges. New movements are borrowed from other cultures and selectively incorporated in routines in such a way that the syncretism is not obvious. The trainers, therefore, are becoming more aware of those elements that are easily compatible and using them effectively to develop new dance genres.

More recently (1993), the organizers have also realized that different dances cannot be judged on the same criteria. By grouping similar styles together in one class while separating those that are dynamically different, the organizers are structuring the competition to include such considerations. For example, groups that were originally pastoralists have similar types of movements that are different from groups that were subsistence farmers. For example, the Kalenjin group (composed of about 30 ethnicities) can compete against each other, while the Luyia and the Kisii, who have a different dance aesthetic from the Kalenjin group, but are more closely related to each other, are grouped together. The organizers are structuring the competition to

include such considerations by grouping similar styles together in one class, while separating those that are dynamically different. This of course has its problems, but it sends the message that every culture has its distinctive music but there are similarities based on former occupations and "culture clusters."

The Festival further seeks to promote ensemble playing of instruments divorced from singing in an effort to cultivate an instrumental genre. This can be seen to counteract the European orchestral section. Other classes derived from the group folk song include solo folk singing and the recognition of children's play songs for the very young as a category of their own.

European Section

With time, the European section has added all kinds of European vocal and instrumental solo and ensemble sections, including orchestra and Western dances. At first, the main competitors in this section were professional singers. With time, especially in the 1970s, students began to participate in large numbers and the festival was forced to adopt an age group limit. In examining the syllabi between 1976 and 1986, it becomes clear that participants in this group became more diversified. At first, there was a monopoly of a few schools, mostly run by the British. As the Kenyan government became more active and students from these schools became teachers at other centers, more schools began to participate. The festival itself provided educational opportunities for students to learn what was expected in a class and they were inspired to try and participate. In most cases they asked the festival officials for help with repertoire. For example, the festival included competition in a solo class for tenor voice. One year, 1980, there was a group of boys who registered for this class. Their repertoire, however, was the tenor lines of hymns, as that was their understanding of the concept "tenor." The adjudicators had to help them understand what was expected. As a result, the festival organizers provided set pieces for tenor voice. While this limits the wide range of tenor singing styles, it provided a starting point regarding repertoire. Unfortunately, it has become a standard procedure to provide these set pieces, so that variety is dictated from the festival office, rather than by

the participants. This sometimes makes the festival boring. With the expansion of music education in the late 70s and early 80s, participation in these European classes has intensified. Sometimes, students practice at the festival for their final exams which are held two months later.

The piano has been the most popular Western instrument at the festival. In this class, festival officials were also forced to adopt age group limits. For example, primary school beginners, who may have been 6 years old, were separated from secondary school beginners, who were fourteen years old. In the last three or four years, with changes in the education system, more students began to play the recorder. At first students selected their own pieces, but the levels of the various students was very diverse, so the class was divided into beginners, intermediate and more advanced. This did not solve the problem though, as many students were only familiar with their exam repertoire and used the festival as a training ground before their exams. The festival, therefore, had to assign set pieces for these classes. In this way, the need dictated the creation of a class. As the number of participants grew, the festival was forced to legitimize the class by assigning a set piece.

The African Section

Since independence, additional classes have been added to the African section. The most prominent newer classes include the African vocal and instrumental solo and ensemble sections that are counterparts to the European section. These are some of the most difficult classes to adjudicate as it is mainly the creativity of teachers who seek ways to integrate or synthesize instruments that traditionally were not in the same ensemble, even if they belonged to the same culture. Yet every year, the class expands as musicians seek to create new ways to express themselves in a changing society.

Musicians are encouraged to try and play African instruments as solo instruments. One of the most boring and controversial classes to participate in and adjudicate in is the Aerophone class. Horns are grouped with flutes. Some of the horns traditionally produce only one note. It is difficult to compare a competitor that does circular breathing and holds a note for three minutes on a horn with a player of a transverse flute who has several melodic motifs. Here again, the

organizers have to be consulted. It is an effort to develop the repertoire of traditional instruments, but this particular class has too much decontextualization in the name of development. The string instruments, on the other hand, have very interesting contrasts.

In addition, the festival officials encourage participants to experiment by using alternative playing techniques and contrasting them with traditional styles. In this class, the participants almost always accompany themselves with song or with other instruments. It is usually quite a big debate when adjudicating, especially since the officials allow for piano accompaniment with the European solo instruments. Some African instruments may have a solo role, but they are played with accompanying instruments. The festival officials have had to grapple with the discrepancy of allowing European songs and solo instruments to be accompanied with other instruments and denying African instrumentalists that right, especially when it is within traditional practice. The officials also experience difficulty, because dance is also included, and yet there is a separate dance class.

The festival has greatly expanded its horizons either in response to needs, or as an incentive to creativity. It still has a long way to go and many mistakes are made. Adjudicators may encourage one thing one year and another set of adjudicators in another year say the opposite. This tends to play on the morale of participants. There was a case in 1990 when an adjudicator advocated for contemporizing some baroque pieces. He argued that the pieces are relevant today and should be interpreted in the light of current vocal timbres and music practice. The next year, a medievalist was adjudicating and really put down the choirs for "Kenyanizing" British songs. He wanted the singers to capture the spirit of the composers in the time the pieces were written. Many people were confused to such an extent that there was a recommendation that there be an adjudicators workshop to ensure a consensus of opinion. This worked well, except some of the adjudicators at the lower levels were choir masters at other levels and used this information to gain advantage over non-adjudicating choir trainers.

This African section is reinforced through other competitions apart from the Music Festival. According to Gichingiri Ndigirigi, the School's Drama Festival began to incorporate a dance section in

1981.²⁴ Prior to this, Obura reported that the drama festival which had originally had been set up to explore and expand play acting and identify potential artists, had merely presented plays that had been adopted from the founding father's English traditions, but later incorporated African plays.²⁵ The Festival planners decided to incorporate African dance, as this was viewed as dramatic action. In this case, the participants found it easier to enact traditional situations and present in dramatic form, some traditional situations of which dance was a propellant force. This approach differed from that of the Music Festival whose principal objective was to present dance as a musical art. The result has been increased creativity in both festivals. The Drama Festival usually takes place in March/April. Current trends indicate that when teachers have no time to rehearse with students, they simply adapt their presentations at the Drama Festival to suit the requirements of the Music Festival. On the other hand, students and their trainers get a chance to change aspects of the drama based on comments from the Drama Festival and adapt their dances for the Music Festival's specifications.

Conclusion

It is impossible, within the limits of this paper, to touch on all aspects of the Kenya Music Festival's transformation, and the ways in which it has transformed music practice within the Kenyan education system. The Festival serves as an artistic, creative, lyric, and dramatic institution. It helps to revive folk and cultural values, and provide a sense of History. It is possible by chronologically studying the contents of some of the compositions and folk songs to recreate important events in the lives of the people. It educates the young. The expansion of the festival shows how it has come to articulate African values, yet reflect modernity.

The participants are mainly school children. Through the festival, the students learn about the diverse and rich Kenyan cultural

²⁴ Gichingiri Ndigirigi, Personal Interview with the Author, 20 May 1994.

²⁵ Oluoch Obura, "Struggle for a Theoretical Identity: The Decade of the 60's and 70's," Unpublished paper presented at the Literature Congress in Nairobi, 1984.

heritage. Organizers and adjudicators are seminal in transforming the image and content of the festival. Since these two are affiliated with the Education institution, what they advocate, or where they place importance is reflected in future activities in the countries. As Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has stated, the mind is being decolonized. The Festival is one place that allows for such a process. Evidence and reiteration of this factor is in the establishment of a separate Music Festival for the older population, who would like to contribute to statements about cultural creativity and continuity. At first this group was given a few categories in classes referred to as "open" classes. But participation in these classes sometimes included students who were forced to compete against their teachers or parents. Eventually, separate classes were created with age as a defining factor. The number of participants in these classes forced the organizers and the government to create a separate festival which is held in September and October, one of the busiest time for the students. Further expansions of the festivals are seen in dance competitions organized by private individuals and Church music festivals organized by various denominations. The Festival is still in process.