

West African Drumming and Dance in North American Universities: An Ethnomusicological Perspective. George Worlasi Kwasi Dor. 2014. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 60 b&w photographs, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index, 304 pp.

World music and dance ensembles have long held a special place in the North American academy. Their existence has indisputably shaped major developments in the field of ethnomusicology, be it through determining competent candidacy for teaching positions, informing one's choice for a graduate school institution, or serving as spaces for experiential learning. Their presence has also sparked important theoretical debates; for instance, ones that have problematized notions of authenticity, classicization, exoticism, identity, and localization, among other themes. In spite of their importance, world music and dance ensembles have received minimal attention as topics for scholarly inquiry. George Worlasi Kwasi Dor's *West African Drumming and Dance in North American Universities: An Ethnomusicological Perspective* builds on existing limited work on the subject (see Solis 2004). Drawing on his personal experience as an ensemble director and his many years of ethnographic and secondary research, he examines the history and practice of West African drumming and dance in North American universities.

Dor dedicates two chapters to the historical transportation of drumming and dance practices from the continent of Africa to its diaspora. Chapter 1, "Historical Overview of West African Drumming and Dance in North America: From the Period of Slavery (1619-1863) until the Early 1960s," examines the reinvention and revitalization of West African drumming and dance traditions during and after slavery, respectively. The chapter points out specific individuals who contributed to the rebirth of these traditions in North America, mainly through immigration and the founding of performing groups or institutions. This development followed the suppression of the drumming and dance traditions during slavery and their limited presence after the abolition of slavery. The narrative of this chapter maintains originality while synthesizing views from many historical sources. Dor's first-person narrative at the end of the chapter conveys his immersion in and authority on the chapter's as well as book's subject.

Chapter 1 serves as a backdrop to the sixth chapter, "A Transplanted Musical Practice Flourishing in the African Diaspora," which focuses on the "music subculture" (190) that West African drumming and dance practices have established on and beyond American university campuses. Many elements of this "subculture" receive Dor's attention, and his discussion highlights not only the vibrancy of the "subculture" but its position as a living manifestation of North America's support for and participation in African musical expression. The discussion of musical transplantation is very rich and compelling, but it could have explored some sonic aspects (rhythms, time lines, etc.) of specific music and dance genres. In addition, an elaborate discussion of popular music ensembles featuring "traditional" African drumming and dance might have enhanced Dor's comments on accessibility, particularly the topic of generational gaps and musical tastes in the diaspora.

Chapters 1 and 6 evoke many themes featured in the seventh and closing chapter, “World Music and Globalization: West African Drum-Dance Ensembles.” Focusing on the impact of globalization on African drumming and dance practices, Dor utilizes the term “global soundscape” (226) to conceptualize how individuals and communities from different locations around the globe have kept West African drumming and dance traditions active in the diaspora. Music scholars will find the Chapter’s documentation of different ways through which people globally engage with West African drumming and dance enlightening. Such ways include academic courses, performances and festivities, ensemble tours, exhibitions or demonstrations, research and writing, study abroad programs, and use of African models (227- 238). The aforementioned three chapters collectively reaffirm the ability of West African drumming and dance traditions to articulate the historical connection between the subcontinent and its diaspora.

Various aspects of West African drumming and dance in the North American academy receive the author’s attention in the second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters. Chapter 2, “Selected University Ensembles: History, Resources, Repertoire, Teaching, Learning, Performance(s), and Reception,” describes and analyzes information on major university programs that feature performing ensembles in the United States and Canada. Dor highlights commonalities across these ensembles while carefully underlining the uniqueness of each. Though not comprehensive, the chapter is a great resource for information about West African drumming and dance ensembles at major North American universities. The facts, history, personal commentaries, and perspectives (from an enlightened author) presented in this chapter draw our attention to important details about these performing groups. Similar to Chapter 6, the chapter could have featured some musical analysis of selected repertoire.

Dor dedicates Chapter 3, “Pedagogical Approaches of Dance Drumming Instructors,” to different ways through which instructors and ensemble directors or “implementers” (98) transmit knowledge about West African drumming and dance. His views on how “the problem of the ‘outsider-insider’ binarisms” (119) impacts pedagogy evoke unresolved theoretical debates that ethnomusicologists have grappled with for decades. The chapter offers some examples of pedagogical approaches, including drumming-dance reciprocity, oral and aural transmission, selected repertoire, and flexibility (104-115), leaving room for discussing many more approaches. For instance, peer teaching and decentralized learning, both of which are common in university settings, barely receive attention.

Chapter 4, “The Impact of West African Drumming and Dance on the Participating Student,” draws on student surveys about their course experiences to examine academic and non-academic benefits of ensembles or performance classes in the academy. The chapter details some of the benefits that university ensembles offer to students: “multi-musicality,” career development, multicultural awareness, and development of interactive skills (132-145). Dor’s discussion is eye-opening but limited in scope. One could write an entire book on how the communal, collaborative, interactive, and experiential learning involved in running African music and dance ensembles

or performance classes enrich students' lives beyond introducing them to unfamiliar performance techniques and cultural practices.

Dor turns to administrative and directorship aspects of ensembles in Chapter 5, which he titles "Path-finding Agency of Administrators and Ensemble Directors." The chapter sheds some fresh light on the responsibility and agency of administrators and ensemble directors, challenging the latter to discover opportunities for innovation and advancement and reasserting their ability to influence and transform performance activities at their institutions and beyond. As director of the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) African Drum Dance Ensemble, his observations and opinions about the role of administrative and directorship agency in shaping identities of ensembles hold value that may only be gained through firsthand experience and knowledge. Scholars and departments offering or considering developing world music ensembles within their curriculums will find these four chapters very informative and inspiring.

Overall, Dor, in *West African Drumming and Dance in North American Universities: An Ethnomusicological Perspective*, does an excellent job of studying an important but unexplored subject. As an ethnographic, theoretical, and methodological resource, the work is unmatched and has relevance to contemporary ethnomusicology and related fields. Scholars, ensemble directors, and administrators will find the book useful. The book opens avenues to further exploration of its subject and presents insightful ideas upon which to expand. Indeed, it lays the groundwork for thought-provoking commentary and future research.

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References

Solis, Ted, ed.

2004 *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

East African Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization. Mwenda Ntarangwi. 2009. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. appendix, glossary, index, 176 pp.

The theoretical framework of this book is the study of hip hop in Eastern Africa as a tool of agency and subjectivity to illustrate the social issues affecting the youth. More specifically, Ntarangwi touches on how hip hop artists express social themes such as: African identity, economic policies, political establishment, education, poverty or health. Thus, the author explains the impact of globalisation and how neoliberalism has affected hip hop by shaping the collective and individual experience in Eastern Africa. Ntarangwi examines the impact of hip hop by interviewing artists, attending live performances, and studying the lyrics of hip hop artists from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.