The music of Africa is so different from our own music that we are unable to appreciate it until we know where that difference lies and therefore what to listen for. It is no use listening for the harmonies based upon the triads of the major and minor scales when listening to African music. Similarities there are, particularly in the melodic aspect of music. Neither European nor African music is characterised by a high development of melody, such as we find in the rich melodic ornamentation of Indian music. The Indian scale is arranged into a large number of modes (as against our two modes, major and minor) and the octave is divided into 24 quarter-tones (as against our 12 semi-tones), and this gives full scope to the flair for ornamentation to be found not only in the music of India, but also in the wonderful weaving and in other aspects of culture. The intricate patterns of a carpet are analogous to the melodic embellishments of a song; and think of the dome of a Hindu temple.

The ancient Greeks were also melody-makers. They had no harmony, and yet without it Orpheus could draw iron tears down Pluto's cheek. Music was the finest of the arts, and this high development was along the line of melody, as the large number of modes indicates, each with its own ethos, gay, lyrical, sad, restful and so on. These modes were still in use in the Christian Church during the Dark Ages, when the world was musically imprisoned within the pentatonic scale, but the melodic ornamentation of classical antiquity was considered too frivolous for religious use, and this was prohibited by papal decree. From here the development of European music is along the lines of polyphony, the simultaneous singing of different lines of melody rather than the flowery embellishment of a single melodic line; and we can trace the same development in the music of Africa.

Here, in Africa, melodic invention is limited by the use of the primitive pentatonic scale, and also by the fact that African languages are tone languages. To take this point first, a tone language is one in which every syllable bears a predetermined tone. If you want to sing "I loved her", in Zulu, you must sing just as you say "Ngiyithandile", for if you say or sing "Ngiyithandile" you will be wasting your emotions on winding a piece of string! Furthermore, the intonation of a Zulu sentence is always from high to low, and this must also be maintained in singing, just as every syllable within the sentence must receive its correct tone. This song illustrates the point very well. It is a love song sung by Princess Constance Magogo, daughter of Dinizulu and mother of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. I know her well, a charming woman of great dignity, and I have heard her sing this song several times, accompanying herself on the Zulu musical bow known as umgubu. This bow has a calabash resonator at the lower end, and it is played by holding this resonator against the body and tapping the string with a reed. It has two notes (plus harmonics), one with the open string and one when the string is pinched by the fingers. It is rather rare nowadays. The common type of Zulu musical bow is the makhwenyana, which has the calabash resonator in the middle. At this point the string is tied back to the stave, so that there are three notes, the upper string, the lower string, and when the lower string is stopped. A word about this song: a political marriage was arranged between Magogo, Dinizulu's daughter, and the chief of the large Buthelezi tribe. Fortunately she fell very much in love with her husband, and composed this song...
which she still sings, although he has been dead for many years. The song illustrates clearly the way in which the melody is in the straight-jacket of speech; the high-to-low intonation of the sentence and the correct tones of the syllables within the sentence. (1 See Key).

To return to the pentatonic scale, the other limiting factor in the development of melody. The octave is the basic interval in music, as the upper note is twice as high (in European music) or twice as small (in African music) as the lower note, that is, it has twice as many vibrations per second. Within the octave, the only natural musical intervals are the 4th and the 5th. The 5th has 1 ½ times as many vibrations and the 4th 1 ¾. The pentatonic scale recognises the 4th and the 5th as dominant notes, and in between the lower note and the 4th, the 5th and the upper note, there are passing notes, not fixed in pitch, which are used only in passing and not as essential notes in melody-making. In European music we still talk about the perfect 4th and the perfect 5th, even though these intervals sound anything but perfect to our ears; we have grown so accustomed to the imperfect intervals of the 3rd and the 6th.

In most South African music melodic invention is confined to the pentatonic scale, and we therefore find very simple melodies, repeated over and over again. In this song the woman uses the dominant notes, except for one slight variation. It is a pounding song from Mozambique, and you can hear the sound of mortar and pestle very clearly. (2)

In this next song the woman uses the passing notes as well as the dominant notes. It is a Xhosa lullaby sung by uqogo (grannie), and another old grannie joins in from time to time. (3)

And now we have a Zulu herdboy accompanying himself on the makhwwenyana musical bow. Notice how much higher and lighter it is in tone than the somewhat sombre uqibu musical bow of Princess Magogo. This song illustrates a more elaborate use of the pentatonic scale. It is called “Sawubona” (4)

Not all African tribes suffer from the limitations of the pentatonic scale. The more musically developed tribes of Central Africa have evolved some sort of seven-note scale with fixed intervals, and we therefore expect to find a greater development of melody. In this Lala song from Northern Rhodesia the man accompanies himself on the mbira. This instrument is sometimes known as the hand piano. It consists of a small slab of wood to which is attached a number of metal tongues, and it is played by plucking these tongues with the fingers. The singer uses a heptatonic scale, and the mbira is tuned to the same scale. (5)

This limitation in the development of melody constitutes a similarity between European and African music, and because of this similarity, so it seems to me, African music is developing along the same lines as European music in the Middle Ages: the treatment of melody takes the turning to polyphony. Let me illustrate this parallel development.

In Europe plainsong was sung at first in unison, and later in parallel 4ths and 5ths. This so-called ‘organum’, the singing of 4ths and 5ths in parallel motion, is not polyphony, as all voices sing the same melody, starting and finishing at the same time. Such singing is common in Africa. In this Swazi song, sung by five girls of the queen mother’s village at Mbabane, the chorus sings in parallel motion of 5ths. The song was composed during the second world war, and they sing, “Whenever a girl falls in love, her young man is taken away to go to the war”. (6)

There are some Central African tribes where we find singing in parallel motion of thirds instead of fourths and fifths. This is musically something quite different, for we find that this singing of 3rds in parallel motion involves sometimes an interval of four semitones (which we call a major third) and sometimes an interval of three semitones (which we call a minor third), due to the fact that the third is not a natural interval,
and the lower voice is therefore no longer singing exactly the same melody as the upper
voice. Here lies the seed of harmony; but it has not germinated in Africa. This need not
surprise us, for we discovered the 3rd in the 13th Century, and yet it was not till the
16th Century that we started to see the possibilities of this seed, which we brought to
full flower in the 18th Century. The harmonic triads of the major and minor scales are
built upon the 3rd, which therefore lies at the core of the wonderful system of harmony
that is Europe’s great contribution to the art of music. To return to Africa, this song
illustrates singing in parallel motion of 3rds. It is sung by a group of men of the Aushi
tribe to celebrate, says Hugh Tracey, the departure of a boy to the Copper Belt. It is
don’t encouraging: it simply tells him how terribly frightened he is going to be.  
(6b)

In Europe the parallel motion of the 10th Century gradually developed into the
contrary motion of the 12th Century. This is polyphony, the simultaneous singing of
different melodies. The beginnings of polyphony are to be found in antiphonal singing,
when the chorus starts before the solo has finished and the overlap of the last part
of the solo with the first part of the chorus is necessarily in contrary motion. At first
only the perfect intervals of the 4th and 5th are allowed to coincide, but it is inevitable
that 3rds and 6ths arise as the use of contrary motion develops. The chorus is simply
an imitation of the solo, perhaps with some slight variation. In this recording of Pondo
party-songs, the solo and the chorus sing without overlapping in the first song and with
overlapping in the second, resulting in a simple sort of polyphony. (7)

In European music the highest development of this antiphonal type of singing is
the religious ‘canon’ or the secular ‘round’, where two or three or four voices sing the
same melody one after the other, each with a different starting point. As far as I know,
there are no rounds in South African music, probably because the melodies are so short.
The melody is never anything more than a simple theme, repeated over and over again,
with a variation creeping in from time to time. Let me illustrate this point. Here are
two solo songs with self-accompaniment by the singer. The first is from Mozambique,
sung by a Shangana man. He accompanies himself on the mbira, which is unusual as
this instrument is not normally found so far South. Hugh Tracey records that the
performer had learnt to play it by borrowing from the neighbouring Ndau tribe, which
belongs to the Shona group of Southern Rhodesia. The theme may be described as
‘a b a’, i.e. two ‘a’ phrases joined by the ‘b’ phrase, which the singer sometimes omits.
This theme is repeated over and over again. (7b). The second song is by a Xhosa woman,
accompanying herself on the ibadl musical bow, which corresponds to the Zulu
ugubu. This song is interesting in that it has two themes: the first may be described as “a a a”,
and the second as “b1 b2, b1 b2”. These two themes are repeated in alternation with
one another. (7c)

Antiphony is a characteristic of African music, and there are many variations of
this type of singing. The chorus is not always simply an imitation of the solo; it sometimes
gives a choral comment to the solo. This may be a musical phrase repeated as a refrain
to the solo, as in this sophisticated song recorded in Nyasland by a group of men of the
Tumbuka tribe. It is called ‘Kayuni’, (the long-tailed widow-bird), and describes the
difficulty the bird has in balancing itself on a perch. The humour of the song is infectious,
even although we do not know the language; and listen to the affection in the leader’s
voice as he sings “Kayuni, kayuni”. (8)

Sometimes the antiphony is between two solos or between two choruses. Anti­
phonal singing between two choruses is found when men and women sing together.
These two wedding songs, Zulu and Baca, bring me back to my original point, as they
illustrate so well the origin of polyphony in antiphonal singing. In the Zulu song the
leader states the theme to be taken up by the women, and the men answer with a con­
trasting theme. When the women take up the theme, the men state this contrasting
theme not only in answer but also while the women are singing. The two themes are
here in contrary motion in such a way that only 4ths and 5ths arise in harmony. (9)
In the Baca song, where the contrary motion is more developed, the intervals of the 3rd and the 6th arise in harmony, as well as 4ths and 5ths. The Baca fled from Zululand over a hundred years ago to escape from Shaka, and since then they have been in close contact with Xhosas and missionaries, as is reflected in their singing. This song is altogether more attractive. (10)

African music is polyphonic. The harmony that arises as a result of contrary motion is incidental to the horizontal flow of melody, and there is no notion of enriching the melody by harmony. European music was at this same stage in the Middle Ages. And there is another similarity; African music is predominantly a vocal art, and the rhythm is determined by the words. Plainsong has no metrical rhythm; the rhythm is determined by the natural stresses of the words in the sentence. You may have noticed this in the love-song sung by Princess Magogo, but you may not have noticed the way she taps the string of her bow in measured time while she sings the song in free time. The Zulu herdboy does the same. Time is measured in African music, even in the simplest song. In this Xhosa party-song the chorus of women are singing in free time but clapping to a regular rhythm. To us it seems that the singing is punctuated by claps in the most impossible places, and yet the free time of the singing is tied to this regular rhythm in some elusive way, and the claps are the backbone of the song. (11)

Singing in regular rhythm is also practised, as in this Pondo party-song, where the women are singing and clapping 'in time' in the European sense, but note the syncopation, so typical of African music, between the singing and the clapping. (12) Even here, however, the words are never subjected to the regular rhythm of the accompaniment so that they become distorted. They are allowed to overlap a little from time to time with the rhythm of the accompaniment, to become 'out of time' in the European sense, in the interests of the words. To illustrate this point I am going to play a song by a Zulu girl, accompanying herself on the makhwenyana musical bow. The song has a pathetic title, "Akasangibaleli", "He no longer writes to me". The boy has gone off to work in the town, and the girl is left behind. He no longer writes to her, and she no longer knows whether or not he loves her. (13)

In Europe, as polyphony grew in complexity, it became necessary to fix the time and measure it into bars of equal length. Once rhythm was set by regular metre, polyphony was able to soar to the heights of counterpoint. But in the concentration upon the polyphonic treatment of melody, it was forgotten that rhythm also has its possibilities. In Africa melody and rhythm have developed hand in hand, and African music is polyphonic in both respects, both as to melody and as to rhythm. Here lies the great dissimilarity between African music and European music. I have dealt with melodic polyphony. Now I want to deal with rhythmic polyphony.

The seed of rhythmic polyphony seems to me to lie in the practice of playing or clapping duple time against triple time. It is common in European music to play three to a bar against two to a bar, but this seed has never germinated because we assume that the bar-lines of the two parts must coincide. In African music clapping three against two is a common accompaniment to a song, but this kind of clapping does not develop beyond this point because there is always the main beat where both groups of clappers coincide, as in European music. This clapping rhythm is therefore not so strange to us. It is drumming rhythm that we find so bewildering.

If we had to combine these two rhythms,
we would do it like this:

But an African drummer would not do it like that. The main beat of the second rhythm would fall either on the second beat of the first rhythm:

or on the third beat of the first rhythm:

This technique of crossing the beats is fundamental in African drumming.

These are very simple rhythmic phrases, such as we are accustomed to in our own music, and they may be barred into equal units of three quavers. But it is often impossible to give an African rhythmic phrase a time signature like $3/8$ or $2/4$ or $3/4$, when it is too irregular from the European point of view, with its points of emphasis too unequally spaced. Many African rhythmic phrases may be counted to twelve pulses, and where these phrases cannot be divided into bars of equal length, this unit of twelve pulses has to suffice as the unit of musical time. I am going to beat out a rhythmic phrase that seems to be found in most parts of Africa. Its points of emphasis in this unit of twelve pulses are $1 . 3 . 5 . . . 8 . 10 . . . (a)$, or $1 . 3 . . . 6 . 8 . 10 . . . (b)$.

Just as the melodic phrase is repeated over and over again in African music, so is the rhythmic phrase. Here is a rainsong from the Tonga tribe of Northern Rhodesia to illustrate this particular rhythmic phrase, here used to measure the time of a song in free time. It is beaten out by two sticks, and the song is accompanied by a musical bow. (14)

The next record illustrates several varieties of rhythmic phrase very well. The tribe is the Ngoni of Nyasaland, and it is an offshoot of the Nguni group which inhabits the South East coast of Africa, including the Zulu and Xhosa. In the early days of Zulu history, the Ndwindwe tribe in Northern Zululand was top tribe, and its defeat by Shaka was perhaps the most momentous event of that time. The tribe was disrupted, and one party trekked up through Mozambique and Rhodesia to become the Ngoni of Nyasaland. The Zulu origin of this tribe, even after almost a hundred and fifty years, is obvious from the way they sing this song. (15)

The next song is sung by women, and Hugh Tracey makes an interesting note:

"These women are Ngoni, but they are singing in Nsenga, the language of their forebears. The singing of the Ngoni is especially interesting for the fact that they
sing in two distinct styles, that of the Ngoni, their fathers’ tribe, and that of their mothers’ tribes who were conquered by the Ngoni. Both strains are still clearly defined after nearly a century of integration”.

This shrill nasal style of singing is not at all Zulu. The song is sung in free time to a regular rhythm of clapping. The rhythmic phrase is most interesting. To me its points of emphasis in the unit of twelve pulses seem to be 1 . 3 . 5 . . 8 . 9 . 11 . , to us a very difficult rhythm. (16)*

The next two songs are sung by men in the Ngoni-Zulu style of singing, and the rhythm is beaten out by stamping with leg rattles. The singing is also interesting. It is antiphonal, and the chorus joins in while the soloist is still singing, in such a way that the contrary motion uses only the perfect intervals of the 4th and the 5th. The phrase of the first song is 1 2 . 4 . 5 . 7 . 9 . 11 . , and that of the second song 1 2 . 4 . 6 . 7 . 9 . 11 . . (17)

The last song I want to play you from this record is interesting in that the melody and the rhythm are in unison with one another, as in European music. However, this simplicity has to be relieved from time to time by rhythmic variations. Notice the singing in parallel motion of 4ths and 5ths. Here again the relationship between Ngoni and Zulu is evident. Music is not a highlight of Zulu culture, but they do know how to stamp. (18)

The drum is often taken as the symbol of Africa, and rightly so, for it is not only the basic instrument for singing and dancing, and, with the xylophone, the most highly developed in construction and in techniques of performance, but it is also of great ritual and ceremonial significance. There are the tribal drums which are sounded in times of danger, in war to mobilise the men, and in drought to bring the rain. There are the drums for use at initiation ceremonies. The python dance of the Venda female puberty rite is danced to the drums. Sex instruction is given against the background of the drums, so that sex matters in Venda are referred to as “d^ingoma”, the drums. The drum is not a feature of Zulu life, but even here some sort of drum is used at ceremonies. The skin of the goat killed at an initiation rite is stretched over a pot, and this is the only type of drum indigenous to the Zulu. It is played by drawing the hands down a reed held vertically in the centre, and this friction causes a sort of roaring. The time I saw this friction drum made and played, the woman steadied the bamboo reed against the shoulder and played the drum to the accompaniment of a lot of splashing of water necessary to cause the friction. Although this instrument is used to accompany the obscene songs that are sung on these occasions, its significance is ritual rather than musical. But it is in Central Africa that the drum comes into its own. It is a carefully constructed musical instrument, consisting of a wooden resonator covered by a head of hide, and there are many different types.

Let me now quote Father Jones, the great authority on African rhythm. Here are the four drum rhythms of a Bamba dance:

```
1. |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
J  |
According to Father Jones, they are combined as follows: the first drum starts. The second drum enters so that its main beat falls on the second beat of the first drum, and the third drum so that its main beat falls on the third beat of the second drum, and coincides with the main beat of the first drum. As Father Jones says, "the main beat of the second drum is crossed with the others. This produces a thrill in the listener; for he can either listen to the main beat of the first and third drums, in which case the beating of the second drum clashes right across it; or he can fix his attention on the main beat of the second drum, in which case the main beats of the first and third drums form a strong cross-rhythm which clamours for recognition and is very stimulating. In fact these cross-rhythms have an effect upon the African which it is hard to describe; all we can say is that they are quite intoxicating; they make every muscle in the body clamour for dancing." Then the fourth drum enters, so that its main beat coincides with the main beat of the second drum and crosses with the first and third drums. The rhythm of this drum is a mixture of triple and duple groups. (See figure) To quote again Father Jones: "Now as all the other drums have rhythms of triple groups, when the fourth drum crashes across them with its duple groups, the effect is indescribably thrilling!" This is not all. Then the clapping starts, three against two, with the two groups in time with one another, but in cross rhythm with the drums. Then the singing, then the dancing. This is the African dance, "the flower of his musical genius and the full expression of his aesthetic sense", as Father Jones says.

From this analysis the principles of African drumming emerge. Each drum has its own rhythm, and the points of entry are staggered so that the different rhythms are crossed against one another. There are more ingredients to this complexity than this: not only does each drum have its own distinctive timbre, but also its own techniques of performance to give variations of pitch, depending upon how it is held and how it is beaten, with the palm of the hand, with the fingers or with the tips of the fingers, or with a stick. These variations of pitch, when used to imitate the variations of pitch used in speech—and remember that African languages are tone languages—enable the drums to speak. Here in this record, a man interprets a message, which the drum beats out vibrating through the Congo forest. (19)

Now listen to some examples of African rhythm. I am going to play the first part only of two dances from the Lala of Northern Rhodesia, so that you can hear the nature of rhythmic polyphony. (20)

The next record is from the Tonga of the Zambezi valley. It is a funeral dance with an ensemble of drums and horns. Each horn has one note, which it interpolates at the appropriate place. This method of playing flutes and horns is found in many parts of Africa, which is partly the reason why I play this record. The main reason is the cross-rhythms of the drums. (21)

The syncopation that we regard as so characteristic of African rhythm is due to the complexities of rhythmic polyphony and the rhythmic phrases that are used. There is far more to it than merely missing a beat here and there. But there is another factor: every beating movement is twofold: tension and release. We measure musical time by the release, by the beat we hear; the African by the tension, by the beat he feels. This is why he so often claps and stamps and beats time on the 'off-beat', as it is to us. In the dancing of the 'Kwela' the main beat is marked by tension and the off-beat by release and movement. We say that the 'Kwela' is danced 'all on the off-beat', but tension is the main beat and the off-beat is release.

The xylophone is a percussion instrument that is also capable of melody. Whereas the drum can only have two or three notes at the most, very close together in pitch, the xylophone may have a large number of notes spread out over more than an octave. Among the Central African tribes, the xylophone is as highly developed as the drum, but it has not the same prestige, as the drum is both a ritual and a musical instrument.
The construction of the xylophone requires a high degree of musical craftsmanship, for not only has each slab of wood to be tuned to fit into the scale, but it also has to be resonated underneath by a calabash of exactly the same frequency of vibrations. The xylophone is beaten by rubber-headed sticks, and, African music being polyphonic in both melodic and rhythmic aspects, the two hands play contrasting melodies and rhythms. The average pianist can manage contrasting melodies, but as to contrasting rhythms, three against two is the most that he can manage, which is the simplest contrast that African music allows. The Chopi of Mozambique have concentrated on the xylophone, and they are famous for their great xylophone orchestras. Here is an example of an orchestra of fifteen xylophones, with rattles. (22)

To my mind Chopi music emphasises the xylophone at the expense of the drum, and at the expense of the singing and drumming that are the ingredients of African music. The records that I am going to play now represent, in my opinion, the highest development of African music, an amazing and exciting combination of melodic and rhythmic polyphony. The first piece of music is performed by an ensemble of two xylophones, one bass drum and three goblet drums, hand beaten, to accompany the ceremonial procession of a chief. It was recorded in the Congo. (23)

The second piece of music is performed by an ensemble of three conical drums, one friction drum (which is clearly audible—a booming, roaring sort of noise), one xylophone (which enters by means of off-beat taps to get the rhythm), and rattles. It is the accompaniment to the muzemvu dance, which Hugh Tracey describes as “a popular entertainment in the Zambezi valley”. (24)

Finally we have two dances from the Luba tribe of the Congo. The music is excellent. In the first piece there are two xylophones and two drums, and the wonderful polyphony of melody and rhythm is easy to hear. The singing is very good as well; it is altogether an outstanding piece of music. (25)

In the second piece the component parts of the ensemble are mbiras and flutes; no drums, except for the tapping of a stick against a calabash. It is just as attractive.

And what of the present? In the melodic aspect of music Africa is at the stage where Europe was in the Middle Ages. Unisonic singing in parallel motion is found side by side with polyphonic singing in contrary motion. The pentatonic scales with their natural intervals of the 4th and the 5th are found side by side with heptatonic scales and artificial intervals, and with modern town music, where European scales and harmonies are used.

The guitar is so ubiquitous in Africa that it can almost be regarded now as an African instrument. This song is a quartette sung by men of the Bemba tribe of Northern Rhodesia to the accompaniment of a guitar. (26)

But in the realm of rhythm, there is a danger that the African may take over the European system of rhythm together with the rest of Western civilisation, and forget the sophisticated art of his forefathers. This is the modern version of the Central African dance—a Xhosa dance-band, the ‘Midnight Stars’. The rhythm is unisonic throughout, and notice how the words are distorted to fit the rhythm. (27) Can that compare in musicianship to this, the record I am going to play in conclusion: a Congo dance, with its well-developed polyphony of melody and rhythm, its singing and dancing, its excitement, its spirit of Africa? (28)
**KEY**

The references are to records in the *Sound of Africa* series of the International Library of African Music.

2. 1.B.1. Tonga (Hlanganu) Pounding song, Mozambique.
5. 21.B.6. Lala song, Northern Rhodesia.
6b. 19.B.1. Aushi, Northern Rhodesia.
7c. 13.B.2. Xhosa woman, South Africa.
12. 33.B.1. Pondo party song, South Africa.
14. 41.B.3. Tonga rain song, Northern Rhodesia.
20. 14.B.1 & 3. Lala drums, Northern Rhodesia.
21. 41.A.8. Funeral dance, Tonga, Northern Rhodesia.
25. 35.A.3 & 5. Luba dances, Congo.
26. 23.A.5. Quartette and guitar, Bemba, Northern Rhodesia.
27. 27.B.3. Dance band, Xhosa, South Africa.
28. 15.A.5. Conclusion, Kanyoka dance, Congo.