

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *African Music*, Volume 9, Number 1 (2011) is extraordinary in the history of this journal, in part due to its extraordinary length and in part due to its extraordinary content. It ranges from articles replete with transcriptions that explicate the music itself in extraordinary depth (Tracey, Chopi timbila music; Dargie, Xhosa umrhubhe mouthbow; Lucia, choral compositions of J.P. Mohapeloa; Racanelli, diasporic jeliya practice in New York City; and Burns, Ewe *vugbe* drum language conversations; to articles on the politics of popular music and the youth in east Africa (Perullo) and gospel music videos and post-nation identity in Kenya (Kidula) to two self-reflexive articles on the process of field research on women's participation in music in Ghana (Lawrence and Scharfenberger). This issue of *African Music* gives readers a sense of the depth and breadth of current research on African music from the work of South African elder scholars, Andrew Tracey and Dave Dargie, whose hand-drawn transcriptions reveal their passion to understand and teach how the music 'works' structurally and how it is played, to several generations of younger scholars armed with cross-disciplinary theory and the benefit of decades of prior publications to draw upon. This is shown particularly in Burns' detailed account of literature on drumming in Ghana, beginning with A.M. Jones' transcriptions from collaborative research with Ewe *azagunɔ* drummer Desmond Tay (1959) that set a precedent for analysis of African music with the input of cultural exponents. Also significant are Lawrence's references to feminist theory and Scharfenberger's comprehensive review of existing literature on women's participation in music in west Africa for how these readings had an impact on their attitudes as they embarked on field research.

This issue opens with three articles by senior South African scholar/musicians: Professors Andrew Tracey, Dave Dargie and Christine Lucia. It is dedicated to Andrew Tracey in celebration of his seventy fifth year and his article on the structure and learning techniques of *timbila*. Equally important is Dargie's article on Xhosa whistled *umrhubhe* mouth bow for his contribution to knowledge of the structure of *umrhubhe* music and how it is played. In a classic example of carefully crafted, historically contextualized, deeply informed and theoretically grounded musicological research, Lucia gives readers new insight into how the tonic-solfa notation system, often considered a mere remnant of the colonial encounter, allowed Mohapeloa, in his compositions, to retain the essence of the indigenous Sotho music that was his heritage and formed his style. Further, she demonstrates how in the process an 'archive of African song' was created – also existing in the scores of other composers not yet researched – that significantly informs research of African choral music on many levels.

James Burns' micro-analysis of Ewe aesthetics (*atsiā*), through detailed transcriptions and descriptions of the particulars of how *vugbe* drum language conversation occurs, gives readers new knowledge of this Ewe communicative tradition as an extraordinary

example of how music and language cohere. Using analytical techniques of ethno-poetics (grounded in direct experience of the performance tradition), Burns presents his considerable expertise in the practice of *vugbe*, gained from his now twenty years of experience performing it, with such detail that this article will no doubt serve as a reference work for any serious scholar of Ewe drumming and African drumming in general.

Readers learn about the music industry and the place of the youth within it in east Africa through the outcomes of primary research in Tanzania and Kenya presented by Alex Perullo and Jean Kidula respectively. Perullo clearly demonstrates how the youth, through their politically motivated song lyrics and radio airplay of their compositions, gain the public's respect due to their successful careers. He also gives ample evidence of how the youth have gained – due to the impact of their music – a recognized voice in politics in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Kidula's study of gospel music videos in Kenya historically contextualizes and then analyzes how gospel music has agency in the production of national, generational, and post-national identity. She uses the concepts counter-memory, hegemony and heteronomy to show how distinctive identities are created while emphasizing the importance of the presence music videos on the web in promoting transnational identity constructs associated with the youth.

Moving to a musician/scholar's experience of the transnational music scene in New York City, Rancanelli's insider account (as one who participates by performing) of how non-griot players of music originating from west African *griot* repertoires participate with native west African musicians living and working in New York City as 'collaborative trade' provides a comprehensive understanding of how *jeliya* traditions have been transformed and also maintained in this American context.

Finally, the SEM African Music Section's student prize paper by Sidra Lawrence posits a method for research and interpretation of implications women's participation in music performance based on her experience in the doing of field research among Dagara women in northeastern Ghana. She contends that informal conversation and relationship building are the most effective way to get beyond unintentional 'outsider' expectations fostered by her study of African and postcolonial feminist literature and use of conventional ethnographic methods. Angela Scharfenberger's self-reflexive account of her learning process from playing in African music ensembles as a female drummer, to graduate studies in ethnomusicology, to field research into women's music traditions in Ghana gives readers an exhaustive summary of published studies on women and music in west Africa as well as additional insightful reflections on the insider/outsider dilemma in the quest for accurate interpretation of realities for African women musicians.

As witnessed by the contents of this issue and the four issues of Volume 8 (2007-2010) that came before it, the aim of *African Music* to cover the gamut of contemporary research and scholarship on the music of Africa is being achieved. Once again, the articles and reviews in this issue leave no doubt that there remains much about

African music – both the music itself and the way it actualizes itself culturally – to be discovered, much to learn from, and much to inspire further research. A sincere thank you is extended to all authors who have published in *African Music* since it was re-launched in 2007 and to all subscribers – individual and institutional – who have shown their support by subscribing. Submissions from primary research on African music and music with its roots in Africa are being accepted for Volume 9, number 2 (2012).

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