

## FROM THE EDITOR

*African Music*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2012) offers readers a collection of articles from five recent PhD thesis field research projects (M. Ndonmondo, C. Jones, R. Muehrer, P. Hoelsing, K. Stufflebeam), from the field research of independent Fulbright Scholar, H. Kiel, and from the publications-based research of R. Jackson. A hearty thank-you for the in-depth, helpful comments provided by *African Music's* editorial board members who served as peer reviewers for the various articles in this issue. Their input assisted the authors and me tremendously in getting this collection of articles ready for publication. A thank-you is also extended to my editorial assistant, Mandy Carver, whose help in the arduous process of checking and re-checking the article drafts was indispensable. Yet another thank you goes to the authors of the fine collection of book reviews gracing this issue.

In keeping with the legacy of *African Music* to publish research that promotes understanding of African music in terms of the music itself, it is heartening to see the detailed analysis of performance of the *nnanga* harp of the Buganda of southern Uganda provided by Rachel Muehrer. Her meticulous transcriptions of the song “*Gganga alula*” reveal intricacies of the relationship between the vocal melody being sung and the harp melody being played by the same performer that significantly add to understanding of playing techniques of the *nnanga* found in existing publications, most notably those of Gerhard Kubik and Peter Cooke. Knowledge gained through micro-analysis such as this makes obvious the on-going need in ethnomusicology for closely focused research on the music itself.

Also with a focus on particular instruments are the social history of Zimbabwean marimba by Claire Jones and the tracing of the trans-Atlantic survival of Jamaican *gumbe'* (frame drum) by Rachel Jackson. Jones, through her years of field research and as a performer in marimba ensembles in Zimbabwe, gives a detailed account of the invention of the ‘Zimarimba’ (as the instrument was called at the time) at the Bulawayo College of Music in the 1960s and how over the years since then it has satisfied its original intention to provide a vehicle for national identity. She tellingly probes the opposing ‘part of our culture’ and ‘simply school-boy stuff’ local opinions of the instrument to demonstrate how both arise from the same modernist discourse. Jackson’s research, based on a thorough review of all existing ethnographic studies of *gumbe'* in the various locations of its trans-Atlantic existence, is valuable for the comprehensive bibliography on *gumbe'* it provides and for its finding of a common factor where *gumbe'*, both the instrument and its repertoire, has survived: a creole society made up of European colonialists, displaced ex-slaves and local inhabitants.

In an interesting study that traces the origins of Zanzibar *taarab*, Hilda Kiel provides empirical evidence of its various influences by employing comparative analysis of song repertoires to tease out components of individual Zanzibar *taarab* songs that are directly traceable to Egypt and those that are not. She concludes that the unique character of Zanzibar *taarab* can be attributed to a particular ‘island’ aesthetic that

is drawn to Arabic music causing it to retain its predominantly Egyptian character despite the various other styles and influences detectable in early recordings from the 1930s – 50s.

Ndomondo's analysis of how socially constructed gender ideologies and gender relations are reflected and upheld, redefined, negotiated, and contested in present-day musical performances of the Haya in Tanzania reveals how musical performances that address the HIV/AIDS pandemic are more than simply a message-oriented or crowd-attracting activity; they also serve as sites where the social transformation of gender roles occurs and female dancers are allowed freedom of expression not previously possible in Haya society. With his documentation of song/dance performances on World AIDS Day, his interview data and his concomitant analysis, Ndomondo demonstrates the transformation of what is acceptable for Haya women dancers and thereby contributes significantly to a growing body of research on HIV/AIDS and music in Africa.

Also in the area of gender studies, in much the same vein as last year's Society for Ethnomusicology African Music Section's student prize winning paper, Katharine Stufflebeam's field research on Dagbamba women's general involvement in music in northern Ghana reports on how musical participation empowers Dagbamba women and how her relationship-based, 'autoethnographic' approach to field research aims to 'decolonize ethnomusicology'. Although the efficacy of this approach is acknowledged, it needs to be pointed out that this type of self-reflexive, experience near, relationship-based field research methodology has been the norm in ethnomusicology for at least the past two decades and examples exist from long before that.

Finally, Peter Hoelsing's offering on spirit veneration and community healing through the *kusamira* tradition of the Baganda and Basoga in southern Uganda adds to other studies of similar phenomena in eastern and southern Africa. He examines published studies in relation to his own research findings and then presents a detailed descriptive account of a spirit ritual that includes transcriptions from two representative songs and a transcription of song lyrics of another to show evidence of 'social relations of wellness' are taught and promoted for those involved.

It is always exciting and very challenging to work through each year's submissions for *African Music* and finally end up with another compilation of articles that offers a sample of the type of research being done. Through *African Music*, ILAM has every intention to continue to publish articles from primary research of the highest standard in order to fulfil its obligation to the community of scholars and all those with an interest in the music of Africa. In the interest of fulfilling Hugh Tracey's vision for African music education through the schools, ILAM has published, with funding from the National Arts Council, two music education textbooks utilizing its field recordings and images in 2012. Information on their content and how to obtain them is found on pages 193 and 194 of this issue.

I am pleased to report that ILAM's archival holdings continue to grow with the collections of South African ethnomusicologists Dave Dargie and Jaco Kruger now catalogued, digitised and accessible via the ILAM website's on-line audio search

capability. Researchers with collections of field recordings are urged to consider depositing them at ILAM where they will be processed and preserved according to international audiovisual archiving standards. Research projects utilising ILAM's holdings and research affiliations are always welcomed at ILAM; please send project proposals and/or requests for academic affiliation to ILAM's director.

Finally, submissions from primary research on African music and music with its roots in Africa are being accepted for Volume 9, number 3 (2013). Instructions for authors are found on the inside front cover; if you have questions please feel free to contact me via email at [d.thram@ru.ac.za](mailto:d.thram@ru.ac.za); to subscribe to *African Music* go to the ILAM website [www.ilam.ru.ac.za](http://www.ilam.ru.ac.za) or contact [ilamsales@ru.ac.za](mailto:ilamsales@ru.ac.za).

Diane Thram

**NOTICE to RESEARCHERS  
with collections of field recordings**

ILAM is seeking to build its archives by adding to its collections of AV field recordings of music of Africa and music with its roots in Africa.

Deposit agreements are individually negotiated with each depositor dictating the conditions of deposit and access.

Processing (cataloguing, digitizing, creation of database and back-up storage of digital copies) is provided in compliance with international archiving standards for audiovisual preservation.

Please contact ILAM's Director, Diane Thram [d.thram@ru.ac.za](mailto:d.thram@ru.ac.za) for further information.