

has a fluent style and his text is highly readable and clear. The book is meticulously argued and McNeill brings together the various threads of his thesis, keeping his line of thought clear at all times. In this book McNeill follows a process of joining seemingly unconnected dots, and sheds new light on a problem that lies in the seemingly unresolvable clash of cultures, but that urgently needs the insight that he offers.

—Mandy Carver, Diocesan School for Girls

***Music Notation: A South African Guide.*** Christine Lucia. 2011. Pretoria: UNISA Press. 318 pp.

In South Africa, and many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, music literacy is rare. Access to music education is limited by social and economic factors that have improved little since the end of apartheid, especially in rural areas where teachers and resources are in dire need. Yet throughout the country there are popular competitions featuring music and dance from *ingoma* and *maskandi* to brass bands and symphony orchestras. *Music Notation: A South African Guide (MNSAG)* fulfills a growing need for an accessible, self-sufficient, and affordable text for beginning students in music theory and musicianship. The book targets a wide range of interest groups including students at schools and universities, professionals in the industry, and the interested amateur. The course should also appeal to singers familiar with tonic solfa and South Africa's historic choral tradition. Unlike traditional music theory textbooks, Christine Lucia's spiral-bound manual does not assume a Western art music orientation. The basics of common practice tonality are carefully explained but the text introduces a new repertoire and multi-faceted method for practical musicianship that are a welcome addition to cross-cultural music theory pedagogy. In this it sets a new course for postcolonial music studies on the African continent.

Chapters 1-3 introduce the basics of tonic solfa, staff notation, and the piano keyboard. These are foundation chapters that must be mastered thoroughly if the student is to succeed through the remainder of the book. Access to a piano or keyboard of some kind is essential since Lucia provides numerous exercises and basic instruction in piano skills. Innovative use of keyboard diagrams aids the beginning student (much as in a piano tutor). The early chapters also introduce French time names, as well as simple rhythms, time units, signatures, rests, and clefs (Chapters 4-6). Most of these topics are conventional enough, but the need to balance out the tonic solfa and staff notation dual focus necessitates a short introduction to transcription. This is particularly useful for singers, composers, and conductors interested in the South African choral repertoire. Other topics covered here include: major keys, aural exercises, and rhythms with a jazz feel (Chapters 7-10).

Lucia's multiple commitments in *MNSAG* – both in terms of repertoire and technique – become more apparent as the text unfolds. The detailed discussion of

African musical procedures and techniques in Chapters 11 and 13, for instance, are novel additions that fuse history with theory (see discussion below). Chapter 12 picks up the thread with Western melody, expression, and 3/4 time, and then continues in Chapters 14-17 with accidentals, semitones, tones, grouping notes, and more major keys and expressions. All of these chapters are interspersed with exercises and review sections to aid comprehension. Chapters 18-21 cover triplets, scale writing, and 6/8 time followed by topics such as minor keys, modulation, and the cycle of fifths. Diatonic and chromatic intervals are introduced later on, and structural issues are addressed in essays on cyclic form in folk music, jazz, and African music (Chapters 22-25). Harmony is also introduced late in the book with triads, chords and cadences closing out the final Chapters (26-30). In short, this is a comprehensive guide and workbook for music fundamentals.

Each chapter of *MNSAG* relies on continuous self-assessment. One or two sets of exercises are supplemented by a summary exercise at the end of each chapter. These exercises review important terms and concepts and provide numerous practice examples and drills for students to consolidate their learning. Many of the self-assessment exercises reinforce information not only about theory, but also about biographical details and history, including conventional 'life and times' information. As a result the book doubles as a modest introduction to South African music. Numerous pedagogical hints and tips reveal Lucia's practical experience and pragmatism as a teacher. Mnemonic devices and quick study tools point the way for students who may not have ready access to a teacher.

One innovative feature of this text is Lucia's insistence on a multifaceted approach to music theory and musicianship as complimentary activities. The mantra is succinct: "Your goal is to hear music when you read it" (89). Lucia uses several methods and forms of aural exercises to develop the reader's ear: (1) Tonic solfa is introduced to develop accurate sight-singing skills; (2) elementary keyboard training enables the realization of simple melodies, scales, rhythms, and cadences; and (3) French time names are employed for precise performance of rhythms. These methods mutually reinforce one another and are gradually and simultaneously developed through the course of study. By the end of the text diligent readers should possess a solid tool set for encountering music in multiple genres, including tonic solfa. Lucia claims that there are "about 10 million South Africans" (62) involved in the African choir competition circuit and full access to this repertoire is certainly an important outcome of the training provided by this book.

A second innovative feature of *MNSAG* is the wide range of musical examples. Many of these will be familiar to singers of choral traditions, especially the numerous extracts from Handel's "Messiah", perhaps the most cited work in the text. Other than a few keyboard staples, such as selections from J.S. Bach's 'Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach' and a few classic examples from the string quartet and early music literature – the focus is overwhelmingly South African. Many of the tunes are well known – such as "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" and the folksongs "Sarie Marais" and "Frère Jacques"

– but others are novelties introduced by Lucia. See, for example, her transcription of Paul Hanmer’s performance of “Now and Zen” (146) or the popular Christian refrain, “*Masithi Amen*”, by S.C. Molefe (35, 85). Each such example is carefully introduced with brief contextual information. Most of the popular and jazz examples – including those from the folk traditions, jazz, and popular tunes – are mid-to-late twentieth century works that have achieved the status of evergreens. Ellington’s “C Jam Blues” and Vilakazi’s “Meadowlands” are certainly effective, but a few more contemporary additions would perhaps stimulate a younger readership. On the accompanying CD there are 100 midi piano performances of these extracts and examples. This disc that should prove useful to those without access to libraries of sounds, and who wish to check their own performances for accuracy.

*MNSAG* covers Western, African, jazz, folk, art, choral, and popular idioms. The inclusion of African traditional music is of particular interest to readers of this journal. The coverage includes discussion of instruments, compositional techniques, transcription, and analysis. The discussions of *mbira dza vadzimu*, *uhadi* and other southern African bows, and *amadinda* xylophone music demonstrate the pedagogical advantages of comparative study using notation. Drawing on the work of ethnomusicologists Andrew Tracey, Gerhard Kubik, and Veit Erlmann, amongst others, Lucia explains basic principles of African music, such as: cyclic form, resultant rhythms, interlocking rhythm, and inherent melody. Yet Lucia is clear about the limits of staff notation for the study of African music.

Notating a piece of traditional African music in tonic solfa or staff notation requires ‘fixing’ an oral performance without distorting the music melodically or rhythmically. It has to be done with great care and respect, preferably only after repeated listening to performances of a piece. African music is built on precise rhythms which can be precisely notated. When notating pitch one has to remember that staff notation implies the pitches found on the piano and traditional instruments are not usually tuned like pianos. In transcribing any tradition’s music into either tonic solfa (as Bokwe did) or staff notation (as Dargie or Goodall did) sounds become fixed or frozen. Some aspects of duration or pitch may be approximate (119).

There are indeed many features of African music that cannot be transcribed accurately using staff notation. The tonal features of African languages provide one such instance, and explanations of performance conventions remain largely outside the scope of staff notation. To discuss in detail the nature of the problems attendant on such transcriptions, and the sorts of misrepresentations that may result is perhaps not relevant to the readership of this textbook. They are nevertheless crucial to our work as scholars of African music.

In *MNSAG* Lucia demonstrates how staff notation can be used to make sense of melodic and harmonic principles in African music. In Chapter 11, for instance, she discusses bow music at length: “All bow players in southern Africa make use of harmonics derived from at least two fundamental pitches. [...] Returning to ‘uQongqothwane’ [an earlier bow music example], we can now see that not only

the melody of each part derives from the bow scale, but the harmonies too” (127). Lucia concludes from this that, “The whole song therefore – melody and harmony – alternates between two triads that derive from the bow scale” (ibid.). David Rycroft (1975) and other scholars of Nguni music have long persisted with observations of this kind where analysis prioritizes the vertical, harmonic dimension. It is quite simple to show how only a select number of pitches are available to the bow player. But this says very little of interest about the general features of bow music performances or the specifics of particular songs. The manipulation of harmonics using the gourd, the tonal-rhythmic features of the vocalizations, and the co-ordination of bow, gourd, voice, and accompaniment – all add interest and nuance to the performance and are lost to analyses of this kind. The danger with proceeding from staff notation is that we content ourselves with descriptions of what is all too familiar; i.e. with parameters and characteristics that are rooted in values associated with the systematic analytical devices of Western tonal music. In other words, by pursuing a course of ‘sameness’ we may end up with banal explanations that obscure rather than elucidate the diverse and particular textures of African music.

In its more limited usage as a pedagogical tool for comparative study, notation is certainly useful. Lucia demonstrates this with an extended example in Chapter 25 on ‘African Cyclic Form.’ Andrew Tracey’s transcription technique for the *mbira dza vadzimu* song “*Nyamaropa*” (252-255) is discussed at length. Lucia first shows how elements of staff notation were adopted by Tracey for transcription of *mbira* music, and then how a realization of “*Nyamaropa*” at the keyboard elucidates the interlocking principles of the original (a performance of the African examples would be a most valuable addition to the CD). Lucia’s transcribed version – rewritten for Western staff notation (Ex. 25.1.4, p. 254) – provides an opportunity for the reader to imagine African music on the keyboard. This *comparative* analysis demonstrates important structural principles of African music without obscuring the limits of notation. Used in this way staff notation does not reduce complexity or difference to a meaningless amalgam but instead creates a point of entry for the reader/performer. Lucia thereby enables a reflexive approach to African music that highlights our need to understand its mediation. This opens the door for ethnomusicological investigations of a more sophisticated nature.

For Kofi Agawu (2003), a music theory of this kind opens doors to conversations and global discourses long denied Africans and their music. Agawu argues that in our teaching and performance of African traditions we need a consistent common language and that staff notation meets the criteria. This is a convenient perspective for those in the Euro-American academy. Students are well versed in tonal music. Their familiarity is both aural and literate. Not so in the African context. Textbooks make such knowledge normative and universalize notation as the entry point into musics of all kinds. But if notation is not a sufficient mode for the analysis and representation of many African music traditions – as I have demonstrated above – then we need be cautious about educating students in this fashion. Which brings us back to *MNSAG*:

Lucia's goal is to educate (South) African students in the tonal tongue: to sing, play, and count in a systematic fashion. Lucia rightly claims that this promotes access to higher education – including the still conservatoire-centric system of music departments in South Africa – as well as the music industry. But should we persevere with such universalizing tendencies at the expense of non-literate traditions? The policies of higher education institutions continue to promote Western art music and jazz to the exclusion of other styles. What people learn and understand as common tongue remains Western, not African. It can be argued that music theory remains a hegemonic discourse in South Africa, and one that continues to override indigenous traditions. In most South African universities very little African music is taught, at least not to the majority of students. It remains peripheral to Western art music (WAM). This is despite the fact that WAM plays a minor role in the performance culture of African countries and has few career opportunities.

The power of Western art music as normative practice can hardly be denied. Lucia describes music theory's 'practical sphere', "as something concerned with music writing, with music as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary; in short, as precompositional activity or set of tools" (167). The training of habits and technique structure cognition and normalize performance and listening activities within delimited parameters ("precompositional activity"). They also structure systems of value. Lucia demonstrates in *MNSAG* that there are strong traditions of African music rooted in notational convention and this text opens access to such repertoires. But if it is our goal to make sense of the diversity of traditional African music, and to find space for them in the curriculum, then we need temper our enthusiasm for notation and the universalizing force of music theory in the academy. For as Gary Tomlinson, *inter alia*, has noted, "traditional music analysis is one of the most aggressively universalizing discourses still in common use" (quoted in Solie 1993: 8).

*MNSAG* provides a guide to the rudiments of Western tonal music and introduces several features of African music using a very wide range of music. What it does not cover are more advanced harmonic and compositional techniques often discussed in traditional theory texts and in first year college curricula. Indeed, we are nowhere near the secondary dominants so familiar to beginning courses in music theory and there is no advanced training in four-part writing. The coverage of rudiments is however thorough and pragmatic, aimed at inculcating and embodying knowledge that will prove useful to practicing musicians. *MNSAG* is perfectly designed for the types of bridging courses now common in South African universities. Through persistent and patient learning, students will achieve a varied skill set that includes: aural training, basic keyboard skills, sight-singing skills, accurate performance of rhythms, a grounding in Western tonal music, and general knowledge of several genres including jazz, popular, and traditional music from southern Africa. For these reasons, the text proves useful as a basic reference tool and should be available in all music libraries.

—Thomas M. Pooley, University of Pennsylvania