APPROACHES TO THE ADAPTATION OF SHONA *NGOMA* STYLES IN ZIMBABWEAN POPULAR MUSIC

by

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Abstract: The focus of this article is on Zimbabwean popular songs that adapt traditional Shona *ngoma* (drum) genres. Its purpose is twofold. First, the article identifies Zimbabwean popular musicians' various approaches to the adaptation of traditional rhythmic patterns and song texts associated with certain *ngoma* genres. Second, it examines how these approaches influence the process of redefining the Shona musical tradition. It is argued that the traditional drumming patterns and styles incorporated within specific Shona popular songs have an important role in redefining this music culture within Zimbabwean popular music in general. A critical analysis is conducted on selected *ngoma*-influenced, Zimbabwean popular songs and the opinions expressed by the popular musicians who create the music. Three different approaches of adapting *ngoma* rhythms have been identified and are explained. These approaches are realised in the "integration" of musical and non-musical elements, "framework" as far as the imitation of structure is concerned, and "component", as far as content is concerned.

Keywords: Traditional music, adaptation, Shona, *ngoma* rhythms, Zimbabwean popular music.

Introduction

Each of the distinct Shona *ngoma* genres, which include among others, *mbakumba*, *dandanda*, *muchongoyo*, *dinhe* and *mhande*, has its own identifiable song repertoire and distinctive *ngoma* (drum) and *hosho* (gourd rattle) style. Performed in its original context, traditional *ngoma* music is integrated with dance and the form and content of the *ngoma* rhythm are related to the structural and dramatic requirements of the dance (Rutsate 2007).[1] This explains the importance of traditional drumming patterns associated with each distinct Shona *ngoma* genre in relation to specific traditional dance contexts.

Since the early 1970s in Zimbabwe, a considerable growth in the use of Shona *ngoma* music within national and transnational music cultures has taken place. The result has been an adaptation through the predominance of traditionally Shona inspired music within the Zimbabwean popular music industry. The term 'adaptation' is used in this

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[1] The Shona word "*ngoma*" literally means drum, a traditional music instrument which can be played using hands or sticks. In the Shona musical tradition drumming is closely associated with dance. Scholars such as Turino (2000) and Kyker (2016) use the term, "dance-drumming" genres, to refer to what I mainly call traditional *ngoma* music in this article. It is important to note that the term *ngoma* can be used to refer to a song.

article to refer to the practice which involves the "act of re-vision … the exercise of trimming and pruning … addition, expansion, accretion and interpolation" to provoke a critical interpretation of both the popular songs and the existing traditional pieces (Sanders 2016: 22-23). Adaptation of traditional music for popular music therefore implies some kind of change made to the traditional content. For my purposes, the term 'adaptation' is invoked in order to raise the issue of how and why Shona traditional songs change and what the process of change means for the musicians involved. Many popular songs classified under genres such as Zimbabwean jazz, *Chimurenga* music and Tuku music, to mention a few, have adapted aspects from the various *ngoma* music repertoires.

Adapted and recorded largely for cosmopolitan, non-participatory audiences, the majority of traditional Shona dance-drumming styles identified in this article shows that the musical elements associated with each of these distinct genres can be "used more or less loosely to create new songs" (Turino 2000: 296).[2] As Sam Mataure explained with reference to Oliver Mtukudzi's "*Izere mhepo*" on *Nhava* (2005), which adapts the *mhande* rhythm, "there is so much room [in *ngoma* drumming music]… we play it differently… we open up the music a bit more" (Kyker 2016: 210).

This "opening up" is confirmed by musicians like Mtukudzi. Mtukudzi, for example, claims that in basing his songs on dance-drumming genres rather than "classical" *mbira* music, he does not perform traditional songs but writes his own songs, his own tunes and his own sounds (Turino 2008). It is therefore worth considering how the adaptation of Shona dance-drumming musical elements influences the composition of popular music. Data from the Zimbabwe Music Rights Association (ZIMURA) shows that songs such as "Mean what you say" on the album, *Neria* (2001), by Mtukudzi and "*Chemera Chaunoda*" on" *Mabasa* (1983) by Thomas Mapfumo, are labelled as *katekwe* and *mhande* respectively. When they are registered for copyright purposes, the musicians are entitled to full royalties. This confirms the point that the *ngoma* sounds are considered as the musicians' original compositions.[3] It is against this background that this article explores the various approaches that are used by musicians to adapt traditional *ngoma* songs for popular music performance and how these approaches influence the process of redefining the Shona musical tradition. The process of adaptation is explained by using Oliver Mtukudzi, Thomas Mapfumo and Leonard Zhakata and their music as examples.

The three musicians: Zhakata, Mapfumo and Mtukudzi
I chose Oliver Mtukudzi, Thomas Mapfumo and Leonard Zhakata, because they extensively utilize musical elements such as rhythm, melody and text from Shona traditional resources and their music is categorised within distinct Zimbabwean

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[2]   Rutsate (2007) and Thram (1999) study the performance of such music in a secular but non-popular music context, the Chibuku Neshamwari Traditional Dance Competitions. Here the music is performed in the same way as it is performed in the traditional context.

[3]   For *mbira*-based popular songs, if one adapts a certain *mbira* source one receives partial royalty payments. To give examples, on her song "Nhemamusasa" (Temporary shelter) on Ancient Voices (1998), Chiwoniso receives 50 percent royalties because, as one of ZIMURA officials explained to me, this song adapts in its entirety a traditional *mbira* song by the same name.

popular music genres. They have become popularly identified with Shona traditional music in Zimbabwe and are celebrated as models of how Shona music is performed (Pongweni 1982, Turino 1997, Vambe 2004). Generally, a number of these musicians' works have utilized aspects of Shona traditional music. Thus, their music may in one way or the other serve as a model for what can be achieved with this repertoire by future musicians. They are well-known but for those who are not familiar with the musicians I provide brief biographies in the following paragraphs.

Zhakata was born in 1968 in a Shona village near Rusape. He has produced many hit songs since 1989. Zhakata plays *sungura* music, "a Zimbabwean style of popular music that draws heavily from Congolese rumba" (Machingura and Machingura 2011: 27). Zhakata terms his music, "Zhakata/Zimbabwe Original Rhythms of Africa, hence its popular name, "ZORA" music. According to him, ZORA is strongly inspired by his rural background which exposed him to the traditional sounds of Shona music (L. Zhakata interview 7 February 2013).

Born in 1952 in Highfield, Harare, Mtukudzi is originally from Dande, a rural area located in the north-eastern part of Zimbabwe. His childhood experiences with music from the rural areas of north-eastern Zimbabwe had a significant influence on Mtukudzi, "encouraging him to draw upon Korekore musical and linguistic resources" in his popular style which is known as Tuku music (Kyker 2016: 129).

Mapfumo was born in 1945 in what was then the British colony of Rhodesia. He mainly performs what is called *Chimurenga* music. *Chimurenga* songs capture the sentiment of war and the longing for freedom in Zimbabwe. Eyre explains, Mapfumo and his music came to represent his native country's anticolonial struggle and cultural identity (2015). Turino says further that "his music is an excellent example of the blending of indigenous African and western popular musical elements and it illustrates the creativity and adaptability of African musicians in the postmodern environment" (1997: 198–9). Mapfumo's *chimurenga* music, such as his albums *Chamunorwa* (1989) and *Shumba* (1990), extensively draws from Shona traditional music.

In the sections that follow I will examine how the *ngoma*-based popular music by these three musicians can be analysed using the three approaches for adaptation as mentioned earlier, namely, that of integration, of imitating the framework of the original song and by using the musical content of the original song. I focus on various examples of *ngoma*-influenced popular songs to examine approaches to the adaptation and interpretation of *ngoma* musical elements and how *ngoma* rhythmic patterns are combined within popular tunes composed by artists during the process of adaptation. Finally, I examine the impact these approaches has on musical meaning in contemporary, traditional music settings.

The integration approach: Interpreting connections between Shona *ngoma* genres
The list of *ngoma*-influenced popular songs I refer to in this article consists of the majority of the Shona *ngoma* genres from different parts of Zimbabwe. The list of *ngoma* genres includes the *dinhe* and *katekwe* from the Korekore, *mhande* and *mbakumba* from the Karanga, *dandanda* and *jerusarema* from the Zezuru and the *chigiya* from the

Ndau. Other genres such as *muchongoyo* and *chigiyo* from the Ndau as well as *zhana* from the Zezuru are rarely performed in the Zimbabwean popular music scene.

The performance of the *ngoma* genres in traditional and other related contexts has received considerable attention (Thram 1999; 2002, Asante 2000, Rutsate 2007). Its performance within the popular music context has however not been studied in much detail. Particularly, in her work on Mtukudzi's music, Kyker recommends that there is a need to understand the relationships between various Shona *ngoma* genres. In this regard, I observed in the context of my research that popular musicians sometimes fuse different *ngoma* musical elements in their compositions. This confirms Kyker's hypothesis that there exists a constellation of related drumming and dance styles that demonstrate marked similarities (2011: 55). I argue that the relationships between these styles have direct implications on how the *ngoma* traditional musical sources may be adapted for popular music. These relationships may also help to explain why musicians such as Mtukudzi have been able to create distinctive compositions because of their use of the *ngoma* elements. In what follows I provide the background of three of the *ngoma* genres, *mhande*, *dinhe* and *katekwe*, in relation to one another and examine how Zimbabwean popular musicians have interpreted the relationships between different Shona dance drumming musics. These three genres are performed in distinct contexts in Shona society as explained more broadly in the following sections. The popular musicians that I focus on in this study fuse or integrate elements from these genres to conceive their distinct styles.

Each of the genres is performed in a specific context. As the majority of the Shona survived and still survives almost entirely on subsistence farming, most of the dance traditions emerge from related activities. Among the Karanga of Masvingo and Zezuru of Mashonaland East where *mhande* is mainly performed if rain comes later than expected, they invoke the rain spirits at *mutoro* rainmaking or at *bira* ceremonies (Thram 1999, Rutsate 2007). Here *mhande* traditional music and dance have a central role. *Mhande* music consists of a drum pattern which is "characterized by the regularly-accented triple beat grouped into three pulses per beat. This is played on a nucleus of two drums; a high-pitched drum which plays the fundamental triplet pattern and a low-pitched drum which acts as the lead" (Rutsate 2007: 56) (see Figure 1). *Mhande* traditional songs usually address themes connected to the rain ceremonies or *biras*. Examples of popular songs that use the *mhande* rhythm include Mtukudzi's "*Tozeza*" on *Nhava* (2005) and "*Mwana wamambo*" on *Rudairo* (2011).

Figure 1. *Mhande* traditional drum pattern. Transcription by author.

After the planting and harvesting seasons, the Korekore of northern Zimbabwe practice *dinhe* traditional music and dance which also has the religious purpose of

inducing spirit possession (Owomoyela 2002: 47). The *dinhe* drum pattern consists of the sounds played by two people on three drums; one plays a fast triple beat (drum 1) while the other drummer plays interlocking, accented eighth beats on two drums (drums 2 and 3) (see Figure 2). Note that the pattern articulated on drums 2 and 3 is the fundamental beat of *dinhe*. Tadzorerwa Moyo, a traditional dance lecturer at the Zimbabwean College of Music emphasised that

> in the *dinhe* dance, both men and women imitate what happens during the planting and harvesting time. Women imitate *kudyara mbeu* (planting), *kusakura* (weeding), *kukohwa* (harvesting), *kupepeta* (winnowing), and men *kusakura nekurasa masora* (weeding and throwing away the weeds), *kubvisa dikita* (wiping away sweat), and *kuputa bute* (sniffing tobacco). (T. Moyo interview 7 Feburary 2013)

Popular songs that are based on *dinhe* musical elements include Mtukudzi's "*Hwenge mambo*" on *Bvuma* (2001) and Mapfumo's "*Ndakasvika nani*" and "*Kuenda mbire*" on *Chimurenga Explosion* (2000). In these popular songs the *dinhe* drum rhythm is adapted entirely without any alteration. As such it is possible to perform the *dinhe* traditional dance to these popular songs.

Figure 2. *Dinhe* traditional dance pattern. Transcription by author.

There are a number of popular songs that present elements of *dinhe* in combination with that of the *mhande*. To give an example, Mtukudzi's "*Njuga*" on *Tsimba itsoka* (2007) integrates the fundamental triple beat of *mhande,* which is played on the high hat, with the *dinhe* beat played on the conga. Interlocking these two different *ngoma* patterns, the conga imitates part of the fundamental *dinhe* rhythmic pattern on alternating beats while the drum set plays the *mhande* pattern throughout. This rhythmic pattern is fused with new material played on the guitars, the keyboard and the vocal lines (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Combination of *mhande* and *dinhe* rhythms within "*Njuga*" by Mtukudzi, at 0:22-0:28. Transcription by author.

One of the reasons for fusing these two distinct musical traditions in this manner can be that, as mentioned above, they are performed successively in the cycle of farming within the Shona community. Additionally, both drumming patterns consist of a triple beat pattern although each is played differently. By fusing *dinhe* and *mhande* musical elements and slightly changing them, "*Njuga*" in this case produces a unique *ngoma* traditional style (both *dinhe* and *mhande* traditional contexts) which only partially fits within these two Shona *ngoma* genres. Furthermore, Mtukudzi composes new lyrics around the theme of self-discipline in "*Njuga*":

Dzimwe nguva unozviparira wega	Sometimes you create problems for yourself
Imwe nhamo unozviparira wega	Sometimes you create your own predicaments
Kana rufu unozvitsvagira wega	You can even cause your death
Dzimwe nyaya tinozviparira tega	Sometimes we create issues for ourselves

By combining Karanga and Korekore musical elements, songs such as "*Njuga*" show the connection between the musical activities practiced in these two Shona sub-groups. In this way, aesthetic practices are extended by the way music from different sub-groups is manipulated in popular song. New musical or compositional ideas are generated as the two different rhythms are combined.

There is evidence in the scholarly literature that the *dinhe* rhythmic pattern has often been confused with *katekwe*, another *ngoma* genre which originates with the Korekore (Kyker 2011, 56). This confusion stems from the fact that, similar to the *dinhe* rhythmic pattern produced on drum 1 (see Figure 2), the *katekwe* drum pattern consists of the fast triplet rhythmic pattern.[4] Additionally, similar to what has been noted above about the *dinhe*, *katekwe* dancers mimic activities such as "plowing, weeding, winnowing and threshing and wiping away sweat as done by a person working in the field. Women dance while holding winnowing baskets and hoes and men also hold hoes" (Mheta, in Kyker 2011: 53). It is apparent, as Tadzorerwa Moyo explained to me, that these two *ngoma* genres are performed in similar contexts in the Korekore area (interview 7 February 2013). The lyrical context may be based on similar themes and it is not surprising to find similar phrases used across these musical traditions. However, as Moyo clarified, the difference between them is in the speed; *katekwe* is faster than *dinhe* (interview 7 February 2013).[5] This difference in speed may have an effect on the way in which musicians borrow from these two *ngoma* rhythms. Mtukudzi, for instance, has mostly adapted the faster beat *katekwe* rather than the *dinhe* for accompanying his music.

Listening to Mtukudzi's songs such as "*Bganyamakaka*" and "*Dzokai*" (*katekwe*-based songs) in comparison to songs such as "*Hwenge mambo*" and "*Yave mbodza*" (*dinhe*-based songs) one can clearly distinguish between *katekwe* and *dinhe*. Therefore, I suggest that through Zimbabwean popular music, some musicians occasionally continue to maintain a distinction between these two *ngoma* genres.

Apart from the examples above, there are many other contemporary popular songs that integrate *ngoma* genres of various Shona subgroups. This development may be

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4   See Kyker (2011, 45) for more detail on the *katekwe* drumming.

5   The point that *katekwe* is faster that *dinhe* was also confirmed by Mtukudzi in my interview with him.

seen in the use of *mbakumba* and *dandanda* in "*Gehena*" on *Tsimba Itsoka* (2007) by Mtukudzi, and *chigiya* and *zhana* in "*Karigoni*" on *Mandishorei* (1995), by Zhakata. I show in these examples that the possibility of integrating various Shona *ngoma* musical styles has enabled the conception of new Zimbabwean popular styles. This is one of the main reasons why an audience sometimes have problems in distinguishing between *ngoma* styles such as *katekwe* and *dinhe* through listening to popular music (only) and why it has become difficult to identify the songs as versions of a specific *ngoma* source. In an interview with Turino, Mtukudzi explained:

> I try to fuse a lot into the sound. If you listen to the song "*Shanje*" (1981) itself, it's jit. But it is also off jit. You can have two, you know, two beats in one song… And I did that as an experimental thing. I never thought it would work out… Yeah, I wouldn't blame them [his listeners] for failing to identify my music because it's like that; it's got a lot of fusion in it. I fuse different types of local music (Turino 2000: 295).

Fusing different types of local music is also part of what defines "Tuku music" (O. Mtukudzi interview 5 October 2013). Similarly, Zhakata commented on why he combines styles such as *chigiya* which originates with the Ndau people from Chipinge and *zhana* practised by the Zezuru people from Rusape. He says, "it's a good compositional idea to blend these styles from across the country; the traditional music becomes different" (Interview 7 February 2013). In addition to this adaptation, occasionally the musicians represent each *ngoma* source individually and the styles can be altered from one popular song to another. In discussions with the musicians, I noted that this is mainly due to different compositional techniques employed by musicians and their goals in various contexts.

The framework approach: Imitating traditional *ngoma* sources

Some popular songs adapt all the elements of the traditional *ngoma* sources, that is, the rhythmic pattern and the associated vocal tunes and lyrics where they exist. I have referred to this adaptation as the "framework approach", where popular musicians imitate almost the entire traditional source. Jim Chapman (2007: 88) defines imitation as "the quotation of riffs and rhythms and other musical devices into a new setting… direct quotation, modification and improvement of the original". In this article I use 'imitation' to mean the adaptation of a certain traditional, Shona *ngoma* source in its entire form, to popular music composition and performance. In the framework approach, the popular musician adapts the traditional drum rhythm without any alterations because that rhythm "*ndihwo hwaro*" [is the foundation or base] upon which traditional *ngoma* styles are built (L. Zhakata interview 7 February 2013). The musician may alter or change the lyrics of the traditional song to follow the new performance context. Examples of such songs include Mtukudzi's "*Hwenge mambo*" on *Bvuma* (2001) which adapts the *dinhe*-based song called "*Kunatsa muroyi*", and Zhakata's "*Dzakaora*" on *Mandishorei* (1995). Explaining to me why he arranged "*Karigoni*" in its entirety, Zhakata said:

> Culture changes with time but I just felt that some of our cultural values are changing so fast when they still need to continue in their original form. In this song I am calling for people's attention to one of our values reminding them of what was happening. Yeah, the

song is talking about hunting but you can also take that same idea and have a positive interpretation of what is happening now… people are hunting for money. (interview 7 February 2013)

Similar sentiments were articulated by Robert Mundondiwa's comment with reference to Mtukudzi's "*Hwenge mambo*" which adapts a *dinhe*-based traditional song called "*Kunatsa muroyi*":

> If you look at "*Hwenge mambo*" *iye iye* [*Kunatsa muroyi*]. That's a traditional song that's sung in his area and we used to sing that in school. And he just rearranged it, and presented it in the most beautiful fashion, and added a little story into it just to explain what the song is about… so that's the power of the music. What people had discarded long ago as gone has just exploded back into life and it took a new form and being (Kyker 2011: 57).

On entire *ngoma* adaptations, while most of the popular songs that adapt *mhande* music completely change the music's meaning in relation to the *mutoro* rainmaking ceremony, Mapfumo's approach helps to explain that this tradition continues despite western influences. A song such as Mapfumo's "*Chemera chaunoda*" (Ask what you want) on *Mabasa* (1983) has its lyrics changed, but the musician retains the meaning usually presented in the traditional *mhande* songs:

Gore rino iwe tapera	This year we will die
Gore rino iwe nenzara	This year there is drought
Gore rino iwe tapera	This year we will die
Gore rino nenyota	This year there is no rain

In this song, Mapfumo reminds the people that in using the *mhande* music and dance they can appeal to their ancestral spirits to ask *Mwari* (God) for rain. As observed by Rutsate (2007: 56), the *mutoro* ritual is still being practiced in some parts of the country, especially in rural areas such as the Gutu and Shurugwi Districts.

Zhakata made reference to his songs, "*Dzakaora*" and "*Havatongerwe*" on *Mandishorei* (1995), and explained:

> With this type of music, I may choose to sing my own words to the traditional drum. I may sing in English or any other language but the drumming style from my roots remains. Remember what enables people to articulate the *mhande* dance n or *dinhe* or any traditional dance style *ingoma* [is the drumming.] That's why you see that lyrics of the song, "*Tovera*", (for instance) can be sung on *mhande* or *ngororombe* or *dinhe* but we can't talk of performing *mhande* music when it is without the drumming pattern. (interview 7 February 2013)

Zhakata emphasizes the centrality of what he calls "*ngoma*" in his compositions, which refers to the specific rhythmic pattern performed on the drum. This is a result of the traditional performance context, where drum rhythms are inevitably joined with movement and there is a strong connection between the drumming patterns and the accompanying dance patterns. This explains the importance of rhythmic patterns associated with dance-drumming music in understanding Shona music culture and the popular styles that have evolved from it. According to Zhakata, the *ngoma* rhythmic pattern acts as the base for his popular music compositions. This suggests that there is a relationship between the traditional drum rhythms and other elements composed for a popular song and that the existing drumming and rhythmic patterns provide the

framework for conceiving the *ngoma*-based popular songs. Within this framework the musician adds other elements such as the lyrics to fulfil his compositional purpose.

Continuing along these lines, Mapfumo focused specifically on the dance-drumming, rhythmic patterns as the defining factor for his music. Without altering *ngoma* patterns, Mapfumo composes new tunes and lyrics and incorporates them in the traditional genres. For Mapfumo, "the reason is we are trying to make everybody aware that we as Africans have an identity" (interview 27 March 2013). Describing Mapfumo's compositional technique, Turino notes that

> when he composes, he typically creates the tune first and then adds the lyrics, "because you know you cannot just write words without a tune. It's the tune that comes first. The tune comes into my head; maybe I can do a little humming on it. And, ah, well, after I'm satisfied that this tune has got right into my head, then I can try to bring in words, some lyrics". (Turino 2000: 280)

Using this compositional technique to arrange the *ngoma* sources, Mapfumo has been described by other musicians such as Mtukudzi as a "straight arranger", as one who reproduces the *ngoma* patterns faithfully from the traditional source (Turino 2000: 280). The song by Mapfumo, "*Ndave kuenda*" (I am now leaving) on "*Chimurenga 98*" is a good example. In this piece, the *dinhe* drum pattern, which is distributed on a wide range of instruments including conga, high hat and bass guitar, dominates (see Figure 4).

Typical of the traditional way of composing text, the song comprises a few words and these are performed repeatedly in a call and response pattern throughout. This song was performed taking into account the post-colonial discourse of Zimbabwean *Chimurenga* songs where musicians "speak directly to current political realities," capturing the sentiment of war and the longing for freedom in Zimbabwe (Kyker 2011: 138). The song presents the situation of a man, who, because of uncomfortable living conditions, is intending to leave for a better place. Since this is close to the time when Mapfumo went into exile, it is probable that the song speaks about the musician's life around that time.

The component approach: Sampling of Shona *ngoma* music
The adaptation strategy used in traditional *ngoma* rhythms involves that of composing new tunes and lyrical content for pre-existing *ngoma* patterns. Although the rhythms are used in new performance contexts, they are directly quoted with possibly slight alterations at times. This approach to adaptation can be referred to as a type of sampling of *ngoma* traditional music and has been termed the "component approach" in this article. In popular electronic music or rap the term 'sampling' is referred to as a technique that takes only part of its material from another source: "The creator of a sampled sound piece is… merely an arranger, pasting together fragments of a musical history in such a way that the total exceeds the sum of the quotes…" (Holm-Hudson, in Chapman 2007: 82). In the component approach musicians adapt only a part or a section of a particular *ngoma* rhythm and possibly the lyrics of a traditional song. These are combined with their own compositional ideas. Musicians have different reasons for using the component approach. These reasons include the idea that it enables the musicians to borrow traditional musical elements such as *ngoma* rhythms and lyrics

and use them as a "part of" composing, thereby improving the appeal of innovative musical ideas for Zimbabwean audiences.

Emphasizing the importance of a particular tune and the message carried within the text, Mtukudzi explained that in most of his *ngoma*-influenced compositions the lyrical content is the defining factor (interview 5 October 2013). In his discussion with Kyker, Mtukudzi suggests that the sound is secondary to the lyrics; in his terms, "*kuridza*

Figure 4. *Dinhe* drumming pattern in "*Ndave Kuenda*" by Thomas Mapfumo.
Transcription by author.

kurunga" [to play is to flavour] (2016: 41). According to him, the lyrics form the basis of what he calls a song; "For me the purpose of music is to touch people's hearts. When you sing you must touch people's hearts, that's a song, that's music" (O. Mtukudzi interview 5 October 2013). Explaining the way in which he composes songs, Mtukudzi says that he identifies a certain theme, and then writes a poem on it. Usually, the way in which Mtukudzi pronounces the words of that poem guides how he conceives most of the tunes for a particular text, in fact, everything else comes after composing the lyrics and the tune. In Mtukudzi's case, his main focus when composing music is the lyrical content. The traditional *ngoma* styles are then incorporated simply as accompaniment for an already-conceived song which improves the means by which the message in the song may be presented (*ibid*.). This is in contrast to Mapfumo's compositional technique in which the tune is created first and then the lyrics are added. In his words:

> The *ngoma* drumming patterns are just styles, they are flavours for a song, you know, it's like putting salt or pepper in your meat, (and) you may or may not want too much salt or too much pepper. Instrumentation *kungoronga* (arranging in a beautiful way) to lure people's attention to the message, you see. I am not intending that people hear *mhande* or *dinhe* or *katekwe*, I want them to hear my message. (O. Mtukudzi interview 5 October 2013)

Sam Mataure, Mtukudzi's drummer, employs the same compositional technique: "*VaMtukudzi* (Mr Mtukudzi) writes the lyrics, he plays his guitar line, and then we choose the drumming which matches his guitar rhythm" (interview 27 September 2013). This explains why it has been possible for Mtukudzi to create various *ngoma*-influenced popular songs from exactly the same traditional *ngoma* sources. In "*Izere mhepo*", a *mhande*-influenced popular song, for example, Mtukudzi directs his message to an exiled Zimbabwean audience:

Mwana wangu akaenda marimuka	My child has departed for the wilderness
Dangwe rangu rakaenda marimuka	My eldest child is in the wilderness
Ku London	In London

To improve the appeal of his message to an international audience, the traditional *ngoma* elements function as a symbol of home without any connections to the traditional context of the *mhande*. In "*Izere mhepo*", Mtukudzi not only composes the new vocal material and text; he also alters the fundamental rhythmic pattern of *mhande* music (played on the conga) through the substitution of a final eighth note for an eighth-note rest (Kyker 2013: 272). This pattern is dominated by new lines played on the guitars, the keyboards and vocals, and as a result the *mhande* rhythm is not prominent and obvious; without close listening one may not recognize this pattern. Mtukudzi's drummer explained several reasons why they altered the *mhande* rhythmic pattern in this case:

The words and tune dictate whether we should play the rhythm a bit slower or faster, so sometimes we play it faster or slower; we are not worried about speed you see, it's a matter of negotiating your way…We are no longer a traditional people as we used to be. So if you go deep some people do not understand that. (S. Mataure interview 27 September 2013)

As they are added to the newly composed tunes and texts the traditional rhythmic elements may take on a new shape and adopt a new speed. Reflecting on his career

at Tuku music, Picky Kasamba commented on the idea of "flavours" with regard to Mtukudzi's music.[6] He said that "flavours are only flavours and flavours can be changed to suit different tastes, different times and different themes" (Kasamba 2009). By functioning to improve the ways or methods for presenting certain musical messages to the people, these *ngoma* drumming styles, in Mtukudzi's perspective, act as a means to an end. For Mtukudzi, his music should not be categorized as *mhande* or any other *ngoma* genre regardless of the traditional drumming elements incorporated in it.

My focus thus far has been to examine how *ngoma* rhythmic patterns are understood by popular musicians who use them in their compositions. I have noted three distinct approaches to *ngoma* drum patterns: one that integrates various Shona *ngoma* rhythms, one that considers them as the base for a new composition and one that appropriates them to improve a composition. Depending on individual musicians' understanding of Shona music and how they value certain aspects of it, the approaches for adaptation vary and affects how various musicians draw from traditional sources. This is not to underestimate the importance of the accompanying traditional *ngoma* drumming patterns in communicating through song certain pieces of information to an audience. Given the fact that *ngoma* rhythmic patterns are traditionally associated with particular musical dance contexts, there is deeper meaning embedded within the rhythmic patterns; as such their adaptation to popular tunes and texts determines the overall meaning of a song to some extent. This observation is supported by Chapman who comments that "being a cultural experience, each culture and sub-culture responds to music in its own way… building meanings out of the sound as it is heard within their cultural context" (2007: 89). Exploring this idea I now focus on a few examples by Mtukudzi that adapt *mhande* rhythmic patterns.

Conscious of the "central beat" of the *mhande* drum patterns, Mtukudzi's songs which adapt this traditional source reinterpret the musical genre in related but different ways. In the song, "*Mwana wamambo*", from *Rudairo* (2011), for instance, Mtukudzi retains the clear and unaltered rhythm of the *mhande* which is played on the conga. This dominates the song even though other instruments, namely the guitars, keyboard and the bass are assigned new material; they are dominated by the *mhande* drumming pattern played on the conga. Performed within this *mhande* framework, "*Mwana wamambo*" is composed using Mtukudzi's own vocal material. Sung in a call and response fashion, the song's meaning seems to move away from the messages of the *mutoro* and *bira* in which the *mhande* was traditionally performed:

Zvamapinda musvitsa kudai sisi imi	Now that you are married sister
Tururu	Tururu
Zvamapinda pasvitsa kudai baba imi	Now that you are married brother
Tururu	Tururu
Kuzvibata, kurereka, nekuzvityora	Behave, be respectful, be humble

In the song, Mtukudzi expresses the ideal moral values of a married person. To this

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6   Picky Kasamba is a former prominent figure in Mtukudzi's band, the Black Spirits. He worked with Mtukudzi for more than 25 years.

end, he uses the Shona proverb, "*Mwana wamambo muranda kumwe*", which generally means that despite your high social status at your place of birth, you should be willing to learn and serve in your new home. In the same manner, in a song such as "*Tozeza*" (We fear father) on *Nhava* (2005), Mtukudzi sings against gender-based violence, and discourages the abuse of women and children:

Imi baba manyanya	Father you are overdoing it now
Kurovamai	Beating our mother
Imi manyanya kutuka mai	Father you are insulting mother
Munoti isu vana tofara sei	How do you expect us children to be happy
Isu vana tofara sei	As children we are not happy
Kana mai vachichema pameso pedu	If our mother is always crying in our presence

Though performed at a slow speed, the lyrics in "*Tozeza*" are sung to a very clear and heavy *mhande* framework. The conga, the guitars, and the bass simultaneously play the basic triple beat pattern of the *mhande*, while the *hosho* is assigned the rhythmic pattern traditionally articulated on the *magagada* (leg rattles) during performances of the *mhande* traditional dance. Even in the absence of the dancers, the *magagada* rhythm constantly heard throughout "*Tozeza*" enables a cultural insider to imagine the original context where the music would be integrated with dance. Regarding new lyrics in the two *mhande*-based songs, "*Tozeza*" and "*Mwana wamambo*", Mutukudzi follows what Rutsate explains as "denouncing bad behaviour in the community which is believed to prevent rain from falling, thus causing droughts" (2007: 61).[7] In the original contexts songs such as these were performed as a cry to the ancestral spirits for mercy, informing them that adherents are aware of the negative behaviour of certain people within their group, yet they are looking forward to the rains (*ibid*.).

Using *mhande* musical elements, Mtukudzi's songs remind the people that the droughts and misfortunes that befall the community are possibly caused by such bad behaviour. Although popular musicians can perform their own tunes and lyrics which on the surface are completely different from any pre-existing *ngoma*-based song, the performance of these new tunes and lyrics within the Shona rhythmic drum pattern helps shape their meaning. As a Shona person who grew up exposed to the performance and participation of some of these *ngoma* drumming styles, and for listeners who know *mhande* music in connection with the traditional context of rain spirits, such songs allow them to engage in critical listening. Listeners with a background of Shona traditional music can make the link between the new content and the *ngoma* music's original meanings in traditional dance contexts.

Adding to Mtukudzi's idea that "*kuridza kurunga*" [to play is to flavour] (Kyker 2016: 41), with reference to his use of traditional *ngoma* rhythms and that their function is primarily to draw or attract listeners to his message more than being "flavours" or "salt and pepper", I suggest that the Shona *ngoma* rhythms have a fundamental role

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7   Rutsate notes that in the traditional context, *mhande*-based songs such as "*Haiwa yowerere*" serve such purposes. If anyone was caught doing something which was regarded as bad in the community, it requires that people "cry to the spirits for mercy, informing them that the adherents are aware of the unacceptable behaviour of some among them" (Rutsate 2007: 60).

in popular compositions as they influence how people interpret messages within these songs. Even though musicians such as Mtukudzi may not have intended these particular connections, the fact that they grew up "participating in some styles allows them to form similar habits of style that facilitate musical synchrony and thus the deep feelings of identification that music-dance performance can create" (Turino 2008: 19). This shows the importance of understanding the values and meanings represented by musical elements when assembling them.

Conclusion

Three approaches in the adaptation of *ngoma* traditional music to popular music performance have been identified and explained in this article. There is the "integration approach" which involves the blending of various *ngoma* rhythms. The "framework approach" involves the imitation of certain traditional *ngoma* sources which appropriates the *ngoma* rhythmic pattern as a basis for composition and it cannot be altered. The "component approach" is when musicians compose their own tunes and lyrical content for pre-existing, *ngoma* rhythmic patterns.

The discussion throughout shows that the *ngoma* traditional sources have always been an important source which musicians utilize to create distinct, popular compositions. Allowing more compositional freedom, this source has been an important component for popular musician, Oliver Mtukudzi. For Zhakata, the traditional *ngoma* rhythms provide a framework for compositions. The "component approach" differs from the "framework approach" in the sense that the former mainly uses ngoma rhythms to make popular compositions sound more appealing and not necessarily as a basis for composition. Interpreting the *ngoma* music differently, the popular musicians discussed in this article nonetheless treat the rhythmic patterns of the music in similar ways; all their popular songs observed the fundamental rhythmic patterns which according to Kyker are "the center time" for the majority of these popular music genres (2011: 159). It has been noted that the dual production of the traditional Shona rhythms and new tunes has a direct effect on Zimbabwe popular music performance.

Since these rhythmic patterns are associated with specific Shona dance contexts their incorporation within Zimbabwean popular music during performance not only influences particular musical structures but also informs how messages and musical meanings attached to the songs are interpreted. Considering the influence the rhythms associated with *ngoma* genres have on musical composition; that is, in providing the framework for composition, Zimbabwean popular music has a significant role in redefining Shona traditional music. Since new texts can always be performed within the traditional *ngoma* rhythms, this music "constitutes a poetic creation of a contemporary space for repertorial renewal and public display in a global dimension" (Muller 2004, in Kyker 2011: 58).

While I have focused on popular songs that adapt Shona *ngoma* music, there are also cases where popular musicians borrow traditional *ngoma* material and combine it with material from Shona *mbira* music. Research on how combining traditional Shona

mbira music and *ngoma* influence the process of redefining the Shona musical tradition within Zimbabwean popular music is important. Contributing to the growing body of literature on popular music in Zimbabwe such as Chikowero (2015) and Musiyiwa (2013) and others mentioned previously in this article, my research suggests that popular musicians and traditional communities depend on each other for the development and sustainability of traditional musics.

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    2001   *Ziwere, Ziwere:* SHAVACD001-2 (CD)
    2001   *Ndega Zvangu*, Mwana Wamambo: SHAVACD008-2 (CD)
    2005   *Nhava*, Izere Mhepo: HUCD 3102 (CD)
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    2007   *Tsimba Itsoka*, Njuga: SLCD 130 (CD)
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Thomas Mapfumo
    1983   *Mabasa*, Chemera Chaunoda: ASLP 5004 (CD)
    1988   *Zimbabwe Mozambique*, Ndave Kuenda: TML 100 (CD)
Leonard Zhakata
    1995   *Mandishorei*, Karigoni: ZMC (CD)
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