

CONSTRUCTING DAGARA *GYIL* PEDAGOGY: THE LEGACY OF BERNARD WOMA

by

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Abstract: Bernard Woma (1966–2018) was a virtuoso musician and global ambassador of Dagara music. From his extensive outreach, workshops, and touring, Bernard’s work teaching the Dagara *gyil* (xylophone) around the world is recognisable through his detailed compositions emphasising the use of Dagara musical forms. His founding of the Dagara Music Center in Medie, Ghana in 2000, provides instruction on Ghanaian music and dance to hundreds of non-Ghanaian students. Bernard’s pedagogical pieces for *gyil* introduce Dagara music systematically, building students’ technique and facility on the instruments in addition to ensuring student comprehension of Dagara musical practice. Based on sixteen years of apprenticeship with Bernard, this article investigates his pedagogy, detailing his methodical process through his use of cultural and educational scaffolding techniques theorised as “deliberate practice” by Ericsson and Pool (2016) and underscores the importance of recognising the individual African musician in academic and educational settings.

Keywords: Bernard Woma, Dagara, *gyil*, pedagogy.

Introduction

Originally, this article was to investigate Bernard’s work with the Dagara Music Center, the Saakumu Dance Troupe, and his collaborations with universities and performing arts organisations around the world. Unfortunately, Bernard passed away unexpectedly in 2018 leaving many of these collaborations unfinished. As a result, this article investigates the pedagogical legacy Bernard established for teaching his primary instrument, the Dagara *gyil*. This paper first looks at Bernard’s background as a virtuoso *gyil* player and his commitment to family and community as an advocate of Dagara culture. Based upon my sixteen years of study, performance and teaching with Bernard, I offer an examination of his *gyil* pedagogy, particularly for non-African students. Using Ericsson and Pool’s model of “deliberate practice” (2016) I demonstrate the success of Bernard’s pedagogy through an analysis of his instructional compositions.

Bernard Woma – a biography

Bernard Woma was from the *Gbanne* clan of the Dagara people.¹ He was born in 1966 in the village of Hiineteng, located in Northwestern Ghana, near the border with Burkina Faso. As Dagara author, Somé observed, “Dagara believe that every individual comes into this life with a special destiny” (1994: 1). Bernard was born with clenched

¹ The source material for this brief biographical sketch is based on lectures Bernard regularly presented to students visiting his Dagara Music Center, and from the Dagara Music Center website.

fists, as if he was clutching xylophone mallets, indicating a spiritual sign that Bernard was destined to become a *gyil* (xylophone) player (Kyoore 2018: 177). Bernard began playing the *gyil* at two years old and by five, he began study with Ziem Tibo, a *gyil* builder and performer who became his mentor and spiritual guide. Through Tibo's mentorship, Bernard soon began playing at Dagara funerals and ceremonies across the region. By 1982, Bernard moved to Accra to work and became well known throughout the urban Dagara community.

In 1989 he became the solo xylophonist for the Ghana Dance Ensemble and Ghana's National Dance Company. Bernard performed across the globe with artists such as Maya Angelou, Yo Yo Ma, and Glen Velez. Furthermore, he performed for international dignitaries including Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth II, and U.S.A. presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Despite a busy touring and performance schedule, Bernard was determined to bring Dagara culture to a wider audience through his own professional development. He graduated from the State University of New York – Fredonia in 2008, earning a Bachelor's degree in International Studies with minors in History and Arts Administration. He then went on to Indiana University, completing two Masters degrees, one in African Studies (2012) and one in Folklore and Ethnomusicology (2015). His commitment to scholarship on Dagara music and culture led him to present papers and workshops at international conferences such as the Society for Ethnomusicology, the Percussive Arts Society, the African Studies Association, and Africa Network Conference on Teaching Pedagogies. His academic excellence enabled him to teach as an Associate Instructor at SUNY Fredonia, Adjunct Instructor at Indiana University, and serve as the Interim-Director of the World Music Performance Center at West Virginia University. Bernard's personal research into Dagara culture brought deep insight into his performance practice which he readily shared with his non-Dagara students.

Even with his focus on traditional Dagara culture, Bernard sought new ways to introduce the *gyil* to new audiences. His *gyil* concerto, "Gyil Nyog Me Na", which was premiered in 2006 in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall is a testimony of his musicianship, and his interest in the future possibilities of the instrument, thereby reinforcing the notion of the *gyil* pulling together new and diverse audiences, musicians, and communities into Bernard's musical universe.

In alignment with the Dagara belief that everyone is born with a particular destiny, traditional names can also be programmatic (Somé 1994). Bernard's traditional Dagara name, Soglinsog, means "centre." Throughout his career, he created a musical universe, centred around his infectious personality and his instrument, the *gyil*. Although there are many varieties of *gyil*, the Dagara *gyil* is an eighteen-slab, pentatonic xylophone (see Figure 1) used in many facets of Dagara life but most commonly heard at funerals (Godsey 1980, Mensah 1982, Vercelli 2006, Woma 2013).

Using the *gyil* as the gravitational force of his musical universe, Bernard gathered people from all walks of life to build his musical community. As his name, Soglinsog, suggests, Bernard could be compared to the centre spoke of a bicycle wheel, extending



Figure 1. Bernard playing an 18-slab Dagara *gyil*. Photograph by Author.

out in every direction, connecting musicians, students, his culture, and creating new opportunities. Through these opportunities he created the Dagara Music Center (DMC). The DMC is located in the village of Medie in the Ga West District of the Greater Accra Region, and opened in the summer of 2000.

The Dagara Music Center

The Dagara Music Center's Mission is "to combine the teaching and promotion of traditional Ghanaian music, dance, and indigenous cultural art in a community-oriented, multicultural space that provides opportunities for artistic development and educational exchange among diverse communities and peoples" (<http://www.dagaramusic.org/about/>). To date, the DMC has taught over 5000 students, including over 1000 international students through their study-abroad and outreach programs.² The DMC has been the primary resource for seven Master's degree theses, and five doctoral dissertations from students in the United States, United Kingdom, and Ghana.

As the DMC provided a resource for many students and scholars, it also provided immediate opportunities for members of Bernard's community in terms of employment,

² International students from United States, Britain, Germany, Austria, Holland, Japan, Spain, Ireland, Philippines, Cyprus, Italy, Mexico, Estonia, Belgium, Canada, Brazil, India, and China, representing over 100 academic institutions around the world have attended the DMC.

performance, education, and teaching responsibilities. The DMC employs approximately eleven professional educators, ten staff members, and twenty-four performing artists with the Saakumu Dance Troupe (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Saakumu Dance Troupe. Photograph by Author.

Regionally, the DMC works with the local public and private schools in the Ga West District and beyond through the teaching of traditional music, dance and visual arts. The teachers and instructors are from the local community, providing employment opportunities. The Saakumu Dance Troupe and DMC youth ensemble provide entertainment and foster community solidarity among the various ethnic groups within Medie. Researchers and volunteers from outside Ghana who have stayed in the Centre have taught courses in the local schools in various communities to foster exchange possibilities.

Community advocacy and sustainability

Although the DMC's centre of operations is in the south of Ghana, Bernard continuously sought resources for his Dagara community in the Upper West region. Combining his musicality with environmental advocacy, in 2002 Bernard matched the Ghanaian government's contribution to install two freshwater wells in his home village of Hiinteng. These wells continue to provide safe drinking water to the local community and regional school. Ten years later, again using the international resources created

through the DMC, Bernard raised funds to construct a reusable, metal funeral pyre. In the Dagara funeral tradition, the deceased is displayed publicly on a wooden pyre for the members of the community to view and pay their respects. After the funeral, these pyres would need to be destroyed, depleting many local resources. Due to deforestation of the Upper West region, the funeral pyres were becoming increasingly difficult to build. Bernard sought a sustainable solution to maintain these funeral traditions while reducing the ecological impact of funeral practice within his homeland. His campaign raised funds to build two pyres which are still in use by the local community. The pyres serve as physical reminders of Bernard's legacy of sustaining traditional practices.

Methodology

My introduction to Bernard was in 2002 as a student at the DMC. While I was interested in the *gyil*, it was Bernard's sheer virtuosity on the instrument that inspired me. I returned to the DMC in 2004 for six months to conduct research for my DMA dissertation on *gyil* performance practice (Vercelli 2006). During this time, in addition to learning *gyil* performance practice with Bernard, I began to absorb his teaching methods for non-Ghanaians as well. Over the course of six months, I had the privilege of watching him instruct study abroad groups from USA universities for the week or two they would visit the Center. From 2006 through 2018 I returned to the DMC ten times, each time staying between two to eight weeks.³ For many of these visits, I brought my own students as part of a faculty-led study abroad programme. Through these programmes, I observed Bernard teach many students with very limited background in Dagara music. At the end of their week-long stay at the DMC students were able to play Bernard's pedagogical *gyil* pieces successfully. While hosting Bernard in the USA, I was able to observe him employ the same pedagogical methods for university and high school students, elementary programmes, and community groups. During his USA visits, my adoption of his teaching methods was generally critiqued based on how my students performed. Our workshops in 2008 and 2016 at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention focused specifically on his pedagogical method for *gyil*. This presentation of Bernard's pedagogy uses a mixed methods approach combining my practice-based experience learning, playing and teaching *gyil* with an autoethnographic reflection of these experiences.

Pedagogical approach for non-Ghanaians

In my sixteen years of study and collaboration with Bernard, I met with him individually for lessons, performed with him, and observed him teaching classes for non-Ghanaian students in Ghana and in the USA. I regrettably did not see him teach another Dagara *gyil* player. His work with Ghanaian musicians would best be considered as professional mentorship, especially in his involvement with his performing ensemble, the Saakumu Dance Troupe. As many of the members of Saakumu are already recognised musicians and dancers, Bernard's role as artistic director primarily focused on choreography,

³ These visits took place in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014.

staging, and modeling “professionalism” as it would apply to a touring ensemble (Interview 9 April 2007).

Bernard’s *gyil* pedagogy involved “a combination of traditional observation, repetition, and correction” and focused on a set of his own Dagara-inspired compositions to help the non-Dagara student hear melodic musical cycles in the way he understood them (Arnové 2009: 149). The complex Dagara funeral music of *Bine* involves many layers of repeating musical cycles that are in constant dialogue, varying in rhythmic length, from short, bell-like ostinatos to long melodic cycles governing the interaction of the *gyil* with dirge singers. Bernard’s pedagogical pieces are systematically built upon one another, gradually outlining melodic cycles so that the student hears, recognises, and eventually learns to interact within longer cycles appropriately.

Current instructional materials on *gyil* introduce the basics of *gyil* performance through a combination of western cipher notational transcriptions and *gyil* melodies. Strumpf’s *Ghanaian Xylophone Studies* provides an overview of common rhythmic and melodic song patterns performed by the *gyil* player to present the novice with the particular “sound” of Dagara, Lobi (Birifor), and Sisaala music (Strumpf 1970). Wiggins and Kobom’s *Xylophone Music from Ghana* focuses on using the pentatonic *gyil* in music education, also through transcription of Dagara, Sisaala, and recreational songs (Wiggins and Kobom 1992). Bernard similarly addressed the melodic song aspect of Dagara music, but his pedagogy expanded to develop three primary principles: 1) Understanding of intervallic relationships based on Dagara family structure; 2) Hearing the importance of ever-present melodic cycles which define the structure of Dagara music; and 3) Building technical facility for the demands of Dagara music.

Interval “families”

Perhaps the most significant insight Bernard gave in talking about *gyil* music is his concept of intervallic relationships on the instrument. The foundation of Dagara melodic cycles are basic intervallic relationships, but also the physical space between *gyil* notes. As the tuning of the *gyil* varies between communities the intervallic relationship between *gyil* notes is also not standardised (Godsey 1980, Hogan 2011, Mensah 1982). This creates discrepancies in how the *gyil* is heard, but not in how the instrument is played. The relative “key” of the instrument may vary, as well as the sonic intervals of the instrument’s scale, but the physical relationships based on the instrument’s construction, remain constant.

Using the physical relationship between intervals on the instrument, Bernard developed a language based on familial relationships to support instruction and ignore the sonic discrepancies. Bernard’s system is comparable to Kubik’s seminal work on amadinda/akadinda music where he presents Kiganda seconds, fourths, fifths, and so on (Kubik 1994: 260). Although both systems are forgiving in view of sonic disparities between instruments and intervals, Kubik’s model provides a language for a sonic analysis of Kiganda music, while Bernard’s system provides students with a visual and kinesthetic model to use in *gyil* performance. These intervals, which can be applied to any octave of the *gyil* are demonstrated in Figures 3a–3d.

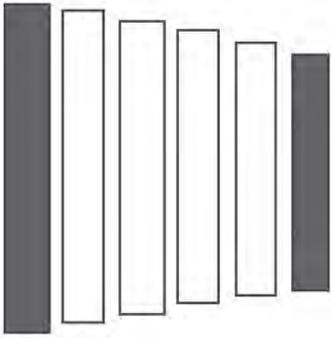


Figure 3a. Brothers/sisters (octaves, 4 slabs between hands).

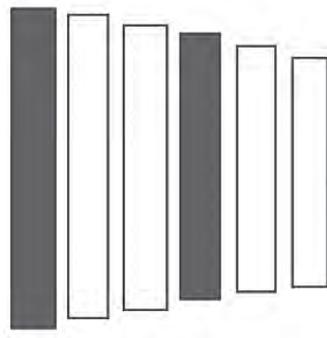


Figure 3b. Uncles (2 slabs between hands).

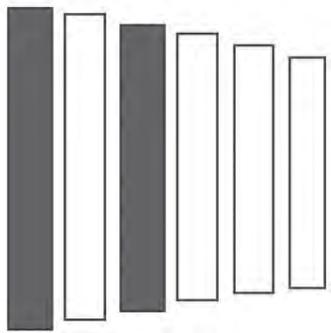


Figure 3c. Nieces (one slab between hands).

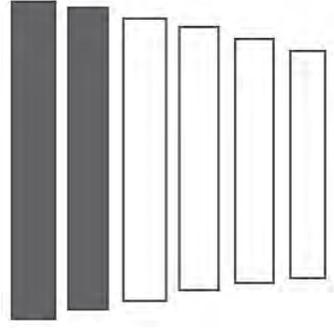


Figure 3d. Friends (one slab next to another).

By removing the sonic difference and addressing the physical consistencies in *gyil* performance, Bernard was reinforcing important Dagara family relationships. Seavoy introduced the concept of family relationships on the Sisaala xylophone in reference to the octave interval as that of mother and child because they are thought to be “almost alike” but does not state Sisaali names for any other interval (Seavoy 1982: 338). The use of labeling relationships between individuals as family – fathers, mothers, brothers, uncles – are critical in Dagara mortuary customs and issues of inheritance (Goody 1962). Mensah has similarly described *gyil* builders and performers who name each slab of the instrument in regard to Dagara social and societal hierarchy stating that these names “suggest a clear orderly heritage as well as blurred and confused mutually borrowed patterns. Their most obvious feature is their depiction of aspects of the social order” (1982: 145). The use of naming individual notes can also be seen in other traditions across Africa, specifically the mbira and balafon (Berliner 1978, Charry 2000). Bernard’s use of common family relationships between *gyil* intervals reinforces his Dagara social values by creating an egalitarian schema to overcome sonic differences between physical relationships. The identification of these relationships then becomes the foundation of establishing and understanding the underlying melodic cycles of Dagara *gyil* music.

Teaching melodic cycles (*yagme*)

To help students understand the musical structure of Dagara music, Bernard focused his attention on teaching common Dagara melodic cycles. These cycles, called *yagme* in the Dagara language, provide a foundational harmonic accompaniment for many Dagara *gyil* repertoires. On occasion these cycles are referred to as *lenu*. *Yagme* can be relatively short and simple or as is the case in funeral music of *Bine*, long and complex. Bernard focused his classes and lessons on making the Dagara recreational music of *Bewaa* accessible to the novice *gyil* player and easy to learn. To develop accessibility he created a series of pedagogical pieces which challenge students rhythmically, build technical facility on the *gyil*, but most importantly, reveal the underlying melodic cycle governing the musical structure.

Using his composition “Ni Wa Seb”, Bernard first introduced students to creating *gyil* structure. Using a set of “brothers” or octaves as guiding points, a *gyil* player can divide the octave into two sets of bichords or “nieces.” Bernard labelled the sets “A” and “B” in order to conceptualise the form for students. Figures 4a and 4b demonstrate the two sets of “nieces” within the octave. Once the “nieces” intervals were established, Bernard introduced the melodic *yagme* structure of Ni Wa Seb by creating a repeated cycle as AABB.

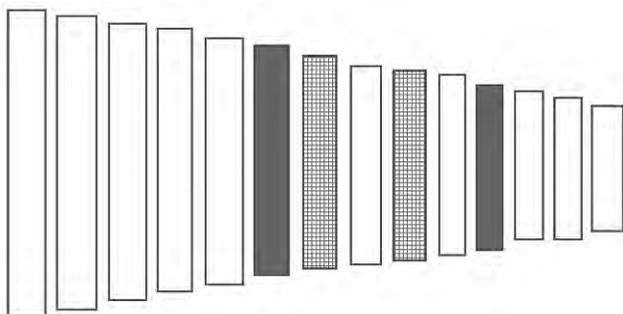


Figure 4a. “Ni Wa Seb” brothers with niece’s interval “A.”

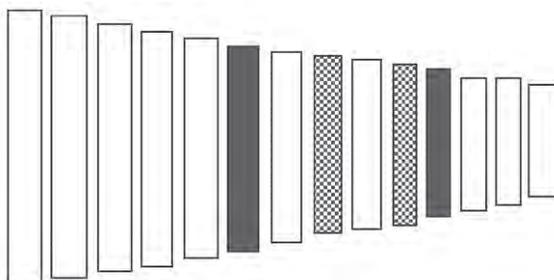


Figure 4b. “Ni Wa Seb” brothers with niece’s interval “B.”

The “Ni Wa Seb” melody and *yagme* structure is shown in Figure 5. Although this method of transcription is not perfect in identifying the exact pitch discrepancies of the *gyil*, (see also Strumpf 1994), Transcription 1 clearly demonstrates the repeated octave “brothers” relationship and the intervallic distances of the “nieces.”



Transcription 1. Primary melody for “Ni Wa Seb” outlining the *yagme* melodic cycle.
Transcription by Author.

As students progressed, Bernard introduced the primary *yagme* to the Dagara recreational music of *Bewaa*. *Bewaa* builds upon the basic A/B principle introduced in “Ni Wa Seb” (see Figures 5a and 5b) by developing it into a longer cycle.

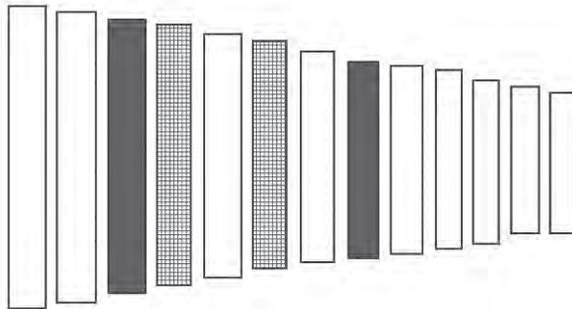


Figure 5a. *Bewaa* “A” nieces.

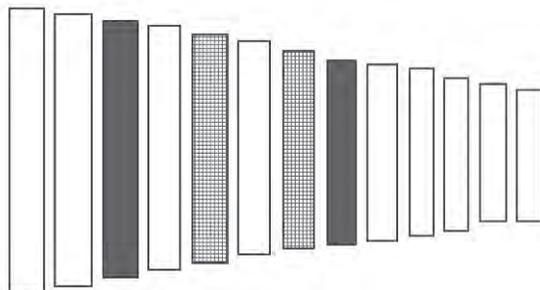


Figure 5b. *Bewaa* “B” nieces.

Bernard was particularly fond of drawing the following chart (Figure 6) on an old chalkboard at the DMC to help students visualise the *Bewaa* cycle. Bernard's pedagogical presentation using the labeled "nieces" builds a mental image of the cycle based on the kinesthetics of the instrument and it allows students to hear, see, and feel the *Bewaa yagme* in performance.

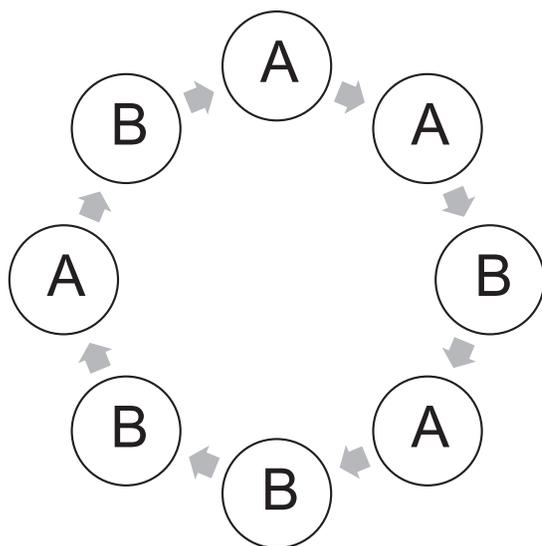


Figure 6. Underlying *Bewaa yagme* cycle.

Bernard started the *yagme* at the top of the illustration creating the pattern AABA BBAB, and required students to demonstrate their understanding of the cycle by performing a specific number of full or partial repetitions. By performing the *yagme* cycle in a varying number of repetitions, the student had to demonstrate accuracy of notes within the cycle, and comprehension of the *yagme* as a cyclical phrase with multiple points of entry and ending. Upon satisfactory demonstration of repeating the cycles, Bernard demonstrated how to incorporate songs within the cyclical format. These songs have specific relationships to the *yagme*, dictating where in the cycle they begin. If the student missed the entrance, Bernard had them wait until the cycle repeated, in similar method to that described by Anderson in learning Kiganda *amadinda* music (Anderson 1968). Many songs do not start at the top of the *yagme* cycle but instead begin in the last quarter AB. This visual aid helps the student coordinate song entrances by combining auditory, visual, and kinesthetic cues.

In performance, a Dagara musician would rarely stick to a single interpretation of the *yagme*, as evident in a variety of recordings.⁴ Bernard's distillation of a single *Bewaa* accompaniment helps students hear the cycle throughout the piece. In a typical

⁴ See Audio and Video References for list of recordings containing *Bewaa* repertoire.

Bewaa performance, the *gyil* player performs the *yagme* in one hand and plays a *kpagru* by striking the lowest note of the *gyil* with the wooden end of the *gyil* mallet in the other. In Dagara music, the *kpagru* provides a rhythmic time-line to accompany the *gyil*, *kuor* drum, and dancers. As the tempo for *Bewaa* is generally fast, the *gyil* player often uses a variety of *yagme* patterns which imply the underlying harmonic structure, but remain physically comfortable to be played for a long time. Although the implied *yagme* is interpretable to the Dagara musician, Bernard's use of a "complete" *yagme* cycle specifically serves as an additional level of musical support to the non-Dagara musician. This arrangement requires an additional performer for the *kpagru*, allowing students to learn and fulfill multiple roles within the ensemble (see Transcription 2).

Transcription 2 consists of two systems of musical notation. Each system has two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Kpagru' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Gyl'. Both staves are in 2/4 time. The Kpagru part consists of a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Gyl part consists of a melodic line with four measures, each containing a note with a box above it labeled 'A', 'A', 'B', and 'A' respectively. The first system ends with a double bar line and repeat dots. The second system continues the Kpagru pattern and the Gyl melodic line, with the Gyl part ending in a double bar line and repeat dots.

Transcription 2. Full *yagme* with *kpagru* (two players). Transcription by Author.

Once students had gained this primary level of understanding, Bernard then demonstrated how the *kpagru* and *yagme* can be combined by a single player, focusing their attention on the coordination required to perform the musical composite (see Transcription 3).

Transcription 3 consists of three systems of musical notation. The top system has two staves: 'Gyl' (bottom) and 'Kpagru' (top). The Gyl staff has a melodic line with four measures, each containing a note with a box above it labeled 'A', 'A', 'B', and 'A' respectively. The Kpagru staff has a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second system has two staves: 'Gyl' (bottom) and 'Kpagru' (top). The Gyl staff has a melodic line with four measures, each containing a note with a box above it labeled 'B', 'B', 'A', and 'B' respectively. The Kpagru staff has a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The third system has two staves: 'Gyl' (bottom) and 'Kpagru' (top). The Gyl staff has a melodic line with four measures, each containing a note with a box above it labeled 'B', 'B', 'A', and 'B' respectively. The Kpagru staff has a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. All systems end with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Transcription 3. *Yagme* with *kpagru* (one player). Transcription by Author.

Coordination as a basis for improvisation

To increase technical facility on the *gyil*, Bernard presented students with repertoire to build stamina and accuracy in their non-dominant hand while developing coordination and improvisational motives in the other hand. Bernard was left-handed, and given the flexibility of *gyil* performance, preferred to sit at the *gyil* with the lowest notes on his right side, keeping his dominant left-hand on the upper register. In the sixteen years I observed Bernard teach, I did not see any non-Ghanaians who were left-handed adopt this approach. Non-Ghanaian students kept the instrument oriented with the lowest notes on the left side of the body, similar to a piano. This kept the *yagme* in the left hand while rhythmic and melodic improvisations were focused on the right hand.

Bernard's approach to coordination and rhythmic layering closely resembles that of prominent method books for the drum set, the primary difference being many drum set texts keep the static rhythm in the dominant hand on a hi hat or ride cymbal while the non-dominant hand or foot (bass drum) provides embellishment (Chapin 2002, Chester 1985, Erskine 1987). In drum set terminology, this coordination is commonly referred to as "independence" of limbs and can be conceptualised as a state of control between "hear[ing] a rhythmical or other musical elemental idea inside of your head" and being able to "play it on drums without being limited by one of your hands or feet dictating *what* should go *where*" (Erskine 1985: 19). Bernard's use of independence-building techniques can be seen in his teaching of the Birifor funeral song, "Ganda Yina", where he develops the non-dominant hand ostinato while introducing a series of rhythmic subdivisions in the dominant hand, performed on the highest note of the *gyil*. The formal structure of "Ganda Yina" closely relates to his "Ni Wa Seb" example, keeping to a similar A/B structure that is familiar while focusing attention on the improvisational coordination in the dominant hand.

The example in Transcription 4, transcribed from an introductory *gyil* lesson in 2002, demonstrates how Bernard gradually introduced the dominant hand against the melodic ostinato. This rhythmic exercise reinforces coordination between the two hands, but also challenges the player to hear a variety of rhythmic subdivisions and beat emphases. As the student progressed, Bernard encouraged the mixing of these rhythmic

The image displays two musical staves for the Gyil instrument. The top staff is in 6/8 time and features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic ostinato in the left hand. The bottom staff is in 7/8 time and features a more complex melodic line in the right hand and the same rhythmic ostinato in the left hand. Both staves include repeat signs and double bar lines.

Transcription 4. "Ganda Yina" rhythmic coordination/improvisation exercise. Transcription by Author.

ideas, often including a re-orchestration on the top two notes of the *gyil*, to develop the student's vocabulary for improvisation. Bernard introduced new repertoire and had the student repeat the process with various *yagme* ostinati. Through these exercises for coordination, students would gain technical facility on the instrument in preparation for future repertoire. By reversing the hands, students could also use the same method to develop the independence necessary for common *yagme* and *kpagru* combinations.

Deliberate practice

Bernard's pedagogical scaffolding of Dagara musical ideas helps the student hear Dagara music as well as perform it. His systematic approach gives students achievable musical goals necessary to demonstrate proficiency on the *gyil* and a basic understanding of Dagara music. These achievable goals are of primary importance to what Ericsson and Pool label as "deliberate practice" (Ericsson and Pool 2016). According to Ericsson and Pool, deliberate practice requires the guidance of an expert in a highly developed field, such as musical performance, so that the expert can "provide practice activities designed to help a student improve his or her performance" (*ibid.*: 98). Specifically, Bernard's refined pedagogy concisely translates the complexities of Dagara music for those with little or no prior experience with the subject, and provides a clear method for students to continue learning Dagara music in his absence. Close examination of the seven characteristics Ericsson proposes for deliberate practice demonstrate how Bernard used his musical and cultural expertise to empower non-Dagara students to learn Dagara music more efficiently:

1. Deliberate practice requires the skills of a teacher who demonstrates the skills and abilities of expert performers. Bernard's background as an international *gyil* virtuoso provided him with the necessary musical and cultural knowledge of an expert.
2. Deliberate practice takes place outside of one's comfort zone. Bernard's students are primarily non-Dagara and unfamiliar with Dagara musical systems despite any prior musical background.
3. Deliberate practice involves well-defined, specific goals. It is not aimed at vague overall improvement. Bernard's pedagogical pieces require students to perform specific arrangements and accomplish specific technical and conceptual tasks. Through study and performance of Bernard's individual compositions, students gain a foundation for a more general comprehension of Dagara music.
4. Deliberate practice requires a person's full attention. By slightly varying performance tasks such as demonstrating *yagme* cycles through a specific number of full or partial repetitions, or using rhythmic displacement as exercises for coordination, students remain engaged to focused on details.
5. Deliberate practice involves feedback and modification. Bernard's gradual introduction and progression of repertoire provide space for the necessary accommodations of student learning. Verbal feedback often consisted of the "5000 Rule" where a student would jokingly owe Bernard 5000 cedis (Ghanaian currency) for making a mistake.

6. Deliberate practice depends on effective mental representations. Bernard's illustration of the *Bewaa yagme* provides visual representation and underscores the importance of using audiation – the mental realisation of music – to hear and recognise the cycle.
7. Deliberate practice involves building or modifying previously acquired skills – Bernard's pedagogical pieces show a linear progression, gradually building upon *gyil* technique as well as the students' conceptualisation of Dagara musical elements.

Ultimately, Bernard's pedagogy provides an achievable and succinct method for the translation of Dagara musical practice for non-Dagara musicians and performers. His emphasis on family relationships as a defining characteristic of his pedagogy builds a sense of trust, allowing students to perform with him regardless of their length of study on the *gyil*, and providing the appropriate sensation of Dagara performance. I was fortunate to share in many formal and informal performances with Bernard, and the experience was always the same. No matter the situation or venue, Bernard's physical command of the instrument in terms of volume, accuracy, tempo, and endurance were unmatched. Musically, he could push one player to the edge of their physical capabilities, while at the same time holding back enough to keep the another player within their limits. As Locke stated in his analysis of Dagbamba pedagogy, "Humble honesty requires recognition of the limits of our achievement, but we should not overlook the fact that a very crucial aspect of Damba drumming for the Dagbamba lies in what we *are* learning: the power of its music" (Locke 1990: 7). While Bernard's virtuosity took a lifetime to achieve, his detailed pedagogy allows the student to gain an introduction to the power of Dagara music.

Conclusion

Bernard has left a considerable legacy. Recognising the role of the individual African musician, educator, and performer is critical in discussing African musical pedagogy. As Kidula states, "Insights by African scholars [musicians] from the continent situated in music and in other disciplines expand the vista of researchers in Europe and North America. They may provide pieces to a puzzle in our interconnected and multilayered musical encounters" (2006: 110). Bernard's commitment to his Dagara community provided new and sustainable practices, such as a reusable funeral pyre, while his commitment to sustainable pedagogy continues to provide the non-Dagara student an important method of learning Dagara music on its own terms.

To measure the effectiveness of Bernard's pedagogy, one can easily look to the thousands of students who have studied at the DMC since it opened in 2000, or the hundreds, if not thousands, of students Bernard has worked with in the USA and Europe. Although the sheer number of students that have studied with Bernard is impressive, his *gyil* legacy will be sustained by his contribution of a structure in which to learn and understand Dagara music more comprehensively. As Locke observed in determining the foundation for Dagbamba music study, "We want to know not only what Damba sounds like but how it feels to play it, and the rationale that guides

performance decisions... its sensuous reality in felt bodily motion and perceived sound” (Locke 1990: 2–3). Bernard’s carefully constructed pedagogy has provided a basis for understanding the physicality of the *gyil*, the rationale for musical interactions, and the process of developing creative expression through coordination. His use of elementary compositions is crucial in this development. By providing a clear and logical progression of skills that facilitate student development, Bernard has empowered the student to better understand Dagara music as a whole.

Bernard’s unexpected passing left a tremendous gap in his *gyil* universe. Fortunately, through the work of the Dagara Music Center and Bernard’s detailed pedagogy his *gyil* legacy will continue.

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