

# A WOMAN CAN SING AND DANCE BUT CANNOT DANCE WITH HIGH LEAPS: MUSICAL PERFORMANCE OF THE HAYA OF BUKOBA, TANZANIA

by

MATHAYO NDOMONDO

## Introduction

In the area covering the present day Muleba and Bukoba Urban and Bukoba Rural Districts, as is the case in other areas where Buhaya culture is predominant in the Kagera region in Tanzania, musical performances – singing, dancing, and playing of musical instruments – are integral parts of everyday life. As is the case in many African societies, among the Haya musical performances are inseparable from the daily events and the social, political and cultural life of the community. Traditionally, events such as marriage, funerals, worship, installation, praise, and exaltation of kings (*omukama*), celebratory war dances (*omutoro*) and heroic recitations or self-praise recitations (*ebyebugo*), healing practices such as cleansing and chasing away evil spirits, and all occasions calling for celebration produced performances. In the contemporary Haya world, some such events (for example, war dances and installation of traditional leaders) have ceased, but the musical performances have been re-contextualized for religious, social, health and political purposes.

Participation in music-making in a variety of musical genres of the Haya music-culture which are associated with secular and sacred functions is traditionally on the basis of gender, social role and category, and age of the participants. The war dance (*omutoro*) and heroic recitations (usually recited within the *omutoro* dance, and sometimes in other avenues) were the domains of men (Mulokozi 2002 and Ndibalema 2008). *Enanga* (a seven or eight string trough zither) poetic tradition, which traditionally was associated with the heroic milieu<sup>1</sup>, was also the privilege of the male bards. Songs and dances associated with marriage teachings for the bride and those associated with female-based activities such as harvesting had women as main participants. During a lengthy interview with Bibi Getruda Kokushobera, an old woman who lives in Muleba District who served as one of my principal informants, she sang and danced for me a number of songs from the marriage teachings repertoire of the Haya. These days, however, mixed-gender performances are not uncommon even in those genres traditionally meant for single-

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mugyabuso M. Mulokozi (2002: 43), in addition to heroic narrative poetry (narratives that tell stories about heroic deeds) non-heroic narrative poetry exist side by side with non-narrative poetry whose defining features are short songs and recitals that do not tell stories.

gender participants. The types of musical performances that I watched during my research in the Bukoba Urban and Bukoba Rural Districts were re-worked and re-contextualized wedding songs and dances, war dances, songs from *enanga* music and children's games, all of which had mixed-gender performers.

Remarking on the recontextualization of the older music traditions of the Haya for current social-political purposes, Father Cornelius Mushumbushi, a composer for the KAKAU Band who also serves as a *Baba Paroko* (a Parish Father) of Bumai Parish in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bukoba, informed me that many of his compositions are based on a variety of the music traditions of the Haya. The piece, *Timpya Tinsorora*, which addresses the HIV/AIDS pandemic and forms an integral part of this discussion, originated in a children's stepping stones game. *Omwana Wo Mwiru*, another song by the KAKAU band which also focuses on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, emanated from *enanga* music (Personal Communication, Father C. Mushumbushi, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009). In these performances I noted a complex reflection of Haya gender ideology and gendered roles and identities which were manifested through playing of musical instruments, dancing styles and patterns, vocal roles, and dress. Such manifestations provided me with answers to my research question: how are socially constructed gender ideologies and gender relations reflected and upheld, redefined, negotiated, and contested in musical performances of the Haya?<sup>2</sup>

In this article I discuss the performance of gendered identities, namely masculinity and femininity—as enacted during musical performances that address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It should be noted from the outset that although the musical performances discussed here took place in the context of the campaigns against the HIV/AIDS pandemic (which was the major objective of my comprehensive research on the topic), the focus of my analysis will not be on the efficacy of performances in addressing HIV/AIDS. In view of this, the article, except for only one verse of poetic recitation, does not attempt any textual analysis of the songs about HIV/AIDS. Instead, I will concentrate on the display of gendered identities through the body and dress employed in the performances enacted by the selected performing groups. In what follows, I

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<sup>2</sup> I am deeply indebted to the performers of the following artistic groups, KAKAU Band, Abaragomora Dance Group, AMWAVU Poets, and CARITAS Choir, based in the Bukoba Urban and Bukoba Rural Districts, for allowing me to watch their musical performances and share with me their lives, knowledge and experience about the music traditions of the Haya people, and the use of music in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Kagera Region. I am particularly grateful to Mzee Festos Kaiza, Andrew Kagya, Sarah Ibrahim, Bi Getruda Kokushobera, Evarista Rugeiyamu, and Father Cornelius Mushumbushi for patiently taking time to work with me and to Mulokozi Mugyabuso for his valuable inputs about the gender-based division of work among the Haya and their music traditions. The reviewers for *African Music* have given me very constructive criticism upon which this article has relied hugely. My thanks go to those whose commentaries on this and related research have assisted in writing this article, especially Veit Erlmann, Sonia Seeman, Toyin Falola, Michael Tusa, and Robin Moore. Research carried out in 2008-2009 was funded by IFP-Ford Foundation. Further research between 2011 and 2012 and preparation of this article was funded by an African Humanities Program Fellowship of the American Council of Learned Societies financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

demonstrate how these identities are negotiated by various means, specifically bodily movements, dress, and positions traditionally associated with one gender but now taken up by another, or shared between them. I look at the intersection of the body and sound in displaying not only how music serves as a means of documenting and analyzing gender hegemonies and identities, but also the ability of the body to operate as a significant political tool towards understanding and changing society. By so doing I show that performance is more than a space for message-oriented or crowd-attracting activity, but serves as a site upon which readings of the social transformation of gender roles can take place.

Use of the arts to attract crowds to social-political events and as channels for disseminating ‘messages’ that educate the people about certain issues at hand is common in Tanzania, as elsewhere in Africa and beyond. During the early days of the campaigns against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Tanzania, in many instances musical performance groups were incorporated as crowd-pullers. Far from addressing HIV/AIDS related issues during events organized around HIV/AIDS, most performing groups only played the role of attracting people’s attention to the events. The role of artists was to entertain, thereby leaving the educational component of the event to health officers. This manner of proceedings was largely due to artists’ lack of the necessary knowledge about HIV/AIDS that would transform them from being mere entertainers to edutainers.

Later on, with increased knowledge about the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the part of the artists, they were employed in the campaigns not only to entertain, but also create awareness among those in attendance about the pandemic. This development contributed significantly in directing the major focus of the organizers and sponsors of such events on the verbal aspect of the performance – song texts – as the channel through which information about HIV/AIDS is delivered. After watching several such performances I realized that the people watching the performances were equally and perhaps even more fascinated by the bodily movements and dancing patterns as they were with the song texts. As Jonas Frykman maintains, the body is the space upon which statements of power are most clearly broadcast. It is a space upon which political violence crops up and is interpreted and where the articulation of resistance is done (1994: 66).

It is against this backdrop that I decided the non-verbal aspect of performance was another area of observation upon which my analysis of the interrelations of music, gender and power needed to focus. In this article, my argument that performance is more than a space for message-oriented or crowd-attracting activity derives from realization that, in the music culture of the Haya, the non-verbal (choreographic) aspect of a dance performance - an integral component of the performance - has received scant attention in regard to its contribution to understanding society, and also changing it. Instead, the focus has been on the verbal aspect of the performances - the song text and its signification process.

### **Performance contexts**

I analyze performances of Abaragomora, a dance group in Bulinda Village in Bukoba Rural District, and KAKAU (Kanisa Katoliki Dhidi ya UKIMWI – Catholic Church against HIV/AIDS), a popular music band in Bukoba Urban District. The two performances took place three months apart. Through the performance of Abaragomora I show how the dance patterns uphold expected gendered roles, as the masculine attributes are only performed by the male performers. Through the performance of KAKAU I show how women dancers challenge the established order within the context of a musical performance by appropriating masculine attributes through dance patterns and dress. The dance patterns in which women execute movements involving high jumps, which traditionally are the privilege of the male dancers, demonstrate a deviation from the expected social norms for women, who are supposed to execute restrained dancing patterns. The adopted dress serves as a source of empowerment, as it enables women to actively participate in the education process about HIV/AIDS. I demonstrate that female dancers are contravening expected social norms, and that this reveals ways cultural spaces created through music about HIV/AIDS has served to redirect social instruction.

This ethnographic work was carried out from September 2008 to May 2009, with short visits done between October 2011 and May 2012. Participant observation was my principle research method since it provided me with ground-level experience of learning and observation (see Geertz 1988; Myers 1992; and Marcus 1998). Additionally, this method enabled me to utilize an anthropological approach referred to as a “discourse-centered”, which facilitates the discovery of social meanings by focusing primarily on “spontaneously” occurring discourse in daily social interactions, in contrast to events or performances organized by the researcher (Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991). By videotaping, sound/voice-recording, photographing, and then analyzing performance practices and audience reception, I was able to use feedback interviews to elicit comments and explanations from individuals regarding their own performances. Thus, interviews, both formal and informal, were also integral parts of my research. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected informants considered to possess required information on the subject matter. Those interviewed included performers and selected members of the audience, government officials, and other people in the society considered to possess cultural and musical knowledge of the Haya people.

Kiswahili was the major language of communication. Born and raised in Tanzania and being fluent in Kiswahili, communicating with the people while in the field was not a problem for me. However, the performances that I observed in Bukoba and those recorded on CD, VCD, VHS, and DVD tended to mix Kiswahili and the Kihaya languages. I therefore requested translation assistance of the Kihaya from the performers of the respective groups and other Haya speaking people were consulted for cross-checking purposes.

**Performance one: *Balibona ninkenyuka* (I will dance rigorously until they see me breaking into pieces) and *Akanana* (A Young Girl) [CD track 1]: Abaragomora at Bulinda**

It is Monday evening, March 30, 2009. The scene is Bulinda Village, about 45 kilometers from Bukoba Township, where we watch a musical performance done by Abaragomora group. The performance takes place at the village's primary school premises. Many other people are present, including school children. Bulinda is one of the hardest hit villages in Kagera region by HIV/AIDS. Throughout our journey to this place Mzee Kaiza keeps pointing at houses, empty after their inhabitants perished from the pandemic. After friendly exchanges of greetings with the performers of the Abaragomora group and getting to know each other, the performance is ready to start. All performers have put on short-sleeve T-shirts, assorted-colour tracksuit pants (for males), a casual skirt (for the one female performer), and dyed *vishenshe* (raffia skirts) tied around the waist on top of the pants and skirt. All performers are barefoot. Mzee Kaiza, who is also a member and one of the leaders of this group, gets dressed and joins the other performers.

Two dances, *balibona ninkenyuka* and *akanana*, each spanning approximately 10-15 minutes, are performed one after another. Both dances begin with the dancers entering the performance space in two lines, while singing. The dances consist of one step forward with the right leg in front, slightly grinding the ground, a waist-shake, then one step back with the torso bent downward allowing both hands to reach out and touch the ground, the left leg hitting the ground, and then up the torso goes followed by a step forward. This pattern goes on until the dancers get to the middle of the performance area, where they form a semi-circle facing the direction where the musicians are positioned. The musicians accompanying the dancers include a drummer playing three traditional Haya drums (*engoma*), a whistle blower (a *firimbi*), and the other two playing gourd-shakers, and *baragumu* (*enzamba*) also known as animal horn, respectively. The dancers move to a kneeling position and they start clapping to signal the commencement of *kukuta* (climax of the dance), performed in solo and or duet dancing. It is here where the sweetness and mastery of the dancing resides—a moment for the display of individual dancer's skills. The emphasis is on both energetic stomping and grinding (*kulibata*) of the ground. The stomping legs movement corresponds very closely with the shake of the waist. This movement of the waist is usually amplified by the vigorous rotation of *vishenshe* tied around the dancer's waist.

Dancers take turns in entering the middle of the semicircle to improvise various patterns of the grinding and stomping motifs (see Figures 1-2). The patterns range from single-leg stomping with a straight torso or a coiled torso that is vigorously moving forward and backward with suspended makeshift fall-off-on the ground movements, to leaping high in the air with a thudding two-leg landing, *thiii!* When performing these patterns the dancer's space moves between the middle of the semicircle to the very front of the musicians. The performance of the single-dancer solo pattern is followed by a one-on-one contest, with each dancer attempts to outsmart the other

by performing high upward leaps and heavy ground-pounding movements, decorated by a variety of bodily gestures and movements. The intensity of the *kukuta* moment is highly motivated by the shouts and clapping of the fellow dancers sitting in the semicircle, and the musicians whose drumming patterns resonate with the movements of the dancers.



**Figures 1-2.** *Abaragomora* performers at Bulinda during *kukuta* moment. Photos by author.

The female dancer's movements were more or less the same as those of the male dancers but with an emphasis on the waist. Most of the dance movements involving hard thudding of the ground and high leaps were performed by male dancers. However, to determine differences in the manner of executing the 'hitting-and-grinding-the-ground' movements between those of the female and male dancers would be utterly difficult. After all dancers have performed their solos, they exit the performance space using their entry dance.

**Performance two: *Timpya Tinsorora* (I neither get burnt nor perish) [CD track 2]: KAKAU band at Buyekela**

**Lyrics *Timpya Tinsorora***

You are always saying that nothing will go wrong, but still you are not changing your lifestyle. The outcome of your immoral life will be disastrous,  
 You will perish like a breaking grass,  
 You will be seen drying like a leaf.

You are always called upon to change your attitudes, but you can't listen!  
 Why can't you listen to your parents, religious, and political leaders or your elders?  
 You don't even listen to the Almighty God.

Please look around and see how the world is on fire,  
 Your life style is increasing the spread of AIDS.



Your life style will increase the number of orphans in our community  
 Your life style will bring deep sorrow to your family and the community at large.

The problems you are putting yourself into can easily be a burden to others  
 The moment you become ill you will require care,  
 Your family members will abandon other economically productive activities to take care of you  
 This will affect not only the economic situation of your family, but also that of the nation.

We know that it's your obligation to look after your life  
 But we would like to take this opportunity to caution you on the most destructive aspects in life  
 Always live a life with purpose, avoid immoral life.  
 Be serious with what you do, avoid destroying your life

(Translation from Luhaya to English by KAKAU band)

The event takes place right in front of Buyekela Sokoni (Buyekela Market) areas, in Buyekela Ward in one of the high-density suburbs in Bukoba Urban District. It is about ten minutes walking distance from the center of Bukoba town and about the same distance from the District's main offices. Performing groups in attendance include women living with HIV/AIDS (*Akina Mama Wanaoishi na Virusi ya Ukimwi - AMWAVU*), the CARITAS women's choir group, Rinaz Band, Lugoroile dancing group, Yagi-Ishi Rap-and-Drama group, and KAKAU Band. The composition of the KAKAU performers includes a keyboardist, percussionist, solo guitarist, rhythm guitarist, and bassist. In contrast to Abaragamora whose musical instruments were chiefly traditional ones, KAKAU Band employs electronic and modern instruments.



Figure 3. KAKAU band performers executing high leap movements during *kukuta* moment on the World AIDS Day ceremony at Buyekela, Bukoba, December 1, 2008. Photo by author.



Figure 4. A female performer of KAKAU band executing shuffling *kulibata* motif during *kukuta* moment, on the World AIDS Day ceremony at Buyekela, Bukoba, December 1, 2008. Photo by author.

Standing behind the microphones are four singers: two male and two female. The male singers are dressed in *kitenge*<sup>3</sup> long-sleeve shirts, casual pants, and shoes. The female singers on the other hand, have put on a costume of green-and-black *kitenge* style free size short-sleeve blouse and pants. Tied around the waist on top of the pants is a dyed *kishenshe*. In front of the musicians and singers standing in a line are four dancers, two male and two female. Like the female singers, the female dancers are dressed in multi-colored short sleeve blouses and pants, and wear dyed *vishenshe* tied around the waist. The length of the pants of the female dancers is slightly above the ankle. The male dancers' costume consists of blue T-shirts and multi-colored pants similar to the female pants, but theirs have a fringe hanging from the knee downward. They too have *vishenshe* decorated with an assortment of colors tied to their waists.

The performance presents a mixture of instrumental, vocal lyrics with HIV/AIDS text, and a variety of dance formations and patterns. Seven dancing patterns are repeated throughout the performance. Instrumental music ushers in the dancers with the first pattern of dance movements: left and right swaying of the body, and then a light waist-

<sup>3</sup> The name is popularly used in eastern, southern and central Africa to refer to an African garment often worn by women wrapped around the chest or waist. These days, men use the garment to make shirts or suit-coats.



and-foot-work in the middle with arms rigorously swung up and down. A singer brings in the second dancing pattern, one step to the left and one step to the right making a pause in the middle where hip swaying and waist wriggling is done. The third dancing pattern comprises intricate footwork with raised legs for both female and male dancers: three steps left and waist work, and repetition of the pattern to the right. The chorus that follows introduces the fourth dancing pattern in which footwork is intensified and arms waving up and down. The keyboard is used to introduce another dancing pattern when the dancers make a rigorous backward turn with a raised leg. Another vocal part introduces new dancing patterns: the movements are now more varied and rigorous. The dancers stomp the ground and push their legs sideways before making a powerful raised backward kick as the torso slightly bends forward. The backward kick also makes the dancers turn backward and come face to face with the singers and musicians.

A complete turn of the performance occurs when another dancing pattern is introduced with changes of the rhythm. The dancers perform elaborate high leaps, executed not in a particular formation; rather the dancers are scattered all over the performance space walking three steps and all at once leaping high into the air, and finish with a soft landing (see Figure 3). After such a cocktail of movement patterns it is the moment of *kukuta*. No single style of dancing during the *kukuta* moment can be defined here because the dancers dance in whatever style they want, in duets or solo. There is no clear distinction between dancing patterns designated for men and those for women. If it is hard stomping or grinding the ground both female and male dancers can be seen doing it in the same manner. So, female and male dancers take turns in displaying various dancing styles until all have been done. It is the *kukuta* moment performed by the female singers that brings the performance to an end.

### **Masculinity theorized**

Masculinity has been linked with the notion of what it implies “to be a man”. In view of this notion, masculinity is spoken in terms of what men do to show off their manliness. For this reason Michael Herzfeld (1985: 46) uses the expression “being good at being a man” as an appropriate way of describing markers of manhood. Cross-culturally attributes such as toughness, aggressiveness, stoicism, economic capacity to support households, and sexuality are considered to be markers of manhood and thus linked to the notion of masculinity (Herzfeld 1985; Gilmore 1990; Brown et al 2005). Rather than a natural attribute as it was thought in the past, scholars today consider masculinity to be a fluid and social construct because it is a culturally imposed ideal to which men must conform to prove their manliness.

Unfortunately, the attempt to theorize, analyze and define masculinity enacts gender exclusivity in that it fails to demystify the evolvment and performance of masculinity by females. The attempt seems to ignore the sociopolitical and economic transformations that occur in society in which masculinity is contested and undermined in relation to changing perspectives on what constitute both womanhood and manhood due to developing female’s masculine roles and attributes. It is within this changing situation

that men's positions as legislators and heads of households become insecure, and their masculine attributes not only deteriorate but are also constantly questioned and challenged (Oliven 1988; Walser 1993; Gutmann 1997b; Silberschmidt 1999; Meintjes 2004; Fox 2004).

These issues of contradictions, fluidity, and multiplicity of identities cut across this article in respect of the musical performances I watched in Bukoba districts in Kagera region, Tanzania. As I demonstrate in this article, the fluidity of gender identities in the selected musical performances serve to not only deconstruct entrenched gender ideologies among the Haya through women's subversion of the expected social norms by means of appropriating male's dance movements and dress, but also to propose change.

### **The performance of masculinity among the Haya**

An understanding of Haya masculinity should take into account the gender constructs and activities occurring in Haya everyday life. These constructs can be observed in political life, work, and expressive culture. With regard to gender ideals, patriarchal authority is still considered decisive and is very strongly observed. This is evident in the inheritance traditions pertaining to land and other properties and the provision of education in which, more often than not, male rather than female children are preferred (Corry 1971; Weiss 1996; Lugalla et al. 1999: 388). Gender ideals are also central to issues governing economics, politics, sexuality, and the division of labor.

At this juncture, it is important to present, however briefly, the traditional construction of gender and gender relations, what I mean by gendered identities, and what it means to be a male and a female within the traditional Haya worldview. Firstly, gender construction among the Haya is considered both a cultural and a biological discourse. That is, biology has an important role in the construction of gender because to some degree there is a connection between the physical appearance and the social cultural understanding of gender among the Haya (Mutembei 2001). As Mutembei (2001:47) puts it:

“... a distinction is made between gender attribution which to some extent is associated with physical appearance, and gender roles which are based on daily activities. It would sound awkward to deny physical appearance totally as not being related to the concept of gender...  
[ ] ... to Haya people, the primary meaning of being a man or a woman is restricted to sex as it is defined through culture”.

Secondly, I approach the question of gendered identities from the viewpoint of the theory of gender performativity in relation to conceptualizations of gender and identities. Thus, I use the term 'gendered identities' to denote the manifestations of the culturally-sanctioned internalized meanings constructed through the process of individuation. Thus, gender identities are shaped and indivisible from performance. Judith Butler (2006: 191) provides an excellent example:

Gender identity is tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effects of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, and hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movement, and styles. . . constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.

In view of this, gender should not be perceived as a fixed cultural signifier, but rather, as a constant and sustained social performance (Butler 2006: 152, 192).

Thirdly, in regard to gender relationships, Haya men and women are considered to be normatively related both complementarily and hierarchically (Carlson 1989: 122; Mutembei 2001: 47- 48). The women-men complementary relationship does not exist simply because both sexes are involved in a joint task assigned to them, rather, “because domains of activity, productivity, and human fertility are kept separated” (Carlson 1989: 124). On the other hand, although the hierarchical relationship between men and women among the Haya is a shared view among some scholars, this kind of relationship is considered a recent phenomenon as it did not exist in the traditional gender conceptualization of the Haya people. Mutembei says, in traditional Haya society, “... the opposition man and woman did not have hierarchy in terms of high or low. Both a man and a woman occupied important and equally valued space in Haya cosmology. They stood as complementary to each other, and no one was considered “complete human” without the other ...” (2001: 47). In contrast, in contemporary Haya society in which hierarchy forms part of the basis of gender conceptualization, the male gender is more culturally than biologically privileged over the female gender. Thus the division of labour between women and men, in accordance with the arrangement of the traditional Haya society, and physical performance of each gender were equally accorded honor by culture (Mutembei 2001: 48).

Major activities of men in Haya society during the chieftainship and modern times consisted of those which took them beyond the *ekibanja* (banana plantation) system for market exchange, and were considered masculine and geared at enhancing the permanence of social values. These included, among others, iron-smelting, manufacturing of pottery, tools, and weapons, construction of palace and private houses, fishing, and bark-cloth and boat-making. It should also be noted that among the Haya fetching firewood is the activity carried out by men, not women. In contrast to men’s activities, women’s traditional activities were executed within the confines and context of the *ekibanja* producing commodities for immediate consumption. Besides working in the *ekibanja*, women also used to cultivate small portions of land either close to the banana groves or in the open fields where they grew such seasonal crops as legumes, grains, and root crops Mulokozi (2002: 22). In addition, women occupied themselves with other activities such as handcrafts, cooking, fetching water, and collecting *ensenene* (locust) and various types of grasses for numerous uses, including flooring inside the traditional house and thatching. This work arrangement changed much later with the introduction by the colonial government of coffee as a cash crop

among the Haya, in which women also became “major producers”<sup>4</sup> although men continued to be controllers of the revenues obtained. In this regard, the social value of activities performed by men and women was measured in terms of permanence and variability, which were associated with men’s activities, and repetition and instability, associated with women’s activities (Carlson 1989).

Another important area of work that defines gendered division of labor among the Haya of significant interest in this study as far as music making is concerned, is the activity of brewing beer. Beer making in Haya society is considered an exclusively male domain; women and children are involved peripherally, through fetching grass and fresh water used in the production process and through peeling bananas. But the actual work of making beer (*rubisi*) referred to in the Haya language as “*okunjuga orubisi*”, which means “stomping or crushing banana beer”, is left to specialized Haya men. I will explain the reasons for the privileging of men in the beer making below.

My interest in the examination of this type of work stems from the conversations I had with various people after watching a musical performance by Abaragomora group described above. After that performance, in which only one female dancer participated, a lengthy discussion followed between the dancers and musicians, and myself. Part of our discussion was about the stylistic differences between female and male dance movements. Based on this discussion I conjectured that stylistic dance movements performed by male dancers were associated with what constitutes “being a Haya man”, and those by women associated with “markers of Haya feminine attributes”. In the course of our discussion one performer stated a proverb in Haya, “*omukazi azina tagaruka*”, and he repeated the same words in Kiswahili by saying, “*mwanamke anaweza kuimba lakini hawezi kuruka juu*” (a woman can sing but cannot dance with high leaps). Since proverbs are traditionally used in certain situations to create an understanding of cultural systems (Seitel 1972), it was important that I explore how this was reflected within the context of musical performance, especially in relation to the execution of gendered bodily movements. When I asked what meaning this proverb conveyed among the Haya, Festos Kaiza had this to say:

There are scientific reasons why women are not allowed to dance with high leaps. [For example], a woman might be “on her period”, so, if she decides to jump, and unfortunately the “thing” falls off her body, this might cause a lot of embarrassment and shame (personal communication, March 30, 2009)

In addition, Kaiza noted that since among the Haya, banana beer is made by crushing ripe banana by legs and not by squeezing with hands, traditions do not allow a woman to enter in a canoe that is used to make the beer and start crushing banana beer with her legs. In view of this, and as some scholars have suggested, the study of dance should take into account a wide range of ordinary bodily movements involved in

<sup>4</sup> I am using these terms to denote women’s active involvement in the labor force on the coffee plantation in a non-monetary sense.

various types of socially constructed space because dance translates daily experiences into movements (Fodeba 1959; Blacking 1973). Here I take a look, albeit briefly, at how beer making influences bodily movements, and how these bodily movements are translated into musical performance.

### **Manifestation of the everyday bodily movements in dance performance**

A comprehension of the dancing patterns of Abaragomora requires an examination and comprehension of socially normative behavior and experience on the one hand and the interconnectedness of these with the configuration of space and movements as strongly dictated by social and economic activities based on the gender divide, including beer making. The dancing movements and patterns performed by male dancers were intended to display attributes considered in keeping with the Haya viewpoint of masculinity, while the movements of the lone female dancer denoted femininity. I suggest that the male dancers' energetic movements performed during *kukuta* are intended to serve a double purpose. First, they serve as an expression of symbolic re-enactment of men's involvement in beer production in which bodily energy, especially "emanating from the male body", is required. It is suggested that besides the high degree of purity, which is an important factor in the production of *orubisi*, bodily strength is equally important. This is expressed in the manner of crushing (with the feet) beer banana (*okujunga orubisi*). Two reasons for the need for masculine energy in the beer making process can be advanced: the need for strength to deal with the tough grasses used as aid in breaking the bananas apart, and in the execution of the entire task. Because among the Haya, just like in many other societies worldwide, women are considered a weaker sex (see Lugalla et al. 1999) both anatomically and in terms of rationality, they are deemed unsuited for such a task. As a result, women (together with children) are only allowed to take part in the peripheral, yet no less laborious and repetitive, activities of the beer making process (cf Carlson 1989). I suggest that the act of crushing the banana (*okujunga*) can aesthetically be compared with the act of stomping the ground during the moment of *kukuta* in a dance performance in which male dancers make stylized elaborate high leap movements that end with powerful hitting of the ground, "thiiii"! It should be noted that although women do participate in the *kukuta* moment, their dancing patterns are circumscribed to *kulibata*, a term used to associate women with the task of grinding *enshoro* (*kulibata enshoro*), a type of crop from the peanut family. The process of grinding the *enshoro* does not allow high-rising movements of the legs (see Figures 1 and 4), so as not to crush the nuts. It is gentle movements of the legs that are required, which normatively are associated with female bodies. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Haya place a high premium on emphasizing restricted movements of the female body as a marker of femaleness.

It could be suggested that the strategic exclusion of women from the central focus of the dance serves various purposes. First, as a way of showing women's inability of doing what men are capable of, and second as a way of reminding women of their socially expected, gendered normative mannerisms. As pointed out earlier, women are



expected to observe their socially prescribed behavior in every aspect of their daily lives, including dressing, manner of talking, and walking. This means that the appearance of the body has to adhere to the socially constructed principles. This is in tandem with the suggestion that “meaning”, “does not lie in the body” (Cowan 1990: 25); rather “ideas about the body must be very closely linked to ideas about society” (Gotlieb 1990: 128; cf Douglass 1970; Maus 1979) as are notions of gendered behavior. And, as already suggested, a dance-event is a space where the display of gender differences and inequality and sexual and gender interrelations is effected (Cowan 1990; Sugarman 1997). Dancing in particular is an activity in which the body is both a site of experience and a site in which sexuality is negotiated. As we have seen in the foregoing, during the post-performance discussion at Bulinda village, the remarks of the male performers aimed at illustrating and insisting on how a dance-event can serve as a site for the display of gender differences and inequality, especially in regard to whether it was possible for men *and* women to perform elaborate high leap movements. Besides stating that women could not leap as high as men, the male performers added that there were other dances which were for women alone, performed during their activities. In such dances women wrapped themselves with the sort of dress which did not allow them to jump high. The only female dancer present during the performance supported the view that women do not jump as high during the dance, but attributed this situation to the lack of energy and breath:

But it is not because of what they said. [The reason is] Even our strengths are not just as men's. I do not have the same speed as that of men. Well, I can jump, but I might have chest problems such as shortness of breath. And this is completely different from men. (Personal communication, March 30, 2009)

Such remarks reflect the stereotypes that Jane Cowan (1990) and Jane Sugarman (1997) have advanced. They categorically reflect how gender ideals and ideologies within a dance context are closely related to the wider sociocultural ideals. However, this general view of gender ideals contrasts remarkably with the views of other people I talked to and the type of musical performance that KAKAU performed on the World AIDS Day at Buyekela in Bukoba District. My conversation with Getruda Kokushobera, a woman about eighty years old, at Kagondo Village, in Muleba District, and Francis, a man who accompanied me on my trip to visit Gertruda, provides an excellent example. I asked Bibi (grandmother) Getruda if there were any differences between male and female dancing styles in the Haya dances. Immediately, Francis, the man who accompanied me in this trip, came forward with this response:

Yes, there is a difference, especially during drum beating. The way the drummer beats the drum may change when a woman enters [on the dancing space], because a woman dances on the ground [dance movements restrained], but a man often jumps high; he jumps because of his energy. Now the woman dances [the way she does] because she is a woman (Personal Communication, April 4, 2009)

This perspective was rejected by Bibi Getruda outright. Speaking while demonstrating dancing patterns she said: “There is no difference. Everyone dances the way they want”. When I asked her if the dances she was dancing were designed for men or women, she offered a furious response, “All of them! One by one enters the arena and dance”. She noted that the importance is given to adhering to the required rhythmic pattern, and she demonstrated that by beating the rhythm by hand clapping. Not satisfied by Bibi’s response, Francis insisted on the biological difference: “*the difference is that a woman dances slowly and the man dances with energy because he is a man*” (Emphasis mine).

Initially, I had assumed that Bibi Getruda, being an old woman who strongly cherishes the Haya gender ideals, as it was revealed in her conversation heavily spiced with bodily illustrative demonstrations, would have talked about gender ideals in relation to women’s participation to expressive culture in a way that would less challenge than uphold it. So I kept asking myself what was really being revealed in the conversation between Bibi Getruda, Francis and myself, regarding the question of gender ideology as a social construct vis-à-vis the actual manifestations of the same, both in ordinary life situations and in expressive culture. I kept questioning myself what role expressive culture plays in the everyday life of the Haya women, especially in relation to the fight against gender discrimination.

Then I realized that while it is true that an understanding of people’s social structure and organization can be achieved by investigating the gender structure of society, an explanation of the daily social practices that are in opposition to the declared ideals must not be overlooked (Koskoff 1987; Gutmann 1997a; Sanday 1990; Cowan 1990; Sugarman 1997). While the majority of Haya people have upheld the gendered spatial and ideological divide of their culture as demonstrated in their daily social practices, including folklore and expressive culture, such a division may clearly reflect the ideological system of gender relations that the Haya uphold, but not be, in itself, a representation of the Haya gender identities. For although gendered identities and roles among the Haya are socially and biologically constructed, they are not static but rather, they are as fluid, variable, and contradicting in everyday life as in musical performances.

### **Literature on women’s performance, resistance and HIV/AIDS education**

Departing now from my analysis of gendered dance movements of the Haya, I review various studies that demonstrate the need to understand that manifestations of gender interrelations and gender-based roles in a musical performance are much more complex than those suggested by established ideology. In situations in which asymmetrical power relations between dominant and subordinate members of a culture exist, usually the latter group feigns loyalty to the former group. However, such loyalty can be examined as one of several means by which subordinate people seek to insulate themselves from the sacrilege emanating from the dominant groups. James Scott (1985: xvi), for example, cites feigned ignorance, false compliance, and

dissimulation, among others, as part of the ordinary weapons of powerless groups. It is under such circumstances that Scott (1985: xvi) maintained that most subordinate groups do not have the pleasure of demonstrating overt organized political action against the dominant class. Rather they frequently opt to more inconspicuous forms of everyday resistance that either occur undetected or may occur indirectly such that those in power may not recognize them (*cf* Gilman 2009: 17). In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, women who have been culturally and politically relegated to subordinated positions have always employed various forms of performance as sites for challenging domination as well as ascertaining their social and gender status. In her investigation of women's political dancing in Malawi during the British colonial period, Lisa Gilman (2009: 5) notes that women activists employed musical performances as a means of expressing their anti-colonial sentiment. Similarly, during the post-independence era, nationalist leaders of Malawi employed the arts, including those performed by women, as a means of mobilizing the people to cultivate a sense of national unity and identity based on cultural diversity (Gilman 2009: 5). Performances not only served as reflective and constitutive of political and social realities, but also as sites upon which the establishment and sustenance of social relationship and social action took place (Gilman 2009: 10).

Unfortunately, in spite of the significant role women and female dance societies have played in advancing the nationalist struggle in colonial Dar es Salaam, Geiger (1987) argues, such an account of this is either muted or lightly addressed in scholarly work on African nationalist movements. Geiger attributes such neglect of women's active participation in these struggles to gender bias. Deborah Heath (1994) takes a similar position asserting that women's dance performances in urban Senegal serve as an expression of resistance and partial autonomy of women in the gender politics of urban society. In urban Senegal such performances are under constant surveillance, criticism, and even banned by male members of society, but Heath maintains that such moves have not succeeded in halting women's participation in self-organized dance events in various places of the urban region of Kaolack in Senegal. Such instances of everyday forms of resistance serves to not only demonstrate "...the agency or critical consciousness of subordinated members of a culture but also serve as a diagnostic for the various forms of power relations that link resistance, complicity and structures of domination" (Heath 1994: 88, after Abu-Lughod 1990). In view of the above selected examples of women's dance practices as forms of resistance, I consider Bibi Getruda's assertions supported by her musically rendered bodily demonstration as a way of indexing a sense of agency.

Women and young people have increasingly employed music, dance, drama, and poetic recitation to address gender and health issues in Africa generally, and in Tanzania in particular. Traditionally, women have used dance and music for empowerment and didactic purposes for individuals and society at large. This is contrary to the deep-seated general belief among development and communication agents that women are incapable of engaging in the process of communication for development. As Penina

Mlama (1994: 51) says, “[w]omen are said to be timid, lacking the confidence to speak, especially in public or in the presence of men and even when given the opportunity to communicate. On the contrary, the sociocultural factors that relegate women to a subordinate position to men are at the root of the communication inactivity among women”. Furthermore, the systematic exclusion of women from participating in the entire development planning process, and the lack of access to conventional media by the majority of women in the rural areas, due to diverse sociocultural and economic factors, both as communicators and audience, have compounded the situation. The use of indigenous expressive arts, including music and dance, have been the sole effective means for women and marginalized people to communicate about and participate in development. As Carol Robertson (1987) has noted, music and musical behavior can be manipulated to enhance or inhibit the social, ritual, and political access and awareness of all people in society regardless of their sex or age. Thus, if well-used, music serves as a means to empower women and enable them to set in motion social change.

In an era in which HIV/AIDS in Bukoba, as elsewhere in Tanzania and beyond, continues to pose a great menace to women’s health and lives, music and dance serve as one of the effective channels of voicing concerns. This is especially true where the women’s disempowered position denies them capacity for safer sexual negotiation with men (Setel 1999; Lugalla et al. 1999; Mutembe 2001; Mascarenhas 2007). As Gregory Barz has illustrated in the Ugandan context, “[m]usic, dance and drama have been (and continue to be) deep cultural resources and instruments of survival in the confrontation with the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis...” (2006: xxvi). The participation of women [and young people] in combating HIV/AIDS in Uganda, according to Barz, has been far more effective when expressive arts rather than other conventional biomedical approaches were applied. Members of the National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (NACWOLA) in Uganda provide a classic example of how singing and dancing form an integral part of their various initiatives in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Barz and Cohen 2008: 154; cf Barz and Cohen 2011). The significant decline in HIV infection rates in both urban and rural areas of Uganda is largely attributed to the use of musical and dramatic performances of women’s groups that raise awareness about the pandemic in the society (Barz 2006; Barz and Cohen 2008). Likewise, in Bukoba, Tanzania, performing groups of Women Living with HIV/AIDS such as (AMWAVU) and CARITAS women’s choir group (widows whose husbands have died of AIDS) have used performance arts in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and related issues, including poverty, and gender discrimination associated with women living with HIV/AIDS or those women whose husbands have died of the pandemic. Gender inequality in Buhaya society, which plays a central role in all aspects of the people’s socioeconomic and political lives; including sexuality, deprives women of their freedom and power over sexual matters (Lugalla et al. 1999: 387). HIV/AIDS in Kagera region is considered to have been introduced by *abakukomera* (young businessmen), who then spread it to their female sexual partners (see Lugalla et al 1999). According to Lwihula (1992 in Lugalla et al 1999) and Lugalla et al. (1999), *abakukomela* (the young and sexually

energetic wealthy businessmen) are considered to be one of the central sources to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Kagera because of the high mobility and permissive sexual behaviors and life styles these young businessmen had, and especially with regard to the mode of migration that was involved between Uganda and Tanzania.

Despite this background, it has been reported that fingers are pointed at women as vectors of the disease. And when women begin to fall ill or to show symptoms of HIV/AIDS before their husbands, more often than not, they are likely to be kicked out of the household and sent back to their parents or relatives (Lugalla et al. 1999: 389-90). As a result, some women do not want to participate in voluntary HIV/AIDS testing because they are afraid of testing positive. The question of associating HIV/AIDS with women as vectors was confirmed during my conversation with members of AMWAVU whose assistant chairperson said:

If your husband dies of AIDS, it is the woman who receives most of the blame. They say, it is the woman who brought the disease. So you are told, "it is you who killed their son." And even before the burial has taken place, you see that they start locking the bedroom. They say that you are the one who have killed our son. You know, some people conceive of this disease as if it were very strange, and/or as a sexually transmitted disease; and if it is so, then the woman was thought to be adulterous (Personal communication with Fatima Khalfani, December 2, 2008).

It was against this background that AMWAVU was established in order to equip seropositive women with various means to face HIV/AIDS-related problems such as stigma, lack of economic power, and discriminatory legal traditions regarding inheritance following a husband's death. The arts, including music, serve as one of the means AMWAVU uses to educate fellow women living with HIV/AIDS, and the entire society at large about such issues and the importance of testing, and living positively with HIV/AIDS. "We educate people through our personal testimonies, and through various arts such as recitation and choir. When a woman is educated and becomes knowledgeable, no one can touch or discriminate her" said Mama Hilda Rwechungura, Secretary of AMWAVU (Personal Communication, December 2, 2008). During the World AIDS Day anniversary on December 1, 2008, in which older men were minimally represented, AMWAVU drove home the importance of voluntary testing and made the general minimal active-participation of older men in the fight against the pandemic as the point of attack of one of the verses embedded in their poetic recitation [CD track 3]:

When it comes to health testing, men are difficult,  
 Even if you consult them, they are difficult to listen,  
 Men are cowards,  
 Even if you send them the right information [about the disease],  
 Men are stubborn  
 But if you talk to women about this [HIV/AIDS] issue they are not difficult,  
 Women are number one,  
 Lead and enable, fulfill your promise



The above examples, illustrate how women performances have played a central role in numerous local initiatives and media to disseminate information, mobilize resources, and raise awareness about the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa in addition to posing as sites of resistance to gender disparity. Similar examples of women's groups that employ performance arts in the fight against the HIV/AIDS can be seen from group performance of female peer educators in Venda South Africa (see McNeill and James 2011), and Siphitemba mixed-gender choral performance in Durban Kwazulu-Natal (Okigbo 2011). Additionally, Kathleen Van Buren's works (2006 and 2011) provide examples of how young people, both females and males, employ musical performances and other arts to address HIV/AIDS and to bring about social changes in Nairobi, Kenya.

Conclusively, the above scenarios operate to stress the need to distinguish between what is said about gendered identities and roles and what occurs in actual practice. Such an understanding can explain why an individual, as in the case of Bibi Getruda in the foregoing, can state ideas that represent socially sanctioned notions, but are completely inconsistent with the declared ideal (Gutmann 1997b; Gilmore 1990; Kopytoff 1990). The following section demonstrates how a musical performance can be a space in which such contradictions are being acted out.

### **Contesting gender identities through dance movements**

In the previous section we have seen that a dance event is considered as a space where the display of gender differences and inequality is performed, and that the body operates as the surface upon which the inscription of ideology, culture, and bodily techniques takes place. We have also seen how the performance by the Abaragomora dance group has functioned to confirm such assertions. I would now like to expand that discussion by examining how this is manifested in the performance of KAKAU. However, I refuse an all-encompassing pursuit of the idea of dance or musical performance as a mere space for displaying gender disparity, and also of the body as a mere site for displaying the inscription of ideology, culture, and body techniques as suggested above. Instead I want to join those scholars who view dance as a performance art, which serves first as a vehicle and context of social action (Martin 1990; Cowan 1990). By social action, I imply seeing performance as a space upon which the contestations of public space, knowledge and social meanings are effected.

During one of several conversations I had with Sarah, one of the singers and dancers of KAKAU, I mentioned to her my interest in knowing the differences in dancing styles between female and male dancers in the musical tradition of the Haya in general, and in their performance on the World AIDS Day on December 1, 2008 in particular. Sarah told me that "usually men make high leaps into the air but a woman was not allowed". When I asked her to tell me the reasons for that she responded by saying:

The biological set up of the woman does not allow her leaping into the air; [in the past] there were no pants. It was only a skirt. So if a woman leaps under such circumstance then the skirts will move up high thereby leaving the dancer naked. *But now we leap into the air*

*because we dress something that protects us; so, why shouldn't we leap? But in some places [here in Kagera] a woman is not allowed to leap. Many women of KAKAU do leap. We do that to let people know that even we women can leap. So, even us KAKAU, are fighting against [gender] discrimination. You know what... , even during the moment of kukuta, the emphasis is for all (Personal communication, April 15, 2009. Emphasis mine).*

I analyze the performance of masculinity by the female dancers of KAKAU based on the notion of “challenging authority in the medium of style” and “at the level of symbol” as Comaroff (1985: 196) following the lead of Hebdige (1979) suggests. Comaroff suggests that usually marginalized people strategically challenge authority in the medium of style. Similarly, as Sarah has clearly indicated in her remarks above, musical performance (which was about HIV/AIDS) serves as a suitable avenue to challenge and propose a transformation in Haya worldview by foregrounding gender-based contradictions that are insufficiently dealt with by the established ideology. This can be done through the female performers’ appropriation of dance styles, which are traditionally meant to be performed by male dancers, and through the medium of clothing. In addition, this female choreographic manipulation of the “female” body to embody “male” masculinity expresses a multilayered meaning, including among others, an expression of the autonomy, variability, progress, and modernity of the female self. The defiant embodiment of masculinity by females also serves as a way of transforming the entrenched normative model of masculinity.

## **Conclusion**

In this article I have explored the construction and contestation of gender ideologies and gendered identities in musical performances of the Haya by focusing on musical and dramatic performance groups in Bukoba Urban District and Bukoba Rural District in Kagera Region. I have argued that musical performances about HIV/AIDS that I documented not only serve as space for generating knowledge about the pandemic, but also serve as a site where gendered identities as well as power relations between various social actors are negotiated. I have also demonstrated that performances serve to allow a transformation of social reality.

I have approached the question of construction and contestation of gender and gendered identities from the viewpoint of performativity and argued that gender identities are shaped through sustained social performances and are fluid rather than fixed cultural signifiers. My research revealed significant variation with regard to the display of gendered identities in the performances examined. I have used performances of Abaragomora and KAKAU to show that, through dance patterns, bodily movements, and gendered roles and dress, some performance groups uphold the established gendered order while others challenge and contest the same within the context of a musical performance. The dance patterns in which women performers of KAKAU execute movements involving high jumps, traditionally the privilege of the male dancers, demonstrate the subversion of the expected social norms that dictate women are to execute restrained dancing patterns. This demonstrates that gender identities are negotiable, that they are being transformed, and that there is a discrepancy between stated gender ideology and present gender practices.

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