

## **A MEDIUM OF OTHERS:**

### **RHYTHMIC SOUNDSCAPES AS CRITICAL UTOPIAS <sup>1</sup>**

**Phil Weinrobe and Naeem Inayatullah**

The rhythm is more important than the meaning of the words. (Macumba priestess, in Chernoff, 1979: 124)

All language is then political; vision is always ideologically charged; perceptions are shaped a priori by our assumptions and sensibility formed by our consciousness at once social, historical, and aesthetic. There is no such thing as non-political poetry. The time, however, to determine what those politics will be is not the moment of taking pen to paper, but during the whole of one's life. We are responsible for the quality of our vision, we have a say in the shaping of our sensibility. In the many thousand daily choices we make, we create ourselves and the voice with which we speak and work. (Carolyn Forché 1981: 6)

While teaching “The Political Economy of African Diaspora Music” together, we began to wonder whether the music of the African Diaspora<sup>2</sup> expresses a deep politics through its form. Significant characteristics of African Diaspora Music -- for example, call and response structures, heterogeneous sound ideal, rhythmic tension, and restraint in emotional and technical expression – while typically seen as musical and aesthetic qualities (see below), also construct soundscapes that serve as living illustrations, quasi-

experiments, and critical utopias on how to relate to others in the wider drama of social life [ Lock, Davies, Franklin].

Increasingly comfortable with uncovering the political implications of aesthetic forms, we wonder why we hadn't detected this politics before and why the overlap between aesthetics and politics seems to remain taboo. While these questions remain well beyond the ambitions of this chapter, nevertheless, they drive our inquiry. Perhaps one reason we are diverted from contemplating the politics of musical form is due to its subtlety. Extraordinary political events -- wars, coups, revolutions, elections, or policy changes -- easily allow us to depict how dramatic events shift life's patterns. Less obvious are the mundane continuities of living; we often overlook that our daily patterns and configurations can sway us in ways that may be no less commanding than the thrust of unusual events. Because the routine, everyday, and subtle politics of musical form slips in under the radar as a "non-event," we speed past the possibility that the ordinary activities of daily living are saturated with aesthetics and politics.

This "below the radar" quality, or stealth, points to both the strength and weakness of musical form as a kind of politics. Strength because participating in these forms usually occurs without a critical awareness that one has committed to a type of politics; weakness because perceiving and articulating the political implications of a musical form requires us to perform an excruciating and suspect theoretical labor. The use and abuse of this stealth and the relative effectiveness of a politics of musical form steer our concerns. Specifically, we wonder if the musical forms of the African Diaspora provide a *significant* site for cultural and political resistance. Our concern emerges from our

belief that hegemonic cultures dictate, in part, by delimiting the modes of dissent. Hegemonic culture can position ideological and material forces so that resistance remains within the logical and textual parameters valorized by the hegemony. In this way, even if the content of resistance appears triumphant, its form, nevertheless, may be shaped and delimited so that dissent turns into something that the hegemony can anticipate, pacify, and tolerate (Nandy 1983). Nevertheless, the cultural repertoire of the colonized, specifically their capacity to display compliance with imperialism while simultaneously cultivating/synthesizing forms of dissent that oppose that very same imperialism, is often underestimated. We like to think that rather than being strictly confined to a valorized dissent, colonized cultures create dynamic critical spaces that escape hegemonic detection. If so, we may wish to ask how much of our practical and theoretical attention is committed to a politics defined by dramatic events and how much to the politics of everyday forms.

A confession before we proceed: To specify the musical and political implications of African and African derived music we frequently compare them with examples from “Western music” – by which we sometimes mean “classical” and other times various types of “pop.” Of course, in the existent world most and perhaps all musical forms are hybrid entities exhibiting multiple influences and this makes drawing precise lines between what is “African or African derived” and “Western” difficult if not impossible. And yet, if one avoids the ecological fallacy and recognizes that what applies to the whole may not apply to any part within that whole, or may apply to those parts only in degrees, then general comparisons may still be productive. We accept, further, that much may be gained by comparing African and African derived music with a global

variety of styles and genres. Nevertheless, we would betray our broader motivations if we claimed that opposition between African and Western music/politics was strictly demonstrative, and therefore that we are celebrating African music while merely drawing out the politics of its form. Instead, we find ourselves moving to a cross-rhythm: on one side, we can say candidly, “No, we don’t mean that African/African derived musical forms are better musically or politically. Our comparisons are meant to make sharp contrasts while our discussion aims simply to inspire an appreciation of African music.” On the other side, after having resisted these forms and their implications for many years, we confess an inability to escape the feeling that something about African/African derived musical forms seems “better” or, at least, that these forms stand as a significant critique and corrective to a cultural and political imperialism that threatens all forms of aesthetics and politics.<sup>3</sup> We are unable, presently, to articulate the arguments that might support our intuition. More important, we suspect that this tension between a celebratory and relativist presentation versus an insistent and pointed critique may be more productive if left unresolved, thereby leaving it to you, the reader, to enter and find/create your own beat within our particular cross-rhythm.

#### **Characteristics of “African Music”<sup>4</sup>**

Ethnomusicologist Olly Wilson’s (1974; 1983) seminal work characterizes African and African derived music as having some combination of the following six qualities<sup>5</sup>: an abundance of call and response structures, a heterogeneous sound ideal, rhythmic tension, a percussive mode of playing all instruments -- including voice, high density of

musical events, and integration of listener response – especially dance – into the performance.<sup>6</sup>

While Wilson, perhaps wisely, circumscribes his attention to aesthetic qualities, his analysis tempts us to speculate whether these aesthetic elements evoke a broader politics of practice. We invite the reader to join us in considering whether Wilson's elements also have political implications that serve as deep everyday criticisms of modernity. Thus, call and response structures suggest dialogical and conversational orientations as opposed to monological methods of communication; a heterogeneous sound ideal can be thought of as a bow to the “plurality of timbres” or a “democracy of differences” that oppose homogeneity; rhythmic tension suggests an expectation of, and a comfort with, social tension that opposes the norm of a unified harmony; a percussive mode of playing calls for dance thereby emphasizing that physical activity serve as the basis for forming a type of community that goes beyond cultivating a sedentary audience; and a high density of musical events may be seen as the result of a desire to include others and otherness.

John Miller Chernoff (1979; 1985) puts forward a further aspect of African and African derived music that we wish to explore – the exercise of restraint. In Classical Indian and Classical European music, as well as in jazz, rock, and pop, virtuosity is usually expressed by combining emotional verve and technical mastery. The soloist emerges from the collective, even if only momentarily, and shines as a virtuoso performer. The audience, while not limited to mere appreciation, must find its aspirations fulfilled analogically -- by absorbing and channeling the genius of the soloist. In much of

African music, in contrast, virtuosity is expressed as emotional and technical restraint; the master musician provides the few and many notes that stimulate musical coherence and that deliver the event as a successful musical/social activity for the community of players and listeners/dancers. Analogy and contemplation give way to the immediacy of direct participation.

Combining Chernoff's observations with Wilson's analysis, we propose the following: African and African derived music creates sonic utopias that can be positioned as alternatives to certain aspects of the musical, social, aesthetic, political, and metaphysical assumptions of dominant European/North American standards. We probe this claim by describing the music of three Nigerian artists usually thought of as a part of the genre of "world music."

### **The Music of Stephen Osadebe, Fela Kuti, and Sunny Ade**

In this section we present our claims about the political aesthetics of a few African musical forms by discussing the work of three Nigerian musicians: Stephen Osadebe (highlife), Fela Kuti (afrobeat), and Sunny Ade (juju). Fela Kuti (b.1938--1997) is the originator of "afro-beat" – a genre that combines jazz and funk qualities with many traditional elements of African music. Many consider Fela Africa's most important musical innovator. Fela his major competitor was Sunny Ade whose form of JuJu music highlights guitars in combination with thick percussion featuring the talking drum as the lead soloing instrument. After Bob Marley's death, Island Records promoted Ade as Marley's heir apparent. However, his combination of polyrhythm, "modern

sounding” synthesizer sounds, and African drumming seemed to ask too much of Western ears. Ade has been producing juju since the 1960s and continues to be a major musical figure both in Nigeria and across the world. Stephen Osadebe is foremost and oldest living exponent of “highlife” – a musical form that emerged from post-independence West Africa. Highlife blends Jazz and Cuban influences, using horns, electric guitars, and percussion. Both Fela and Ade were raised in, and responded to, the tradition of “highlife.” Osadebe is among the most popular and most influential musicians in Nigeria and West Africa.<sup>7</sup>

To respect space limitations, we primarily emphasize four principles: one from Chernoff -- the tendency toward emotional and technical restraint and three taken from Wilson -- call and response, rhythmic tension, and a heterogeneous sound ideal. Two of Wilson’s remaining characteristics -- the tendency toward percussive playing and high density of musical events – seem to follow from the first three. Percussive playing can be seen as a tool with which to create a rhythmically tense soundscape. Playing and singing in a percussive manner brings additional rhythm resources allowing a greater complexity and richness in creating rhythms. High density of musical events can be seen as derivative of other principles: an abundance of call and response layers, a rhythmically tense soundscape, and the ideal of presenting heterogeneous timbres produce and require a high density of events.

### **Call and Response: External Others**

Call and response expressions rest on a continuum that ranges from an “echo” at one end and a more dynamic conversational answer to the calling phrase at the other end. The echo is a repetitive response, so that if I say “good morning” I can expect my listener to respond with “good morning.” Or, if I sing: “Oh the Mississippi Queen” you might repeat back, in perfect echo “Oh the Mississippi Queen.” The “conversational response” expression of the call and response continuum, at the other end, goes beyond echo by providing a more deliberate and articulate reaction. Such an answer might provoke a different call with a still more elaborate response in the next repetition, and so on. If I sing “Oh the Mississippi Queen” you may answer, “She’s the Queen of the West.” I could then go on with “She’s the Biggest Steamboat that ever was Afloat” and you may extend with “On the Mississippi River back home.”<sup>8</sup>

As implied above, the first and most explicit call and response technique is between singer and chorus. This is evident in “Nyem Obi Gi” (Osadebe, Kedu America, 1996) at 0:56, where Osadebe sings a line and the chorus responds directly with the same phrase after each of Osadebe’s different calls.<sup>9</sup> Even though the chorus is not merely echoing Osadebe, we are closer to the “echo” end of our continuum since this is not yet a full dialogue. The analogy is to the call and response found in gospel services, where the preacher speaks, and the congregation always replies with “amen.”

The conversational call and response can be seen as a way of allowing the chorus of singers to play a fuller roll in delivering the song, as for example in “Mo Bero Agba” (Ade, Juju Music, 1982) at 0:56 - 1:45, where we hear Sunny Ade’s chorus change its response with each call from Ade. We needn’t know the meaning of the lyrics in order

to grasp the forms of call and response, because for our purposes, the meanings are less important than the way the call and response structures interaction. Call and response is emphatically not limited to vocals between singer and chorus. It occurs at numerous levels and between all instruments. In the music of our three artists, call and response is so ubiquitous that its presence is easy to miss. It may not be too much to say that the execution of *all* of the phrasing between *all* of the instruments can be seen as variations of call and response. Indeed, registering the ways that call and response is evident even in a single cut can be both a mundane and sublime experience.

Consider the dynamic conversation between Osadebe's vocals and Christian Ibekwe's muted trumpet in "Onu'wa" at 1:17-1:45 (Osadebe, Sound Time, 2001). Their interweaving differs markedly from the previous example since both caller and responder have the flexibility to bend their lines by varying the length and intensity. In our view, this improvisational immediacy is the height of conversational call and response since it creates overlaps between the caller and responder – both call, both respond.

Often, such conversations go beyond two voices. At 0:22 - 0:43 in "Ana Amasi Ife Uwa" (Osadebe, Sound Time, 2001) we hear the chord playing, wah-wah soaked guitar producing an ostinato – a repeated rhythmic phrase – while conversing with both the drum set and the hand drum. This is not unlike the repeated response example of Osadebe and the chorus in that the guitar maintains a consistent line, while both percussionists generate responses. It is worth noting that at the end of the listening segment, and hence at the end of this specific call and response episode, the guitar and

drums come together to make a type of joint statement suggesting a wrapping up and a mutual positioning.

A third type of call and response is when the call of a single entity (guitar, voice, drum) is met by the response of the entire collective. From 0:00 to 0:10 in “Obinwanne” (Osadebe, Classic Hits, 2001) we hear how the entire group responds to the guitar’s opening statements. This type of call and response is abundant in African forms and suggests the importance that is placed on the dynamic interaction between individual and community so that each expresses, hears, and responds.

### **Call and Response: Internal Others and Speaking with and Through Silence**

The drum-set can be seen to inherit the function of a traditional drum ensemble. The drum-set player is assigned the bass drum, the high hat, the snare drum, the cymbals, and other percussion attached to the set. Such drumming must then be able to produce a vast call and response soundscape so that each limb seems to play a different drum. From 5:00 to 5:05 in “Akonam” (Osadebe, Classic Hits, 2001), we can hear how two different snare drums call and respond to each other. From 0:15 to 0:46 in “Agbalu Aka Na Ani” (Osadebe, Kedu America, 1996), we here the drummer work the call and response relationship between the bass drum and the high hat; the accent for the bass drum falls on the “down beat” and the snare accents the “up beat.”<sup>10</sup>

A slightly different take on the internal call and response structure is that of consequent and subsequent phrasing. Such phrasing -- a formal structure abundant in Western

classical music -- refers to a type of statement that begins with a “question” and ends with an “answer.” A striking example of the rhythmically induced question/answer relationship is the clave rhythm, which is composed of one measure of a “three against two cross-rhythm” during which three hits are played against the underlying duple meter (which means that three hits are played in the time it normally takes to play 2 beats), and then followed by a measure of straight duple rhythm in which two hits are played on beats 2 and 3.<sup>11</sup> This rhythmic conversation is on display in most of Osadebe’s music, but specifically at 2:40 of “Obinwamme” (Osadebe, *Classic Hits*, 2001). The clave rhythm is rather easy to pick out since it is being played by the claves<sup>12</sup> themselves -- the high-pitched, wood block percussion instrument.

An intriguing type of internal call and response is that of presence and absence. This is subtle and hard to hear, especially when embedded in a dense rhythmic soundscape. “Udara Ka Mma”(Osadebe, *Classic Hits*, 2001) contains a useful example. From 0:00 to 1:00, there is a wood block that is making a high pitched clicking sound and playing a phrase made up of 6 beats. The accents at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> beats of the 6 beat phrase are often left out suggesting a call and response relationship between the absence and presence of those beats. When the 1<sup>st</sup> beat sounds, the 4<sup>th</sup> beat is often absent, and vice versa (although the pattern is not regular, there is still an absence/presence relationship.) We can consider this a call and response with “the void” or “silence” where nothing less than a dialogical understanding is being played upon. Within an oppositional pair -- presence and absence, on and off, light and dark, life and death, the mundane and the transcendent – each part separates itself (“apart-playing” in Chernoff’s language, see below) in order to express its particularity. But in so doing, rather than becoming

severed from its other, as in a Hobbesian state of nature, or rather than becoming assimilated into its other, as is insisted upon by the Hobbesian Leviathan (Hobbes 1981), each part retains a playful tension with its other, cultivating and deepening uncertain encounters. In music, and in life, sound is founded on un-sound, presence on absence.

Call and response, therefore, can occur with external others or with others within; it can occur through improvisatory language within one instrument's role (e.g. drum-set); it can be displayed between two single instruments (e.g. vocals and trumpet); it may be present between a single voice and a collective (e.g. guitar and ensemble, singer and chorus); or it may be imbedded within the rhythmic or melodic structure of a single rhythmic figure (e.g. the clave rhythm). Overtly and covertly, call and response structures send us messages encoded in music. They exert a conversational form announcing and realizing the following claims: "We are speaking, always. We are listening, always. We speak with others, and with ourselves; we hear others and ourselves; we hear sound and silence. We are always within a medium of others."

### **Rhythmic Tension and Poly-Rhythmic Sensibilities**

Osadebe's music also utilizes a highly complex rhythmic structure that favors sustaining rhythmic tension over rhythmic release. He rarely relies on all the instruments playing in rhythmic unison, and instead uses each instrument to highlight beats that both clash and combine. As was the case with call and response, rhythmic tension is ever-present in much African music. It can be achieved by means that are not dissimilar from the

two styles of call and response. From 5:47 to 6:23, if we listen to the two guitars in Osadebe's "Osondi Owendi" (Osadebe, Kedu America, 1996), we can note that the guitar panned to the left is playing a syncopated figure based in a 16<sup>th</sup> note staccato pattern while the guitar panned to the right plays a more melodic, but equally syncopated, line against it.<sup>13</sup>

Chernoff (1979: 47) refers to this as "apart-playing" since the musicians are purposefully playing overlapping but non-parallel lines that draw out both their own and other's rhythmic characteristics. If we focus on just these two guitars, we can note how they push and pull the body. The two lines work together and at the same time move apart creating a space of tension for the listener. They also combine to create a third composite rhythm: If we focus on one rhythm for, say, eight seconds and then shift to the other rhythm for another eight seconds, we can feel our internal sense of time shift. When we become comfortable moving back and forth and identify the two rhythms at the same time, then we can witness the emergence of the third composite rhythm. Perceiving the third composite rhythm is not easy but it helps to shift our focus on the guitars' percussive, not melodic, use. The difficulty of explicitly observing the composite rhythm impedes straightforward comprehension and contributes to the "stealth-like" character of this music and its implications.

Fela Kuti, a great arranger of guitar lines, uses a similar technique in "Shuffering and Shmiling" (Fela, Shuffering and Shmiling, 1977). From 0:00 to 0:15, the guitars are panned and help us discern the two distinct parts. The guitar on the left is playing a chord rhythm while the guitar on the right – what Fela calls the "tenor guitar" -- plays a

single note line. Although both guitars are working within a duple meter, they employ a heavy dose of syncopation. Notice how the guitar in the right starts its phrase on the “and of one”.<sup>14</sup> The guitar on the left is even more syncopated, especially with the double hit on the one and the following 16<sup>th</sup> note leading up to the entrance of the tenor guitar line (see figure #1). In order to hear the third composite rhythm, we can first focus on each rhythm individually and then the two rhythms collectively. Again, we can feel the pull and push effect this has on our body.

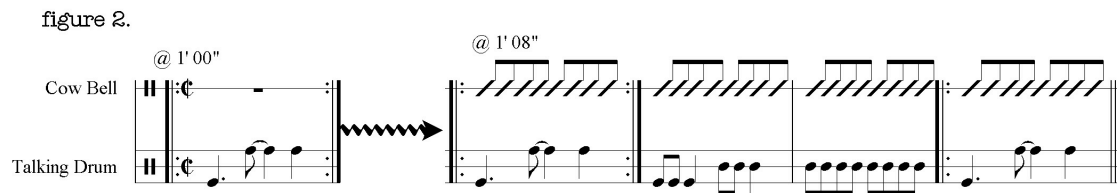
figure 1.

The musical notation for Figure 1 consists of two staves. The top staff, labeled 'Right Guitar ("tenor guitar")', is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a rest on the first beat, followed by a series of eighth notes on the second beat, and continues with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The bottom staff, labeled 'Left Guitar', also has two flats and a 2/4 time signature. It starts with a double hit on the first beat, followed by a 16th-note lead-in to the start of the Right Guitar's phrase.

Determining whether the chord that occurs directly before the “and” of the “one” in the tenor guitar is the beginning or end of the guitars phrase seems difficult. For the purpose of notation, the placement of the figure suggests certain beginnings and endings. And, because of the linear form inherent in standard musical notation it has difficulty representing circular rhythms and melodies. Nevertheless, the position of that chord within the soundscape suggests a circular structure in which there is no clear line between beginning and ending. In contrast to the Western practice of clearly marking the start and end of phrases, Fela’s blurring of beginning and ending adds to rhythmic tension since it obscures the point in which our body “should” begin feeling the rhythm. The unaccustomed Western listener is, in a sense, left off balance and in a place of rhythmic uncertainty. This “uncertainty” or rather the rhythmic complexity that is heard as “uncertainty” is key to the music and its politics; it works against reductive Cartesian anxieties and invites a playful confidence that risks possibilities in everyday decisions.

Earlier, we listened to the clave play its signature rhythm that used a 3 against 2 (rhythmically tense) phrase followed by a straight duple (rhythmically relaxed) phrase and we recognized the call and response implications of that rhythmic positioning. At times, however, instead of a three against two rhythm followed by a duple rhythm we will experience the three against two rhythm primarily on its own. If we are unsure if the rhythm being presented is a three-against-two or merely a three on its own, we can tap our feet along to the music. Since our feet usually lead the way, if they start tapping in a duple meter, we can assume that the rhythm is indeed a three against two. If our feet merely tap along with triple rhythm, we can assume that we are merely in a triple meter. In Sunny Ade's "Opening Medley: Drums/Egbe Mi Ro" (Ade, Live Live Juju, 1988), there is a simple example of a three against two rhythm (see figure #2). Starting at 1:00, we can notice how the talking drum is playing in triple meter. If we count along, we can hear a low note followed by two high notes. Call the low note "one" and the high notes "two" and "three" respectively. Now, at 1:08 the cowbell will enter playing a fast duple meter. We can count this by saying 1,2,3,4 fairly fast as soon as the cowbell enters. The talking drum leaves the triple meter at 1:10 and plays a fast duple line with the cowbell, then returns immediately to the triple feel. Such movement highlights the role of the talking drum as rhythmic highlighter. The drummer accentuates the rhythmic complexities in two ways. First, by playing the triple against the duple, the drummer supplies contrast by bringing our attention to the inherent difference and tension between rhythms. Second, at times the drummer also plays within the other rhythms – in this case the duple of the cowbell -- so as to draw attention to the other rhythm's properties. At 1:40 we can hear how the talking drum lays down the contrasting triple rhythm, then swoops into a duple meter to bring out the cowbell,

and returns to its original rhythm. In this time span the talking drum moves back and forth four times – each time with a different variation.



While rhythmic tension can seem technically complex it can also feel organic or natural. In Sunny Ade’s “Ase” (Ade, Aura, 1984), we hear the use of a delay effect to create a rhythmically tense and complex soundscape that is not unlike an echo that one would experience in nature. The chorus holds a note between 0:30 to 0:33 at the end of which delay effect comes on. The delay occurs, however, at intervals that are not rhythmically even with the music. The rhythmic shift becomes even easier to identify at 0:37 when the volume on the delayed vocals rises.<sup>15</sup> We can feel how the beat slips out from under us when the delay gets loud, and how it slips back into our body as the delay moves out again.

A key to achieving rhythmic tension is the reliance on the use of voice as a percussive instrument. Fela Kuti, is a master of the rhythmically complex vocal structures. On “Equilisation of Trouser and Pant” (Fela, Opposite People, 1977), he sings a wonderful line that brings out two main techniques, percussive vocals and rhythmic displacement (see figure #3). At 10:47-10:57 his vocal line is syncopated, especially around the word “anytime.” We can hear how his voice is quick, short, and sharp, much like a drum. Focusing on the word “anytime” in the last line of each of the three phrases, note how the second mention of “anytime” receives a minor variation at the end that forces Fela

to clip in the word before the line repeats. In this rhythm, the figure actually starts a fraction after the strong pulse of beat “two”, adding to its syncopated feel.

figure 3.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff is labeled "Voice" and contains the lyrics: "Trous - er at an - y - time, trous - er". The second staff continues the lyrics: "an - y - time, trous - er get dec - or - a - tion an - y - time, like a but - ton." The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth, quarter, and half notes, along with rests and accidentals (sharps and naturals).

Finally, there are times when the success of the rhythmic tension relies on the listener/dancer to internalize an implied, or absent, rhythm. Let’s return to the talking drum and the cowbell as we listen to “Medley Drums/Egbe Mi Ro” (Ade, Live Live Juju, 1988). When the talking drum leaves the triple to join the duple rhythm of the cowbell (e.g. at 1:10-1:11; 1:20-1:22; 1:31-1:32), the cowbell and talking drum “line up,” thereby seeming to dissolve the tension and permitting a sense of release. However, an alternative interpretative response is for the dancing listener to assume the triple rhythm and thus maintain the rhythmic tension. By moving from the triple to the duple, not only does the drum highlight the duple of the cowbell, it also invites us to supply the triple it has just vacated. In this way, the drummer alerts the listeners/dancers to the opportunity and responsibility of sustaining the interlocking texture of the soundscape.

This music presents so many layers of rhythmic tension that an adequate discussion would require great length. Instead, we mentioned a few of the more easily identifiable techniques. We need to note, however, that the use of all these techniques -- vocals as percussion, direct rhythmic contrast (beating of duple against triple), syncopation,

contrasting lines (apart playing), and rhythmic variation -- are *all* likely to be present at any given point in the soundscape.

While rock, and other forms of popular music can claim a heritage to African musical sensibility, much, if not most, of rock and pop avoids the tensions created by polyrhythm. In disco, and in most rock and punk, while a spirit of anarchism might pervade the lyrics, participants might be saturated by counter-culture drugs, or the soundscape might enfold a mosh-pit kinesthetic, the form – especially its rhythmic aspect – is usually march-step predictable, head-bangingly monolithic, and blatant in its domination of the body. This is not to say that such authoritarian and assertive forms lack appeal. On the contrary, to give up oneself to the collective other can create a transcendent unity, cultivate a rich stupor, and provide necessary cathartic release. Indeed, we suspect that it is precisely when we underestimate the allure of such forms that we are most prone to their captivation. The African forms we are exploring, on the other hand, tend towards social anarchism, where, rather than a dictating rhythm, we are offered cross-rhythms and called upon to make our own way into an intricate soundscape. If, perhaps unselfconsciously, we prefer authoritarian forms and we treat the invitation and the intricacy/complexity/subtlety of African forms as an inferior other – prior conditions that, admittedly, reflected our own posture -- then African music can seem un-danceable; its politics unfathomable. Both pitched well below our radar.

## **Heterogeneous Sound Ideal: The Democracy of Difference**

A third fundamental principle -- a heterogeneous sound ideal – conveys the idea that the greater the abundance of textures and timbres the better. In a heterogeneous soundscape, sonic textures are purposefully contrasted and perceived as being apart. There is no attempt to make sounds come out as one “voice” since the singular voice of each instrument is deemed vital to the soundscape. The heterogeneous sound ideal may be divided into two subsets: hard and soft sonic clashing.

Hard sonic clashing constitutes sounds that strongly oppose each other. At 5:22-5:30 of Osadebe’s “Nwannem Ebezina” (Osadebe, Kedu America, 1996) we hear a sustained repeated horn line but also the metallic, percussive sound of the hi-hat cymbal (the sound of two cymbals held almost completely together being hit by a drum stick). It is difficult to imagine these two sounds “blending.” This may seem like an obvious point but the ideal of contrasting textures differs from traditions such as in Western classical music where homogeneity in sonic textures is favored. The stress on homogeneity, of course, has fed-back into some African/African derived music, especially in the U.S. during the period of slavery when Africans slaves adopted aspects of Christian Church music. Such a shift to relative homogeneity, however, need not be seen primarily as the result of external influence since such influence may simply have brought out the non-dominant aspects of African music itself. Nevertheless, moving towards homogeneity, or “sonic blending,” strikes us as an observable Western emphasis that may be confirmed, for example, by attending most musical conservatories, or listening to most

string quartets, classical chorals, and church singing or even to vocal harmony in most pop music.<sup>16</sup>

Soft sonic clashing is a purposive favoring of individual voices and textural tensions within sound sources that have a potential to blend into a single voice. The horn section and the vocal chorus in Fela Kuti's "Water Get No Enemy" (Fela, *Expensive Shit*, 1975) provide an example of contemporary West-African ensemble singing. From 6:40-7:00 if we focus on the vocal chorus, we can hear many individual voices, some high, some low, but all distinct. In contrast, on the Beach Boys' "Our Prayer" (Beach Boys, *Friends 20/20*, 1990), from 0:00 to 0:10 (although really any part will do), we can observe how all of the voices are meant to blend together. Picking out a given voice proves difficult because the Beach Boys aim to erase differences among themselves in order to evoke a single collective voice. If, now, we go back and listen to Fela's track, we can discern distinct voices that mix rather than blend. If the Beach Boys create an image of a single, harmonically rich sound, than perhaps Fela presents a reality that is explicitly variegated, rhythmically diverse and multicolored even when playing together.

This soft clash version of the heterogeneous ideal is also pervasive in the horn parts. In Fela's "No Agreement," (Fela, *Shuffering and Shmiling*, 1977) we can hear each horn's individual tone in the repeated horn line from 10:00-10:20. The distinction between the high trumpet and the low baritone saxophone are striking and intense. The saxophone solo cuts across this collective brass sound, blazing a timbre and texture that declines to blend with the other horns. Note also how the use of call and response brings out the

difference between timbres; not only are the timbres juxtaposed by texture, but also by rhythmic spacing between saxophone and brass ensemble.

Lastly, we can listen to some guitar lines that may help highlight this characteristic. In Fela's "Opposite People" (Fela, *Opposite People*, 1977), from 1:07 to 1:31, note how he separates the guitars to bring out contrast. The tenor guitar sounds clean and smooth and the other guitar choppy and rhythmic – a typical Fela guitar treatment. Because both African and Rock genres have one guitar playing smooth single note lines and one guitar playing more choppy chord-based rhythmic lines, one might be tempted to draw a parallel between Fela's two guitars and that of the rhythm/lead guitar relationship found in most western rock and pop music. The difference is that Fela's guitars *both* serve a rhythmic purpose; there is no lead/rhythm distinction.

Osadebe's guitars also give a sense of not blending. However, in addition to being distinct relative to each other, each guitar also clashes with itself. Osadebe's guitars are actually slightly out of tune on many of his recordings. At first, one may be tempted to conclude that this is mere carelessness. However, this absence of "proper" tuning may be seen as a device to bring out the sound of each of the strings. In "Aye Mama" (Osadebe, *Kedu America*, 1996) from 0:00 to 0:10 or "Makojo" (Osadebe, *Sound Time* 2001) from 0:00 to 0:17, each string of the guitar seems to be alive and speaking; each note expresses distinction and singularity of voice. If we juxtapose this with any guitar styling of modern rock and pop music the difference is clear, since the latter places a heavy emphasis on blending of strings and on perfect intonation (being in tune).

The full implementation of the heterogeneous sound ideal leads to a sense of diversity in which the listener encounters an enormous variety of sound at any given moment. There are long, sustained notes, short percussive notes, big-round bass notes, piercing trumpets, grunting, singing, bells, whistles, low thuds, and the list goes on.

By contrasting this soundscape with much of Western classical music – a complex set of genres that nevertheless *generally* values homogeneity over diversity -- one begins to grasp the different values towards which these two musical worlds strive: one world seems to value expert technical precision that blends beautifully as a fused soundscape, the other seems to value expertise in social/musical interaction that imperfectly *and* beautifully brings together a plural soundscape. Our position is not that one set of values does or should trump the other. Rather, we favor super-abundance. Nevertheless, we also hold the view that current context – one of Western cultural hegemony -- requires emphasizing those values that such a hegemony misunderstands, submerges, or devalues.

### **Restraint**

The tendency toward restraint serves to enable others. Creating rhythmic complexity and an effective tension depends upon all instruments maintaining a shifting balance between foreground and the background. Osadebe's guitar player displays masterful restraint in his solo at 7:33-8:50 on "Nri Sports Di Uso" (Osadebe, Sound Time 2001). First he sets up a rhythmic ostinato in three against two rhythm that allows the other rhythms to come forward. When he moves to his single note solo, it is slow and

contemplative, interacting rhythmically with the other musicians and never bringing undue attention to himself. By the end he comes back to the three against two rhythm and returns to highlighting the work of the ensemble.

Fela Kuti collaborated with one of the most skilled restraint artists of all, drummer Tony Allen. Allen, a remarkably multifaceted drum-set player who could have easily been a show stopping force in any funk or jazz band in the U.S.A., combines virtuosity with intricate subtlety. He uses flourishes that leave the listener marveling at his technical prowess, while still staying within the groove, dropping bombs with his bass drum to accentuate different rhythmic motifs, and using his hi-hat and snare to call and respond to the vocalists and soloists. His style of placing fills is the polar opposite to that of a modern rock drummer, who may typically bang as many notes as possible on his set during breaks in the musical action. To select a listening example is difficult since Allen's style is embedded in everything he does. Nevertheless, in "Expensive Shit" (Fela, *Expensive Shit* 1975) from 4:45 to 6:11 we witness his skill in leading the rhythm section during a trumpet solo. He uses variations and subtle interactions with the trumpet to bring out the rhythmic structures created by the interlocking guitars and percussion. When there is a musical break and the dynamics are relatively calm (4:46-5:00), Allen pushes the beat without overstepping his role as rhythmic enabler. It is no accident that Tony Allen was also the musical arranger and bandleader for Fela's group in the 70s (Veal 2000: 50-1).

Finally, we need to pay due attention to the talking drum, since it nearly defines restraint during lead playing. In "Opening Medley: Drums/Gbe Mi Ro" (Ade, Live

Live Juju, 1988) from 2:11 to 3:45 we hear the talking drum, a high pitched cow bell sound, a shaker, a conga, a guitar, and sporadic keyboard. The talking drum, as you may recall from our earlier use of this example, is in a three against two rhythm supplying the basic rhythmic pulse through which we perceive the tension of the other rhythms. As the talking drum comes forth, abandoning the three against two rhythm, the real work of restraint begins. Within the interaction between itself and the other instruments the talking drum spurns any movement towards euphoric abandonment. For example, at 0:43-0:50, the talking drum begins to take ecstatic flight – a moment that the live audience in Seattle seems to relish with anticipation. But the allusion to transcending rapture seems more like playful humor evoked just before the drummer returns to the founding three against two rhythm. The drummer seems to say: “No. Here we play with and through each other.” The talking drum plays a lead role but only in as much as it drives its own rhythm, highlights other rhythms, improvises, and combines all these roles in order to shape, accent, and bind together all the rhythms moving the collective.

Contrast this sensibility to much western classical and pop music. While certainly dependent on the sonic foundation created by the rest of the group, the lead player aims to transcend the group by “getting-off” or “taking-off.” In a rock guitar solo or the solo in an orchestra, one is struck by the absence of any expectation that the soloist will highlight or bring forth the contribution of the various musicians sharing the soundscape. Rather, the point is to exhibit a unique genius. Expressed as individual brilliance, such virtuosity, while it can achieve a remarkable transcendence, also creates a hierarchy within the soundscape.

To listen to Jimi Hendrix's peerless solo on *Machine Gun* (Hendrix, "Live at the Fillmore East" track 5) from 5:28 to 6:28 is to understand the role of the soloist within the expected framework of Western popular rock music forms. Hendrix's solo is virtuosic and transcendent but he shows little or no desire to directly commune or converse with the other musicians whose role is to provide an unmoving framework. With or without the guitar solo, the music created by the rest of the band would only change slightly in feel because the form allows few opportunities for collective suppleness. While we are both admirers and collectors of great solos, African forms have pressed us to acknowledge the limitations of the binary opposition of soloist versus supporting musicians found in Western popular music. For all their strengths, such solos, and the forms from which they emerge, freeze elasticity and thereby act as obstacles to a differentiated and egalitarian collective expression. The aesthetic of restraint, on the other hand, weaves together a sonic structure that, relative to other sensibilities, is more generous and mutually supporting, one that is relatively free of a monocular vision, and that is constituted by a collective sensibility in which each individual thread is both necessary and evident.

### **Other Worlds/Biographical Breaks**

In this collaboration, our two threads come together from opposite directions: Phil's as a practicing musician, Naeem's as not-so-casual listener, both trying to understand and express meanings brought to us from other worlds. Our stories might bear telling:

*Naeem:*

In 1974, at a venue called *Stables* in East Lansing, Michigan, in the middle of continuous four hour set, Sun Ra and his twenty piece Arkestra (1950s-1990s)– a band that moved seamlessly from free improvisations, to poetic group chants, to intentionally imprecise versions of Basie and Ellington tunes, to African drums -- climbed down from the stage and moved in a snaking line through the crowd while still playing their instruments. Moving from table to table, Sun Ra grabbed my arm, locked my eyes and beseeched, “I am the Pharaoh Sun Ra. I have no people. Will you be my people?” I did not understand his question; his music even less. But thirty years later, I’ll be damned if I am not one of his people. The following year the Art of Ensemble of Chicago performed with a six foot high bass-saxophone, a half dozen giant gongs and more than 150 instruments from around the world. From inside the instruments they emerged, faces painted, randomly picking up instruments, sounding them, setting them aside and moving on. What stayed with me from that sculptured process was, again, what I couldn’t understand: How could they meander through the instruments flowing from free jazz, to blues, to ragtime, to lullabies -- collectively, individually, seamlessly. In the last five years, I have seen Thomas Mapafumo, Sunny Ade, and Djelmadi Tounkara perform with their bands. Each, besides being a bandleader is also considered a virtuoso. Tounkara, for example, is reputed to be Africa’s best guitarist. I am still waiting for the ecstasy inducing solo that never came. Only now do I begin to understand that while I am waiting for something that may never come, I am missing the virtuosity that is, in fact, there – his/their ability to play with and through others, a musical sociality, a hope for international relations.

Music can hurt you, hurt you for decades. In the film “Contact”, Jodi Foster plays an astronaut that returns from another planet. Her first words are something like, “you should have sent a poet,” because she didn’t have the words. Words and un-words, I wonder if that relationship isn’t the key. If we always had the words would we need music? Musicians are astronauts – real ones. They chart and create worlds for which we do not have words, worlds that seep into our everyday lives, and hurt us.

The tragedy and sublime beauty of music is that it is intrinsically bound to the aims of a “negative utopia” – a musical, political, pedagogical space that cannot unequivocally speak, that cannot impose or direct, that cannot teach. Why? Because it does not have the words -- this is the “negative” part of the soundscape. But of course it does speak without words, in its own language. In its own way it directs, imposes, teaches, hits and hurts us. While we trivialize it as pastime, a hobby, a dream, it stays within us, waiting for decades. And then, boom!

Sun Ra showed me how to build a cross-rhythm between discipline and anarchy, long before I would understand that I needed them both. The Art Ensemble of Chicago displayed something about how to talk and listen at the same time well before I could articulate a research agenda on enabling a conversation of cultures. Mapfumo, Ade, and Tounkara were patient with listeners like me who lacked the perceptual keenness to appreciate how cleverly and subtlety they created sonic communities that their listeners/dancers entered without knowing how or why. They were performing the engaged patience, or restraint, necessary to invite others into learning-scape.

Powerless to teach, sonic forms, with a stealth-like, below-the-radar quality, use the potent overlap between entertainment and education to provide opportunities to learn. Of course, different soundscapes present different utopias/dystopias. Maybe we can spend a bit of our energy assessing what has seeped into us through music and ask whether what we think we like is consistent with what we think we want. The rather large cost of such labor is a temporary desecration of a provisionally sacred soundscape. The gain? Well, I am not sure I have the words for that, but I suspect I could dance it for you.

***Phil:***

While learning to play the electric bass, I was often baffled. I was 11 years old, sitting in my room. My stereo on full blast listening to Metallica. One problem stuck out and haunted me for the next two years: how does the musician know when to play higher or lower notes? How does one develop a contour to one's musical line? I became obsessed with counting notes going up, then going down. When I was 13 years old I went to a guitar camp and found what I was looking for -- scales. I used scales to dictate when to go up and when to go down, and in what degree and intensity.

Slowly I became a victim of mathematics. I conceptualized everything musical in relation to numbers and patterns of numbers and patterns of patterns of numbers. My musical experience was a set of equations. These equations did not only apply to my

own musical endeavors, but to all music I listened to and loved. Songs that once held emotional weight for me sunk into the pit of numerical analysis. A great guitar line became a simple string of digits. This mode of thinking continued until I was 16 when a high school music teacher taught me that there were 7 principles to music (which he would be ashamed that I can no longer repeat). These included timbre, melody, harmony, rhythm, form...etc. However, he said there was an eighth principle that required the successful implementation of the first seven but what was not reducible to them. This eighth principle is the intangible experiential reaction to the music by those involved in the soundscape, players and listeners. This hit me hard, and it hurt. The other seven principles I could easily convert into my numeric scheme of comprehension, but this eighth principle, this beast, this enigma, well, it had no linear shell that I could penetrate.

Since then I have slowly started to see music as an emotional and cosmological experience first, and a complex numbers game second. The intangible quality of music is what makes it sublime and truly transformative. Although I still find enjoyment and purpose in the technical aspect of music creation and appreciation, I now see that as merely a path toward a greater vision, a greater experience. Seeing the eighth principle, which I often call "The X factor" has also allowed me to relate music to social life and events. When I only saw music as a series of technicalities draped in numbers I had no way of relating my musical experience to anything beyond itself. But with my new realization of this experiential/emotional/interpersonal element, music became another way to grasp love, doubt, regret, joy, friendship, and life.

Those who see music as a hobby, or listen to it as white noise (so many of us are guilty of this) fall into the same trap. Music is something that happens around them, but not to them; it's an end, never a means. Allowing the form and substance of sound to break through this barrier allows one to enter into the kind of experience that is vital in understanding any phenomenon. Without this eighth principle, we have neither politics in music, nor beauty.

I suppose that my process of discovering African music rests firmly on the foundations of the lesson I learned that day in high school. There is something more going on with music than a series of notes and rhythms, calls and responses. There is an otherworldly sensibility and a social message trying to come forth. We can write it as dots on a page, numbers on a graph, or words on a piece of paper, but the music is always something more than that, something beyond, something that asks us to open our ears, hearts, and minds.

## **Fade**

African and African derived music can be made to evoke a critique of Western culture: call and response oppose monological cultural practices; rhythmic tension challenges the drive for resolution and solution as endpoints; heterogeneous soundscapes confront the ideal of beauty as harmony and singularity by highlighting the “messy” beauty of diversity and imperfection; and restraint demonstrates that beyond the accretion of great personal skill, technique, and power, genius is realized as a moderation that cultivates others as a medium by which we can embrace the overlap between self, nature, and

cosmos. Restraint acknowledges that a transcendent political/aesthetic moment is all the more powerful when it emerges as immanence, when it swells from the ground up, and when it binds a community with that community's own resources.

Are the elliptical critiques offered by critical soundscapes adequate in the face of hegemonic control? Part of the answer to this question depends on our conception of politics and specifically the weight we attach to the relevance of mundane forms of social life. If we are wedded to the politics of macro-drama – wars, revolutions, and regime changes – then critical soundscapes are indeed below the radar. If, however, our understanding of macro-dramas incorporates the mundane rhythms of everyday actions, then soundscapes become consequential. To paraphrase the opening epigram by Carolyn Forché, soundscapes are ideologically charged: what we listen to, how we hear, and the forms through which we articulate sound, tell the world something (and perhaps everything) about what we regard as “good,” “right,” “orderly,” and “divine.” It may even be the case that our implicit commitment to musical forms gives away more realness about our politics than we can consciously bear to show. If so, there is much to be gained (and lost) in developing a critical self-consciousness about how musical and aesthetic forms shape the theoretical and practical fabric of our daily lives. International relations theory may need to recognize that cultural resistance and the musical forms through which that resistance occurs is worthy of its attention.

## **Discography**

Ade, Sunny. 1982. *Juju Music*. Mango 162-539712-2.

-----, 1984. *Aura*. Mango 162-539824-2.

-----, 1988. *Live Live Juju*. Rykodisc RCD-10047.

Beach Boys. 2001 [1968]. *Friends/20/20*. Capitol 31638.

Billy Bragg & Wilco. *Mermaid Avenue*. 1998. Electra 66024.

Devo. 1988 [1978]. *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!* Warner Brothers 2-3239.

Hartford, John. 1976. *Mark Twang*, Flying Fish FF-70020.

-----, 1978. *Headin' Down Into the Mystery Below*. Flying Fish FF-063.

Hendrix, 1999. *Live at the Fillmore East*. MCA 11931.

Jackson, Michael. 1991 [1982]. *Thriller*. Epic 38112.

Kuti, Fela. 2000 [1975/1974] *Expensive Shit/ He Miss Road*. MCA 547030.

-----, 2000 [1977] *Opposite People*. Polydor 547383.

-----, 2000 [1977]. *Shuffering and Shmiling*. MCA 547380.

Osadebe, Stephen. 1996. *Kedu America*. Xenophile 4044.

-----, 2001. *Classic Hits*, Leader 3.

-----, 2001. *Sound Time*. Indigedisc 5001.

Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi da. 2000. *Missa Papae Marcelli, Missa Aeterna*. Naxos 550573.

Zorn, John. 1999. *Music Romance, Vol. 2: Taboo & Exile*. Tzadik 7325.

## Chapter 9: Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> For their comments on earlier drafts we thank Erin Clark, Caitlin Connelly, Cory Fazio, Rob Guay, James Napoli, Emily Paulson, Kiran Pervez, Steve Pond, Mike Roberts, Clayton Rosati, James Searl, Kirsten Wasson, Mark Weinberger, Keith Yetter, and especially Marianne Franklin; for inspiration we thank Andrew Battles, Brendan McGrath, John Dobry, Sheri Feldman, Brendan Ford, Natasha Keller,

---

Noah Marmar, Bret Miller, Steve Reichlin, Malikah Waajid and Bora Yoon; and for his invaluable transcription and notational work, Benjamin Day Smith.

<sup>2</sup> By “African” we mean the spaces and cultures primarily south of the Sahara Desert; by “African derived,” those practices traceable to Africa or the African Diaspora; and by “African Diaspora” those sets of communities and histories whose ties to Africa are based on dispersion, exile, or migration, or to ideologies of ethnicity, nationalism, and trans-nationalism. See Ingrid Monson’s excellent introduction in Monson (2000).

<sup>3</sup> In Gilroy’s (1993, 99-103) language, we vie neither towards “ethnic absolutism” nor towards “anti-essentialism” but rather towards an “anti-antiessentialism.”

<sup>4</sup> We ground our discussion in the music of three Nigerians: Stephen Osadebe, Fela Kuti, and Sunny Ade. Our confidence in our ability to apply Wilson’s principles to larger fields, such Nigeria, West Africa, Africa, and the African Diaspora, decreases as the breadth of the domain increases. For the problems of representing “African” music – many of which this paper was unable to avoid or finesse, see Monson (2000) and Agawu (2003).

<sup>5</sup> We regard Wilson’s and Chernoff’s principles of African and African derived music as “changing sameness” (Gilroy, 1993, 101). That is, these principles are not fixed to some timeless essence that we might call “African.” Rather, they represent what may constitute African music at a particular time for particular purposes. See Gilroy (1993, 99-103) and Monson (2003, 4-6).

<sup>6</sup> Here are musical examples of these six elements: an abundance of call and response structures (e.g. Billy Bragg and Wilco “Mermaid Avenue Vol.1”, track 1 0:08-0:030), a heterogeneous sound ideal (Michael Jackson “Thriller”, track 1 5:01- 6:03), rhythmic tension, (Devo “Q:Are We not men?” track 2 0:35 – 1:15), a percussive mode of playing all instruments, including voice, (John Hartford “Mark Twang” track 10 2:47-4:40,), high density of musical events, and (John Zorn “Music Romance, Vol. 2: Taboo & Exile” track 5 0:49- 0:59), and integration of listener response – especially dance – into the performance.

---

We have provided counter-intuitive examples of these principles here to show, in part, how Wilson's principles have permeated and changed the way Western music is created, thereby suggesting their under-the-radar effectiveness. The Billy Brag and Wilco example is a classic use of conversational call and response found in much American folk music, a form heavily influenced by black slave culture. Michael Jackson's use of multiple timbres is telling of a trend in Western pop music that involves dense layering of sounds through horns, percussion, guitars, vocals, and keyboards. Devo's use of rhythmic tension and syncopation is made increasingly evident through the juxtaposition between the verse and chorus sections of the song. The vocal percussion of John Hartford can be directly linked to the improvisatory and rhythmic sensibilities of black slave music and its eventual cross-pollination with American rural folk music. Finally, we hear how the modern composer John Zorn uses an assault of volume and sound to create a soundscape that involves many performers and musical events. Only five examples are presented because finding a case of "integrating listener response" is rather difficult without a visual medium. Later we will analyze these principles in detail as we go through our Nigerian examples.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on these artists and their work, please see: African Music Resources Online <[http://ntama.uni-mainz.de/~ama/archive/ama\\_links.html](http://ntama.uni-mainz.de/~ama/archive/ama_links.html)> and All Music Guide <<http://www.allmusic.com/>>. Other genres from Africa and the African Diaspora also fit nicely into the Wilson/Chernoff model we use here, but perhaps not as paradigmatically as Osadebe, Fela, and Ade. For example, Jazz is prone to overlook the principle of restraint, and much popular rap/hip-hop (much like rock/pop), while rhythmically connected with African music, tends to reduce and simplify the more complex and tense rhythms found in our three Nigerian examples.

<sup>8</sup> This example is found in the John Hartford composition, "Oh the Mississippi Queen" (Headin' Down Into the Mystery Below, 1978). Sadly, this recording is out of print.

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise noted, references to recordings are for CD-digital format.

<sup>10</sup> We can find the "down beat" by tapping our foot to the music. When the foot hits the floor that is the downbeat. When our foot is at the top, the up beat is occurring.

---

<sup>11</sup> It is important not to think of this as an alternating meter, but instead, according to Steve Pond, “as a syncopated figure that suggests a ‘three’ beat measure, mapped onto the underlying duple measure. The feet are the boss – they step resolutely in duple time.” Pond quoted from personal correspondence.

<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, the musical instrument we call the “clave” is also the name of the rhythmic figure that it traditionally plays.

<sup>13</sup> The panning, which refers to the placement of the instrument in the speakers, is very stark in this track, and can be experienced best by using a pair of headphones to appreciate the most drastic left/right separation. Syncopation is the act of accenting notes that are not on strong beats. Strong beats are generally beats 1, 2, 3, 4. We can think of the predictable pounding of the drumbeat in a disco or techno song as the opposite of syncopation.

<sup>14</sup> To understand the “and” of “one”: listen to the track and count out the beats 1,2,3,4. To help, listen to the shaker, which is playing all those beats very strongly. Now, in between the numbers, say the word “and.” So you will be saying 1 “and” 2 “and” 3 “and” 4 “and.”

<sup>15</sup> Such delays are often used in Dub Reggae style in order to create rhythmic tension.

<sup>16</sup> For an excellent example of classical choral singing, consider the stunning use of vocal blend and harmony in Palestrina (*Missa Papae Marcelli*, 2000), especially “Kyrie” (track one, from 0-1:00).