



MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Transformation and Negotiation

Eric Akrofi, Maria Smit & Stig-Magnus Thorsén (Eds.)



Music and Identity
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FOREWORD

South Africa and Sweden have a long history of cooperation, which intensified during the last decades of the 20th century. Culture then came into focus, mirroring a variety of political and social changes. In the mid 1990s musicology emerged as a new area. A Travelling Institute for Music Research in South Africa (TIMR), established in 1999, aimed at building capacity and initiating common research projects. The South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) provided funds for TIMR (which was active from 1999 until 2004), resulting in several networks and research projects.

In 2002 support was given to the Swedish South African Research Network on Music and Identity (SSARN). International workshops were held with funding from the Travelling Institute and finally we received a grant from the NRF-Sida fund “South African – Swedish research partnership programme bilateral agreement”. This made it possible for SSARN to organise a series of local and international seminars from 2004–2006 in order to broaden our perspectives and deepen our knowledge in the area of music and identity. Also, the hosting universities, namely Walter Sisulu University and the University of Stellenbosch, both in South Africa, and Göteborg University in Sweden, provided financial support for our meetings.

Publishing a book, out of experiences of the network, was a goal from the beginning. The book project called for further expertise and Professor Kofi Agawu, Princeton University USA, and Professor Even Ruud, Oslo University Norway, scrutinised texts and gave all writers clear-cut scholarly feedback. Professor Christine Lucia, Wits University, Johannesburg, South Africa, wrote a lucid introduction in order to place the subject in a wider research context. Undersigned Maria Smit did the extensive final editing in cooperation with the publishing house.

We are most grateful to all institutions and persons, who made the publication of the book possible. However, in the first place we want to thank all participants, who since 2002 have shared thoughts, ideas, and research through discussions and texts. Not all the essays produced during these years have found a place in this book, but they have given input to the network’s inspiring work.

For the Swedish South African Research Network (SSARN):

- Eric Akrofi, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa
- Maria Smit, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Göteborg University, Sweden



MUSIC AND DISCOURSE

TRAVESTY OR PROPHECY? VIEWS OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK CHORAL COMPOSITION

Christine Lucia, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

ABSTRACT

This chapter uses the example of African choral music in South Africa to show how differently the anthropological view of music in society and the musicological view of music as autonomous object can affect the way South African black music is perceived. This is especially the case in analytical approaches to an African musical tradition that apply norms of music theory and modernity associated with Western music and its analytical traditions. Four musical examples are discussed, through which the possibility for different readings are presented, and the chapter ends by proposing another kind of analytical reading, one that accepts a new African identity in the making of 20th-century choral music.

INTRODUCTION

In *Ethnicity, identity and music*, Martin Stokes notes a tension between the anthropological view of music in society and the musicological view of music as autonomous object that permeated the 20th century (1994, pp. 1–3). It nurtured differing views of music and identity that changed, as Stokes points out, according to where you stood. In this essay I consider South African black choral music in light of this tension, seeing it as “composition” forging a new African identity and noting Veit Erlmann’s caution about the “futility of bringing plain structural approaches to bear” on such music (1991, p. 120), but trying to understand why it continues to be seen in either a social-functional way as a field for ethnomusicology, or as “art music”. As Martin Scherzinger suggests, in his (2001) critique of the “form versus function” argument that generates the very disciplinary tension Stokes points to, there are dangers inherent in taking an “either-or” perspective on any kind of music; more especially this is the case in music that draws strongly on both western and African traditions, as black South African choral music does.

African choral music as a field of study has not been neglected (see for example Hansen 1968, Huskisson 1969, Mngoma 1981, Mthethwa 1988, Erlmann 1991, Mugovhani 1998,

Detterbeck 2003, and Olwage 2002, 2003, and 2006), and the way it has been viewed varies under different disciplinary imperatives. In Erlmann and Mughovani's work the methodological perspective is ethnomusicological, in Detterbeck's this is combined with action research, while Olwage's work is postcolonial musicology. Under a different kind of imperative, the post-apartheid ideology of nation-building, South Africans are now exhorted to regard it as African art music, or "Serious music in an African context", as Mzilikazi Khumalo puts it (2005, p. 13), distancing it from both the "traditional" and the "popular" (*ibid.*).

In this essay I focus on (mis)understandings of form, language and syntax that arise in formalist discourses on African choral music. The view Erlmann condemned above as "motivated by racial prejudice" (*ibid.*) still seems to prevail in post-apartheid South Africa, I suggest, if the continued marginalisation of choral music in the academy and classroom is anything to go by. This attitude stems from a philosophy of music education that still inculcates – through music curricula, policies, and the banning of choral music to the margins of extramural time – a particular view of European compositional identity as mainstream. I explore two compositions by black composers and two by white composers in the quest to reveal resultant disjunctures in the way choral music is read. My search begins in the archive.

QUALIFICATIONS AS MEASURE OF IDENTITY

Amongst the papers housed in the Kirby Collection of the University of Cape Town,¹ is a circular dated 3 August 1965, sent from the Johannesburg-based Institute for the Study of Man in Africa to all its members. It reads:

The Institute for the Study of Man in Africa is pleased to announce that Mr Khabi Mngoma, U.T.L.M., U.P.L.M., L.R.S.M. (Teaching), L.R.S.M. (Performance), A.T.C.L., who was born in Johannesburg and who is of Zulu extraction but completely detribalised, has kindly agreed to lecture on "The Role of Music in Soweto" (Kirby Papers, UCT).

The impression this gives is of someone brought up with tribal ways shed through the civilising process of Western education; knowledgeable enough about music in "his"

¹ Percival Kirby was a major figure in African music scholarship, and Professor of Music at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1921 to 1952 where *inter alia* he taught composition. Trained at the Royal College of Music (majoring in composition: see Kirby 1967a, 39–44, 74), Kirby emigrated to South Africa in 1914, pioneered ethnographic work on "Native" traditions (Kirby 1934 and 1936), and also became interested in contemporary African music (Kirby 1967b and 1971).

society (Soweto, the black apartheid township near white Johannesburg), to give a talk on it to a predominantly white audience at the Institute. The twenty letters after Mngoma's name suggest he is qualified to do so – U.T.L.M., U.P.L.M., L.R.S.M. and A.T.C.L.² – qualifications that link South Africa to Britain through the history of colonialism.³

This history can partly be traced back to 1832 Britain, when the Sacred Philharmonic Society was formed to promote choral practice. It soon transformed “into a symbol of religious dissent as a [huge] coalition of nonconformist choirs” (Ehrlich *et al.* 2000, p. 139), and this “dissenting” choral practice used a resurrected form of medieval tonic sol-fa notation to teach predominantly working- or lower middle-class choral amateurs throughout Britain to read and sing music. In 1835 the British Committee of Council on Education recommended tonic sol-fa and class singing for state schools (Rainbow 1986, pp. 28–31), a move further consolidated by the founding of the (London) Tonic Sol-fa College in 1869, which issued elementary and advanced external certificates, and soon included South African candidates, black and white, in its sway.⁴

In a colonising context tonic sol-fa's use in black mission schools such as Lovedale became inflected with racial overtones, as Grant Olwage has pointed out (2003, Ch 3). At black teacher training colleges throughout South Africa in the 20th century only enough of it was learned in order to be able to teach basic music theory at elementary school, thus putting most musicians on a treadmill of arrested development, their formal knowledge of music “remain[ing] ‘elementary’ because their teachers’ musical training was elementary because their pupils would not require anything more than elementary music instruction” (*ibid.*, p. 75). In the Victorian musical Establishment, meanwhile, figures such as Stanford and Parry (Percival Kirby's mentors during his formative education in the UK) saw mass education in tonic sol-fa as a threat to highbrow traditions of instrumental music in staff notation (*ibid.*, p. 66), and institutions such as the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (formed 1889) were established to provide a corrective, offering qualifications by distance education all over Britain

² These denote diplomas granted externally through the University of South Africa (UTLM/UPLM), the London Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in London (LRSM), and London's Trinity College of Music, London (LTCL).

³ Kofi Agawu (2003, 1–22) has given an overview of the colonising impact in Africa of Western musical language and education but does not include the hegemonic effect of external diplomas in the way African musicians were inculcated with Western notions of “qualifying” musically.

⁴ Robin Stevens gives an overview of the history of tonic sol-fa notation in South Africa elsewhere in this book.

(Associated Board 1890–1901), restoring piano, violin, “bel canto” voice (rather than chapel singing) and organ, as norms of musical training, transmitted (of course) in staff notation.⁵ The new external exams of the Associated Board promoted training in Western theory, harmony, and counterpoint as essential building blocks to composition in a musical culture conceived with instrumental music as primary. These exams were requested in South Africa via the University of the Cape of Good Hope as early as 1894 (*ibid.*) and indigenised by the University of South Africa in 1948 (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music 1948; Paxinos 1994a and 1994b). The letters after Mngoma’s name, then, were not acquired at school but by a laborious process of self-study in a situation where rival institutions once offered two forms of notation to external candidates and then competed to bring “music education” to South Africans, within an overriding context of racialised imperialism. For tonic sol-fa became the predominantly “native” notation, and staff the predominately “white” one.

External diplomas were (and still are) owned by few black South Africans, probably through lack of access to private teachers and the cost of entry fees (see Lucia forthcoming). As a result they are invariably mentioned in the literature on black musicians (see for example Huskisson 1969 *passim*, and Ballantine 1993, pp. 33–34). They constitute the end of a series of steps known as “Grade Exams”,⁶ and few African musicians in South Africa own them, so the five sets of letters after Mngoma’s name signify something extremely unusual in the Sowetan musical world he described in 1965. In the academic world from which Kirby had retired, on the other hand, they indicated another thing altogether: aside from adequacy to enter the music profession as a private music teacher – then, as now, most teachers had diplomas not degrees – they implied readiness to pursue an undergraduate degree in music.

⁵ This was a move explicitly concerned with the perpetuation of high standards of “taste” in British musical life (see early volumes of the London-based journal the *Musical Times*), with the pre-eminence of instrumental over vocal music, and the survival of upper-, middle- and upper-class cultural values and national political hegemony.

⁶ These progressive stages of learning (Grades 1 to 9), denote a rising scale of values for “detrified” African musicians. Grade 1 is the first step – reading staff notation’s pitches and note-values; Grade 3 is a sign of mastery over the epistemology of scales and time signatures. Grade 5 indicates familiarity with keys, time signatures, note grouping, Italian expression marks, and 18th-century ornaments, and is a point beyond which most African musicians in South Africa do not proceed; Grades 6 to 9 denote skills in elementary melody writing, harmony, counterpoint, and formal analysis. Parnassus is the Diploma, which can be taken in either teaching or performance.

MISREADING OF MUSICAL IDENTITIES

This double standard, in which one man's Parnassus is another's half-way mark, is symptomatic not only of the colonial history from which it emerged, but also, I suggest, of the tension mentioned earlier between disciplinary perspectives. As choral music in tonic sol-fa notation became automatically considered inferior to instrumental Western music composed in staff notation, so through general attitudes by white musicians to composers of choral music was this sense of inferiority preserved. This, in turn, made it more likely that an ethnomusicological perspective would be used to study choral music, and that Western musicology's formalist modes of analysis would find such music wanting.

I use four works as evidence of the disjuncture created between readings of music composed in staff notation or tonic sol-fa notation, each dependent on different notions of music and identity: two by black composers (Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa and Michael Mosoeru Moerane), and two by Western-trained white professors of music (Percival Kirby and Hans Roosenschoon⁷). I show how the professors related to the composers, not within an anthropological paradigm where "emic" notions of composition are expressed, but from an "etic" perspective, in which knowledge of theory, harmony, and counterpoint is the qualifying trope of composition. I am aware that this may seem an ironic position, since I, too, am a white Western-trained professor of music, here assessing the extent to which other white professors of music may be missing the point of black music – and seeing that music, furthermore, from my own perspective.

I confess to being spurred on by two things: one is a question asked from the floor at a music conference in South Africa in 1997 about African choral music: "but isn't it a travesty of Western music?" The other was a comment made by a fine arts colleague to whom played a young African composer's composition, that the music sounded "postmodern". The modernisms both listeners heard choral music avoiding are those of atonal, serial or post-serial techniques of composition. What such music seems to lack, however, makes it precisely what it is. It plays with codes of 19th-, 20th-, and even some late 18th-century music, but in so doing it flaunts such music's contextual conventions and syntactical moves. In so doing it becomes not so much travesty as reimagining; and this, as I shall show later, can also be seen as having a prophetic quality.

The codes such pieces employ are drawn from a missionary schooling tradition, of which John Knox Bokwe (1855–1922) was the colonial founding father (see Olwage 2006). The vast extant repertoire of choral music has a complex, non-unitary history and

⁷ Roosenschoon is Professor at the University of Stellenbosch; Kirby was Professor at Wits.

is far from homogenous in style. It has acquired idioms from each musical discourse known to generations of composers, most of whom were/are teachers, who live(d) in diverse intercultural and interlinguistic environments. The repertoire, written in tonic sol-fa notation, comprises thousands of pieces each about five minutes long, most of it unpublished. Texts (in all eleven official South African languages) are integral to the meaning works hold for composers and their communities. Composers write their own words, adapted from church or other ritual contexts, articulating tropes of struggle and victory in everyday life (see also Agawu 1987, p. 63), and “writing” their experiences into music.⁸

The examples of African choral music I analyse here, then, are not by people struggling with a borrowed identity within a discourse of European modernity, nor are they minor composers, but towering figures in South African culture. Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa and Michael Mosoeu Moerane were contemporaries,⁹ and the songs I have chosen here were composed in the 1930s: Mohapeloa’s “*U Ea Kae?*” (“Where Are You Going?”) and Moerane’s “*Barala ba Jerusalem*” (“O Daughters of Jerusalem”) which was probably composed much later.¹⁰

"U EA KAE" BY J.P. MOHAPELOA

“*U Ea Kae*”, of which the first six bars are shown in Ex. 1, uses “traditional” material: a Sesotho corn-threshing song from the eastern mountains of Lesotho where the composer was born.¹¹ It was published in 1935 as the first song in Volume I of Mohapeloa’s *Meloli le Lithallere tsa Afrika* (“African Melodies in Decorative Counter-Display” (Huskisson 1969, p. 161) or “... Decorative Counterpoint” (Khumalo 1998,

⁸ They often refer(red) to politically-induced hardship. Examples are Caluza’s “*iLand Act*”, composed to mark black opposition to the Native Lands Act legislation of 1913 (see Lucia 2005, pp. 172–175 and 336), Tyamzashe’s “*Zweliyaduduma*” (“The Country is Thundering”) – a metaphorical interpretation of the British Royal family’s visit in 1947, and Matyila’s “*Bawo, Thixo Somandla*” (“Father, God Omnipotent”). This was a mid-1980s protest against the apartheid state-within-a state’s Ciskei Government, quickly taken up as a protest song and later mistaken as “traditional” (see Khumalo 1998, p. 48).

⁹ Mohapeloa (1908–82) and Moerane (1909–81) are known throughout southern Africa. Almost every year a work by one or both men is prescribed in national competitions that involve millions of choralests. No white South African composer can claim this degree of exposure.

¹⁰ There is no date ascribed to this song.

¹¹ Lesotho is a small mountainous kingdom in southwestern Africa surrounded by South Africa; formerly called the British Protectorate of Basutoland.

p. 38)). In Huskisson's view it is a "[c]horal *arrangement* of a traditional threshing song" (1969, p. 164; my emphasis). It is impossible to know how close it was in the 1930s to a traditional rendering, but from the way it is written down and the fact that it is performed without the movements choirs use in "traditional songs", also from the fact that it only has one verse, I see it as composition rather than arrangement. Mohapeloa was in any case quite scathing of "[a]uthorities on African music [who] uphold the old type of folk song as the only sound basis for further development", advocating instead the use of "idiom[s] of the time", absorbed from musics "the African has tasted, chewed, swallowed, and assimilated till they formed part of his being" (Mohapeloa 2002(1951), [2]). This did not stop him from using traditional music, but I suggest that he did so as composer rather than arranger. According to Khumalo, the song's popularity in its place of origin is such, nevertheless, that it is now known principally in Mohapeloa's version, which has been accepted as the "clan-song of the Moletsanes" (Khumalo 1998, p. 28):¹² an interesting example of the re-inscribing of identity through composition.

There are two main sections (bars 1–12 and 13–23) with a *dal segno* repeat at bar 13 that reinforces the refrain-like second section, although if this *is* a refrain the piece seems to end prematurely. The opening melody's rapid descent of a major 9th in one-and-a-half bars is striking, as is the way the bass rises towards it.¹³ Musical texture is characterised by restless movement in harmony and rhythm with frequent parallels between soprano and bass, as there are in choral songs where traditional bow harmonies are implied.¹⁴ The piece uses new material every few bars, each idea is repeated, and the ending is not climactic. It has no tempo or expressive markings – prominent in choral music and unusually absent here – and there is an avoidance of Western notions of harmonic tension. Mohapeloa uses material in relation to the song's length in a way that makes it open-ended, and if not "postmodern" (for 1935 this might be stretching a point), it sounds at least modern; but modern within an African rather than European discourse of modernity.

¹² The song is performed in competitions as an "indigenous composition" rather than a "traditional" piece, and is therefore sung without movement. This plus the fact that it has been included by Khumalo in the first volume of SAMRO's South Africa Sings as if it were a piece of "art" music, justifies my reading of it as a "composition", rather than as an "arrangement".

¹³ The potential for the soprano part to exist as "melody" independent of the bass and some of the original harmonies is nicely realised in a jazzed-up version of the song recorded by Sibongile Khumalo in 1996.

¹⁴ "Bow harmonies" are chords based on overtones from two or three fundamental notes roughly a tone apart.

MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Doh is A

S } : 1 . r | 1 . l : s . m . r | d : r . l , | s , : - | : 1 . r | 1 . l : s . m . r | d : r . l , {
Tshoa - ra kho - ng, Re ee - koo - na Ta - ung, Tshoa - ra kho - ng, Re ee - koo - na Ta -

A } : . s , | d : - . t , | l , : - . d | s , : - . m , | m , : . s , | d : t , . t , | l , : l , . f , {
Tshoa - ra khong, Re ee koo Ta - ung, Tshoa - ra ko - to, Re ee koo -

T } : . f | m : - . d | f : - . d | m : - . d | d : . r | m : r . r | f : r . d {
Tshoa - ra khong, Re ee koo Ta - ung, Tshoa - ra ko - to, Re ee koo -

B } : . t₂ | d , : - . d , | f , : - . l , | d : - . s , | m , : r , . t₂ | d , : - . s , | l , , f , . l , {
Tshoa - ra khong, Re ee koo Ta - ung, Re ee koo -

For rehearsal only

ung, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne; Re e'o
na Ta - ung, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne; Re e'o
na Ta - ung, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne; Re e'o
na Ta - ung, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne, Ha Mo - le - tsa - ne; Re e'o

Ex 1 "U Ea Kae" by J. Mohapeloa bars 1-6 © SAMRO

(Translation [Khumalo]: Take your stick, and let us go to Taung, home of the Moletsanes)

Where does this piece's musical identity come from? Lying behind it is the composer's experience of folk music, hymns, European parlour songs and art music, and probably early jazz. His familiarity with some European classics might have been engendered in the 1930s by tonic sol-fa books published in his home town, Morija (Lesotho), such as *Lipina Tsa Likolo tse Phahameng* (Morija Sesuto Book Depot 1985(1907)), which includes music by Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Rossini. The remains of Mohapeloa's library in Morija includes vocal scores by Donizetti and Meyerbeer, perhaps acquired later along with *The world of music* by Sandved (1957), and Ewen's *The complete book of 20th-century music* (1959). Mohapeloa was already by the late 1930s, however, a composer whose reputation had grown from home-singing to national status (see Sibandze 2003). His musical experience was fairly wide and he had already published two books of choral songs (Mohapeloa 1988a and 1996; the third volume in this series followed in 1947 (Mohapeloa 1988b).

In 1938 he enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) as an "occasional" student (Huskisson 1969, 161). He was almost thirty, with junior secondary education at Morija Training Institute and senior secondary education at the South African Native College (Fort Hare University) behind him, plus some correspondence courses through the University of South Africa (Pretoria) (see Sibandze *ibid.*, and Khumalo 1998, p. 10). At Wits he came "face to face with Music Composition" as Huskisson puts it (*ibid.*, p. 162). It was Kirby who provided the face of composition,¹⁵ while W.P. Paff was an "outstanding teacher of harmony and counterpoint" (Khumalo *ibid.*, p. 28).¹⁶

My take on "U Ea Kae" is not to see it as an early song written before the composer knew what he was doing, or as arrangement, or as a simple hybrid, which is how African choral music has often been seen by ethnomusicologists – combining "African" and "Western" elements (see Mngoma 1981 and Mthethwa 1988). Even Khumalo prolongs this somewhat polarising view, seeing Mohapeloa's training in Western music as "not stilt[ing] the Africanism ... but rather provid[ing] a means by which to express it" (*ibid.*). I suggest that the tension is not so much between African and Western but between what Mohapeloa learnt compositionally from Kirby, and what he felt able or inclined to apply. Mohapeloa was arguably more of "a composer" than his teacher (who was more a teacher and researcher). His early compositions experiment with stylistic traits from Europe, America, and Africa, grafting a range of new onto the already known, in much

¹⁵ Kirby notes in his memoirs: "I was awarded the Diploma of ARCM in Composition [in 1913], and at last I found myself with a real qualification as a professional musician" (1967a, p. 74).

¹⁶ Mohapeloa did not appear to complete his diploma, perhaps because of the ill-health that dogged much of his early life and disrupted his education.

the same way his contemporaries in South African jazz were doing in the late 1930s through 1950s, to create marabi and kwela. African material (if this is what is meant by “traditional”) was only part of what he used to realise his compositional identity, against such an eclectic background.

What about the relationship between the two men? In the “Epilogue” to his autobiography (1967a), Kirby lists many famous white South African musicians among his legacy of students, but Mohapeloa’s name is not mentioned. Someone called “Mohapela” is referred to very disparagingly in a letter from Friedrich Hartmann to Kirby many years later (Hartmann was one of Kirby’s students), in answer to an enquiry by Kirby, but there is no mention of Mohapeloa among Kirby’s own surviving papers at UCT or Wits.¹⁷ Mohapeloa, on the other hand, claimed in later life, “I am what I am because of [Kirby’s] guidance, tuition, and everything”, and asked his daughter-in-law Joyce to name her first-born son Percival after his mentor (Joyce Mohapeloa, Author’s Interview 28.09.06). So how, and what, did he learn from Kirby about composition? I turn here for more evidence, to one of Kirby’s own works.

“A SOTHO LAMENT” BY PERCIVAL KIRBY

In 1939, the year after Mohapeloa began studying at Wits, Kirby produced a Sesotho folksong arrangement he called “A Sotho Lament” (Kirby 2004)¹⁸, the first verse of which is shown in Ex. 2. The descent and rise in melody represents “an African melody” while words like “hearken”, “didst”, “implore”, and the bland chordal accompaniment place it in the parlour-song genre of Edwardian Britain (see Van der Merwe 1989). It is far easier to sing than the Mohapeloa, whose melodic and rhythmic twists are challenging. Kirby’s three verses are almost identical and the verse is in two sections (bars 6–14 and 15–24).

¹⁷ Hartmann writes: “I am not sure at the moment about Mohapela [sic]. He probably was the Native B.Mus student who was in the Department when I arrived here [Wits]. He was a hopeless case, failed certain second and third year subjects and disappeared. He would not deserve to be mentioned in your presentation of S.A. musicians anyhow” (Museums and Archives, University of Cape Town: Kirby Papers file BC 750, “Correspondence”). If this was an opinion of J.P. Mohapeloa, it is Hartmann’s not Kirby’s, as far as we know.

¹⁸ No. 1 of Kirby’s *Three African Idylls* (republished by SAMRO in 2004), both words and music by Kirby.

Travesty or prophecy? Views of South African black choral composition

Andante

Voice

Piano

fz *p* *dim.* *p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. (ad lib. throughout)

Oh— hear-ken, Be -

- lov - ed, Why— didst thou de-part? Why— didst break my heart? Why

— didst thou de-part? Why— didst break my heart? With grief both night and day My heart is

dolce

burn - ing, To heav'n a-bove I pray, Im - plor - ing thy re - turn

dim.

Ex 2 "A Sotho Lament" by P. Kirby bars 1–24 © SAMRO

The key is E major with modal inflections in the harmony and a drone bass that makes it "traditional" sounding. There is a teleology of phrasing, and extensions in bars 13–14 and 19–24 are techniques learnt in elementary Western composition, as are the piano embellishments in verses 2 and 3, to alleviate the boredom of repetition. Perhaps the comparison is unfair: this is an arrangement, not pretending to be a sophisticated composition; Kirby was a student of Stanford, trying to show here in a creative way his

understanding of foreign African traditions, of which he was a dedicated scholar. What is more interesting is the way it shows how Kirby *interpreted* African music compositionally, seeing its elements as in need of framing, of the civilising lineaments of Western harmonic embellishment. This, I suggest, is partly what learning Western composition may have meant for Mohapeloa: a conforming of his language to Western expectations. Such conformity, however, is precisely what makes “A Sotho Lament” sound simplistic and repetitive next to “U Ea Kae”.

And it is Mohapeloa’s piece that has lasted: it has become a “classic”, still prescribed in choral competitions; it has been reimagined as popular music (Khumalo 1996, track 4), and arranged for orchestra (Cheyne 1997 and Hankinson 1999). What actually happened, then, during those composition lessons in the late 1930s? Were there disagreements or did Mohapeloa passively do his exercises, conform, and decide later what to use in his own work? I suggest he was offered, but mostly did not take on board judging from his later compositions, a curriculum of scientifically based rules of four-part voicing, voice-leading, phrasing and harmonic progression in a Western musical idiom. Early counterpoint might have been part of this process (also music history) but not the serialism of Schoenberg, which was too “new” in the 1930s; and for melodic writing the ideal types offered by the Grade and Licentiate exam syllabuses were along early 19th-century lines (as echoed in “A Sotho Lament”).

This way of learning to compose – and what the letters after Khabi Mngoma’s name also denote as the outcome of – symbolises the unequal power-relation of one kind of musical identity over another. The hegemonic Western system has its own ideological history: it developed out of an early 19th-century European notion of music’s autonomous status as high art, when moreover “music instruction and music organisations were seized on to help consolidate a middle-class society by means of appreciating music for its own sake” as Sanna Pederson puts it (cited in Treitler 1999, 374). This view of music as autonomous object rather than social text – and the tension Stokes and Scherzinger point to – is the work of decades of Western – specifically British – music education at university level.

Harmony and counterpoint studies in the academy as preparation for composition were consolidated by Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, who as the new Professor of Music at Oxford in 1855 instituted “major reforms of curriculum”, introducing exams in “Harmony and Counterpoint, Fugue, Canon, Formal Analysis, and Musical History, in addition to the submission of written composition of prescribed nature” (Rainbow 1989, 239). Notice how this separates music theory from history (which allows the former to remain in a timeless present), and both of them from composition: all three axiomatically Western (this didn’t even need to be said in 1855), but by far the larger

emphasis on techniques learned *before* composition. Oxford “set the pattern generally adopted” by other universities (*ibid.*, p. 241), including Wits in the 1930s. This approach separated historical and performing contexts of music from rules around compositional abstraction, which could then remain a formalist pursuit in the academy.¹⁹ Teachers were able to downgrade music that did not observe the rules without having to take into account historical or social context, let alone cultural difference. “Difference” was in fact well preserved in Kirby and Mohapeloa’s case, as one can see clearly through their own music.

"BARALA BA JERUSALEMA" BY MICHAEL MOERANE

Mohapeloa’s contemporary, Michael Moerane presents another case. His “serious study of music” (Khumalo 1998, 14) or mastery of the rules, lasted from 1930 to 1941, culminating in a BMus obtained through the University of South Africa. During the eleven long years he took to achieve this he passed thirteen courses including Harmony & Counterpoint, History of Music, Score Reading, Orchestration and Instrumentation, Double Counterpoint, and Fugue.²⁰ Moerane’s “*Barala ba Jerusalema*” (“O Daughters of Jerusalem”, adapted from the *Song of Songs*), was probably composed in the 1940s or even later, but the manuscript only came to light in 1998 in the SAMRO Music Library in Johannesburg; and it was immediately published (Khumalo 1998, 10²¹). The first section is given in Ex. 3.

¹⁹ The type of theory tuition set by Oxbridge and London universities was generally only available to external students (residential courses in music were only offered at Oxford from 1914, for example), so it was natural that bodies such as the London Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (established 1889), should apply the same notion of progression to the new Grade exams. The promise of self-education within an ideology of progress or scientific modernism in the “grades” caught on in South Africa from the start, and passing their theory exams became the benchmark by which many aspiring musicians, black and white, measured themselves as musically trained.

²⁰ Kirby obtained an academic record, now among his papers at UCT, from the University of South Africa in 1962 while he was pursuing the case of the (then) missing score of Moerane’s symphonic poem *Fatše la Heso*.

²¹ I have not seen the manuscript version.

MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Deh is C

S: *f* m' :- :d' | s :- :m | f :s :-:l | s :- :m | s :f :-:m | m :r :-:m {
 Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa - le - ma, Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa -

A: *f* m :s :f | f :- :m | m :r :r | r :d :-:ta, | l, :t, :-:d | d :d :t, {
 Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa - le - ma, Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa -

T: *f* a :d' :r' | d' :r' :m' :r' | d' :d' :-:t | t :l :-:s | m :f :s | l :l :t {
 Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa - le - ma, Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa -

B: *f* d :m :s | l :t :d' :t | l :s :-:f | m :r :-:de | de :r :m | f :f :s {
 Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa - le - ma, Ba - ra - li ba Je - ru - sa -

Moderato
 For rehearsal only

r :d :- | - :- :s :s | m' :-:d' | s :- :m | f :s :-:l | s :-:d' {
 le - ma, Ke mo - tshoa - na e - - mpa ke mo - tie Joa -

r :d :- | - :- :f :f | m :s :-:f | f :- :m | m :r :- | r :-:s {
 le - ma, Ke mo - tshoa - - na e - - mpa ke mo - tie Joa -

d' :t :-:l | s :l :t | s :d' :-:r' | d' :r' :m' :r' | d' :d' :-:t | t :-:l {
 le - - - ma, Ke mo - tshoa - - na e - - mpa ke mo - tie Joa -

l :s :-:f | m :f :r | d :m :-:s | l :t :d' :t | l :s :-:f | f :-:m {
 le - - - ma, Ke mo - tshoa - - na e - - mpa ke mo - tie Joa -

Ex 3 “Barala ba Jerusalema” by M. Moerane bars 1–6 © SAMRO

(Translation [Khumalo]: O daughters of Jerusalem, I am black but beautiful)

The piece keeps straining against conventions. Driven more by its melodic line than the Mohapelo and within an idiom less redolent of folksong, it uses a key (C major) and chords, in an ostensibly functional way. But there is a tension below the surface, for it intensifies chromatically (bars 9–15) towards the words “do not stare at me because I am black”, erupting in bar 15 into a series of vertical textures that flaunt conventional harmonic voicing (“tell me, tell me”). In bar 16 it suddenly changes direction again, the harmonic “deviance” is submerged (“where you tend your flock”), and the section ends abruptly before the double bar with a rapid unison descent to the tonal centre, C. Rather than closure, however, this comes across as an interruption, an abrupt displacement of the expectation set up by the previous bars.

A contrasting middle section in the relative minor follows, but this similarly deviates from its own path a few bars later, with choral shouts at a high register and in a more urgent tempo. The uses of harmony in this piece – certainly the most important aspect of its musical identity – are not easily positioned within the language of European art music of the mid-20th century, but also not within Victorian norms – if anything they relate to the disintegrating tonal structures of early 20th-century Europe, and most of all to a “new African” concept of dissonance. What the piece also shows better than the Mohapelo is a close representation of the text, with resultant harmonic tensions that can, I argue, be read as political signifiers. I turn to how it has been reconceived in the post-apartheid era, where it has been recomposed as a solo art song with both piano and orchestral accompaniment, by Hans Roosenschoon.

***"BARALA BA JERUSALEMA"* RECOMPOSED BY HANS ROOSENSCHOON**

Roosenschoon's arrangement is a total reimagining, for it changes a number of elements, imposing a new notion of how it should “go”. The first page of the Roosenschoon-Moerane score is given in Ex. 4.

MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Moderato ♩ = 66

Michael Moerane
verw. Hans Roosenschoon

Tenor *mp*

Clarinet *p*

Marimba

Strings

5

ra- li ba Je- ru- sa- le- ma, Ba- ra- li ba Je- ru- sa-

8

le- ma, Ke mo- tsoa- na e- mpa ke mo- tle Joa-

11

le ka te- nte tsu Ke- da- re, Le se ke' lu ntu- li- ma ha

Ex 4 “Barala ba Jerusalema” by M. Moerane, solo version bars 1–13 by H. Roosenschoon
© SAMRO

Most of Moerane's interesting subtexture – and subtext, because the original relied heavily on word-painting – is removed. The melody is foregrounded as in a 19th-century art song – as indeed it was in Kirby's "A Sotho Lament". The chromatic lines seething below Moerane's surface are replaced by diatonic decorative accompaniment: semiquavers taken from the original agitated chromatic bass line in bars 11 and 12 are brought into service in a totally different way, as rippling adornment, wrapping the melody like a chocolate box. Chromatic ("black") notes become diatonic ("white"), perceived dissonances are turned into consonances or disappear altogether. The texture is stabilised, and a Western notion of harmonic convention reinstated. The result is an erasure of Moerane's idiom, an ignorance of what he might have been trying to say: it has become Schubert with a Sesotho text. The idiom kicking its way to the surface of Moerane's music, expressing his identity as a composer, is unrecognisable to a white composer fifty years later.

COMPOSITION AS "PROPHECY" RATHER THAN "TRAVESTY"

The African pieces show an emerging modernist language coming from a uniquely South African place, however much European musical conventions are held up as models. If we are to read these pieces as autonomous objects, it has to be within a tradition other than the European mainstream, for considering such music as "travesty" so obviously misses the mark. I end by suggesting another reading, inspired by the idea that it is postmodern, drawing on Jacques Attali's notion of composition as "foreshadowing", or prophecy (from *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 1985). His notion of composition depends on the idea that anyone can "com-pose" – literally "put together" a piece – not only those exposed to what Susan McClary in her "Afterword" to his book calls the "rigid institutions of specialised musical training" (McClary 1996, 156). Attali reveals the "noise" music can make, with its ability to question and disrupt the status quo, paralleling society and even foreshadowing in sound what a new political order might look like. This, I suggest, is what Mohapeloa and Moerane did, in different ways. But when the one came "face to face" with composition teaching and the latter face to face with an arranger, their music was forced to "renounce [its] responses, to discover that the musical phenomenon is [only] to be understood mechanistically" (*ibid.*, p. 150). The identities the African composers already had were submerged, in the name of a tradition of music education that preserved the mystery of Western instrumental music in staff notation, "accessible only to a trained priesthood" in order to preserve its prestige "in a culture that values quantifiable knowledge over mere expression" (*ibid.*).

The language of choralism is not an archaic or unschooled language, but one that foreshadows – even in the 1930s or '40s – the avoidance of modernisms that now

characterise Euro-American new music in the late 20th and 21st centuries. It displaces Western music's sense of past and present, asks us to reconsider what makes the "contemporary" or the "old-fashioned". Especially it calls into question educational practices where Western theories of musical language continue to shape perceptions of musical identity, "conditioning us not to recognise silencing – not to realise that something vital may be missing from our experience" of a vital stream of black South African music (*ibid.*). It asks that we read choral compositions in order to hear what is there rather than what is not there, so as to better understand the "noise" they are making.

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