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Dancing to the beat of the diaspora: musical exchanges between Africa and its diasporas

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This essay examines the complex ebbs and flows of musical exchanges between Africa and its diasporas. Specifically, it focuses on musical engagements between, on the one hand, the Caribbean and West Africa and, on the other, the United States and Southern Africa. It argues that the influence of diasporan music on modern African music, especially popular music, has been immense. These influences and exchanges have created a complex tapestry of musical Afro-internationalism and Afro-modernism and music has been a critical site, a soundscape, in the construction of new diasporan and African identities. A diasporic perspective in the study of modern African music helps Africa reclaim its rightful place in the history of world music and saves Africans from unnecessary cultural anxieties about losing their musical ‘authenticity’ by borrowing from ‘Western’ music that appears, on closer inspection, to be diasporan African music.

Keywords: modern African music; African diaspora influences

Given the complex ebbs and flows of history, for Africa itself and the various regional hostlands of the African diasporas, it stands to reason that the engagements between Africa and its diasporas have been shaped by continuities, changes, and ruptures. Charting and deciphering the content and contexts of the ties that bind Africa and its diasporas are the analytical challenges of the larger project I am currently working on. As I have argued at length elsewhere (Zeleza 2005), diaspora is a state of being and a process of becoming, a condition and consciousness located in the shifting interstices of ‘here’ and ‘there’, a voyage of negotiation between multiple spatial and social identities. Created out of movement – dispersal from a homeland – the diaspora is sometimes affirmed through another movement – engagement with the homeland. Movement, it could be argued then, in its literal and metaphorical senses, is at the heart the diasporic condition, beginning with the dispersal itself and culminating with reunification. The spaces in between are marked by multiple forms of engagement between the diaspora and the homeland, of movement, of travel between a ‘here’ and a ‘there’ both in terms of time and space; of substantive and symbolic, concrete and conceptual intersections and interpellations.

The fluidity of these engagements is best captured by the notion of flow, that flows of several kinds and levels of intensity characterize the linkages between the homeland and the diaspora. Flows can be heavy or light, they can be continuous, interrupted or change course, and may even be beneficial or baneful to their patrons.

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or recipients at either end. All along they are subject to the unpredictable twists and
turns of history. The diaspora–homeland flows are, often simultaneously covert and
overt, abstract and concrete, symbolic and real, and their effects may be sometimes
disjunctive or conjunctive. The diaspora or the homeland can also serve as a signifier
for the other subject to strategic manipulation. The flows include people, cultural
practices, productive resources, organizations and movements, ideologies and ideas,
images and representations.

Clearly, engagements between Africa and its diasporas have been produced by
many flows that have been carried on by a variety of agents; but not all flows and
agents are equal nor have they been treated equally. In studies of the historic
diasporas there has been an analytical tendency to privilege the political connections
represented by the Pan-Africanist movement, while in studies of the contemporary
diasporas focus concentrates on the economic impact – flows of remittances and
investment. No less critical have been the cultural flows. Over the centuries cultures
in both continental Africa and diaspora Africa changed and influenced each other,
to varying degrees across time and space. This was a dynamic and dialogic exchange,
ot simply a derivative one between a primordial, static Africa and a modern,
vibrant diaspora.

This is to suggest the need for an analytical methodology that is historically
grounded, one that recognizes the enduring connections between Africa and its
diasporas, that the cultures of Africa and the diaspora have all been subject to
change, innovation, borrowing, and reconstruction, that they are all ‘hybrid’, and
that the cultural encounters between them have been and will continue to be multiple
and multidimensional. We need to transcend the question of African cultural
retentions and survivals in the Americas, to examine not only the traffic of cultural
practices from the Atlantic diasporas to various parts of Africa, but also the complex
patterns and processes of current cultural exchanges through the media of
contemporary globalization from television and cinema to video and the internet.

Music has been one of the primary media of communication in the Pan-African
world through which cultural influences, ideas, images, instruments, institutions and
identities have continuously circulated in the process creating new modes of cultural
expression both within Africa itself and in the diaspora. This traffic in expressive
culture is multidimensional and dynamic affecting and transforming all it touches.
Rooted in the dispersals and displacements of African peoples, it is facilitated by
persistent demographic flows and ever-changing communication technologies and
involves exchanges – that are simultaneously transcontinental, transnational, and
translational – of artistic products, aesthetic codes, and conceptual matrixes. The
musical linkages are governed as much by the impulses of cultural ecology as by the
imperatives of political economy and our understanding of them is, in turn, filtered
through the paradigmatic lenses of changing scholarly preoccupations and
perceptions.

This paper focuses primarily on flows of musical influences from the diaspora to
Africa, rather than from Africa to the diaspora or within the diaspora itself, or the
exceedingly complex and fascinating history of the transformation of African musics
in the diaspora. It is quite clear that over the past century the influence of diasporan
musics on modern African musics, especially popular musics\(^2\) has been immense.
The flow of musical styles, symbols, sensibility, songs, and instruments from the diaspora to Africa has a long history that certainly antedates the advent of contemporary 'world music'. The returnees from the Americas to Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Bight of Benin, and elsewhere on the continent, as well as the diasporan missionaries and the itinerant sailors who plied the Atlantic world brought with them musics from the diaspora that influenced the development of popular music in various parts of the continent. For example, in the nineteenth century the Americo-Liberians introduced the quadrille from the southern United States that became their national dance and Caribbean sailors introduced merengue, which was turned into maringa, that became a national dance of Sierra Leone.

The introduction of new music genres from the diaspora into Africa continued throughout the twentieth century. The coastal cities and towns were the first to be touched by these influences before they spread into the rural hinterlands. Diasporan music not only helped ‘modernize’ African popular music, it also facilitated its ‘Africanization’. Countless African musicians, such as E.T. Mensah of Ghana, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti of Nigeria, and Miriam Makeba of South Africa rediscovered African music through their encounters with Afro-American music (Collins 1985, 1987, 1992, 1996). In fact, increased communication across the Atlantic ‘have made musicians more aware of each other’s musical expression and have stimulated imitation’ (Wa Mukuna 1997, p. 248). In a sense, then, African and diasporan musics have become more, not less, intermingled over time.

It would not be possible, or even necessary in a survey such as this, to discuss the musical flows and exchanges between the diaspora and Africa in all their fascinating details. At the risk of oversimplification, one could argue that in the first half of the twentieth century the imprint of Caribbean musics was most pronounced in Central and West Africa, while Black American music was dominant in Southern Africa. In more recent decades the regional flows have assumed new directions as new musics have developed in the diaspora and new global media of dissemination have emerged. Few Africans realize that some of the most popular forms of music they listen or dance to in their towns and cities, in the privacy of their homes or in public places from nightclubs to outdoor arenas, and that is broadcast on radio and television and which they regard as unquestionably modern African music, is derived or adapted from, in varying degrees, the musics of the African diasporas. Examples include, in Central Africa, Congo music and its numerous mutations, in West Africa highlife and jùjù, and in Southern Africa marabi and jazz. More recent diasporan musics from soul to reggae to hip-hop have inspired numerous African popular musicians and new forms of music, such as afrobeat in Nigeria and kwaito in South Africa.

Caribbean connections

The development of Congo music was heavily influenced by popular Cuban music, which is itself profoundly marked by African influences transmitted and transformed through Afro-Cuban musical creativity. The impact of African religion, culture, and aesthetics in the growth of popular Cuban music is widely known. Yvonne Daniel (1995) identifies four direct African music complexes that went into the construction
of Cuban music and dance, the Yorubá complex, Kongo-Angolan complex, Arará complex, and Carabali complex. African influences also came through the Spanish heritage and Haiti. Not only did the Spanish who conquered Cuba include ‘black persons of Spanish descent’, Spanish culture ‘was mixed with North African culture before coming to the Americas and that in song and dance, the Spanish had already combined elements from Spain and Africa’ (Daniel 1995, pp. 31–2). Haitian influences came in two waves, in the early nineteenth century in the aftermath of the Haitian revolution when some French planters and their slaves fled to Cuba, and at the beginning of the twentieth century as Haitian migrants flocked to the Cuban sugar plantations. The first group introduced contradanse that quickly became contradanza, and the second brought gaga, both of which were African-inspired.

Musicians belonging to the Abakua Society played a particularly critical role in the development of Afro-Cuban music. The society, derived from the mutual-aid ‘leopard societies’ of Old Calabar in southeastern Nigeria, was originally formed in Havana in 1836 to oppose slavery and later colonialism. The Abakua’s rich expressive culture from music to the visual arts inspired Cuban popular culture and became ‘a key symbol of the Afro-Cubanistas, a group of intellectuals in the early twentieth century who sought to define a national culture’ (Miller 2000, p. 168). Drawing from their vibrant traditions and creative impulses, Abakua musicians helped ‘generate Cuban popular music from the late nineteenth century until today (the cha-cha-cha, the danza, the danzón, the mambo, the rumba, the son, the songo, the timba, and the trova’ (Miller 2000, p. 177). The most influential Afro-Cuban music-dance complex in Africa was rumba, which spread to the continent in the 1940s and 1950s (and in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s and in Spain in the late nineteenth century). Rumba developed among Afro-Cubans in the solares (large houses divided into crowded living quarters for the poor) of Havana in the 1850s and 1860s out of musical antecedents from West Central Africa – the Congo–Angola region. After the Cuban revolution of 1959, rumba became a national symbol due to increased state support for previously marginalized groups and cultural expressions (Daniel 1995).

The spread of Cuban music began in the Congo region (the Republic of Congo and Congo Democratic Republic) from the late 1930s and accelerated after the Second World War, facilitated by the spread of gramophone players, records, and electric guitars, the growth of radio and a local recording industry, and traveling Cuban ensembles. In the process the once dominant brass band tradition declined. The new music relied on novel instrumentation including ‘string instruments (lead guitar, rhythm guitar and double bass), wind instruments (preferably the clarinet and trumpet), and an assortment of percussion instruments (conga drums, maracas, güiros and claves)’ (Merriam et al. 2005). In their performances the bands modeled themselves on Cuban ensembles in terms of dress, stage presentation, and even in the latinization of artists’ names. In Brazzaville, notes Phyllis Martin (1995, p. 136) in her pioneering study of leisure in a colonial city, ‘people responded to a music and dance form that they found both familiar and novel … While the music was familiar, the similar movement of maringa and rumba dancers may also explain why Congolese so quickly embraced the new dance forms’. Congo rumba developed as part of the emergence of new expressive cultures and experiences in the rapidly expanding and racialized colonial mining towns that brought together people from Central, West, and Southern Africa, where the
production, provision, practices, politics, and places of leisure were being contested and recreated, in which new forms of popular music that was simultaneously local and transnational, African and diasporic, in short, authentically modern, was being conceived and constructed all the time.\footnote{After independence, Congo music became integral to the complex processes of constructing new national and social identities inscribed around the differentiations of class, ethnicity, and gender. Its growth was aided by the explosion of cities, the escalation of outdoor beer gardens or bars where audiences and musicians gathered and musical experimentations were undertaken, the expansion of the record industry and broadcast media, and the emergence of mega stars from Mwenda Jean Bosco and Tabu Ley in the 1950s and 1960s to Papa Wemba (Shungu Wembadio), Lwambo ‘Franco’ Makiadi, Zaiko Langa-Langa, and Sam Mangwana in the 1970s and 1980s. Women musicians began to make their mark in the 1970s beginning with Abeti Masikini, who was followed by Mbilia Bel, Tshala Muana, and M’pongo Love (M’pongo Landu).} 

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The proliferation of music styles is a testament to the incredible creativity of Congolese musicians. Each generation has sought to outdo the previous generation, and intra-generational competition is fierce, the result of which have been melodic, rhythmic, instrumental, and extra-musical improvisations and innovations that have carried Congo music in exciting new directions, turning it into a genre quite distinctive from the Cuban music that originally inspired it.\footnote{Congolese musicians have been mining the rich reservoirs of their respective traditional musics and aesthetics, combining them with their own creativity, and the cumulative stock of modern popular music to create new forms of music that have earned them such a popular following across the region and Africa as a whole and made Congo music perhaps the most recognizable form of modern popular African music across the world. Congo music became particularly popular in East Africa including Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, where visiting Congo musicians were widely admired and copied.} Congo music also attracted a large following in West Africa, a region that developed its own distinctive forms of popular music that bore the influences of the diaspora. This was facilitated by the fact that Cuban music was already popular in the region both in the former British and French colonies (Fonsu-Mensah 1987). For instance in Senegal, Guinea, and Mali Cuban influence was particularly strong in the 1950s and 1960s, and it was not until the 1970s that there was ‘the gradual assertion of local musical traditions … and an emergence into the world arena in the mid-1980s with several artists holding major European and American recording
contracts’ (Charry 2005a). In Guinea, the state-sponsored ensembles were initially greatly influenced by Cuban music. In the 1960s the Bembeya Jazz National was one of the most famous bands in West Africa. It was elevated to the status of a national orchestra in 1966 after winning prizes at an international festival in Cuba a year before. Bembeya’s revered vocal soloist, Aboubacar Demba Camara, whose premature death in 1973 was nationally mourned, is reported to ‘have moved the old Afro-Cuban animateur Albelardo Barrosa to tears when he performed, in Spanish, one of the biggest successes from the rich career of the seventy-year-old man’ (Bender 1991, p. 10).

State sponsorhip ended after the death of Guinea’s first president in 1984, but popular bands continued to produce records that were ‘for the most part rumba, or rumba versions other than simple rumba: “rumba lente” and “rumba guinée”’ (Bender 1991, p. 14). Boncana Maiga, who became Mali’s most prolific arranger and later worked in Abidjan, Paris and New York, studied for eight years at the conservatory in Havana, Cuba. His group Las Maravillas became a leading propagator of Cuban dance music (Charry 2005b). The Cuban impact is evident in the recordings of some bands in Senegal as late as the late 1970s, such as Star Band that Youssou N’dour, the superstar of Senegal’s mbalax music, joined before he formed Étoile de Dakar in 1979, later renamed Super Étoile de Dakar in 1981. The influences were of course not one way. Ladji Camara, lead drummer of the famous Les Ballets Africains, which became the first National Ballet of Guinea, would ‘relocate to the USA in the early 1960s and train generations of American drummers’ (Charry 2005c).

Highlife was perhaps the most famous popular music developed in West Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. The hybrid origins of highlife music are better known than those of jùjù music. According to John Collins (1989, p. 222), highlife developed out of three streams. ‘First there was the imported influences of foreign sailors that became “palm-wine” highlife; second, that of the colonial military brass bands that became adaha highlife; and third, that of the Christianized black elite which became dance-band highlife.’ Palm wine music, named after palm wine served in coastal bars in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria evolved from gombey, named after gumbay frame-drums that were brought to Sierra Leone by Jamaican Maroons, was a music craze that emerged in the early nineteenth century and eventually spawned other popular music styles, all of which were to be incorporated into highlife. Palm wine combined local and foreign stringed and percussion instruments brought by foreign sailors who included whites and diasporan Africans. Kru sailors, ‘who pioneered the West African “two-finger” palm-wine style of plucking the guitar, by applying the traditional African cross-rhythmic way of playing the local lute or harp to the guitar’ (Collins 1989, p. 222), together with Krio sailors from Sierra Leone played a particularly important role in the development of the new music, spreading it across coastal West Africa, marked by local variations including maringa in Sierra Leone, ashiko in Accra and Lagos, osibisaaba in Ghana’s coastal Fantiland, odonso in Ashanti, and jùjù among the Yoruba of Nigeria.

In the meantime, another musical tradition was developing based on brass bands playing military music. These bands were stationed at the former slave forts along the West African coast, now used by Europeans to wage wars of colonial conquest:
The transformation of European march time into syncopated African beat occurred when West Indian troops were stationed in West Africa – which in Ghana was from the 1870s on ... When the Ghanaian military brass-band musicians saw the West Indian regimental bandsmen played their own local Caribbean mentos and calypsos in their spare time, the Ghanaians were inspired to do the equivalent and created their own African version of danceable brass-band music which they called ‘adaha’”. (Collins 1989, p. 223)

By the 1920s the new music had spread to the villages in southern Ghana where it became extremely popular until the 1940s. The rural musicians used local instruments instead of the expensive imported brass instruments and the music came to be called *konkoma* or *konkomba*.

The third musical tradition behind the development of highlife was derived from the ballroom orchestras that emerged in the 1910s among the coastal elite of Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. These orchestras were large symphonic-type ensembles which did not play European classical music, but rather European and Americans dances like waltzes, polkas, Afro-American ragtime and Latin-American ballroom music (tangos, sambas, rumbas etc.). (Collins 1989, p. 224)

The term ‘highlife’ was coining in the 1920s when these high-class orchestras added to their repertoire palm-wine music. This was pioneered by the Excelsior Orchestra formed by Frank Torto in Accra in 1914, and from the 1920s other orchestras in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria had adopted the new style and highlife was on its way to becoming West Africa’s most popular music of the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1930s highlife bands were typically five-fourteen-piece bands. Highlife was famous for its innovativeness and its ability to incorporate new sounds, styles, and instruments. During the Second World War highlife bands integrated swing brought by American and British troops stationed in the region. The visit of Louis Armstrong in 1956 to Ghana strengthened American jazz influences, while the Soul to Soul Festival held in Accra in 1971, which was attended by leading American soul musicians, led many highlife bands to include soul music in their performances. In the 1970s many bands added reggae in their repertory (Bender 1991, pp. 80–4).

The most influential highlife band in the 1940s and 1950s was the Tempos, whose music added a touch of swing, Afro-Cuban percussion (by using maracas, congas, bongos), and calypso horn inflections. E.T. Mensah, nicknamed the ‘King of Highlife’, founded the band and was widely emulated throughout West Africa. Another renowned highlife bandleader in Ghana was King Bruce who formed the Black Beats. In Nigeria, the key figure was Robert Benson, known as the ‘Father of Nigerian Music’, a former sailor in the British merchant navy during the Second World War, who returned to Nigeria in 1947 and formed the Jam Session Orchestra in 1948. He is credited with introducing calypso (which became a craze in Nigeria in the 1950s) and the electric guitar to West Africa. He also pioneered popular jazz and popularized African American dance styles including the boogie-woogie and the jitterbug (Ita 1984). In the 1950s, the Ghanaian and Nigerian capitals of Accra and Lagos competed fiercely as centers of highlife music. Highlife songs commented on a wide range of issues from politics to everyday life especially gender relations, as well as philosophical subjects including death (Bender 1991, pp. 81–6; Mensah and Barz 2005).
In Nigeria, jùjú, fùjì, afrobeat and other forms of popular music eventually overtook highlife music. Jùjú and fùjì developed among Christian and Muslim Yoruba, respectively. The origins and development of jùjú lie in the matrix of social change in pre-colonial and colonial Lagos, a city that attracted migrants from all over Nigeria and West Africa, especially the Yoruba hinterland and the Yoruba diaspora. This diaspora consisted of two major groups, the Àgùdà (also known as the Brazilians) and the Sàró who settled in Lagos during the course of the nineteenth century.

The Àgùdà were emancipated slaves of Yoruba descent from Brazil and Cuba who brought with them distinctive styles of architecture, dress, cuisine, and music. They introduced new dances and musical styles and instruments including the samba drum, tambourines, guitars, flutes, clarinets, and concertinas, which were used to perform serenatos, fados, and polkas at weddings and wakes in the Brazilian quarter ... Although the Aguda constituted only a small part of the total population of Lagos by the outbreak of World War 1’, notes Christopher Waterman (1990, pp. 31–2) in his extensive study of jùjù music:

their syncretic musical styles profoundly influenced popular music in Lagos. The Brazilians and Cubans, along with other Afro-American migrants from the United States and British West Indies, introduced a range of mature syncretic styles, providing local musicians with aesthetic and symbolic paradigms that could be adapted to African urban tastes.

The Sàró were Yoruba Krios from Sierra Leone. On the one hand they were enamored by high British culture they had been socialized to admire and their musicians reveled in performing European classical music, recitals and concerts, and ballroom dances. However, they also played an important role in forging a pan-Yoruba culture and identity, in domesticating European technology, institutions, and aesthetics, and in the development of Nigerian nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century as their fortunes declined in the face of a rising colonial racism, which forced them to embrace the political and cultural aspirations and agency of their compatriots.

Out of these diverse influences, popular music styles emerged that would eventually crystallize into Nigerian highlife and jùjú. The leading genres by the time of the First World War were sákárá, asìkò, and brass band music. Sákárá was performed and patronized largely by Muslims of various backgrounds, including those from the Sàró and Àgùdà communities, while asìkò was associated with the Christian groups in Lagos that also included the immigrant communities. Both produced praise song and dance music that incorporated religious song. ‘Yoruba proverbs, urban slang, Latin rhythms – into a performance style that symbolically linked the old and the new, the indigenous and the imported’ (Waterman 1990, p. 42). While sákárá and asìkò sought to meld and modernize indigenous and diaspora Yoruba music, brass band music aimed at indigenizing and internationalizing western instruments and musical traditions by spicing them with African and diasporan African aesthetics. The Calabar Brass Band popularized brass band music in Lagos in the 1920s and 1930s. It inspired the formation of numerous highlife and jùjú groups.

By the time of the Second World War the Lagos music scene pulsed with various forms of popular music from different places – Cuban rumba, Brazilian
samba, Dominican merengue, American swing, and local versions of highlife and palm-wine music. As we saw in the case of Congo music, gramophone records played an indispensable role in disseminating local and foreign popular music. ‘The most influential recordings’, notes Waterman (1990, p. 47), ‘were the Latin American G.V. series released by the Gramophone Company, Ltd. on His Majesty’s Voice label, including recordings of Cuban groups such as Septeto Habanero and Trio Matamoros’. The number of record companies increased in the 1950s and 1960s, a period that also saw the establishment of Nigerian owned labels, and the expansion of the broadcast media.

It was in the early 1930s that jùjú music, ‘a local variant of the urban West African palmwine guitar tradition, emerged as a defined genre in the Nigeria colonial capital of Lagos’ (Waterman 1990, p. 55). It was popularized by Tunde King whose carefully crafted performances combined melodies from Christian hymns, rhythms from asákò and diasporan drumming traditions, and song texts from įjínleē Yorùbá poetic rhetoric that addressed the challenges of urban life and the durability of tradition. He also introduced the accordion to produce sounds modeled on Afro-Latin music. ‘T.K.’, as he was fondly called, was the first jùjú musician to be commercially recorded in 1936 and to appeal to both the elite in private parlors and the working people in palm-wine bars, to mediate successfully the aesthetics and ambiguities of modern African popular music and identity through music that syncretized and synchronized Yoruba, diasporan, and European performative practices and impulses. He was followed in the 1960s by Isaiah Kehinde Dairo, often regarded as the ‘Father’ of modern jùjú, who recorded hundreds of songs and mentored the jùjú superstars of the last three decades of the century including ‘King’ Sunny Adé (Sunday Adeniyi) and Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey (Ebenezer Olasupo Fabiyi).

The early jùjú bands were typically trios consisting of the lead singer who also played the banjo, the tambourine (jùjú) drummer, and the bottle-gourd rattle (ṣhekere) player. By the Second World War, most bands had become quartets with the addition of a supporting vocalist. New developments after the war included the introduction of the Yoruba hourglass-shaped pressure drum or talking drum in 1948, and more percussion instruments and electronic amplification in the 1950s, all of which led to the expansion of jùjú bands, which by the 1960s entailed eight to nine members, and by the 1970s up to 16 musicians. Sunny Adé’s ensemble was even larger.

The evidence is quite compelling that the Caribbean, or more broadly South America, led by Cuba, was the dominant source of diasporan music in West Africa at least until the 1960s. From the 1970s Jamaica began to supplant Cuba and the United States to compete with the Caribbean as the wellspring of musical inspiration for the region. Jamaican reggae began to penetrate African markets and enjoy widespread appeal especially for urban youths from the mid-1970s. Bob Marley’s spectacular performance at Zimbabwe’s independence celebrations in 1980 scaled and sealed reggae’s attraction across the continent and Marley’s own standing as ‘a global symbol, a floating signifier, waiting to be taken by oppressed people throughout the world’ (Moyer 2005, p. 35). In fact, Africa soon became reggae’s biggest market, absorbing ‘a greater proportion of sales than that of Europe or America’ (Clarke 1980, p. 167).
The reasons for reggae's popularity are quite complex and varied, ‘ranging from
the structural and functional affinities that exist between indigenous African musical
forms and reggae, the potent appeal of the music’s religiously inspired and
sociopolitically charged song texts and the eagerness on the part of young people
in Africa to identify with a Black, transnational pop music idiom’ (Savishinsky
1994a, pp. 22–3). As was the case with the other musics imported from the diaspora,
reggae served as a medium, especially among the young people, for both the
consumption of the culture of the diaspora and the construction of urban identities
that were simultaneously local and transnational, pan-ethnic and pan-African. For
others reggae provided more than music or commoditized diasporan culture; it
brought a religion, Rastafarianism. In other words, some fans of reggae became
adherents of Rastafarianism; whereas others were attracted to reggae because it was
the highly visible and valorized face of Rastafarianism.

Reggae was distributed through a vast network of record shops, radio stations,
and nightclubs, as well as reggae bands and stars that captured the imagination of
the youth, such as Sonny Okuson, Evi-Edna Ogholi, Majek Fashek, Demba Conta,
and Alpha Blondy in West Africa and Lucky Dube in South Africa. The popularity
of reggae in West Africa probably surpassed that in the other regions of the
continent. Four types of reggae producers and productions can be identified. First,
there was reggae imported directly from Jamaica itself in the form of records and
performances by visiting Jamaican reggae stars. Second, reggae imported from
Britain and other western metropoles, which was often the creation of expatriate or
diasporan Caribbean musicians. Third, reggae produced by local artists, such as the
ones mentioned above, who experimented with the form and increasingly trans-
formed it by using local languages and themes for the lyrics and incorporating
indigenous instruments. Finally, some local artists borrowed stylistic elements from
reggae and blended into and enriched the styles of music they were already making.
The media or visiting reggae singers were not the only sources of inspiration for West
African reggae musicians or devotees. Many were introduced to reggae as students or
visitors to Britain and other European countries with a relatively large Caribbean
presence or an active reggae music scene, such as Holland.

The role of European countries and capitals as brokerage houses in transnational
exchanges and engagements between Africa and its diasporas is well established.
Certainly, reggae benefited from encounters between Africans from the continent
and the Caribbean in Europe. West African immigrants either returned with reggae
music or introduced it to their friends and families back home. But the contexts of
the overseas encounters were dictated by the cultural legacies of colonialism and the
patterns of contemporary transcontinental migration. In so far as Jamaica was once
a part of the British empire, Jamaican reggae was primarily expressed in an English
idiom and Caribbean migrants were concentrated in anglophone countries from
Britain itself to Canada and the United States, which meant that they were more
likely to encounter anglophone rather than francophone West Africans, whose
migrations also tended to follow the trails of colonization. This might account for
the greater inroads that reggae and Rastafarianism made in anglophone than
francophone West Africa. It might also explain the need for reggae musicians in
francophone countries to resort to local languages. It is quite instructive that the
interest in reggae music and Rastafarianism by Alpha Blondy, the Ivorian reggae
superstar, apparently started when he stayed briefly in Liberia in the late 1970s and
thrive during his three years of college in New York. As local reggae bands matured, their music was increasingly preferred over those from overseas bands and singers. In fact, West African reggae musicians succeeded, argues Neil Savishinsky (1994a, p. 26) in creating:

a totally new form of syncretic African pop music, singing for the most part in their own languages and employing indigenous African instruments, melodies and rhythms in their mix. This musical synthesis has proven so potent that it has been feeding back into the international pop scene, influencing the music of both Jamaican and British reggae musicians.

American feedback

Reggae was only one of several popular musics flourishing in multi-musical West Africa from the 1970s. Another was afrobeat first developed in Nigeria. If jùjù proclaimed the aesthetics of neo-traditionalism and praised elite aspirations and acquisitiveness, afrobeat invented by the irascible, irrepressible iconoclast, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, exuded an infectious cosmopolitanism and excelled in excoriating the venality of the elites and the banality of the postcolony. Fela was a ‘political musician’ and a ‘cosmopolitan nativist’ par excellence as Tejumola Olaniyan (2004) characterizes him in his brilliant study. His music was marked by US African American influences to a degree that was unusual in West Africa and more common in Southern Africa.

The antecedents of afrobeat are imbricated with Fela’s musical and political biographies. It was as a music student in Britain (at Cambridge University) that Fela discovered the first big musical influence of his youth – jazz – which he immersed himself in. Upon his return to Nigeria in 1963 he formed a band, the Koola Lobitos, which sought to create a genre that fused jazz and highlife, then the most popular music in Nigerian cities but which Fela found rather simple. He called the hybrid highlife jazz, but it was a commercial and artistic flop. Highlife jazz failed to catch on because, first, there was ‘too much jazz and too little highlife in the hybrid’; second, its ‘more complex and varying harmony ran against the grain of popular dance taste’; and third, because Fela was a dreadful singer who ‘because of the deep influence of jazz ... approached the songs as unnecessary bother’ (Olaniyan 2004, pp. 12–14). To escape the rut he was in he decided to go on a tour of the United States, hoping that fame in the US would ignite his career in Nigeria.

The effects of Fela’s 1969 tour of the US on his music and political awakening are now legendary (Idowu 1986; Moore 1982; Grass 1986). The US was then at the height of the civil rights struggle, which irrevocably radicalized him, turning the inchoate yearnings of cultural nationalism into a resolute Pan-Africanism. It was in those ten fateful months, with the mentoring of his African American girlfriend, Sandra Smith Isidore, a former member of the Black Panther Party, that Fela ‘discovered his blackness and Africaness in a radically new way’, which enabled him to create ‘a new music aesthetic which the “afrobeat” name he had invented a year earlier would more properly describe: a fusion of indigenous Yoruba rhythms and declamatory chants, highlife, jazz, and the funky soul of James Brown’ (Olaniyan 2004, p. 32).16 His first successful afrobeat composition was ‘My Lady Frustration’ which he dedicated to Sandra. He returned to Nigeria in 1970, renamed his band Nigeria 70, then Africa 70,17 and launched one of the most illustrious musical
careers in postcolonial Africa in which the power and popularity of his performances was matched by the narcissism and nihilism of his personal life. In afrobeat Fela found a winning formula – music that was sophisticated to satisfy his enormous musical talents and exacting performance standards and popular with audiences because its rapid tempo and hypnotic rhythms made it so danceable, and its sharp political lyrics and use of pidgin and Yoruba captured the languages of, and endeared it to, the dispossessed and disenfranchised masses of Lagos.

After Fela’s death, a new generation of afrobeat musicians carried the music in new directions, including his son, Femi Kuti who ‘interfaced afrobeat with hip-hop and even had tracks electronically mixed to expand his audience base’ (Olaniyan 2004, p. 178). Another major afrobeat star is Lagbaja (Bisade Ologunde) who:

is giving afrobeat the deep Yoruba instrumental anchor that it never had with Fela . . .

In a sense, we could say that while Femi is opening up afrobeat to contemporary North American musical forms, Lagbaja is securing for afrobeat a deep cultural mooring. (Olaniyan 2004, p. 186)

Afrobeat’s influence transcended Nigeria. Numerous musicians across the continent and in the diaspora were influenced by Fela’s music.

The list of musicians whose compositions bear traces of afrobeat is quite impressive. From Africa the names of Hugh Masikela of South Africa, Brice Wassy and Manu Dibango of Cameroon, Tabu Ley Rochereau of the DRC, Cheikh Lo and Baaba Maal of Senegal, and the group Soundz of Ghana have been mentioned. In the diaspora the list includes American luminaries, some of whom performed or toured with Fela in Nigeria or the US, such as James Brown, George Clinton, Alfred Ellis, Brandford Marsalis, Steve Turre, Lester Bowie, Roy Ayers, Stevie Wonder, Miles Davis, and Afrika Bambaataa, and groups such the New York-based multiracial Afrobeat Orchestra, and David Rudder, the Trinidadian calypsonian (Olan-yan 2004, pp. 177–8; Bender 2005). A new generation of musicians in the diaspora is discovering and incorporating Fela’s afrobeat. ‘The most tangible evidence of this influence’, notes Richard Byrne (2003), ‘is ‘Red Hot + Riot’ – a tribute to Fela’s music that features his son, Femi Kuti, and some of the brightest stars in contemporary music: Sade, Macy Gray, Me’Shell NdegeOcello, Taj Mahal and Nile Rodgers. It also features some of the hottest rap stars of the past five years – like Talib Kweli and Common.’

Diasporan musical influences were no less marked in the settler colonies of southern Africa, especially in segregated and later apartheid South Africa where African elites and urbanites readily identified with the political struggles and cultural achievements of diasporan Africans particularly in the United States. Racial tyranny in the US resonated with the emerging racial terror in South Africa, a situation that encouraged transnational cultural circulation and the development of a dialogic relationship between black activists and entertainers in the two countries. The extensive history of circuitous cultural flows between black South Africans and black Americans was initiated in the late nineteenth century through the influence of the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 1890s, the jazz musicians of the mid-twentieth century, to the rap artists in the closing decades of the century, a long century which was marked by profound struggles and transformations in the political economies and racial ecologies of both countries. In the black South African imaginary African American modernity subverted the modernist-inscribed discourse of segregation – the ‘racial
time’ of European ‘civilization’ and African ‘primitivism’ – and served as a powerful symbolic weapon against deepening oppression, ‘as proof of black capacities to modernize and as role models worthy of emulating in antisegregation activity’ (Kemp and Vinson 2000, p. 141).

The Virginia Jubilee Singers, led by Orpheus M. McAdoo, came to South Africa in July 1890.20 Their first visit lasted until January 1892, then they returned in June 1895 after a three-year tour of Australia and stayed until April 1898 after which some members of the troupe left the country, while others stayed behind and formed local minstrel companies.21 McAdoo died a couple of years later in Australia. Their performances combined ‘concert party songs, Afro-American folk songs, spirituals, instrumental music, “Grand Opera”, juggling, jokes and comic sketches, solo dancing and cakewalks’ (Coplan 1985, p. 39). The legacy of the Jubilee Singers, argues Veit Erlmann (1988, p. 349), ‘lived on in South African black performing arts’.

The Jubilee Singers arrived in a country with a four decades long tradition of minstrel shows, worsening racial segregation, and a rapidly changing economy due to the mineral revolution – the discovery of diamonds in 1867 in Kimberly and gold in the Transvaal in 1886. They were generally well-received by white audiences thanks to Cape liberalism and Boer paternalism, the troupe’s virtuoso performances and its imperial sympathies rooted in cosmopolitan and class aspirations for national difference and racial upliftment (they were treated as honorary whites).22 Black audiences welcomed them enthusiastically not simply for their musical feats and the appeal of the spirituals to an emergent elite captivated by both Victorian values and nationalism, but for their educational accomplishments and the model of African American cultural achievement they represented to an increasingly beleaguered population desperate to loosen the tightening noose of racial subjugation through western education.23

In terms of music, the Jubilee Singers inspired the formation of several local music ensembles whose repertoire included a blend of spirituals, traditional songs, and new choral compositions. In Cape Town Colored communities that had already developed a vibrant performance culture incorporated many elements of American minstrelsy and variety entertainment, which in turn, spread to African students who formed groups of ‘coons’ of ‘smartly dressed vocal quartets and string bands which became a fixture of student variety concerts. Their repertoire favored black American and English songs plus African choral compositions and arrangements of traditional tunes’ (Coplan 1985, p. 39). The choral tradition that emerged became known as makwaya (direct translation of ‘choir’). The renowned anthem of South African indeed Southern African nationalism, Nkosi sikelel’ I-Afrika, was composed in the makwaya tradition in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a teacher. The Jubilee Singers influenced the work of South African composers, such as Reuben Caluza, regarded as the greatest black composer of his time. Caluza combined the rhythms, melodies, and harmonies of ragtime, choral music, and Zulu traditional and topical lyrics to create fresh music that shaped isicathamiya, the powerful and beautiful vocal music developed by Zulu migrant workers in Johannesburg and Durban in the 1930s that has been studied in comprehensive detail by Veit Erlmann (1996). Isicathamiya represented the reemergence of the Jubilee legacy.
It is one of the rich ironies of African-diasporan cultural flows that the diasporan influences on *isicathamiya* music are largely unknown in South Africa, let alone the US. Magubane (2003, pp. 304–5) puts the point quite well:

At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle *isicathamiya* music enjoyed a brief moment of international success. Their most famous exponents, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, were embraced at home and abroad. A good deal of their appeal lay in the fact that they were seen to symbolize the best of what traditional African cultural practice had to offer. The fact that they sang in Zulu and performed in traditional attire made them all the more attractive to urbane and politically minded African-American and European-American consumers, the core constituency of ‘world beat’ music. Thus, African Americans and European Americans alike were wooed by a ‘traditional’ African performance style that traced its origins to musical styles of Euro-American and Afro-American origin.

There is fascinating contrast in the way the *isicathamiya* music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in the 1980s and the choral music of the South African Choir in the 1890s were marketed and received internationally. Both rested on the imperatives of difference. In the 1980s, South African musical difference was implicated with the global commodification of world music, while a century earlier it was integral to the interests of colonialism and its civilizing mission (Erlmann 1988, 1996).

From the 1920s new forms of popular music began to emerge in South Africa’s rapidly expanding, segregated, and restive African townships, some of which were heavily influenced by popular African American music styles. Working class entertainment was centered in the shebeens of the slumyards where musicians were invited to perform. ‘In the 1920s, these musicians assimilated elements from every available performance tradition into a single urban African musical style, called *marabi*’ (Coplan 1985, p. 94). This was a vibrant, syncretic, rhythmically propulsive dance music that blended elements and instruments from different ethnic traditions, European styles, and African American influences, whose infectious rhythms were eminently suitable for vigorous dancing by couples or individuals. First developed in Johannesburg, *marabi* music and culture spread across the country as the preferred performance culture and marker of urban working class identity (Ballantine 1993, 2005).

In the meantime, seeking to distance themselves from *marabi* culture and tiring of *makwaya*, the emergent African elite ‘created *isidolobha*, the culture of towns, based on the ideal of a cohesive Afro-European way of life’ (Coplan 1985, p. 114). They preferred to patronize dance clubs and were increasingly attracted to jazz, which symbolized both black modernity and political rebelliousness. African American jazz gained exposure in South Africa during the interwar period through the spread of gramophones, the dissemination of American records, Hollywood movies and magazines, which inspired the formation of numerous African jazz dance bands, such as the Rhythm Kings and the Jazz Maniacs, both founded in 1935. These bands quickly domesticated the imported styles and sounds of jazz and created distinctive South African forms of jazz music and dance. In fact, so popular did South African jazz become that by 1939 it had eclipsed *marabi* in the townships.

It was in the legendary township of Sophiatown, an intoxicating enclave of African cultural creativity, creolization, cosmopolitanism, and cultural resistance, where jazz music, both African American and South African, flourished in the dreary early years of apartheid after the Second World War (Hannerz 1994). As
apartheid tightened its grip and South Africa became more industrialized, so did identification with the socio-historical experiences of African Americans grow among black South Africans and the appeal of African American models of cultural modernization and performance, from jazz to cinema to dress, rose and became constitutive of a self-consciously defiant popular culture that was astonishing in its diversity, national filiations, and transnational affiliations.

A succession of South African popular music styles developed in the 1940s and 1950s. They included tsaba tsaba developed in the 1940s, a dance music that ‘combined African melody and rhythm with the rhythms of American swing, jitterbug and even Latin American rumba and conga’ (Coplan 1985, p. 152). Then there was kwela music, a lively, syncretic, rhythmic music distinguished by the use of the penny-whistle, which gave rise to a new dance style called patha patha (‘touch touch’). Kwela bands became extremely popular among both blacks and whites in South Africa. In the 1950s some bands forged kwela, marabi, and American jazz into a unique South African jazz style called mbaqanga (‘homemade cornbread’) that achieved considerable commercial success and was popularized by big bands, small ensembles, and vocal quartets such as the Manhattan Brothers.24 Ever alert to African American developments, ‘Sophiatown’s culturally self-conscious, American-oriented elite had taken steps to support local jazz by forming the Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club in 1955. By that time, the bebop styles of Charles Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were a powerful influence on local musicians’ (Coplan 1985, p. 171).

Some musicians who began their careers as mbaqanga musicians, such as Spokes Mashiyane and Miriam Makeba became internationally famous. Perhaps the most influential jazz group was the Jazz Epistles whose members included Dollar Brand (who later changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim) and Hugh Masikela who became international stars. In the 1960s Makeba, Ibrahim, and Masikela and many other musicians left South Africa for exile as apartheid spread its vicious terror that ravaged the townships including Sophiatown, which had been destroyed by 1960. Many of them ended up in the United States where, as Makeba’s (1987) and Masikela’s (2004) biographies clearly show, they were embraced by African American musicians who influenced them greatly and whom they also influenced quite considerably. Despite the difficulties facing the jazz musicians who remained in the country, South African jazz continued to evolve in the 1960s and 1970s ‘by fusing with various more popular styles of mbaqanga, indigenous soul, rock and popular music’ (Coplan 1985, p. 192).

Nevertheless, as in the United States, from the 1970s the popularity of jazz in South Africa declined in favor of new forms of local and imported popular musics. The former included smanje manje (‘now now’) that was popularized across South Africa and Southern Africa and beyond in the 1980s and 1990s by the great ‘groarer’ Simon ‘Mahlathini’ Nkabinde and his vivacious singing and dancing troupe the Mahotella Queens. The latter included musical imports from the Caribbean, such as Jamaican reggae, whose leading proponent was Lucky Dube, and souksous or kwasa kwasa from the DRC that inspired local variants. And from black America came soul and later rap. As with jazz, soul was indigenized into what has been called ‘Soweto soul’, which became the beat of the rising tide of political and cultural opposition to apartheid in the townships, as local singers and bands, such as Steve Kekana, Letta Mbuli, the Soul Brothers, Malombo, and Harari fused African American soul ballads and funk, with mbaqanga and traditional music (Coplan 2005). Rap music
exploded from the blighted post-industrial inner cities of the United States in the late 1970s and quickly found resonance in the depressed townships of South Africa where a local version of rap known as *kwaito* emerged out of a blend of South African disco music called ‘bubblegum’, African American hip hop and R&B, Jamaican Ragga, and the sampling of South African music classics (Swink 2003; Mhlambi 2004).

As with other musical styles imported earlier, the spread of rap into ‘the preeminent form of musical expression’ for the first generation of post-apartheid youth was facilitated by the ‘striking similarities between some urban, black communities in the United States and those in South Africa, coupled with the immense proliferation of American music, movies, and television’ (Magubane 2003, p. 311). Both American rap and South African *kwaito* were born in the ghettos and alongside their crass individualism, consumerism, and misogyny they also offer critiques against the plunder of the lives of the dispossessed by powerful local, national, and transnational forces. Also, as before, South African rappers refrained from slavish imitation of American rappers by singing in South African languages and street slang and addressing South African issues. In fact, the *kwaito* artists and groups most popular with South African audiences, such as Abashante, Boom Shaka, Bongo Maffin, Mafikizolo, and TKZee, were those who were consciously *South African* in their lyrics, lifestyles, and the music legacies they draw upon rather than those who mindlessly copied American styles (McCloy 2005).  

This is a clear indication of what some have called the ‘glocalization’ of rap, the indigenization of the performance rhetoric of rap across Africa and the world (Mitchell 2001, 2003). In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, such as Malawi and Tanzania, there was the linguistic and stylistic indigenization not only of American rap, but also the regionally influential South African rap (Perullo and Fenn 2003). It is a mark of the commercial success and artistic respectability of *kwaito* and the endless fusions possible in South African music that in his 2005 album Hugh Masikela ‘draws much of his inspiration from the arranging styles of Kwaito music exponents, Fela Kuti’s Afrobeat, jazz, and rhythm and blues’ (Cigarwise Magazine 2005).

South Africa was not the only country in the region that felt diasporan musical influences. Zimbabwe was another as shown by Tom Turino (2000, 2003) in his splendid study of nationalism and popular music in that country. The flow of diasporan music to Zimbabwe was often mediated by South Africa. Turino examines what he calls middle-class cosmopolitanism in late colonial Harare as articulated in elite tastes and discourses of popular music. He suggests that cosmopolitanism is both a local and transnational cultural phenomenon, social islands of practices, material technologies, conceptual frameworks, and lifestyles that circulate internationally but are localized in their production and consumption. Popular music in Harare townships began developing in the 1930s. Before then the scene was dominated by Christian music and indigenous music of various types. The new types of urban popular music that began to emerge – centered on dance bands, concerts, jazz, and ballroom dancing – that appealed to ‘middle class performers, audiences, and occasions’, although they were not confined to them, were ‘modeled on North American and South African styles’ (Turino 2000, p. 119).

Living in a highly racialized society, the emergent African middle class was anxious to separate itself from the working class and the peasantry through cultural markers of difference, and taste in music constituted a declaration of distinction. The
new music styles emerged out of school and church choirs, military bands, and imported music; in short, from the traditions of makwaya, instrumental dance band, and transnational music. In particular, ‘the Police Band, still active today, was the training ground for some of Zimbabwe’s leading “jazz” musicians of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Benedict Mazura, August Musarurwa, the Harare Hot Shots, and the City Slickers’ (Turino 2000, p. 140). The most famous of them all was August Musururwa who brought Zimbabwean tsaba tsaba music to international attention when his tsaba dance tune, Skokiaan composed in 1947, went on to become internationally famous. Zimbabwe imported tsaba-tsaba from South Africa where it was brought by returning migrants. Earlier in the century South African minstrel and vaudeville troupes visited Zimbabwe, and they inspired the formation of groups such as the Bantu Actors and the Epworth Theatrical Singers in the early 1940s. In the 1940s and 1950s the example of South African jive and vocal groups such as the Manhattan Brothers and the sophisticated sounds and deportment of African American jazz ensembles such as the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots helped shape Zimbabwean concert performance culture. The most famous concert group was De Black Evening Follies which started performing in 1943.

African American musical influences in Zimbabwe were not always transmitted via South Africa, but also came directly through the diffusion of gramophone records and tours by African American musicians. Linda Williams (1997, p. 291) quotes an itinerant musician (omasiganda) who noted the influence of African American blues from the mid-1930s: ‘We heard on the radio that blacks in the United States were playing a form of music called the Blues, so we tried locating blues records to adapt to our style. Many of us Zimbabwean musicians began our careers imitating the blues musicians from the United States.’ Touring African American R&B and jazz musicians in the 1950s included Louis Armstrong, who performed in Zimbabwe in 1957. He left ‘greatly inspired by the Zimbabwean township jazz that he heard there … demonstrating the reciprocal musical influence between the continent of Africa and the Americas’ (Williams 1997, p. 294). In the late 1950s and early 1960s Zimbabwean musicians also embraced Cuban rumba. The return in the late 1950s of Dorothy Masuka – the country’s first international musical star – from South Africa where she had performed with Miriam Makeba and the Manhattan Brothers, enlivened an already increasingly lively music scene. In the early 1960s, rock and roll, Congo music, and South African mbaqanga – all foreign music styles transmitted through the media, tours, and returning migrants – became the rage among urban audiences and in the repertory of local bands.

As the nationalist struggle for independence gathered momentum from the late 1960s, and state repression increased many township jazz musicians left the country for the neighboring countries, such as Zambia and Malawi, where they introduced jazz. Within Zimbabwe itself the nationalists increasingly tried to mobilize music in the service of imagining and performing the nation awaiting liberation. This musical nationalism led to the emergence of chimurenga (‘liberation war’) music, which initially referred to overtly political songs and was extended after independence in 1980 ‘to the political songs of electric guitar bands performing inside Zimbabwe’ (Turino 2000, p. 205). Stylistically chimurenga music combined indigenous instruments such as mbira, drums, and shakers with guitars, bass, traps, horns, and electric organ. Although it attained international fame in the 1980s and 1990s through the recordings and tours of its leading practitioners, such as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver
M’tukudzi, the Green Arrows, and the Bhundu Boys, Turino (2000, p. 225) insists that chimurenga is basically jit- or jiti-based music derived from ‘urban South African genres, such as marabi, tsaba-tsaba, and jive (or South African “jazz”). These styles were diffused to Zimbabwe by the powerful South African recording industry, by touring South African artists, and by returning Zimbabwean migrant workers.28

Thus, chimurenga music was hardly new in its instrumental or textual style, both of which were rooted in the circuits of Zimbabwean musical cosmopolitanism, which included diasporan music from the United States transmitted through South Africa, and to a lesser extent Cuban music transmitted through the DRC. Zimbabwe, in turn, indigenized these styles and chimurenga came to be seen as its distinctive musical expression as it was disseminated across the world, including the diaspora, through the global marketing paradigm of ‘worldbeat’ or ‘world music’. Zimbabwe’s cultural nationalism coming as it did in the era of worldbeat entailed both musical indigenization and internationalization, the production and marketing of music that ‘world music’ audiences found both familiar and different – the aesthetic difference was embodied in mbira.29 However, within Zimbabwe itself urban popular music remained diverse: Jamaican reggae had its adherents and bands, so did Congolese rumba, South African kwaiito, American hip-hop culture and rap, not to mention jazz. In the words of one Zimbabwean musician: ‘African American music in the United States has an aesthetic framework in which Zimbaweans can relate. The creative freedom in jazz is very important for our musical development’ (Williams 1997, p. 301).

The cases of popular music in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well as in the DRC, Ghana, and Nigeria that have been examined in this paper clearly demonstrate the complex musical exchanges between Africa and its diasporas. Just as the diasporan Africans transformed the music they had brought with them from Africa, Africans on the continent have been transforming the music they have been importing from the diaspora. Both groups did so in the context of, and in response to, the specific musical, cultural, social, economic, and political conjunctures and contexts in which they found themselves. The result has been the cross-fertilization and flowering of African musics, making them, in their collectivity, perhaps the most dominant on the global scene of twentieth-century popular music. It is important to underscore the historical dynamism of these flows, not to freeze them in temporal boxes in which Africa’s influences on diasporan music are confined exclusively to the past, to the origins of diasporan music, and the influences of diaspora music on Africa are restricted to the present, to the modernization of African music, but rather to explore the continuous interactions among them over time. The influences of modern African popular music on diasporan music, in short, the reciprocity of musical flows in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries between Africa and its diasporas constitutes a fruitful field for further inquiry.

Conclusion
It is quite clear that musical influences constituted intricate threads of diasporic webs that linked the African diasporas together and with Africa. The strands were drawn from many sources and flowed in many directions to create a complex tapestry of musical Afro-internationalism and Afro-modernism, or global Afo-modernism that
became one of the major currents of twentieth-century modernism. Music remained a critical site, a soundscape if you will, in the construction of new diasporan and African identities. In the Atlantic world African musics survived the Middle Passage, but were subsequently transformed in the Americas, unevenly and inconsistently to be sure, creating new musics that changed the face of global music forever including music on the African continent itself. The flows and feedbacks between diaspora and African musics were continuous in so far as the Middle Passage was not a one-time event nor always a one-way trip, but a process that lasted four centuries and involved returns. During the long centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, new waves of Africans arriving in the Americas reinforced and brought new layers of musical idioms, practices, and styles upon the emerging syncretic musics of Afro-America. The returns, both permanent and periodic, physical and psychic, through migrations and increasingly the mass media created loops of musical influences from the diaspora back to Africa, out of which emerged musical genres of astonishing variety and incredible expressive power on both sides of the Atlantic.

The musical dialogues were of course not simply between Africa and the diaspora, but also within the diaspora world and within Africa. Nor were they confined to ‘popular’ musics, but also involved ‘art’ music and ‘traditional’ or ‘folk’ music. Untangling these multi-musical transmissions in all their dimensions and directions is exceedingly difficult given the multiplicity of mediating contexts, currents, and circuits at national, regional, and international levels. This paper points to the challenges, but also to the exciting intellectual work that such a project entails. The need to capture the transnational flows and intercultural idioms of ‘art’ music is particularly long overdue, as Akin Euba (2000, 2003) has argued in his suggestive theory of intercultural composition, in this case, the dynamics of intercultural communication between the composers of Africa and the diaspora, for the development of African ‘art’ music is not only a product of Christianization and colonization, but also of the ‘returnees’ from the diaspora. As we do in linguistic and literary studies where multilingualism is recognized as a defining feature of the African linguistic experience and ‘canonical’ and popular literatures are accorded analytical spaces, in music studies the issues of multi-musicality must be taken seriously and the composers of ‘art’ music given their due.

A diasporic perspective helps Africa reclaim its rightful place in the history of world music, by stripping the ‘West’ of a false universality that simultaneously appropriates diasporan African musics and disrobes them of their African roots and ignores the specificities of their Pan-African routes back to Africa, and saves Africans from unnecessary cultural anxieties about losing their musical ‘authenticity’ by borrowing from ‘Western’ music that turns, on closer inspection, to be subtended by African influences. In short, through the global diaspora paradigm proposed in this paper and my larger study on Africa and its diasporas, the diaspora and Africa are reconnected to each other, Africa is globalized, globalization is Africanized, and globalization loses its fearsome or feckless western ontological claims and epistemological conceits.

Notes
1. I am currently conducting a global research project on ‘African and Its Diasporas: Dispersals and Linkages’, funded by the Ford Foundation, which has taken me or will take me to visit major locations of African diaspora presence in South America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, and Asia.
2. Popular music is often defined in terms of its in-betweenness, as a fugitive category for musical genres that can be distinguished from the ‘art music’ patronized by the elites and the ‘folk’ or ‘traditional’ musics embedded in oral peasant traditions. For pertinent definitions and discussions of popular music in the African context see Karin Barber (1987, 1997) and Kofi Agawu (2003, pp. 117–50). This paper focuses on what would generally be considered ‘popular musics’ in Africa and the African diasporas that often appeal to urban populations.

3. Collins (1987, p. 189) quotes Mensah as saying: ‘When I was young it was jazz that dominated me as I was naïve and thought that was the thing. But it is the African music that is the mother, not the other way around. But I had to find this out the hard way.’ Fela put it this way: ‘It was then [when he went to the United States] that I really began to see that I had not played African music, I had been using jazz to play African music, when really I should be using African music to play jazz. So it was America that brought me back to myself.’ And Collins (1987, p. 187) comments thus on Miriam Makeba and Letta Mbulu who emigrated from apartheid South Africa and settled in the United States: ‘Both had to make the transition from jazz, for which they were famous at home, to kwela music and traditional African songs, for which they have become internationally acclaimed abroad.’

4. In fact, according to Franklin Knight (1978, p. 46), ‘Africans had accompanied the Spanish explores and colonists to the Caribbean from the beginning of the age of exploration. An indefinite number arrived with the expedition of Nicolas de Ovando in 1502. By 1516 Spanish-speaking Africans – most likely born in Spain – had already outnumbered the true Spanish colonists.’

5. In Cuba the antecedents of rumba music and dance associated with rumba are called Congolese or Bantu. Rumba resembles yuka and makuta still practiced in the Congo-Angola region.

6. Martin (1995, p. 131) describes marinka as follows:

   The characteristic movement of marinka dancers was a hip motion that shifted the body weight alternately from one leg to the other, in a manner similar to the rumba which was later to seep the older dances away, but which in Congo was heavily influenced by the older marinka dance and musical forms. Popularity of the partnered dancing spread like wildfire throughout the Congo region, touching even remote villages by 1935.

7. For an extensive study of leisure in urban Africa from the precolonial to the colonial and postcolonial eras see the collection by Zeleza and Veney (2003); for a theoretical discussion, see the introductory essay by Zeleza (2003).

8. It is a testimony to the enduring appeal of Cuban music that in a 1980 interview Sam Mangwana notes: ‘I sing in Lingala and Spanish, which I didn’t learn in school. During my time with Tabu Ley, he insisted that I memorize the complete repertory of Orquesta Aragon’, quoted in Bender (1991, p. 62).

9. According to Jenny Cathcart (1989), Youssou N’Dour began his career playing Afro-Cuban rumba. Also, note the following observation by Günter Gretz, in his interview with N’dour as quoted in Bender (1991, p. 38):

   [Q] Listening to Star Band’s first records, it becomes apparent that up to three quarters of the titles are of Cuban origin, and only one quarter is based on Wolof rhythms. The proportion is already reversed on the first record you recorded with the band. And today, there is no Cuban music at all on your records. [A] We continued to develop and have taken responsibility to dedicate our music directly to Senegalese folklore. This concept immediately had great success. People liked the music from the beginning.

In a later interview N’Dour was quoted as saying, ‘m’balax contains reggae and jazz and every kind of music, or perhaps they all contain m’balax’ (Savishinsky 1994b, p. 212).
10. The orchestra was established by Fodé Keita in Senegal and made its debut in Paris in 1952 where it initially performed for Africans in the city. Keita was appointed Secretary of Internal Affairs but later accused of treason and executed by Sekou Toure's vicious dictatorship.

11. Among the African American singers who attended the festival, which was held at Independence Square in Accra, were Roberta Flack, Wilson Pickett, Ike and Tina Turner, the Staple Singers, and the Voices of Harlem. James Brown's music was already widely popular (Bender 1991, p. 84).

12. The decline of highlife was evident by the mid-1960s. Several prominent musicians such as Sunny Adé and Dele Ojo shifted from highlife to jùjù. This was not only because of the popularity of jùjù, but also ‘soul music from the United States – for example, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, and Aretha Franklin – displaced highlife among young, cosmopolitan Yoruba’ (Waterman 1990, p. 113).

13. The term jùjù does not refer to magical practices, but was initially used to refer to the technique of playing the music (the rising, whirling motion of the tambourine), then to the tambourine itself, and finally to the music as a whole and its associated dance movements (Waterman 1990, p. 63).

14. The proliferation and increased size of jùjù bands in the 1970s owed much to the oil boom that led to the expansion and emergence of new elites who patronized jùjù music, which facilitated the emergence of some very wealthy jùjù musicians.

15. Adé brought jùjù music to a global audience. His album Jùjù Music, Island Records, apparently sold 200,000 copies worldwide, although his subsequent releases were not as successful and Island Record dropped him in 1984, but he continued to be a megastar in Nigeria selling millions of records, and to undertake successful tours overseas, especially Europe and the United States. Ade is regarded as the most inventive jùjù musician, keen on experimentation and incorporating new influences. In the 1980s he ‘introduced new electronic devices and rhythms from contemporary Afro-American popular music’ (Waterman 1990, p. 140).

16. Bender (2005) claims that the term ‘afrobeat’ was inspired by the term ‘afro-soul’ coined by Geraldo Pino from Sierra Leone who was hugely popular and visited Lagos around 1966, and who was considered by Fela as his chief rival.

17. Later the band was renamed Egypt 80. His band was as large – sometimes with up to 30 musicians – as its records were long – between 15 and 30 minutes and occasionally close to 40 minutes. One of the most distinctive features of his band were the scantily dressed female dancers with their provocative gyrations. Fela's grotesque misogyny and sexual hedonism was notorious, epitomized by his marriage to 27 women in his band.

18. The two were of course connected, the contradictions or antimonies, as Olaniyi prefers to call them, of Fela's life and behavior – the social activism and outrageous sensationalism – were integral to a performative psyche and persona, rooted in ‘his overinvestment in that less culturally policed order of subjectivity known as the imaginary’ (Olaniyi 2004, p. 170). Olaniyi divides Fela's life into three phases, what he calls the ‘apolitical avant-pop hustler’ of the 1960s before his American tour, ‘the afrobeat social reformer’ of the early 1970s, and the ‘afrobeat political activist’ of the late 1970s until his death in 1997 from AIDS. He separates Fela's music during the second phase into three genres, ‘the metro’ songs focusing on the chaotic and colorful sights and sounds of Lagos, ‘racial/cultural nationalist songs’, paens to Pan-African solidarity, agency and authenticity, and appropriated folk songs, consisting of re-workings of classic Yoruba tales. During the third phase political songs predominated in which Fela relentlessly lambasted and lampooned the compradorial elites and rulers of Nigeria for their callowness, crassness, corruption, incompetence, and collusion with imperialist forces.

19. In an interview Femi noted that, besides his father he was influenced by African American jazz and soul musicians, Ghanaian highlife, and South African jazz (Sanneh 2000).

20. David Coplan (1985, p. 39) mentions an earlier visit in 1887 noting that this ‘brought black American minstrelsy to Cape Town for the first time’. McAdoo was a graduate of Hampton Institute, a historically black college and university (HBCU) in Hampton, Virginia, and former member of the renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers that undertook extensive tours of Europe and Asia, the first lasting seven years beginning in 1871 and
another six year tour that began in 1884. McAdoo formed the Virginia Jubilee Singers or Virginia Concert Company as it was sometimes called upon the return of the Fisk Jubilee Singers from their international tour in April 1890. The Virginia Jubilee Singers set off on their South African tour on 29 May 1890, via England, arriving in South Africa in mid-June, and had their inaugural performance at the Vaudeville Concert in Cape Town on 30 June (Erlman 1988, pp. 331–4). Zine Magubane (2003, p. 300) makes a pertinent observation that while Gilroy ‘provides a cogent analysis of the impact of the Jubilee Singers on European aesthetic practice, his analysis does not extend to the second tour undertaken by the singers in 1890. As such, he misses an important dimension of the process whereby African-American cultural forms extended into the popular industries of the so-called “less-developed countries”’. One more indication of the excision of Africa in Gilroy’s conception of black diaspora cultural flows.

21. Among those who remained in Kimberly was the pianist Will P. Thompson who formed a series of local minstrel companies, including the Diamond Minstrels and the Philharmonic Society, with the assistance of Isaiah Bud-Mbelle, a civil servant and musician.

22. African Americans were granted ‘honorary white’ status in the British colonies and Boer republics that then made up South Africa. This right was abolished after the Anglo-Boer war of 1899–1902 (Keto 1972).

23. McAdoo was bombarded with requests for scholarships to the US. He gave a scholarship to one prospective student, Titus Mbongwe, who unfortunately died in a train crash in England before he had made it to the US, and inspired many more including Charlotte Manye, who earned a doctorate in 1903 from an American university, the first South African woman to do so. She went to Britain, then Canada, and the United States as part of the African Native Choir in 1893. Manye and other members of the choir were left stranded in the US when the white South African owners of the choir absconded. She and eight members of the choir were offered scholarship by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church to study at Wilberforce and Lincoln universities.

24. Michael Xaba, a jazz saxophonist who apparently did not like the new style, reportedly coined the term *mbaqanga*. According to Lara Allen (2005) the term is:

used to describe two developments in black South African urban popular music. (1) During the 1940s South African big bands started performing local melodies in swing style, evolving a style that became known as *mbaqanga* or African jazz. (2) In the early 1960s a second style called *mbaqanga* evolved from 1950s penny whistle *kwela* and sax jive, a transition best exemplified by the Hollywood Jazz Band. It was the first South African style to be fundamentally created in the recording studio for a mass media audience rather than for live performance and came to dominate popular music in South African townships during the 1960s and 70s. Like that of its antecedents, the harmonic base of *mbaqanga* is the cyclical repetition of four primary chords. Short melodies, usually the length of the harmonic cycle, are repeated and alternated with slight variations, and call-and-response generally occurs between solo and chorus parts. The characteristics that differentiate *mbaqanga* from previous styles are a driving, straight beat, rather than swung rhythms; melodic independence between instrumental parts, the bass and lead guitars providing particularly strong contrapuntal lines; and electric rather than acoustic guitars and bass guitar.

25. Magubane (2005) claims that,

although kwaito and South African rap share common musical ancestor of American hip-hop, they not only have distinct sounds, but also were pioneered by different black South African communities … American hip-hop found particular favor among ‘mixed race’ or ‘Colored’ performers in South Africa … Kwaito, on the other hand, was pioneered by young African performers and most kwaito are sung in vernacular versions of the major indigenous languages of Zulu, Tswana, or Sotho.
It would be a mistake, however, to rigidly separate kwaito as ‘African’ and South African rap as ‘Colored’.

26. This music included the following: (1) Malawian dances, including nyau; (2) Mozambiquan Ngororombe; (3) jerusarema; (4) shangara; (5) muchongoyo; (6) mbira; (7) mukumba; and (8) dhinhe/dandanda (Turino 2000, p. 67). For a description of each of these musics, see Turino (2000, pp. 68–92). Clearly, at least until the 1950s mbira, which later gained international renown and was seen as representative of Zimbabwean indigenous music, was only one of several indigenous forms of music. Its rise to prominence was facilitated by the rise of nationalism and the proximity of the Zezuru people who played mbira to Harare, the capital, and hence to the center of the mass media, both of which played a role in its dissemination and popularization. Also critical was the role of African music schools and municipal social and recreational programs, which emphasized indigenous music as part of ‘native policy’ to keep Africans within the confines of invented colonial traditions and identities of ethnicity. Moreover, some churches encouraged traditional music in an attempt to Africanize church music. For a detailed study of mbira, see Berliner (1981).

27. ‘Skokiaan’ was recorded in South Africa by Johnny Johnston and the Johnston Brothers and Nico Carstens en Sy Orkes.

28. Malamusi (2005) notes the different perceptions of the two leading musicians when he writes, ‘Thomas Mapfumo’s style began to be termed “traditional”, while others such as Oliver Mutukudzi assimilated contemporary trends such as reggae’.

29. Thomas Mapfumo, for example, did not permanently include the mbira ‘in his band until 1986, after he entered the worldbeat market’ (Turino 2000, p. 341). This market demanded from its heroes, following Bob Marley’s model, a facade of political consciousness, spiritual exoticism, and cultural authenticity, which Mapfumo carefully cultivated. The popularity of Zimbabwe’s 22 key mbira in worldbeat circles was due to its uniqueness and musical attractiveness and accessibility. Interestingly, the mbira was slightly altered – by removing or reducing the buzzers – and electrified to better suit cosmopolitan tastes. The cosmopolitan and diasporan impulses in the construction of indigenous music in Zimbabwe after independence can be seen in the fact that one of the key architects of the National Dance Company, which was established in 1981 to promote ‘traditional’ dances and music, was an African American dancer and choreographer Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1993). Incidentally, in the 1950s the colonial government had also invited an African American choreographer to teach ‘traditional’ urban dance associations! (Turino 2000, pp. 320–9).


References


