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# Music is the "Noise of Remembering" Tracing the Origins, Influences, and Connectivities of West African Music

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# Music is the "Noise of Remembering"

Tracing the Origins, Influences, and Connectivities of West African Music

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Honors Project

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**Introduction**

  The popularity and universal reach of music genres such as Jazz and hip-hop attest to the idea that these forms have been long established as a vital part of global musical culture. For people who are familiar with music derived from the African continent, it is clear that styles such as Jazz and hip-hop are rooted in, and inextricably linked with, African culture and history. Because the stories behind the history are long and fragmented, it is difficult to understand how and why aspects of music from the African continent came to have such wide-reaching impact in the new contexts in which the music was taken up.

  While there is clearly no catch-all answer to this question, this project aims to draw attention to aspects of the journeys and influences of certain music styles from Africa by offering a perspective that comes from the musical experiences I have had at Lawrence University and while studying abroad in Ghana and Cuba. By drawing on these specific experiences, and relevant scholarship in this field, I hope to shed light on some of the ways in which music styles and cultural traditions from West Africa have made an impact on sacred and secular music in South America and the Caribbean, catalyzing a rich and complex cultural exchange between Cuba, Brazil and the United States. An integral part of this project is a live performance that has been orchestrated to highlight the connections between musical styles from these cultures and to demonstrate how influences can be mutual and constantly evolving. The paper provides some background and historical context for the performance. I will also give a lecture before the performance. The project as a whole allows me to

pose some questions for further discussion and study and to generate greater

awareness about the global significance of some of the music we perform at

Lawrence.

My own interest in music of West African origins began in my sophomore

year of high school when I saw a performance by percussionist Michael Spiro during

a summer music program at Indiana University. Spiro, who is renowned as a

historian of traditional Cuban music and a virtuosic conga player, completely

changed the way I thought about conga drums, which inspired me to learn more

about the instrument. As I dug into the technique, I also began to learn more about

the music and culture associated with the instrument. In addition, I had the

opportunity to perform with a number of Brazilian drumming ensembles while in

high school. My newfound fascination with Afro-Cuban and Brazilian percussion

music made me come to the realization, as I was auditioning for music schools, that I

wanted to be somewhere with a really strong world music program. Lawrence's

percussion program stood out to me because of the strength of its Brazilian, Cuban,

and Ghanaian music offerings. As a freshman at Lawrence, I was fortunate to get to

perform in the concert that won the Percussive Arts Society's international world

music competition. During my sophomore year I knew I wanted to dive in further

and was fortunate to receive funding from the school on two occasions to study

abroad in Ghana and Cuba.

The music of Steve Reich has had a significant impact on my interests too and

is a large part of what inspired me to become a percussionist. It is interesting to note

that, in the summer of 1970, Steve Reich spent five weeks studying the music of the

Ewe people in Ghana. Studying in Ghana allowed me to gain deeper insights into

Reich's music, particularly the ways in which his studies of Ewe music affected his

later compositions.

In the summer of 2015, I had the opportunity to study Ewe music

(drumming, dance, and singing) at the Dagbe Cultural Institute in the village of

Kopeyia, in the Volta region of Ghana. I was struck by how integrated music seemed

to be, in all aspects of the communal life of the village. From celebrations to religious

ceremonies, festivals, and funerals, every event and occasion appears to be marked

or observed through music and dance. Music, in all its complex meanings, is clearly

not just a side feature of these rituals and occasions but provides the actual medium

in which these practices are expressed and shared through the generations.

Ethnomusicologist, Kofi Agawu, makes the point with regard to the Northern Ewe

people, that every aspect of life is "fundamentally ritualized" (*African Rhythm* 26).

Ewe identity is formed by repetitions of various acts, in routine activities and, most

significantly, in musical performance. The idea of "becoming" or being transformed,

is a crucial part of Ewe ritual, and this is particularly evident in certain musical

styles. In the coming of age dance, Tokoe, for example, girls are transformed into

young adults. In war dances, such as Agbekor and Adzogbo, the participants (men,

historically) are being transformed into battle-ready warriors. However, cultural life

in Ghana with its myriad rituals has undergone profound changes resulting from

colonization, urbanization and globalization, and as a result, many of the songs and

dances of people who identify with Ewe culture have been infused with secular

meaning as well as influences from other religious traditions, such as Christian beliefs and practices.

Two years after studying in Ghana, in the summer of 2017, I was able to spend some time in Cuba, studying styles of music that originated in the African continent and took root in the Americas and the Caribbean. This was an opportunity to build on the familiarity I had acquired performing in Lawrence University's Afro-Cuban ensemble, Tambo Toke. It was illuminating to study with teachers in Cuba, who brought to life the connections between the music of West Africa, and the styles of music that began in West Africa and that are now an integral part of performance and religious ritual in Cuba.

These experiences, in Ghana and Cuba respectively, inspired me to think about the historical journey that music from West Africa has taken, about the relationship between traditional forms of music from West Africa and the transformations the music has undergone in the Americas and Cuba, and about the ways in which that journey seems to be characterized by a circular rather than a linear movement because of its ongoing consequence in global culture.

As my performance comprises both "traditional" music from West Africa, such as Adzogbo, and music that migrated to the Americas as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, from where it evolved into new forms, it is necessary to clarify some nuances of meaning when we talk about African music. In his 2016 work, Agawu makes some helpful distinctions: He points to the differences between *African* music, "implying music of African origins," and *music in Africa*, "implying any and all repertories irrespective of origin, that are performed on the continent" (2).

Jean Ngoya Kidula, an Ethnomusicologist who studies East African music makes some points that are relevant here. She makes a distinction between "African music" and music that is "in/of Africa." Kidula suggests that music "in/of Africa" may be seen as styles, structures, or practices of music that are "developed and performed in Africa by past and current populations," sometimes informed by trends in "modern Africa," whereas "African music," by contrast, consists of forms and practices that are considered "Afrogenic," or originating in Africa (142).

For the category, music "in/of Africa," Kidula uses an example from her own context in Kenya: the Isugudi, a dance music of the Luyia in western Kenya. Relevant to this project, styles of music from the Ewe people in Ghana would be other clear examples of Afrogenic music represented in my performance. Kidula makes the point that Afrogenic music has undergone transformations, and has taken new roots, over time, not just in Africa, but in the various places where this music has traveled and transformed. This includes "blues in the United States . . . or Samba in Brazil – music whose origins are associated with people of African descent" (142). She argues that this music has been the most influential on "growth, development, and creativity in global styles in the 20$^{th}$ century" (142).

Having a clear idea of these distinctions allows people to speak of African music in contextually specific terms, rather than using generic terms that may contribute to the marginalization or idealization of music from or of Africa (making it seem exotic or "other"). It allows scholars and musicians to grasp the complexity of the influence of African music globally, but also, it compels us to be aware that

African music is not a category of music distinguished primarily by its difference from "Western music" (Agawu, *Representing* 5).

This project aims to demonstrate that various forms and styles are connected and are part of a complex cycle of transformation and mutual influence. This helps to shine a light on the idea that African music is neither simply a preserved, pure, indigenous form of music, nor only a transformation that happened as a consequence of historical events such as the slave trade. Instead, the music reflects evolving forms and styles on the African continent itself as it has adapted to and reacted against global developments, such as colonialism and industrialization. This is evident in the acceptance of musical influence of genres from outside of Africa, such as Jazz and hip-hop, as well as the creation of music in Africa that pushes back against European influence (as can be seen in the Ewe piece, Gahu, which satirizes industrialism).

As James Sweet argues, "scholars are increasingly aware that the idea of a linear progression of culture from Africa to the Americas is a slippery conceptual slope. Because of warfare, trade, and other forms of human exchange, few parts of Africa were ever culturally or ethnically homogeneous" (71). Sweet's point ties in with the approach of this paper that in studying the journey of West African music, we see that this was not a linear journey, with a clear starting point and several end points. Instead, we can see that there is almost no well-defined starting point, and certainly no end points. This is important because it allows us to consider the profound complexity of the African continent, to see that Africa itself, through the colonial eras and the onset of the transatlantic slave trade was a changing and

evolving context, rather than a stable, "essential" entity. Studying the history of African music, for example music associated with Candomblé in Brazil, we are not able to peer back into the past to some kind of preserved form of music as it was at "the beginning," before the slave trade, before colonialism interfered with the purity of its forms. That would be to ignore internal processes, power struggles, and responses to global transformations on the continent. However, by attempting to trace the origins of these forms of music, however blurred they may seem, we can see more clearly the various elements of African survival (Sweet 77) and we can see beyond the "historical snapshots" of certain Afrogenic or Afrocentric rituals and practices. The history of the music is clearly a testament to the struggles of enslaved people in the Americas and the Caribbean, and the resilience of people who brought together fragments of cultural expression from the African continent into newly coherent forms, adapted to their new contexts.

**Historical Context**

The cultural history of the African continent involves hundreds of ethnic groups. This paper will mainly focus on the history and music of the Ewe (pronounced ev-way) and the Yoruba. These two groups are predominant in northern West Africa, and people from these cultures were spread all across the world as a consequence of the slave trade. Of particular note, the Spanish Empire's colonies in South America were almost exclusively from regions along the Ivory Coast and northern Central Africa. This resulted in large numbers of Ewe and

Yoruban people going to Cuba and Brazil and is arguably the reason their cultures became so prevalent among slave communities.

To piece together a precise account of West Africa's history is beyond the scope of this project, but it is worth noting that the earliest accounts of Ewe and Yoruban people were written by European explorers, missionaries, and slave traders. These accounts can be misleading due to racial bias and misinterpretation of cultural practices on the part of the Europeans. Therefore, it can be argued that using the oral tradition of the Yoruban and Ewe people can provide a more accurate account of the history (Badu 60). While there are obvious issues when relying on oral accounts (i.e. differing viewpoints based on geographical location, reliability of preserving a consistent story over the course of many generations), a common practice among historians is to support data obtained from oral traditions with ethnological and archaeological evidence (Younge 5). This paper draws on secondary sources, as well personal accounts of teachers I have studied with in Ghana and Cuba. No formal interviews were conducted, so my observations, particularly any obfuscation or misrepresentation, are entirely my own, and not attributable to them.

The origins of the Yoruban people can be traced back to the Sudanese Empire. Despite the broad variety of stories that portray this part of their history, in addition to a lack of evidence that could support one origin story over another, it is generally agreed upon that the Sudanese Empire, which consisted of dozens of cultural groups, split apart as a result of political upheaval and population pressure (Younge 5). Various groups spread out in different directions across the continent

and established a number of kingdoms. One of the most prominent of these groups, the Yoruba, traveled southwest until they established the kingdom of Oyo (Fig. 2) near where modern-day Nigeria is located (Fig. 1). As the kingdom of Oyo grew, subgroups of the Yoruba split off from the kingdom to settle their own territory. The most notable groups to come from Oyo include the Ewe, Fon, Ga, and Ga-adangbe people. These groups migrated further west into what is present day Benin, where they established a new kingdom known as Dahomey. Feuds between the Ewe and Fon caused the Ewe people to leave Dahomey, splitting into two groups, one of which traveled east past Oyo, while the other traveled west and founded a settlement called Notsie, which lies between present day Togo and Ghana (Fig. 1). Owing to their location near the Ivory Coast, as well as their prominent numbers, the Ewe and Yoruba became primary targets for the slave trade (Fig 3).

In "The Enslavement of Yoruba," Ann O'Hear points out that from the early nineteenth century, Yoruba speakers were the main group exported from the Slave Coast. The nineteenth century was a time of continuous warfare and chaos in Yorubaland, and the resulting breakdown in the social fabric meant that the area was particularly vulnerable to the slave trade. Common methods of enslavement of Yoruba speakers included "warfare, raids, kidnapping expeditions, and brigandage" (57).[1] In effect, "from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries the slave trade funneled thousands of Yoruba captives to Cuba and the Americas" (Reid 112).

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[1] Yoruba speakers were not only exported to external slavery in the Americas, but were also absorbed into slavery internally, a process that O'Hear suggests continued after the external trade had ended (57).

It is important to note that, far from being victims of forced labor with little

or no agency of their own, the slaves brought their own rich cultures and skills to

the Americas. With regard to Brazil, Reis makes the point that "the four million

Africans imported to Brazil as slaves brought with them not only the physical

energy to produce wealth, but also the religious, aesthetic, and moral values to

create culture" (45). Gomez writes that the skills enslaved Africans brought to the

Americas included the ability to cultivate rice, tobacco and indigo, which they

passed along not only to their children, but also to the slaveholders who exploited

these skills (5). Gomez adds that the enslaved people brought with them metallurgic

abilities, experience with watercraft, and building techniques that transformed the

New World (6). Significantly, they brought religious beliefs and practices that were

initially associated with specific ethnolinguistic groups in Africa, and remained so in

the Americas, even though many groups were split apart. The large numbers of

Yoruban people meant that the most celebrated religions were "Yoruba-based

expressions, most famously represented in Lucumí or Santería in places like Cuba,

and Candomblé in Brazil" (6). See figures 3 and 4 for routes from West Africa to

Cuba and Brazil.

The fusion of cultural forms from different parts of the African continent

began during the enforced transportation of slaves from Africa and continued in the

slave communities "where dance and music were fundamental to slave resistance

and the reconstruction of community within the constraints of chattel slavery"

(Bush 17). Bush clarifies that the beginning of the cultural fusion took place during

the middle passage, on the slave ships, as slaves were forced to dance and make

music for exercise and for the entertainment of the sailors. She stresses that the "Slave Ship Dance" was essentially the start of the process whereby enslaved people from different parts of West Africa and from Central Africa forged new identities. In the African diaspora, the music and dance of the enslaved people fulfilled much the same purposes as on the African continent, in the forms of "work songs, children's games, religious rituals and worship, and community entertainment" (Bush 18). With reference to the Caribbean poet, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Bush invokes the idea of "bridges of sound" that "carried memories of Africa to the Americas, music that echoed down the generations from Harlem to Havana" (Bush 19).

Memory is a vital part of the evolving musical forms because slaves in the diaspora communities in Cuba and other parts of the Americas shared "the basic rhythms (and some instruments) derived from Africa. But these were fused with the instruments and rhythms of the cultures with which African slaves interacted" (Bush 19). During this process of transculturation, forms such as

> the samba and son rhythms (son was a modified, more refined, version of rumba which became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century) combined the structure and elements of Spanish canción (song) and Spanish guitar with African rhythm and percussion instruments. Son, samba, rumba, and other Latin and African-Caribbean dances influenced salsa. (Bush 19)

Some musical forms retained African elements such as the dominant use of percussion instruments and call-and-response vocals. Examples of these forms include rumba in Cuba, and Yoruba music found in "African-derived religious sects" such as Cuban Santería (Bush 19).

As the fusions of music associated with ritual and worship form a large part of the focus of this project, it is useful to explore briefly the development of some religious practices that grew out the transatlantic slave trade, most significantly, Candomblé in Brazil and Santería in Cuba. As these developments are well documented, it will be sufficient for the purposes of this project to provide only a brief outline as context for the relevant musical features.

**Candomblé**

The term "Candomblé" is not tied to any simple derivative, but there is a general sense that it may come from the locality of slave plantations in the Bahia region of northeast Brazil, Candome. It may also have some linguistic roots in languages of Central Africa, but it is clearly a fusion of many ritual and musical influences. In general terms, it is the name given to the development of Afro-Brazilian religion in the state of Bahia. It involves "the worship of a series of spiritual entities, often associated with forces of nature, who receive periodic ritual offerings in their shrines" (Parés 185). Parés points out that Candomblé is associated with three African nations. These nations are Nago, Jeje, and Angola, all of which worship different spiritual entities that are praised in the corresponding ritual language (Yoruba, Gbe, and Bantu-derived dialects). In addition, each group has its own ritual characteristics, such as drum rhythms, dances, and food offerings (185). At its heart, Candomblé can be seen as an Africanized[2] version of earlier Central African kilundu ritual, based primarily on the veneration of ancestors. At the

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[2] Africanized: in the sense of a fusion of different African-derived cultures that took on new forms in the diaspora communities.

risk of confusing an already complicated picture, I point out that this synthesized and evolving form in the diaspora also became known as *Batuque*, but eventually only as Candomblé. The music associated with Candomblé is highly percussive, and eventually influenced contemporary Samba and Bossa Nova styles.

In a sense, the Central African-derived practice of kilundu[3], based on ancestor worship, served as the common binding ritual for a variety of different groups in the Bahia area of Brazil, which morphed into a fusion of practices, known as calundu. James Sweet refers to the expansion of calundu from its origins as a practice specific to Central African ritual (kilundu), to include African people from other areas such as the Bight of Benin. Sweet argues that this inclusion "effectively reduced the ritual to a generic African religious form" (68).

Although singing and dancing were an integral part of the ritual, the various implements used in the ceremonies, such as coins and calabashes, were definitely not characteristic of Central African ritual[4]. Moreover, argues Sweet, "the language of the ritual was Ewe-Fon; not Kimubunde (the language spoken in Angola)" (68). From this description, we can get a sense of the merging of cultures in the context of the diaspora; in this case something that came out of Central Africa (kilundu), then combined with practices of other linguistic and regional groups to become calundu. Sweet notes that the fusion was lost on the Luso-Brazilian observors (Portuguese and Brazilian slave holders and perhaps scholars) who "conflated Ewe-Fon ritual with the specific Central African ritual that was its historical predecessor" (68).

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[3] In Angola, *quilundo* was a generic name for any ancestral spirit that possessed the living (Sweet 64).
[4] Musical instruments such as scrapers and drums were typical of Central African ritual (Sweet 65).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, calundu was no longer part of Luso-

Brazillian lexicon (Brazil was a Portuguese colony), as at that time African dance

forms were more commonly referred to as *batuques*[5]. Sweet points out that,

likewise, "the religious associations of calundu eventually merged into the more

generic Candomblé, a mixture of Yoruba, Dahomey, and Central African religious

forms" (69). The main feature of Candomblé ritual involves a diviner or a fetisher

who becomes possessed by the spirits of the ancestors in order to heal or prophesy;

a practice considered to be demonic by the Portuguese.

Reis points out that although *batuques* took place under various different

circumstances, they were most prominent during Catholic religious festivals. In

1855, twenty drums were confiscated during the festival of Our Lord of Bonfim.

What is interesting here is that Reis points to a fine line that existed between

concession on the part of the slave owners, to allow the people to have their

celebrations (as it was thought that having an outlet would make them more

compliant in their enforced work), and to keep strict control over cultural practices

that they ultimately found to be threatening. Drums, which featured prominently in

festivities, were considered "accursed instruments" by many (Reis 48) as the energy

they summoned up was potentially dangerous to slave owners. In addition, the lack

of European decorum in their dress and manners was disturbing.  Ultimately, says

Reis, the slaves took ownership of the masters' concessions by forging a culture and

strong, critical voice of their own (49).

[5] Joao José Reis explores the nature of celebrations that African people were involved in during the time of slavery in Brazil. Most significant were the kinds of celebrations that "tried to reproduce more closely the experience that slaves left behind in their homelands. The so-called *batuque* represents this kind of cultural manifestation" (45).

**Santería**

Santería, or "the way of the saints," also goes by the name of "La Regla de Ocha," the rule of the law of the Orisha. Michele Reid points out that Santería "evolved from polycultural African and European belief systems by worshiping the orishas, the pantheon of Yoruba gods, behind the image of Catholic saints" (119). As increasing numbers of slaves arrived in Cuba, the Catholic Church attempted to convert them and instruct them in the beliefs and rituals of the Catholic faith. Slaves from Bantu language subgroups, Ewe, and Yoruba groups, were among the people brought over to Cuba to work on the plantations (Fig. 5). The majority of slaves arrived in Cuba in the nineteenth century during the sugar boom. Reid contends that despite, or perhaps because of, the conversion efforts of the Catholic church, the Yoruba captives, for example, "adjusted many of their practices to adapt to the new situation" (119). Catholicism in Cuba emphasized two main factors "that enabled the transformation into Santería: one God and active religious intermediaries" (119). Yoruba religious tradition is also based on the belief in one Supreme Being – called Olodumare, Olorun, Olofi, or Olofin, and numerous intermediaries. The main feature of Santería is the belief that everyone is guided by a personal deity (orisha, or oricha in Cuba) or saint. As in Candomblé, the deities in Santería are associated with a force of nature, but they differ in that they can be tied to a Catholic saint.

The slaves who were sent to the Spanish American colonies, such as Cuba, were originally known as the Lucumí. They were mainly sent to plantations on the Havana-Matanzas region on the western side of Cuba (Ayorinde 210). Ayorinde contends that the arrival of this group of predominantly Yoruban slaves, relatively

late in the island's history of slavery, may be the reason for the "overwhelming

Yoruban influence on Cuban cultural and religious forms (210). We can see that

today, Santería is even considered to be the national religion of Cuba as it has

"developed from being the religion of the Yorubas into the symbol of a 'mestizo'

(mixed) nation" (25).

Music and dance are integral components of Yoruba religious practices.

Robin Moore points out that the repertoire associated with these practices "consists

in many cases of intricate percussive sequences played in strict ritual order, mimetic

body movement, vocal and instrumental improvisation, and hundreds of

responsorial songs with texts primarily in Yoruba languages" (261). In the long

reach of the country's history, from the era of slavery to the years after the

revolution in Cuba, Santería has persisted and flourished despite varying degrees of

tolerance and suppression.

In her study of Santería in socialist Cuba, Moore contends that worshipers

were fairly well tolerated during Castro's early years, more so than they were by

Battista prior to the Cuban revolution. She attributes this to the idea that the Castro

government recognized the importance of Santería to the working classes and

believed that tolerance to the religion would help secure their commitment to the

new regime (226). However, towards the end of the 1960s, greater intolerance

towards all religions took hold in Cuba. Moore argues that some of the negative

views about Santería that emerged at this time, came from the "general ideological

position concerning religion as false consciousness or false hope, but some was tied

to problematic . . . views of African origins" (271). From the 1970s, there was a

period of greater religious tolerance again in Cuba, partly as a result of the

involvement of the Catholic church in progressive movements associated with

Liberation Theology in Central America (276). Although constraints remain in place

on religious expression in general, Santería has persisted and has had a profound

impact on Afro-Cuban culture, particularly with regard to music.

**Characteristics of African Music**

Academic discussions about African music can sometimes be very vague.

Attributing the value of African music primarily to its rhythmic complexity or to

idealized, nostalgic notions of a pre-colonial past, is a vast oversimplification of the

music. There are, however, concrete musical analyses that can be made, which can

help students better understand the characteristics of African music forms and

styles by its own qualities rather than by understanding it only through its

differences from European classical music. Some of these aspects include musical

functionality, and compositional idioms. Musical functionality refers to both

function within music (i.e. the role an individual instrument or dancer plays within

the music) as well as the function of the music itself (i.e. music used for religious

ceremonies, communal gatherings, and so on). Compositional idioms are structural

elements that are commonly found across multiple styles of music. This can include

form, guidelines for improvising, and orchestration.

In order to clarify these characteristics, some examples from Ewe, Arara,

Candomblé, and Maracatu traditions are presented here. The following section

contains broad descriptions of these genres of music to give a foundational

understanding, while looking more in depth at specific pieces within these genres in order to clarify their defining qualities. As supplement, reference recordings have been included with this paper to help the reader gain a general understanding of the examples analyzed here, as well as to showcase characterizing musical elements. Supplemental performances can be listened to either all at once or as they appear in the text and do not need to be viewed in their entirety.

**Atsiagbekor**: All Ewe music is categorized under one of three areas: social music, war music, and sacred music. Whereas social music is typically used for communal activities and casual recreation, war music comes from rituals and stories of battles, and the music used in a religious context is classified as sacred. In addition, all three areas are made up of three main elements: drumming, dancing, and singing. There are a number of different drums used in the Ewe tradition. For the purpose of this paper, the instruments involved with the live performance are detailed (Fig. 6).

The lead drum, which directs the rest of the group and communicates to dancers and singers concerning what actions to take during a piece, is known as the Atsimevu (pronounced Ah-chim-eh-voo). The lead drum both dictates and responds to movements of the dancers with specific rhythmic patterns. Similarly, the lead drum plays patterns that the other drums then respond to by playing other rhythms in turn. In addition to the Astsimevu, other drums may also function as the lead, for example, the Boba drum which is used in the piece known as Gahu. There are also a number of supporting drums which support the lead drum and partake in a rhythmic dialogue. These drums are called the Sogo, Kidi, and Kagan. The Kagan,

which is the smallest and highest-pitched instrument, usually plays one pattern for the duration of the piece and serves as a fixed rhythmic structure on which other parts embellish. The Kidi (medium-pitched support drum) also tends to stick to one pattern and occasionally responds to calls from the lead (The Kidi's involvement in this dialogue usually differs piece by piece). The Sogo (lowest-pitched support drum) also has a basic pattern but is much more involved in dialogue with the lead drum. The Sogo tends to be the most outspoken of the support drums because of its near constant interaction with the lead drum. Lastly, there are two instruments that play a rhythm that serves as the basis of all the other rhythms occurring in the ensemble (Fig. 9): The metallic bell, called gagokui, and a rattle made from a dried gourd, called the axatse (pronounced ah-ha-chay).

The piece Atsiagbekor (pronounced ah-cha-beh-core), or Agbekor for short, is a war piece that has been practiced by the Ewe for almost two thousand years (Recording 1). The piece was originally used as a ceremony to welcome back warriors who were triumphant in battle. The piece would depict the actions of these warriors in battle and served as a way to memorialize their deeds. Over time, the piece has become a method of preserving history as well as a means of imparting wisdom to the audience and performers. The version of Agbekor, which I was taught while studying at Dagbe, tells the story of two villages at war with each other, and how the weaker village triumphed over the larger village against all odds.

**Arara**: Arara refers to a sub-group of Santería within Cuba. Practices from many different ethnic groups combined under the banner of Santería, one of which was Arara. Significantly, Arara was heavily influenced by the traditions of the Ewe.

The deities worshipped in Arara correspond to Santería deities, although Arara has its own set of music and ceremonies that are unique within Santería. The most notable of these differences are the drums used. Arara drums are nearly identical in shape and tone to those found in Ewe music. Because Arara drums are not commonly found, many performers inside and outside Cuba use conga drums for performances rather than the traditional drums. In addition to the conga drums, there is often a cowbell or metallic instrument that plays the standard 12/8 bell pattern and sometimes a different rhythm known as the Arara bell. This rhythm is based on 12/8 bell but extends the phrase a few beats. This pattern can sometimes be improvisatory and therefore adds another melodic voice to the texture of the ensemble.

In addition, changing the bell pattern has a significant impact on how the music feels. A good bell player knows when to change the pattern in order to highlight aspects of the song in order to change the energy of the piece. The highest-pitched drum is known as the Apleti. This drum usually has a single pattern, which acts as a foundational rhythm from which the other parts create contrasting rhythms. The next lowest-pitched drum is known as the Wewe. This drum also has a repeating rhythmic pattern, made up mostly of muted tones (created by pushing the drum stick into the drum) and a few open tones which act as punctuation to the end of the lead drum's phrases. Occasionally, the Wewe has call-and-response patterns with the lead drum and will change its rhythm based on what the lead drum is playing. The second-to-lowest drum, the Yonofo, is the lead instrument in the ensemble. The Yonofo has basic rhythms that are unique to the deity whose songs

are being sung. In addition, the Yonofo player uses specific rhythmic vocabulary at times determined by the player in order to accentuate the songs. The lowest drum is called the Okloto. The Okloto is not used in every rhythm and is therefore only used when performing songs for particular deities.

Recording 2 offers a medley of songs for three deities in Arara: Age, Asojano, and Aunoro. Age corresponds to the Santería deity, Ochosi, the god of the hunt. Age is a warrior who is depicted with a bow and arrow. Asojano corresponds to the Santería deity, Babaluaye, the god of disease and medicine. Asojano is depicted as a sick old man who spreads disease, but also has the power to cure. Aunoro corresponds to the Santería deity, Obatala, who is the goddess of beauty and purity. Aunoro is one of the few deities in Arara who has multiple rhythms associated with them. The rhythm presented in this performance is called Bandera and is made up of two sections. In the first section, the Yonofo plays a constant, repeating pattern which signals the Wewe player to perform a more simple rhythm. The Yonofo calls the next sections in and both the Wewe and Yonofo play more rhythmically dense parts, increasing the energy of the piece. Bandera is typically used to end Arara ceremonies and is normally programmed at the end of a public Arara performance to represent this.

**Vassi for Echu**: Vassi refers to a Candomblé rhythm played for the deity, Echu. Candomblé is usually performed by an ensemble of drummers, dancers, and singers. The songs, movements, and rhythms performed correspond to the deity and the qualities the deity represents. Echu is parallel to the Yoruban deity, Elegua, who fulfills a similar role. Echu is the messenger who connects humans to the orishas.

Candomblé in usually performed on specific drums called Atabaque (pronounced ah-tah-bah-ki) (Fig. 10). There are three Atabaques used: the highest two drums are referred to as the Rum Pi (pronounced hoom-pi), and the Le. These two drums usually play a simple but powerful rhythm in unison. The lowest drum is called the Rum (pronounced hoom), which acts as the lead instrument. As in Arara, the Rum has a basic part that can be embellished with specific rhythms to accentuate the songs. Recording 3 is a collection of songs for Echu, accompanied by the rhythm, Vassi. Vassi is categorized by its use of the 12/8 bell and the way in which the Rum Pi and Le outline the bell pattern.

**Maracatu**: This is a style of parade music that is played in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco, and more specifically is attributed to the city of Recife within Pernambuco. Slaves in Brazil were given few opportunities to practice their own culture. During Christian holidays, slave owners would allow the practice of African rituals and ceremonies. During this time, communities of slaves would get together and elect a king. They would throw huge parades whenever the king would take a queen, and the parades were accompanied by the music of Maracatu. This music involves a large number of drummers playing a variety of instruments and singing. The instruments involved are the Alfaia (a large bass drum worn on a strap) and Caixa (pronounced kai-sha) – a uniquely constructed snare drum that has the snares on top of the drum rather than on the bottom, as is more commonly seen. Shekeres (pronounced shake-erays) are gourds covered with beads that are tossed between the player's hands to create a shaking sound.

Recording 4 is an arrangement I made of a piece called "Baque De Brooklyn"

by the Percussionist, Scott Ketner. Ketner has been an avid scholar of Maracatu for some time now and has done a lot of work with combining musical influences from Maracatu and the US. This piece uses traditional Maracatu rhythms but presents them in such a way as to make them feel almost like a hip-hop beat. The change he makes to accomplish this is very subtle. All he does is change which beat the Caixas accent occasionally, and this has a really significant impact on how the music feels.

**From Cuba to the United States**

Cuban music found its way to America via two main routes: Cuban immigrants who came to America after slavery was abolished in 1886, and American musicians who went to Cuba and incorporated Afro-Cuban music into their own work. The two main locations where Cuban immigrants ended up were the southeastern United States, and New York. Cuban immigrants brought their music with them and the people of the US became obsessed with their high-energy dance styles. The first incorporation of Cuban music in Jazz occurred in 1910 just after W.C. Handy travelled to Cuba with the US Army (Fernandez 10). Later, Habanera music created by Cuban immigrants in New Orleans found its way into the music of other luminary Jazz composers such as Jelly Roll Morton who "used to speak about the Latin tinge in Jazz and he once told Alan Lomax, if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning for Jazz" (Lomax Disc 6). The popularity of Latin music skyrocketed in America during the 1930s when the new dance craze created a huge demand for Latin music, rivaling that of Swing bands in dance halls.

Around 1946, the Jazz and Cuban sounds began to really synchronize, and the new sub-category of Latin Jazz became solidified. Examples of music from this period include Stan Kenton's arrangement of Don Azpiazu's "Peanut Vendor," and "Manteca" by Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo. "Peanut Vendor" utilizes an instrumentation that is very similar to traditional Son bands (horn section, rhythm section, bongos, timbales, congas) which was also a foundation for the development of salsa music.

As Latin Jazz continued to develop, aspects of popular Cuban dance music became less of a focus in this context. However, traditional Cuban music, such as Rumba and Salsa, was making its own way in America owing to the large immigrant population in New York. By the 1950s, many notable Cuban musicians made it to America. These musicians include Chano Pozo, Candido Camero, and Patato. In the 1960s, the Rumba scene in New York really started to take off in the form of jam sessions put together by the Cuban community. The notable contributions of these musicians' abilities carried not only their names but also Cuban music itself into the spotlight of the New York jazz scene (Jottar 13).

**The Performance**

The concert program is designed to outline the musical relationships between various cultures presented in this paper. The pieces have been arranged roughly in chronological order to tell the story of the Ewe and Yoruba going to South America and the Caribbean, which resulted in the creation of new religions such as Santería and Candomblé. The religious music from South America would eventually

influence dance music such as Bossa Nova from Brazil and Salsa in Cuba. These styles of dance music became very popular in the United States, leading to many collaborative efforts between Jazz musicians from the United States, South America, and Cuba.

**Adzogbo**: An Ewe war dance. The dance originated as a divination ritual among the people of Dahomey, which was performed in order to determine the outcome of future battles. This ritual involved sending adolescent boys into the forest to meditate and pray to their war gods in seclusion. The boys would spend a number of days in the forest and then be brought back to the village where they would begin to dance. The dance was said to be dictated by the war gods themselves whose spirits would then possess some of the dancers. War leaders in the village would observe the dance movements and create battle strategies based on their observations. Today, Adzogbo is no longer used in this ritualistic way, but has gained considerable popularity as entertainment owing to the virtuosity of the performance. While it is now secular, Adzogbo is still considered to display both spiritual and physical power.

The piece is broken up into multiple short vignettes which are based on a prayer or ritual. The vignettes begin with the lead dancer performing a chant. The Atsimevu drum then mimics the words spoken by the dancer as the dance begins. The drums outline the dance moves, as they play specific rhythms to accompany specific movements. In addition, the Sogo and Kidi drums have a dialogue with the Atsimevu which takes the form of call and response patterns traded between the players. Traditionally, a performance of Adzogbo will contain multiple vignettes that

can last hours. For the purpose of this performance, only three vignettes are performed. The first vignette is known as *Made Yi Vodiyowe*, a voodoo prayer that comes from the Ewe religion. The next vignette, *Asi Masi*, is based on a Christian prayer. The final vignette is called *Madu Erebe Gita,* a chant used in a fertility ritual.

**Cantos Por Elegua**: The next piece in the program is a collection of songs from Cuban Santería for the deity, Elegua, the messenger who allows people to communicate with the other orishas. Santería ceremonies always begin with prayers to Elegua who then facilitates communication with the other deities. Elegua is known as a trickster and is depicted as both a child and as an adult. The songs are all preformed in a call-and-response style, led by one singer called the Akpon. The songs are accompanied by batá drums (Fig. 8), which play rhythms that are specific to the deity who is being worshipped. The Okonkolo functions primarily as a rhythmic backbone for the piece and stays fairly constant. In contrast, the Itotele and Iya vary their basic patterns quite frequently. There is an element to this music called Lenguaje Del Tambor (language of the drum), which refers to communication between the Itotele and Iya players. The Iya has specific rhythmic vocabulary, used somewhat freely, which the Itotele player responds to with a different rhythmic phrase. The call and response between these two drums creates a melodic line which supports or contrasts the songs being sung in order to drive the energy in the performance.

**Bravuum for Oxumare**: This piece comes from the Candomblé religion in Brazil. Because Candomblé has common origins as Santeria (i.e. was developed by Ewe and Yoruban slaves, among other groups, brought to Brazil), it is interesting to

compare these two styles. Oxumare corresponds to the Yoruban deity, Ogun, who is the warrior god of iron. The music is a reflection of the strength of metal as well as Ogun's dexterity wielding a machete in battle. As in Santería music, there are songs performed in call-and-response style, led by one singer and accompanied by drums. The drums in Candomblé are more indicative of Ewe culture, which can be seen in the instrumentation as well as in the bell pattern. The drums traditionally used in Candomblé are structurally and sonically very similar to Ewe drums (to get a better idea of this characteristic, think about how the batá and conga drums look and sound different to each other). The bell pattern is also not the usual 12/8 or clave pattern that would be found in other Afrocentric music. The pattern outlines a specific rhythm that corresponds to a rhythm found in Arara. As it is known that Arara takes its origins from Dahomey, it is clear that Candomblé shares this connection.

**Gahu**: a social dance that was created by fishermen in Nigeria. The dance was originally called Kokosawa, and was meant to be a satire on how industrialization was making an impact on Western Africa. The piece involves movements and songs that mock people from Africa who gave in to the vanity of European culture (such as fashion and airplanes). Gahu became very popular in multiple surrounding regions including the Volta region in Ghana. There are many interpretations of Gahu that vary according where they are performed. In Ghana the meaning of the piece has changed significantly. It is not considered a satirical piece there, but rather it is considered music for social gatherings used to reconnect with friends. In addition, the form of the piece is very different from the original. In Ghana they begin Gahu at

a slow tempo (which is called Kokosawa). After Kokosawa has ended, a chant is recited, and the piece starts up again at a much faster tempo, which they refer to as Gahu.

**Samba Batucada**: This is the music played in Rio De Janeiro during carnival. Groups, referred to as samba schools, compete with each other, in extravagant parades involving dancing, drumming, and singing.  There are a number of drums involved in this ensemble (Fig 7) including the Surdo (pronounced sir-doo) a large drum with a low pitch. There are typically three differently-pitched Surdos used, the lowest two trade off downbeats, which strongly emphasizes the march-like quality of this music. The higher-pitched Surdo acts more independently; it has a basic pattern but the musician playing this instrument will usually embellish the basic pattern quite drastically. The smaller, cylindrical drum is called the Repique (pronounced heh-peek-ay). This drum is played with an unusual technique where the drummer uses one drumstick and one hand to hit the drum. There is an inevitable lopsidedness to the sound of the drum as a result, which creates a rhythmic feel that is characteristic of the genre as a whole known as Samba swing. Samba Batucada also makes use of the Caixa, just like Maracatu. Caixa rhythms in Samba Batucada tend to be faster and more complex compared to Maracatu. The smallest drum in the ensemble in called the Tambourim (pronounced tahm-bo-reem). This drum also has a unique playing technique associated with it. The drummer plays by holding the drum in one hand while the other hand hits it with a stick. Every three beats, the drum is flipped over and hits the stick. This allows the players to perform fast rhythms consistently without wearing out their hands. Like

the Repique, this technique naturally makes the instrument play the Samba swing. The Agogo bell plays a similar role that has been shown by other bell parts in the performance. It has a main rhythm that it plays most of the time (in this context the bell player will sometimes improvise), which is the foundation for other rhythms in the ensemble. The last instrument is called the Chocalho (pronounced shek-aye-yu). This is a very loud shaker that serves to create a lot of noise while also acting as an anchoring point to keep the group playing together.

The piece of Batucada presented in this concert is an arrangement that I transcribed of a show by the group, Mocidade Alegre. It contains elements of traditional Samba music as well as Samba Reggae, which comes from an African pride movement inspired by Jamaican Reggae in the city of Bahia in order to promote African influences in Samba music.

**Waters of March**: This is a piece by the Brazilian composer, Tom Jobim. Jobim, known as one of the greatest Brazilian song writers of all time, has his music performed by most students of Jazz, including more famous musicians such as Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. I chose to include this piece as an example of how Brazilian dance music has been influential in Jazz, and to portray something representative of modern Brazilian musical culture. The song is inspired by the stormy weather in Brazil during the rainy season. The lyrics tell of a string of objects that get carried down a street by heavy rain. The song is not meant to be narrative, but rather offers a series of imagery representing the cleansing nature of the rain.

**Blue in Green**: This is a piece from Miles Davis' album, *Kind of Blue*. This album has had an undeniably important influence on music inside and outside the

Jazz genre. Because of its importance in the development of Jazz music, I thought it made sense to use a song from this album. In addition, I wanted to find a piece that I could use to connect Jazz to hip-hop by showing how sampling (taking short portions of existing music and looping them repeatedly) borrows heavily from Jazz music. The piano intro Bill Evans plays on "Blue in Green" has been sampled by some very influential artists in the hip-hop genre, including J Dilla, and No Name Gypsy. I have arranged this piece to end by looping the piano intro and acoustically re-orchestrating J Dilla's song, "Life," that uses this sample.

In the Ewe pieces, we can get a sense of the transformative nature of the musical performance that Kofi Agawu refers to, even though these pieces are mostly secular today. We also see evidence of fusion of Christian culture with traditional Ewe practice. Significantly, we see how Ewe musicians incorporated their responses to problems associated with industrialization in musical performance. The Ewe pieces are examples of music that is "in/of" Africa, but even though this was not transplanted, we see how musical expression is adaptable to being used in different rhetorical contexts – in the case of Gahu, as a satire on industrialization – a testament to the impact of Western culture in the first place.

The West African cultures that came to Cuba and Brazil provide a means to understand the process of how African culture can change in new contexts and still be connected to its origins. One particularly interesting detail to look at is a comparison of Santería and Candomblé songs. Songs for Elegua in Santería, and the corresponding deity in Candomblé, Echu, have obvious similarities. Many of the words and melodies are nearly identical even though these traditions are technically

unique from one another. This attests to the idea that traditions from Africa, placed in a new context, can at least, to some extent, remain connected to their origins. This does not always take the form of literal musical or ceremonial similarities, but what does seem to be constant is the role that music plays in the lives of people.

**And Back to Africa?**

By way of conclusion, I would like to refer to an article written by Aleysia K. Whitmore in which she discusses the famous Senegalese band, Orchestra Baobab. Whitmore talked to band member, Latfi Benjeloun, about the incorporation of Cuban styles in the band's music, which provoked the following response from Benjeloun: "the music didn't come home and influence African music. Cuban music is already African. There are African sensibilities that are being expressed . . . in some ways we felt like parents with this music . . . it came from us" (Whitmore 1).

It is my hope that the discussion in this paper, the musical descriptions, and the performance and lecture components demonstrate the complex interactions and connections between music that derives from West African contexts, as well as the circular process of influence of the music, globally.  It is also my hope that this project can generate interesting points for discussion and further study. The topic is vast and remains highly relevant to the ways in which we talk about, perform, and enjoy music in and of Africa.

Fig 1. A map of Africa with postcolonial divisions/ locations of countries. This figure

should be used to orient the reader when looking at Fig 2, which is zoomed into the

Western side of the Ivory Coast, and centered near Benin/ Togo.

Fig 2. A map showing the divisions of African kingdoms, location of ethnic groups pre 18th century. The Ewe people spread East and West to after the feud with the Fon people in Dahome. The settlement of Notsie is located near the area where the Western group is marked.
Image obtained from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oyo_Empire#/media/File:Oyoxviii.jpeg

Fig. 3 Global map showing destinations in Cuba, Brazil, and the United States slaves were taken. 1,053,47 slaves from West Africa were transported along this route out of which 9,706 were brought to the US, 31,748 were brought to Cuba, and 1,011,693 were brought to Brazil. It should be noted that these numbers are only representative of records made by slave traders whose journeys originated from the gold coast, "Western Central" Africa, and therefore do not represent the entire population of people brought to the Americas. Numbers and image were obtained from http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/coarnYIz which is a database containing all documented voyages to and from Africa between the years 1514-1866.
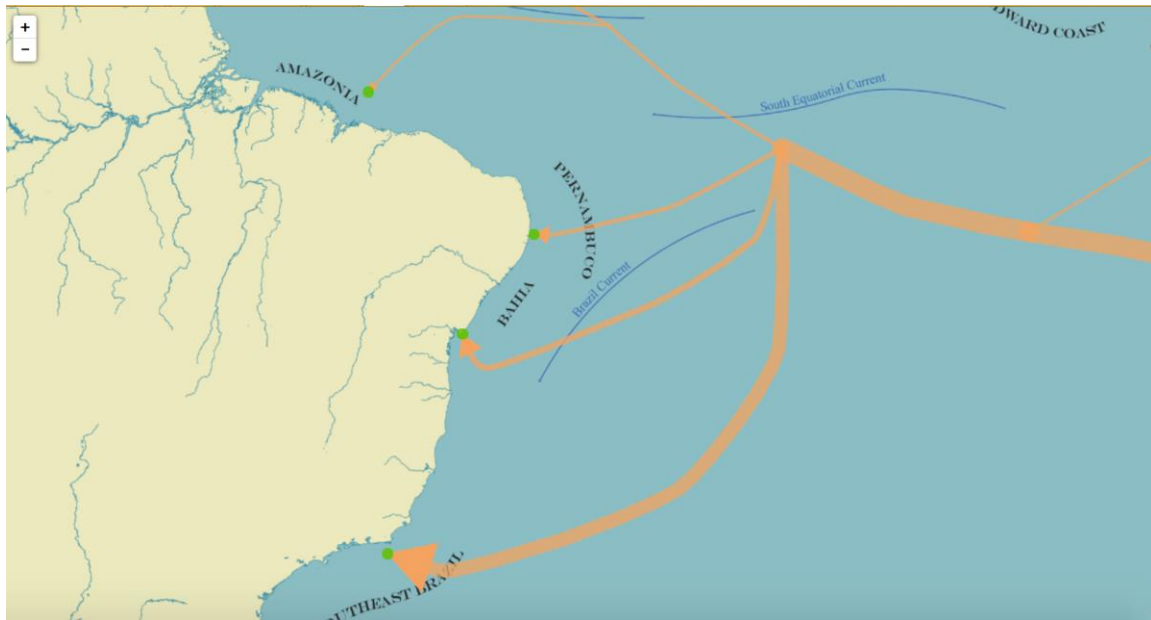
Fig 4. Map showing specific areas of Brazil where slaves were brought. Of particular note, Bahia and Pernambuco were hotspots for growth of African culture in Brazil and are the regions that Condomble, Maracatu, and Samba originated. Map obtained from: http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/coarnYIz



Fig 5. Shows specific regions in Cuba where slaves were brought. Large red dots represent locations that had the most people transported. Havana and Matanzas are considered cultural hubs in Cuba and are primary locations for the growth and practice of African traditions. Map obtained from: http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/coarnYIz

Fig 6. Instruments used in Ewe music. Names of instruments from right to left:

Atsimevu, Boba, Sogo, Kidi, Kagan, Gagokui, Axatse

Fig 7. Instruments used in Samba Batucada. Represents instruments that would be played by Samba groups in Rio De Janeiro. Names from right to left: Surdo, Repique, Caixa, Tambourim, Agogo, Chocalho.

Fig 8. Drums used in Santería music. Collectively known as Batá drums. Individual names from right to left based on size and pitch: Itotele, Iya, Okonkolo.

Fig 9. 12/8 bell pattern. This is the pattern that serves as a rhythmic back bone for many forms of African and African-influenced music. This pattern tends to be a starting point for compositions, and parts are created to outline or contrast this rhythm in order to resolve or build tension respectively. This rhythm is also considered to be the origin of clave, a different pattern found predominantly in South American music, which serves a similar function.

Fig 10. Atabaque drum. This is the primary instrument used in Condomblé music. Typically, three atabque drums are played and are referred to by their pitch. The highest drum is called the Le, middle drum is called Rum Pi, and the lowest drum (which functions as the lead drum) is called Rum. Image taken from Grinell College music instrument collection:

https://omeka1.grinnell.edu/MusicalInstruments/items/show/136

## **Recordings**

**Recording 1** *Atsiagbekor* Feat. Nani Agbeli (Starts 31:45, ends 48:29)-
https://youtu.be/eGtl4JpveYk?t=31m45s

**Recording 2** *Arara Medley* for Age, Asojano, and Aunoro (Starts 1:36:37, ends 1:47:42)-
https://youtu.be/Ed0-hraBA0I?t=1h36m37s

**Recording 3** *Vassi for Echu* (Starts 41:00, ends 44:41)-
https://youtu.be/82OTWuVBrH0?t=41m

**Recording 4** *Baqui di Brooklyn* By Scott Ketner, Arr. Adam Friedman (Starts 49:45, ends 56:06)-
https://youtu.be/0gbeBNyWCuo?t=49m45s

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