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FOREWORD

This journal highlights pertinent current issues in music education. It covers areas such as: the use of technology in music recording and production; popular music messages and performance, indigenous music and its values; music and public governance; and, virtues embedded in indigenous music. It forms a rich reference resource for music educators in Kenya and beyond. In this issue, **Tai** in his paper discusses the concepts and processes involved in the recording and production of music and how this technology can educate professionals and practitioners to understand and assist each other. He enlightens the reader on the power of technology and its benefits with regard to music making. **Shitubi, Ogeri and Kyalo** discuss the complexity of music with regard to public governance. They point out various ways in which music can be employed as a tool of fostering peace and harmony - a duty charged with the public governors. On the other hand, **Nyandiba** explains how popular music can be used to educate masses on HIV/AIDS in Ekegusii language. Nyandiba's paper draws data from Dan Mosima's (whose Stage name is Mr Ong'engo) lyrics. Ong'eng'o's choice of euphemism and metaphors to articulate issues that are considered taboo, such as sex is quite fascinating. **Mindoti** in his paper observes that the traditional community settings, which were custodians of indigenous musical expressions, have been widely affected and compromised by modernity. As much as Mindoti appreciates and embraces modernity, his argument informs curriculum planners in Kenya to refocus indigenous musical expressions as important aspects of education. **Anyonje** opines that the performance of dirges is not an issue that concerns only the bereaved. It addresses an audience beyond the living. Anyonje examines the form and performance of traditional dirges among the *Abashisa* of Kakamega County, Western Kenya. Still on indigenous music, **Masasabi** discusses the various cultural functions of *silao-sikeleko* in *Litungu* music. The Bukusu cultural view of *silao-sikeleko* is discussed in relation to their customs and way of life. In the same vein, **Simiyu** investigates the socio-cultural significance of circumcision songs within a changing Babukusu community. In a close relationship to the foregoing, **Shitandi** demonstrates that African drums are not merely beaten, but rather the drummer requires specialized skills to produce impressive and creative rhythmic tones. Essentially, Shitandi endeavours to provide, through various playing techniques of *Ohangla* drum ensemble and scoring of its rhythmic tones, a

practical guide to African classical drumming. On a related discourse, Akumu's paper, discusses *Ohangla*, as a contemporary Luo instrumental genre from Kenya made up of sets of tuned drums and other instruments. He highlights significant changes in terms of contexts and content of ohangla performances. Shitandi, Makobi and Wanyama explain the widespread of choral music in Kenya. They focus on Taifa Mziki (TMzi) - a choral group that has lately entered into the choral limelight and which, in profound ways continues to influence Kenya's choral music landscape hence creating positive change and promoting Kenya's musical identity through engaged musicianship.



Prof. Mellitus N. Wanyama,
Chairman Editorial Board, KAMAE

Taifa Mziki (TMzi): Changing Choral Soundscape in Kenya through Engaged Musicianship

Wilson O. Shitandi¹, Sylvester Makobi² & Mellitus N. Wanyama³

Abstract

Choral music in Kenya is widespread and there is virtually no place in Kenya where choral music is not practiced. Choral music tradition is experienced in churches and schools, in government and private institutions, in community and media. One therefore encounters choirs of every size, type and style of repertoire. There is a choral music for every function and skill all ranging from amateur, professional to semi-professionals. It follows, therefore, that choral landscape in Kenya is not only viewed as an entertainment industry, but rather a forum and an avenue through which social and economic changes are being realized. The industry has created jobs for many musicians; it has been acknowledged as an effective tool for cultural integration and by extension national cohesion through the sense of belonging and community consciousness it creates; besides the nurturing of creative talents in young people. One of the groups that have lately entered into the choral limelight and which, in profound ways continues to influence change in people and in Kenya's choral music is Taifa Mziki (TMzi). This article, through analytical and live music demonstrations or illustrations, will examine the origin of TMzi, its growth and development, activities and repertoire, and argues that TMzi is not just a community of singers, but a site for nurturing creative talents, creating positive change in people and promoting Kenya's musical identity through engaged musicianship.

Keywords: *Taifa Mziki (TMzi), Changing Choral Soundscape, Kenya, Engaged Musicianship*

Choral Music Tradition in Kenya: Some Historical Reflections

The contemporary Kenyan choral tradition is a processing of African indigenous roots encountering Euro-American Christianity and education systems. The encounter that took place in the class and/or the church created at least two musical ideologies: African folksong and the Adapted and Arranged African folk tune: European and Euro-American structures and elements continued to be applied even as African ethos, structures and performance styles were invoked and solidified (Shitandi *et al.*, 2001).

Adaptation and arrangement of African folk song movement began in 1950s, but gained momentum in the 1970s and 80s. The movement begun as a way of incorporating African tunes into Christian worship. Graham Hyslop, a colonial officer in charge of

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music and drama is regarded as the father of this movement. Hyslop turned African tunes into English anthems by adapting the text into English and setting the melody into four-part harmony (Shitandi *et al.*, 2001).

In the 1970s, Kenyan composers expanded the compositional base by creating works that demonstrated noticeable stylistic devices from Swahili language, music and structure as well as their own ethnic and musical identities. Some examples of these Kenyan composers are Peter Kibkosya, Arther Kemoli, Solomon Adwar, Darius Mbela, and Bonface Mghanga.

The Concept 'Choir Music' and the Choral Soundscape in Kenya

Attempts aimed at defining African Art music are as many as there are composers and scholars in the field of African musicology and ethnomusicology alike. Agawu (2003) gives an interesting definition, but which appears rather controversial. He states:

Then there is the tradition of the so called art music consisting of folk operas, cantatas, orchestral compositions, choral (choir) works and sonatas for various instruments, all of them written down by named literate men and women trained in the idiom and practices of European classical music (Agawu, 2003, p. xiv).

Reading through the above definition one gets curious and ambivalent about the scholar's frame of thoughts. First, the writer employs western terminologies to the extent that one is left to wonder how to conceptualise African art music. Second, does the scholar mean well to say that only those trained and oriented in Western classical music traditions poses the ability to produce African art music? Assuming that his definition holds any substance, how then does one categorise those that Strumpf *et al.* (2003) refer to as oral composers⁴ and who are found in many African communities? How about the many prolific instrumentalists who upon performing on their traditional instruments exhibit such immense prowess only akin to Chopin or Mozart's piano virtuosity? Perhaps a rather convincing but which may not be complete in itself is the definition offered by Nketia (2004) who describes African art music as follows:

The term art music -or sometimes is used for convenience of reference for music designed for intent listening or presentation as 'concert music, is music in which expression of feeling is combined with high level of

⁴Strumpf defines oral composition as the act of composing and music making by people who have neither an academic background in music notation nor a theoretical, formally schooled knowledge in the Western sense of the music theory of their culture (ibid. p. 118)

craftsmanship and a sense of beauty. Hence African art music refers to works that manifest these attributes but which are rooted in the traditions of Africa (p. 5).

It is worth pointing out here that the aspects of 'intent listening' and concert format may vary from time to time with different contexts and goals. For instance, art music composed for many of the contemporary African churches and whose goal is to lead the congregation into offertory procession may not necessarily require 'intent listening' or concert format presentation. One of the prominent neo-African art music composers that has considerably delved into the discussions of this genre is Euba (1982). Euba (*ibid.*, p. 128) discusses four categories of Neo-African Art music and lists them as follows:

1. Music based entirely on western models and in which the composer has not consciously introduced any African elements
2. Music in which thematic material is borrowed from African sources, but which is otherwise western in idiom and instrumentation
3. Music in which African elements form an integral part of the idiom through the use of African instruments or text or stylistic concepts
4. Music, whose idiom is derived from African traditional culture, employs African instruments and in which the composer has not consciously introduced non-African ideas.

What Euba may have indicated, but not explicitly is that the above categories must be expressed through certain medium. A choir is one such medium that has been utilised in African art music performances. Poultney (1991) admits that the term choir has several meaning but the most common one is that which refers to a mixed group of singers or that which is exclusively for women, girls, men boys and or instrumentalist (with more than one on a part) more often than not gathering for the performance of church music. Barz (2003) concurs with this definition and from an African social-spiritual perspective sees '*kwaya*' (a Kiswahili term equivalent of Choir) as:

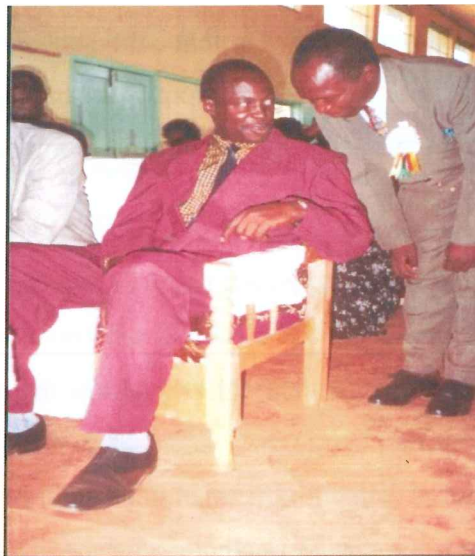
...a community that gathers several times each week to define its spirituality musically. '*Wanakwaya*' (members of a *kwaya*) come together to pray, to sing, to support each other in times of need, and to both learn and pass along new and inherited faith traditions. '*Kwayas*' negotiate between multiple music traditions and they continue to engage musical repertoires from Europe as well as Africa (*ibid.* p. 14).

Inferring from preceding discussions on definitions of African art music or choir music, this study employs the definition of African choir (choral) music as a piece of art work that has been creatively and intelligibly crafted for two or more voices⁵. It perceives the genre as a musical product that draws on the western resources, but whose African element form the integral part of the idiom thus exhibiting originality and depth that is Africa. The product may be an oral or a written one. Depending on the occasion, the music may require intent listening and or audience's subdued participation, but more often than not assuming concert format presentation.

Pacesetters of Kenya Choral Soundscape

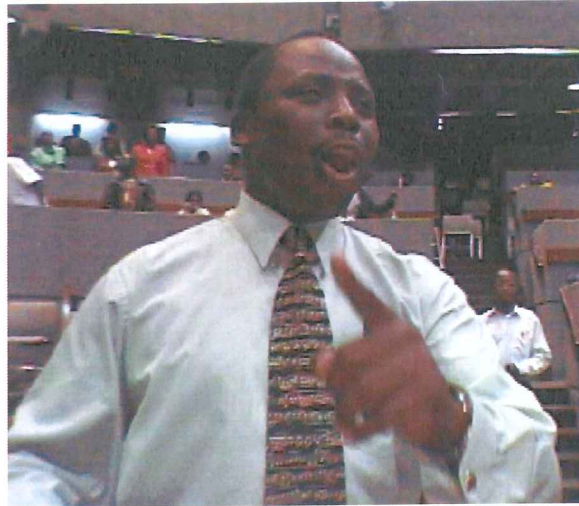
Kenya choral music soundscape has been shaped with a proliferation of various choral groups and artists; *Taifa Mziki* being one of them of course notwithstanding other adjoining factors.

Some of the Pacesetters



The Late Sam Ochieng' Mak'Okeyo (seated). One of the most prolific Kenyan composers, choral trainer, Music Educator and former Director of Holy Trinity Choir

⁵The word voice is used here to refer to human sound producing mechanism. The definition also encompasses musical instruments employed in an ensemble, orchestra or choir. Voice is therefore used in this study not as a concept of advocacy per se but rather as a sound phenomenon (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/human_voice_types_and_the_folds_28cords29_themselves on more about human voice). That notwithstanding resultant discussion has consciously or unconsciously invoked an element of advocacy for African music as a distinct identity within the global music scene.



The Late Bonface Mghanga – A polished choir trainer and conductor. Founder Director of Muungano Choir



The Muungano National Choir doing what they know how to do best.

Examples of Choral artists who left indelible mark, their choral references/Groups and the period (approx.) in which they were actively engaged in choral music performances

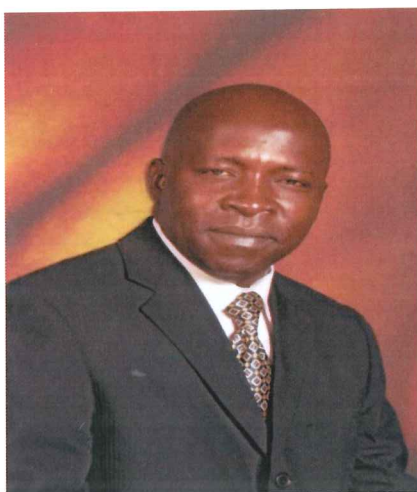
Name	Choral Music Preferences /Group they worked with	Period
Mr. Chris Sikuku	St. Stephens Jogoo Road/Posta Choirs – Church, National, Patriotic, Topical and Patriotic Music	1990-2013
Mr. Darieus Mbela	St. Stephens Jogoo Road –Church Music/ National and Topical songs.	Mid 70s-early 1990s
Mr. Sam Otieno	Johera Church, National Housing Finance, Alliance High School, Parastatals –Church,	Mid 1980s- Early 2000

Mr. Isaac Owili	National, Patriotic, Schools choral and Topical music St. Mary's Catholic Church Nairobi, Coffee Board of Kenya, Music Director Catholic Choirs Association –Church and Schools Choral Music	Late 1990s- 2013
Mr. Charo	St. Lukes Makupa and Kenya Pipeline/Ports Authority - Mombasa, Church Music/ National and Topical songs.	1990s-Late 2010
Mr. Elly Ogalo	Alliance Boys Choir, Kenyatta University Choir, Teachers Service Commission Choir, Teachers Training Colleges - National, Patriotic, Schools choral and Topical music	Late 1980s- Mid 2000
Mr. Leornard Irangatwa	St. Cecilia Holy Cross Nairobi; PAG Nairobi, KNTC, Friends Church Kariokor - Church and Topical Music	
Mr. Simon Wanga	St. Cecilia Holy Cross Nairobi; Holy Trinity ACK Kibera Kenyatta University – Church Music	
Mr. Peter Muinde	Our Lady of Lourdes and Primary Schools in Machakos	1990s-2011
Mr. William Wasike	Our Lady Visitation Makadara, Muungano National Choir/Ministry of Culture – Church, National and Schools Music.	1980s-2006
Mr. David O. Zalo	Secondary Schools Mass Choir, Sacho High School, Kabarak High School – National, Patriotic, Schools and Colleges Music	1980s-late 2000
Mr. Prof. Caleb Okumu	Kenyatta and Maseno Universities, Teacher Training Colleges, Chairman Kenya Music Festival Foundation –Popular Music, National and Schools/colleges Music	1980s-2013
Mr. Leornad Ochieng'	St. Cecilia Holy Cross Nairobi, St. Peters Claver, and Parastatals –Church music and National music	Late 1990s- early 2000
Mr. Obunde	Holy Trinity Kariobangi, Her Excellency Mama Lucy State House Choir, Kayamba Africa – Church and National Music	2000-2013
Mr. Kuria	Senior Chief Koinange, Chairman –Kenya Music Festival Foundation –National and Schools and Colleges Music	Mid 1970s- Early 2000
Dr. Arthur Kemoli	University of Nairobi, Friends Church Kariokor, University Choirs, Muungano National Choirs – Church, National, Topical, Patriotic and Schools music	1970s-mid 2005

Choral Artists who Continue to Shape Choral Soundscape in Kenya



Dr. Timothy Njoora one of the refined Composers and Pianist in the Academia



Dr. Wilson Shitandi – A prolific composer and one of the finest choral trainers and conductor in the country

Name	Choral Music Preferences /Group they worked with	Period
Mr. Richard Khadambi,	Central Bank of Kenya, Parastatal Mass Choir – National, Patriotic and Topical Music.	1990s to date
Mr. Fred Ngala	Moi University, Egerton University, Kabarak University, former Chairman Presidential Music Commission	2000 to date
Mr. Fred Atoh	St. Cecilia Holy Cross Choir Nairobi, University of Nairobi – Church Music, National, Patriotic and Schools and Colleges Music	Mid 2000 to date
Muhalia Isaac	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Kenya Power and Lighting Company – Church, National and	Mid 2000 to date

	Topical Music	
Geoffrey Mukoto	Pambo Africa, St. Theresa's Catholic Choir, Kenya Conservatoire Choir – Church, National, Topical, Schools and Colleges music	Early 2000 to date
Joseph Muyale	Kenya Boys Choir, Ministry of Culture/Mamlaka, State House Girls Choir, Pumwami Boys, Ngara Girls, Aquinas Boys – National, Schools and Colleges music	Mid 2000 to date
Sylvester Otieno	Nangina Girls, St. Cecilia Holy Cross Choir, Holy Trinity Choir, Kenyatta University Staff and Students choir, Parastatals choir – Church, National, and Topical music.	Early 2000 to date
George Mwiruki	Mukumu Girls, Kenyatta University – National, Patriotic and Topical music	Late 1980s to date
Prof. Mellitus Wanyama	Nyang'ori Boys, Teachers Service Commission Choir, Coffee Board of Kenya choir, Moi University choir – National, Patriotic, Topical, schools and colleges music	1990s to date
Jackline Bulinda	Maryhill Girls School, Maseno University	Late 2000 to date
Risper Oduor	St. Bernabas Choir – Otiende, Muungano National Choir, Olympic Primary, Primary Schools Mass Choir – National and Schools and Colleges music	Late 1980s to date
Faith Mbote	Nairobi Primary, Muungano National Choir, Primary Schools Mass Choir, Safari Sounds International – National and Schools and Colleges music	Late 1980s to date
Everlyster Bedder	St. Cecilia Holy Cross Nairobi, Mary Hill – Church, Schools and Colleges music	Late 2000 to date
Luke Khadambi	Moi Girls Eldoret, Coffe Board of Kenya, Teachers Service Commission, Kabarak High School -National, Patriotic and Topic songs	Late 1990s to date
Nancy Masasabi	Maseno and Moi Universities – National and Schools and Colleges music	Late 2000 to date
Prof. Rose Omolo-Ongati	Maseno University – Schools and Collges Music	Late 2000 to date
Dorothy Zalo	Kapropita Girls, Moi High School Kabarak, Moi Kabarak Chapel – Church and Schools and Colleges music.	Late 1990 to date
Wanjala Henry	Salvation Army, Teacher Training Collges and Kenyatta University – Church Music, National songs and schools and colleges	1980s to date

	music	
Chris Welukho	Kenya Aviation College, University of Nairobi and various denominations – National, Topical songs, Schools and Colleges, and Church Music	Late 2000
Mr. Kaskon Mindoti	Maseno University – National and Topical songs. Kaimos and Mosoriot TTC, Chekalini and Church of God others.	Early 1980s to date
Mr. Isaac Shitubi	Friend Boys Kamusinga, Moi University – National songs, Topical songs, schools and colleges music	Mid 2000 to date
Abbey Chokera	Moi Nairobi Girls, Consolata Shrine Catholic Church – Schools and Colleges music and Church choral music	Late 2000 to date
Cornel Onyango	Music Director Homa Bay Catholic Diocese and Secondary Schools in Nyanza – Church Music, Schools and Colleges Music	Mid 2000 to date
Sam Ade	Metropolitan See of Kisumu, St. Teresa's Kibuye and Secondary Schools in Kisumu – Church Music Schools and Colleges Music	Early 2000 to date
Maurice Omolo	Our Lady of Guadalape, Her Excellency Mama Lucy State House Choir – Church and National Songs	Late 2000 to date
George Atsiaya	Alliance Boys High School, Consolata Shrine Catholic Church Westlands – Church, Schools and Colleges music	Late 2000 to date
Mr. Madalanga	St. Stephens Jogoo Road, various Schools – Church and Schools and Colleges music	Early 2000 to date
Mrs Mwele	Our Lady of Visitation, Upper Hill Boys Sec School – Church music, schools and colleges music	1980s to date
Mr. Kennedy Indiasi	Muungano choir, Ministry of Culture Mamlaka choir,	1990s to date
Mr. Sylva's Anami	Lenana/Precious Blood Choir Ministry of Culture Mamlaka choir – National and Schools and Colleges choir	1980s to date
Mr. Nick Omondi	St. Josephs Shauri Moyo Choir – Church music and Topical songs	Late 1990s to date
Mr Keya –Kayamba	Kenya Power and Lighting Company Choir, Kayamba Africa, Friends Church – Church Music, National and Topical songs	Early 2000 to date
Mr. Odemba	Moi Forces Academy Pri. School, Kayamba Africa – National, Patriotic, schools and colleges choir	2000 to date
Mr. Thomas Wasonga	Homa Bay Teachers, Secondary Schools Mass Choir, Muungano choir, Permanent	1980s to date

	Presidential Music Commission – National, Patriotic songs, Schools and Colleges music	
Peter Nyamala	St. Johns Pumwami, various schools – Church music, schools and colleges music	2000 to date
Humphrey Kisia	Maseno University, Chavakali and Vihiga Boys Schools – Schools and Colleges music	Mid 2000 to date
Mr. Edwin O.	Nakuru Boys Choir, Umoja Stars, St. Cecilia Holy Cross Nairobi, Holy Cross Nakuru – Church, Schools and Colleges music	Late 2000 to date
Prof. Emily Akuno	Kenyatta University, Maseno University, Technical University of Kenya, Milimani AIC, former chair – Kenya Music Foundation – Church and Schools and Colleges Music	1990s to date
Gabriel Musungu	Nangina Girls, Alliance Boys, Technical University of Kenya – Schools and Colleges Music	Late 1990s to date
Mukasa Wafula	St. Michaels Choir Dandora, Music Director, Catholic Choirs Association of Kenya - Church and National Music	Late 2000 to date
Mr. Daniel Okongo	Teachers Service Commission, Teacher Training Colleges – Schools and Colleges Music	Late 1980s to date
Mr. Ole Moipei	Loreto Msongari, Girls, Brookhouse, - Schools and Colleges music	Late 1990s to date
James Amukhale	Holy Trinity Kibera, Secondary Schools, former Executive Secretary – Schools and colleges music	1990s to date
Mr. Ongaga	Teacher Training Colleges Secondary schools – Schools and Colleges music festival	2000 to date
Mr. Chole	Vihiga and Chavakali Boys – schools and colleges music	2000 to date
Mr. Blasto Ooko	St. Lukes Makupa Mombasa, Parastatals, Kenya Ports Authority	1990s to date

Choral Groups and Organisations

- (i) Kenya Music Festivals – Schools and Colleges
- (ii) Universities and constituent colleges choirs – Kenyatta University, Moi University, Maseno University, University of Nairobi, Kabarak University,
- (iii) Parastatals, Government Institutions and State Events and Festivals – Ministry of Culture: Kenya Music and Cultural Festival, State Celebrations and State

House Garden Party, Political Rallies, Harambees and Chief Barazas; Housing Finance Corporation Choir, Coffee Board of Kenya, KNTC, Posta Choir, NHIF Choir, Central Bank Choir, Prison Choir, H. E. Mama Lucy Choir, Kenya Ports Authority

- (iv) Church Choirs, Festival Associations and Social Celebrations: Christian Choirs Association Music Festival, Catholic Choirs Association Festival, PAG Moi Golden Cup, Friends Church Festival, Church of God Kima Festivals, Wedding and Home-coming ceremonies; Machakos Town Choir, Kariokor Friends Choir, St. Stephens Jogoo Road Choir, Our Lady of Visitation Choir, Seventh Day Adventist Karura, AIC Milimani Choir, St. Cecilia Holy Cross Choir, St. Lukes Makupa, St. Josephs Migori, St. Barnabas Otiende, National Chorale Nakuru.
- (v) Private Entities, clubs and Radio programmes – Kenya Boys Choir, Mamlaka Choir, Masters Chorale, Nakuru Teachers, Safari Sounds, Safaricom Choir, Nairobi Music Society Choir, Kenya Music Conservatoire, Jambo Africa, Taifa Mziki, Joy Bringers, Muungano Choir, Kenya Power, Radio Husema Studio Kijabe, Church Worship Programms, Ultimate Choir, The Choir, Special programmes to mark special days on church

Music Repertoire

In Kenya, what is experienced as modern choral music constitutes repertoire that has come of age. Early choral compositions can be described as simple with basic harmonic organisation –largely based on the four primary chords and more or less strophic or hymn like. The first generation of white missionaries and African Christian converts converted contributed to much of this early choral music expressions. Composers in contemporary Kenya choral industry have taken the expressions a notch higher by creatively working and experimenting with wide ranging composition devices, techniques, forms, idioms and harmonic renditions.

1. Early compositions – *Adam na Eva, Sauli Mbona Waniudhi, Sikilizeni Mtasikisia, Paulo na Sila, Yesu Nipeleke-Aaa aa aa Nuru*
2. Western Traditional
3. Hymns
4. Arrangement and Adaptation of African tunes
5. Church Anthems

6. Praise and Worship Hymns
7. African Hymns/spirituals/chorus
8. Western Classical Hymns
9. Topical, Patriotic and Political Songs

Study Concerns and Approach

Rieth (1998) notes that any music scholar who visited Kenya at the close of the twentieth century was bound to be greeted with a variety of musical styles. This scenario has been created by music making activities drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds. The vibrant musical culture experienced around the country has been as a result of immense contribution from artists drawn from traditional settings, popular arena and the academy. However, this paper observes that while musical works and efforts of 'Pop' artists are widely acknowledged by newspaper columnists, scholars in the academy and radio stations commentaries, composers of Kenya Choral music whose works exhibit incredible intelligible creative ability are left to sink into oblivion. To close on this gap, this paper discusses through an aural interpretation (concert), a few analytical summaries to illuminate and illustrate techniques of engaged musicianship as evident in the *Taiifa Mziki* choral performances which have contributed to the group's growth and development.

As our interest into *Taiifa Mziki* increasingly became reified, it was realised that the only way one could obtain answers to the concerns and cerebral curiosity, was to carry out an Ethnographic study of this Music. Myers (1992) in describing Ethnography of music states:

Ethnography of music is not defined by disciplinary lines or theoretical perspectives, but rather descriptive approach to music, going beyond the writing of sounds to the writing of how sounds are conceived, made, appreciated and influence other individuals, groups and social and musical processes. It is writing about the way people make [and appropriate] music (ibid. p. 88) – [Wilson Shitandi].

Thomas and Taylor (2002) explain that the term ethnography from a field research perspective does not imply any single method or type of data analysis although participant observation is what nearly all ethnographers employ. Thomas and Taylor (ibid.) further expound that ethnographers do not disavow the use of quantification as far as ethnographic study is concern. On the contrary, they often use surveys and

statistical procedures to analyse patterns and determine who and what to sample. In a nutshell ethnographers will turn on any method to help them to achieve success. The success involves describing and interpreting observed relationships between social practices and the systems of meaning in a particular cultural milieu. Meyer's (ibid.) and Thomas *et al.*'s (ibid.) thoughts informed the procedures and field techniques that were employed in the ethnographic study of the choir music under discussion. Research tools such as participant observation, structured interviews were utilised in gathering data. This information was triangulated by archival study.

At this juncture, the paper offers and discusses our thoughts and personal experiences of constructing choral music through engaged musicianship by *Taifa Mziki*.

1. How does this group (re)create and appropriate choral music?
2. How do they conduct their rehearsals against the backdrop TMzi demands and other individual engagements notwithstanding
3. How do members balance between TMzi activities, academics and other individual engagements
4. What constitutes the bulk of their musical repertoire?
5. What are some of the group's favourite items?
6. What would they say have been their most memorable, successful and outstanding performances?
7. How do they describe the general public's reception to and perception of their performances?
8. Are there other activities the group engages in other than music making?
9. What challenges do they face as a male music ensemble?
10. Are there any future prospects you envisage for the group?
11. And finally, how do the African choral sounds impact on the members of this group and the wider Kenyan community with regard to (re)shaping their individual or group social and musical processes? To do justice to the above interrogations, this paper discusses the profile of Taifa Mziki and its impact on the choral soundscape in Kenya. Through interviews, live music demonstrations or illustrations this study will examine the origin of TMzi, its growth and development, activities and repertoire and it argues that TMzi is not just a community of singers, but a site for nurturing creative talents, creating positive

change in people and promoting Kenya's musical identity through engaged musicianship.

Taifa Mziki: The Beginning and its Profile

During the first week of February 2010, Collins Murambi and Sylvester Makobi who were both members of Kenyatta University Students Choir, met just before one of the choir rehearsals. Since Makobi was an official of the Kenyan Boys choir, Collins asked if he could come back to the boys' choir since he was a member when he was in high school. This would have been difficult since making it for the rehearsals would have been a challenge and Collins was almost getting to the age of 25 which was the graduation age from the boys' choir. The two having sung together in Vihiga High school, they decided to form an ensemble and sing the songs they enjoyed back then. They decided that Makobi would look for the singers while Collins talks to their high school choir conductor Mr. Humphery Kisia for scores of some of the songs they sung.

At first Makobi had intended to use an existing group and train them Kisia's songs, but it did not work well. The two decided to come up with a male ensemble where willing people would sign in and called some of the former schoolmates and former competitors who were also taught by Mr Kisia. The name of the group came up when Makobi presented two names for the pioneer members to choose. The Names were *Sayari Classics* and *Taifa Mziki* the members chose the latter. It even took a while before some members and the public to get acquainted with the word *Mziki* which is a Swahili word normally written as "*Muziki*". The group started performing at University functions, Churches and state functions.

Impacting Kenya Choral Music Soundscape through Engaged Musicianship

Rao (2012) explains the concept of engaged musicianship as follows:

1. Musical performance that extends beyond the aesthetic view of the music being performed
2. Extends beyond intellectually oriented notion of music
3. Extends beyond mere reason or thinking-in-action-reason construed, rather narrowly as the work of logic and intellect
4. Extends beyond rules aligned with musical performance of music for certain musical epochs

5. Socially – As culture evolves, so should be our performance decisions and pedagogical practices that should renew themselves in order to meet the needs of the world today: Hence it is musical performance that is takes into consideration personal sensitivity and social responsibility
6. It is a musical performance phenomenon that is situated in certain social and ethical (doing the right thing at the right time) consideration
7. Musical performance that is aimed at benefitting self, other and Divine

***Taifa Mziki* Repertoire, Engaged Musicianship and the Impact on Kenya Choral Music Soundscape**

Taifa Mziki was founded on 20th February 2010 by Collins Murambi and Sylvester Makobi who also serves as the group's director. A majority of the group's members were competitors' way back in various High Schools in the Kenya Music Festival who came together after high school and decided to make Music. In one way or the other, a majority of the group's members were taught, mentored or passed through the hands of Humphrey Kisia, probably an explanation as to why we do a majority of his songs.



Collins Murambi – Co-Founder of *Taifa Mziki*



Sylvester Makobi – Co-Founder of *Taifa Mziki*

Ever since 2010, the group has embraced togetherness regardless of the members' cultural differences and embracing each other's religion and tribal differences. It has had a steady growth and this has continually given its members the morale to carry on with the group's activities and not giving up. The group initially started with eight members and increased to twelve and as per now the group consists of nineteen members.



Taifa Mziki in Action

Though it has experienced some challenges, with a few members opting to step out of the group because of genuine reasons, like getting jobs away from Nairobi, the group has managed to stand firm and continued to thrill its fan base. Being one of the best all male choral groups in Kenya, the group participated in the first televised choir competition in Kenya, '*The Kwaya*', and thrilled fans due to their wonderful and creative performances. Last year the group was invited to perform during the premiere

of the International Student Film Festival held in Nairobi, Kenya. The group has also been performing at various corporate and state functions. In April 2012, the group performed as part of the chorus of the first Kenyan Opera, 'Ondieki the Fisherman', where its members took up most of the ensembles in the Opera. In March this year, the group performed during the French day celebration, sponsored by the Canadian Embassy. In April this year, the group participated in a workshop for High School Students in Nairobi organized by Jacob School of Music, Indiana University and The Kenya Administration Police. The group also goes to churches of its individual members to minister through music and it has evangelized to many with their music. Due to this, many members from the Christian fraternity continue to call on the group to perform in functions like weddings, fund raisers and many other more activities.

The groups' repertoire is mainly African pop music and folksongs arranged for male voices. Other genres include Western pop, Barbershop music and classical music just for the purposes of diversifying its repertoire. The group sings both sacred and secular pieces.

In the category of African pop, the group performs songs like *Sizongena* originally done by Miriam Makeba and arranged by Humphrey Kisia, *Stella* by Mwema Brothers arranged by Humphrey Kisia, *Christina* by Them Mushrooms arranged by Kisai, *Amina* and *Bwana Nipe Pesa* arranged by Dr. Wilson Shitandi.

In the category of sacred arrangements, the song performs *Baba Yetu* by Kigame Reuben arranged by Kisia, *Mbingu Zahubiri* by Kigame arranged by Kisia and *Nimesafishwa na Damu* by Mary Atieno arranged by Kisia.

Western Pop category: the group performs *Storm is Over* by R. Kelly arranged by Humphrey Kisia, *Grenade* by Bruno Mars arranged by one of its own member George Oduor and *In the Still of the Nite* originally done by a group of five called The 5 Certains in duop style.

The group also does own compositions like *Nitayainua Macho Yangu* composed by Humphrey Kisia, *The Lord is my Shepherd* composed by one of its own member William Ohot Awange.

Folk Songs that have been arranged for the group include *Mulongo* a Luhya secular folk song from the Bukusu community arranged by Dr. Wilson Shitandi, *Orirebwa* a Luhya sacred folk song arranged by Mr. Sylvester Otieno.

Taifa Mziki members, most of them being University students, are involved in a choral music mentorship program in high schools in Nairobi County and its environs. Through this programme, the group encourages young people to join or form choirs and study music. The performances and workshops create a platform for the group to preach against drug and substance abuse.

Recommendation for Achieving Engaged Musicianship

Musical performance is the construction and articulation of musical meaning. Musical performance demands at its highest level a remarkable combination of mental and physical skills. The basic requirement is that a performer should produce (more or less) the correct notes, rhythm, dynamics, et cetera [prescriptive]. However, over and above that, performers are expected to go beyond what is explicitly provided by the notation or aurally transmitted standards – to be expressive (descriptive).

Expression in performance: Expression or “feel.” Seashore in 1930 defined expression as follows: ‘the artistic expression of feeling in music consists in aesthetic deviation (deliberate departure from the indication of the score or from some norm) from the regular – pure tone, true pitch, even dynamics, metronomic time, rigid rhythms among others.

But it should be remembered that a wide range of factors will shape the result and these may include: the possibilities/abilities of the instruments, the acoustics of the performing environment, the nature of the audience, the mood and the intention of the performer, stylistic and cultural norms, and the performance ideology espoused (e.g. historically informed performance practice).

Factors that Impinge on what would have been otherwise Good Performance

- (i) Inadequate preparations.
- (ii) Lack of teamwork (A lot of individual display to impress).
- (iii) Conflicting moods/attitudes/intentions on stage (e.g. occasioned by bickering before actual performance).

- (iv) Feelings of despair/lack of self-worthiness/lack of self confidence or overconfidence.
- (v) Stage Anxiety Syndrome (SAS) or stage fright.
- (vi) Lack of meaning dialogue between the performers and the conductor.
- (vii) Inability to respond and adapt to different acoustic of the performing environment.
- (viii) Imbalance in normal functioning of the body systems (e.g. overfeeding before the actual performance).
- (ix) Late arrival at the practice venue and lack of stage mannerism (unnecessary stage theatrics).
- (x) Absence of any motivation.

Factors that Enhance Good Performance (Technical, Social, Mental/Psychological)

- (i) Practice to make Perfect (adequate preparations).
- (ii) Memorization (mastery of the musical content).
- (iii) Personal disposition (self-esteem self-awareness).
- (iv) Teamwork/spirit.
- (v) Understanding the work/style/ musical context for effective communication.
- (vi) Create a rapport between yourselves and the conductor for a meaningful dialogue (Singers need to learn how to decode and quickly respond to deliberate and musically directed gestures by the conductor).
- (vii) Positive attitude, right mood and intentions (positive emotional effect).
- (viii) Acoustics of the performing environment.
- (ix) Stage presence (dress code/body deco/good grooming/sing through a smile).
- (x) Not so full and so empty stomach.
- (xi) Composure and focus (being punctual for the performance would foster this) to avoid unnecessary anxiety.
- (xii) Intrinsic motivation (singing for simple personal and collective enjoyment).
- (xiii) Organization and stage discipline.

Measures for Ensuring Good Performance

- (i) Practice, practice and practice with emphasis on highly technical areas.
- (ii) Plan, practice, assist each to grasp quickly and share light moments together for social cohesion.

- (iii) Be kind to each other, admonish each other with brotherly spirit, avoid gossip or bickering amongst yourself (this is likely to injure other peoples spirit) and would likely impact on the moods, attitude and intentions of the singers).
- (iv) Listen to a lot of music with a critical mind, watch other performances, create a continuous singing culture, mount mock presentations/concerts to instil self-confidence/self-awareness.
- (v) Rehearse for a confident start and grand finish, memorise/master difficult areas, take a moment to reflect on certain areas of the piece silently just before the performance, take in deep breaths and keep breathing work with light physical exercise to ease anxiety and tension on stage.
- (vi) Rehearse in environments with varying acoustical conditions
- (vii) Rehearse through the conductor's way of doing things and important gestures.
- (viii) Read and familiarize yourselves with various musical styles and contexts, so to understand the dominant characteristic features that defined the way certain works sounded or were to be sounded.
- (ix) Learn basic stage etiquettes (avoid necessary talk, unnecessary giggling/ high and obvious dependence on your neighbours murmuring/grumbling/before or during the performance.
- (x) Discuss appropriate dress-code/issues of good grooming/maintain the body in its upright and ready posture.

Conclusion

Below are suggestions on how to Achieve Impressive Musical Performance through Engaged Musicianship. The study observed that:

- (i) *TMzi* is not just a community of singers, but a site for nurturing creative talents, creating positive change in people and promoting Kenya's musical identity through engaged musicianship.
- (ii) That Kenyan Choral music and which constitute the main *TMzi* is a site for:
 - a) Articulating social issues and reinforcing solutions to problems that afflict our society.
 - b) Different musical and cultural identities.
 - c) For socio-economic development.
 - d) For communing with our Creator and the Divine.

and Cultural Festival at the British Council Auditorium ICEA Building Kenyatta Avenue Nairobi.

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