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***THE CHOICE OF AFRICAN MUSIC
IN ADVENTIST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS***

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Introduction

1.1 Statement of Purpose

This essay addresses the subject of choice of African music in Adventist educational institutions. African music, famed for its polyrhythmic nature and melodic affinity to the contour of the rise and fall of syllables in spoken dialogue, has been associated with “primitive rituals” and “pagan worship”. But African music, like any other music of other races, plays very important roles in the lives of the Africans who cultivate it. For example, in folk society, folk music is a medium of enculturation of posterity. For this reason, music plays a very important role in initiation and circumcision schools. This essay recommends that the important function of African music be re-examined and used in contemporary education. The educative value of African music makes it a suitable curriculum component. The pervasive nature of African music provides opportunities for the integration of faith and learning in music classes.

This essay has attempted to highlight the nature and role of African music so that music teachers and their students will be able to make informed choices in the process of integrating faith and learning. The choice of African music in Adventist circles is a hot potato as it involves the application of value judgement. A value, according to Hill “is an idea about what someone thinks is important in life...the idea of value often involves the idea of weighing up something, of choosing from alternatives.”¹

1.2 Music Education

Music education as already indicated, presents ideal opportunities for the integration of faith and learning as “Seventh-day Adventists believe that God intends music to be one means of fostering spiritual development. Musical appreciation and expression help comprise the worship and faith that draw us to Him. Through the experience of uplifting music we may pursue a relationship with Him, and be helped to enter His eternal Kingdom.”²

All aspects of music including the study of form and analysis, creating (composing), creative listening, movement, singing, instrumental music, rudiments and theory, and history should be taught in such a way that they relate to real life situations. This approach should provide opportunities for students to consider a number of values pertaining to meaning or artistic import embodied in each aspect of music activities and how such significance relates to the Seventh-day Adventist world view.

The creative potential is a God-given gift that should be put to responsible use. This includes the choices that artists make in the type of music they perform and the styles of performance they employ. The student artist, in the making, should be led to appreciate what Erik Routley, in his book- **Church Music and the Christian Faith**, has called the Principle of Restraint which states that:

“corresponding to God’s limitation of His omnipotence is a freedom in His creatures to love Him, or to hate Him, by choice. Derived from that in the Old Testament is the creature’s primary moral duty to renounce his tithes. If, then, a creative faculty in the creature corresponds in any way to the creative act in the Creator, we, who can never create *ex nihilo* but only in manipulating material which God has made, are called to renounce what corresponds to the absolute omnipotence that God renounced. If we believe that God’s omnipotence is limited in order to make possible a rational and living creation, we must believe that an artist’s right over his “creation” are similarly limited.”³

Students should be encouraged to practice the principle of restraint in their music making by critically evaluating their choices in the light of how their musical life style will affect the community in which they live. The virtue of restraint is central in the development of a Christian world view. Contemporary view points tend to stress, mistakenly, human freedom and creativity as supreme values. Marsden rightly argues that

“Although of immense worth, these human gifts will reach their highest expression when exercised within a sense of the limits of the individual in relationship to the community, the created order, and ultimately to God. Individuals who act as though they were a law unto themselves or who proclaim there is no law are apt to destroy those around them. Granted, excessive religious zeal is a danger as well. That does not change the fact that current philosophies which absolutize the self pose a real danger of fostering lawlessness.”⁵

Group music making is one of the effective ways of breaking the barriers of social and educational status, tribalism, regionalism, political affiliations, nationalism, race, religion, gender, that divide people. This music value is in consonance with Peter’s observation that: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”⁶

Through group music making performers develop the spirit of give and take, cooperation, self-discipline, respect and love for one another, virtues which are requisite for a Christian life style.

It should be noted that music education complements the so called ‘core subjects’ to make the school curriculum (including the hidden curriculum) wholesome by providing aesthetic education. Wholesome education, or true education, therefore, goes beyond core subjects that prepare the student for “the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of

wider service in the world to come.”⁷

Surely God intended that man and woman be unique among all creatures. Aesthetic sensitivity, capacity to respond with emotional discrimination and ability to make informed and intelligent choices are some of the virtues that set the human kind apart from other creatures, and these virtues can be cultivated through a well planned music programme.

Charles Leonhard and Robert W. House rightly point out, in the book, **Foundations and Principles of Music Education**, that:

“Man is unique among all creatures in the extent and quality of his potential. He has physical, intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic potentials. If any aspect of his potential is neglected and undeveloped, he never attains his true stature as a human being”⁸

Teachers and their students should know that music does not only have “power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures; power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action, and to banish the gloom and foreboding that destroy courage and weaken effort,”⁹ but it also has power to generate irrational and evil emotional dispositions that can lead to violence, orgiastic behavior, drug abuse and disregard for law and order. In this connection, Ellen White warns that “Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired.”¹⁰

The misuse of song and dance is cited in the biblical account in the book of Exodus. In this account, the children of Israel caused Aaron to make them gods (molten calf) to lead them. Aaron did exactly as he was directed by the people. After he had made the idol, he declared the day that followed, “a festival to the Lord.” The children of Israel “sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”

When Moses and Joshua returned from Mount Sinai where Moses had an audience with God, they heard what Joshua referred to as “the sound of war in the camp.” But Moses recognized that “bedlam of noise” as the sound of singing.¹¹ The revelers were the same people who crossed the Red Sea by the mighty hand of God and sang the song of Moses and Miriam; they were being led by an angel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This account illustrates how the people of God can easily fall into the devil’s trap and become paralyzed by his power when they forget the warning:

“gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation {celebration}; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”¹²

In making choices of African music, teachers and students should be aware of the dangers

inherent in some forms of music such as erotic songs and dances. Like rock music which is intrinsically evil, sexually motivated songs and dances should not form part of the music education programmes. Paul Hamel, in the book, **The Christian and his Music**, quotes the Times Magazine which observed that "in a sense, all rock is revolutionary. By its very beat and sound, it has always implicitly rejected restraints and celebrated freedom and sexuality." Hamel adds that rock music "is vulgar, rude, and deliberately offensive; it is an ideal vehicle for protest."¹³

Modern research points to the fact that rock has roots both in Africa¹⁴ as well as in white country music and black rhythm and blues.¹⁵

Music masters should be wary in their choices of African music, like any other music, for both Christian Worship and for entertainment because when wrongly chosen it can have negative influence on young people in much the same way as rock does. Ellen White cautions that "Satan does not enter with his array of temptations at once. He disguises these temptations with a semblance of good; he mingles some little improvement with the folly and amusements... Satan's hellish arts are masked."¹⁶

Paul's counsel is appropriate: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praise-worthy- think about such things" (Philippians 4:8-9, NIV).

2. The Nature and Role of African Music

2.1 Definitions

The term African music means different things to different people. Most people think that African music includes Western music whose text is translated into native languages, music composed by contemporary African composers in contemporary idiom as well as the folk songs of the village folk in rural Africa. In Adventist African communities, the Euro-American hymns in the old Christ in Song hymnal whose texts are translated into native languages, are considered African music. For the purpose of this essay, we shall define three genres of African music being cultivated in Africa today, as follows :

●African indigenous Music

African indigenous music, generally known as traditional music, "is music associated with traditional African institutions of the pre-colonial era. It is music which has survived the impact of the forces of Western forms of acculturation, and is, therefore, quite distinct in idiom and orientation from contemporary popular music"¹⁷.

Musician and renowned ethnomusicologist Dr.Hugh Tracey, adds to professor Nketia's definition by saying that "this music shows the same integrity, logic, sensibility and originality as their (Africans) own languages."¹⁸ (parenthesis supplied)

●Synthetic Music (African contemporary Music)

Synthetic music is the music that is composed in such a way that the melodic and rhythmic

contents are fashioned after Western melodies. This music is performed either a cappella or with Western musical instruments, African musical instruments or a mixture of both. More often than not, such music is arranged in some kind of harmony resembling Western classical harmony. Trained African musicians do arrange such music in Western polyphonic or homophonic styles.

●Syncretic Music

This music is the product of syncretic existence (co-existence) of an indigenous melody with other sonic events such as harmonic devices, instrumental accompaniment, etc., which would not, otherwise, be employed in a purely indigenous context. Although the melody remains indigenous in its melodic and rhythmic contents, the imposition of western or other non-ethnic type of harmony or instrumental paraphernalia renders the music syncretic.

2.2 African World View of the Role of Music in Society

A. African cosmology

The study of African philosophy of music is central to the understanding of why Africans employ music the way they do. Such information can help us in the process of choosing African music for use in Adventist setting.

Let us first have a brief look at “African Spiritual communalism” as the African world view of existence. According to Owuachi, in the African world, there are well defined ideas of nature, human life, existence, social relations as well as man himself.¹⁹

It is against the background of these clearly defined ideas that the African can explain the cosmic phenomena. For example, extended family patterns of social relationships enable members of a community to co-exist as a collective unit to draw strength from one another in order to overcome perils caused by a hostile environment.

African Spiritual Communalism is the essential principle of the life-ways of the African peoples. In the African life ways there exist the spirit of kinship, respect for age and wisdom, economic cooperation, reverence for ancestral spirits, discipline and social justice, the fundamental collective responsibility for order, and the basic recognition of African dignity and respect for human personality(Ibid.)²⁰.

The quotation above shows that the African thinks of the world as a religious world. Like Christian Idealism, God is the Creator and ultimate Reality. Beyond Him nothing exists. The terms used to refer to God, among Africans, originate from their conception of the manner in which God created man and woman. He is referred to over the whole of Africa, as Creator. Some African societies call God as “Excavator, Hower, Carver, Creator, Originator, Inventor, Architect,” while others know Him as Moulder and Constructor”. Others refer to him as “Carpenter who ‘carvers’ the world giving it different forms and shapes.” The Lozi, Mende, Nandi and others believe that God ended His work with the creation of man.” Mbiti explains that “Generally it is explained that the

creation of heaven preceded that of the earth...²¹

The African world view of origins impact on the practice of music in society. For example many rituals employ song, dance, and the symbolic visual arts objects as mediums of communication between the living and the dead, and between man and attendant deities /spirits. The “worship finds its most respectful and satisfying mode of address in music. More so when it takes the form of powerful communal invocation.”²²

B. The Ubiquitous Nature of Music in African Societies

In traditional African society, music making is generally a group activity through which a community may express group sentiments and accompany multifarious collective activities such as enjoyment of leisure, performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any other collective activity. Music making also features prominently in institutions for enculturation of the young, such as initiation schools and ceremonies, circumcision rites, marriage ceremonies, children’s singing games and action songs.

Music is also used in the treatment of patients tormented by spirits. When music is played upon a medium of bad spirits, the tormenting bad spirits are often said to vacate their mediums who become completely healed. Nzewi points out that there are also modes of folk music “which affect the psyches of the owners in various ways.” Some folk music impose palliative effects on the sick while others are said to aid mental and spiritual healing. In a truly African social setting, music making permeates community activities from the time of a child’s conception, at her birth, during her period of maturity, when she marries, when she has her first baby, when her husband is received into the family of his parents in-law, as one of their children, and finally at the time of her exit from the earth.

Group music making encourages the building of relationships through which faith can be learned. When students sing together, they cultivate trust, intimacy, commitment, and capacity to accept one another and appreciate the contribution each member of the group makes. They learn that no man is an island and therefore we need one another. Selfishness diminishes because in group music making participants learn that the loss of a member diminishes each one of them.

Hill points out that “Empathy and its attunement are also part of caring, of feeling for another, and they help comprise a sense of closeness and connectedness which are the heart of being truly present to each other. Presence is a strong element in the spirituality part of faith in which God’s Spirit touches our spirit. When people’s spirits touch, they reveal God in their lives, they refresh each other, and faith is learned.”²³

So group music making in an African context articulates the concept of dependency upon one another, the extended family relationships which encourage sharing and helping the needy. The early Apostolic church encouraged the building of such relationships.²⁴

C. Signification and Artistic import in Music

● Cues from cultural styles and Norms

African traditional music is organized in such a way that its expressiveness derives from its qualities of likeness with the cultural behaviour patterns of the community that organizes it. It has that human content which can move the people who are able to identify and relate with its expressive elements. For example, in a melody, each tonal event plays a critical role in contributing towards the effectiveness of each melodic pattern to which it is a family member, towards communication of meaning. Each musical idea is expressed in a succession of melodic motives while each melodic motive owes its structure to a number of demands such as semantics, syntactics and pragmatics. A single quality of sound, pitch, timbre, duration or intensity, can be a sign that will cause an interpreter to take account of an object or event. "The sonic and rhythmic properties of music have effect on us ; they produce dispositions to respond: they potentially are signs"²⁵. The value of a sonic event in a melody may thus be likened to the value of an individual person in the context of African spiritual communalism. The person , though individuated, draws her strength from society with which she interacts. Her meaning and value can, therefore be measured in this context and not out of it.

● Human Experience as a Source of Meaning in Music

The African view of the world as a spiritual cosmos impacts on the modes of perception in African traditional Music. Performances of ritual and ceremonial music is thus often conceived as a total experience embodied in symbolic soniferous phenomenon, physical movements and visual representations. Music as a communion between the living and the dead, and the spiritual world employs both soniferous and visual materials that best capture the nature of interaction with this spiritual world. In the performances we find, therefore, the use of cryptic potencies of inherited ancient instruments, a multifarious array of costumery, symbolic items of plastic art, symbolic dances and dramatic representations of ancestral masquerades . The choice of instrumental materials also depends on the type of their intrinsic expressiveness in timbre, resonance, and pitch. The choice of dance motives and movement patterns is influenced by their expressive potential, in their symbolization of life rhythms. In some of the folk dances, there are assigned meanings for particular gestures. For example, a performer may communicate with spectators through various signals : when she points her hands in the sky, she means that she looks to God; when she places her finger to her head she means it is a matter to be solved by her own thinking ; if she places her right fore finger below her right eye, she means that she has no comments except wait and see how things will turn out . Dancers may dance to insult other dancers or to express happy sentiments via body movements and facial expressions .²⁶

It can be argued that some form of meaning in African traditional music depends on determined signals in a cultural setting and that the interpretant must be an insider who is familiar with the sonic and movement vocabulary. Through a healthy program of music education, students will learn to make careful choices of the music they will listen to for entertainment, recreation or worship.

● African folk music as a language.

Folk music may be intended to convey specific messages through its tonal and visual aspects. Sound has linguistic codes which are lexical vocables in song texts ; non- lexical vocables in sobs or ululations ; musical codes such as intervallic patterns , word painting, whistling and humming, instrumental sounds and rhythmic patterns. There are also the visual aspects of the musical codes. These codes may differ from society to society and even from one musical genre to another in the same society. In song texts, singers may convey information as when they censure antisocial conduct, bad governance, malcontents, or when they praise good citizenship or sing about historical events.

Institutionalized music and dance in initiations or circumcision schools is a medium of instruction through which initiates are trained and educated in the life -ways of their society. Musical instruments may be used as speech surrogates as in talking drums that transmit precise information. Nketia explains that units of structure provide a framework for the organization of melody and rhythm and that these units of structure tend to have expressive connotation. They are guided by the kind of feeling being portrayed or the expected response. The mood of a piece of music may be a result of the special framework such as rhythmic and melodic patterns or a synthesis of both and the type of tempo chosen. In addition, variations in units of structure and in the flow of the piece, changes in melodic motives or phrases, shifts in pitch levels, vocable and instrumental timbres, variations in rhythm patterns, use of different time spans, are all special devices employed as codes of expressive signal. It is through music education that students will study all these means of signification to enable them make informed choices.

● African folk music as an ‘Expression of Emotion’

Signification in music in the contexts of absolute formalism or expressionism exclude expression of emotion as one of the functions of music, but rather a memory or an abstract of emotional experience which can be explained in terms of a :

“...re- alignment and fusion of various remembered experiences, made from traces of past events, the old seen in new ways.”²⁷

African folk music, however, may function as an expression of emotion. The cultivation of music that is integrated with dance, or music that stimulates the affective motor response, is much more prevalent, says Nketia. For the African, the musical experience is by and large an emotional one : sounds, however beautiful, are meaningless if they do not offer this experience or contribute to the expressive quality of performance (Ibid.)²⁸.

African folk music can be used to evoke intensely emotional dispositions as Nzewi vividly explains :

As an activator folk music gives drive and solidarity to riot ; provokes and sanctions plunder, mobs and assaults the enemy. It becomes a psychomotor that dopes, intoxicates and activates daredevilry. Folk music instigates , catalyses and perpetuates

clashes, physical verbal or mental. As in its palliative roles, activator folk music favours peculiar texts and textures . It is generally erratic in its rhythms and intervals, incisive and inciting in its language selection and manipulation ... folk warriors and combatants (in wrestling or flogging matches for instance) generally are not drugged. Rather , folk music works them up to mental and physical conditioning that launches them into encounter, oblivious of danger or failure.²⁹

Extreme emotional responses to music, whether it be worship music or entertainment music, should not be encouraged. The Christian life style advocates for moderation. Emotional expression should be balanced by intellectual control. So students' music making should portray application of mental activity accompanying aesthetic response and enjoyment. Total surrender to emotionalism is not a Christian virtue.

When making choices of African music, students should be made aware that certain peculiar texts and textures, erratic rhythm and intervals tend to generate irrational emotional responses.

Routley argues that:

“Artists who design their work so that thrill or sensation is its chief purpose are defective artists. This is especially obvious in church music, for its purpose is to assist the believer in his journey towards God, not to the sensation of this world.”³⁰

African music and performance styles that embody rock elements ought to be eliminated from the musical experience of our students.

● African folk music as ‘Aesthetic Experience’

It can be argued that all music is intended to be aesthetically expressive and that it is this aesthetic content in all music, that has made music man's companion from the time immemorial. The functional roles that African folk music play do not necessarily make the music a non-aesthetic artistic manifestation. In fact, the intrinsic aesthetic qualities of music make the melodies the most effective carriers of information in general situations, in rituals and in folk education ; for, in the absence of this intrinsic value or ‘ centripetal’ nature of the folk melody, verbal utterance would be much more effective .

Although music, in African traditional society, is organized as a community event for expression of group sentiments, there are professional musicians and non-professional virtuoso performers considered great in the community due to their aesthetic sensitivity which enables them to execute and articulate their performances with outstanding artistic flair.

When one undergoes aesthetic experience, one does not draw ancillary value from it but enjoys it for the pleasure the object is able to give, or for its artistic import. Another aspect of aesthetic meaning may involve a person's experience with an aesthetic object which generates dislike or displeasure in the beholder or auditor. In other words, one may not like a good piece of music, may be because his/her taste is uncultivated with respect to the type of music involved. This does not mean that this particular object has no artistic worth. The music teacher's task is to educate students to learn to value things not only emotionally but intellectually as well.

Ability to appreciate art objects for their intrinsic value will help students to learn to appreciate people for their value as human beings created in the image of God and not for instrumental or referential value. To appreciate any type of good music, one must interact with the music (listen creatively) reflectively at personal level and discern its texture, rhythm and melodic design and its subtle nuances. Vicarious experience is of no value in the process of aesthetic experience. Similarly we can draw important Christian values from aesthetic experience and apply them in our interaction with different types of people in our Christian living.

Ellen G. White points out that our God is the Author of all beauty and that He is a lover of the beautiful. He provided to gratify in His children the love of beauty.³¹

But what do we mean when we talk about the beauty of a person from the biblical perspective? The scriptures give us a clear answer from the book of I Samuel 16: 7: "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (KJV).

We may also go beyond the intrinsic value of music and see through it God's approval of the aesthetic experience by creating a beautiful world for us. Hannum points out that "God means for His creatures to enjoy beauty and to take delight in the things He has created."³²

The Christian world view of beauty can be seen in Ecclesiastes 3: 22-14: "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from beginning to the end. ...And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it; nor any thing from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."

3. Homogenous Characteristics of African Traditional Music

3.1 Melodic, Rhythmic and Harmonic Dynamics

Sonic materials are organized within the framework of the rhythm and phonemic tones of the text of the music, when spoken in ordinary dialogue form. So we can say that one of the distinguishing features of an indigenous African melody is its affinity to the contour of spoken text in ordinary dialogue. Composition of melodies is thus restricted by the use of scales and scale intervals that are fundamentally speech bound. Melodic contour can, therefore, be analyzed in terms of three basic intervallic directional possibilities : the ascending, leveling, or descending within the framework of tonal inflexions in speech. This phenomenon explains why it is possible among some societies to use musical instruments as speech surrogates to transmit specific verbal messages. It also explains why each strophe of a song may differ slightly in melody to ensure that the melody proceeds in consonance with the rise and fall of phonemic syllables. Jones observed that "Anyone who tries to write a tune on these lines will find how very difficult it is to achieve interest and especially balance in melodic form . The African does succeed in doing this, but there is no question that the restrictions of the system have a conservative and limiting effect on the free development of African melody"³³

It is important to note, however, that:

A slavish following of speech-melody by musical melody is not implied. Rather, the songs illustrate a constant conflict and accommodation between musical tendencies and curves traced by the speech-tones of the song text. Even when speech tones prevail, the musical impulse is not quelled but merely limited-urged, perhaps, to discovering devices it did not use before.³⁴

Music performance generally employs cross rhythms through the use of two or more drums, each with its own rhythm pattern. To these drum rhythms may be added other crossing rhythms of hand clapping, foot shuffling or stamping, concussion sticks, the melody itself and other body movements. The resultant rhythmical heterophony is held together by the use of a metronomic time line generally externalized in the hand clapping, foot stamping, concussion sticks or lead drum. The total soniferous phenomenon embodies unity in rhythmic diversity. Additive rhythm patterns also play a vital role in music making.

Examples of a variety of homophonic and polyphonic vocal textures are available in African traditional music practice, Homophonic parallelism in which the principal melody is supported with an organal voice moving in consistent parallel intervals of a third, a fourth, or fifth is found among several societies. The use of polarity is also a common feature: in polarity a melody is duplicated at an octave. There are also occasional heterophony in which harmonic devices occurs at cadential points as a decorative device.

4. Rationale for the choice of African Music in Adventist Educational Institutions.

The rationale behind the impetus to develop guidelines for the choice of African Music is based on the belief that God created man and woman and gave them a cultural mandate to rule over the earth (Genesis 2:15). Rasi explains that this rulership includes power, dominion, creativity, concern and care. Rasi continues to explain that the term “to care” is rendered in Latin by *coloere*, the word from which culture is derived.³⁵

We also note that when people begin to multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28) the process of differentiation sets in: families are made, villages grow into large communities, and tribes come about with cultures which regulate their lifestyles. Sire also argues that “the heavens declare the glory of God” because God created the heavens, then culture to, declares the glory of God because God’s creatures created culture. Sire, however, concedes that culture also declares the corruption, error and ignorance of its human creator.³⁶

The point is this that God intended for people to create culture that would glorify Him as Master Designer, and Creator. The cultural mandate recorded in the book of Genesis applies to Africans as well. If this is true, then it follows that African music has a legitimate place in our Adventist Educational Institutions. This essay is therefore an attempt to highlight the crucial role that African music can play in the integration of faith and learning .

Having highlighted the nature of African Music and its role in community life as well as its

“power to uplift or degrade.....” the following is recommended criteria for choice of African music.

5. Criteria for the choice of African Music

5.1 Preamble

God expects us to present to Him the best of all that we possess: the best in our overt and covert conduct; the best in our style of dress; the best in our use of language; the best in our education system; the best in how we think; the best in our day to day choices in life; the best in how we should worship Him and of course the best in our choice of music and how we should perform it.

The general cacophony of contemporary music styles that focus on sheer entertainment, self aggrandizement and catharsis, instead of focusing on Jesus, should be avoided. Melodic, rhythmic and verbal content of the music should be Christocentric: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teachings and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord”. (Col 3:16).

Worship in music should be conducted with an attitude of a contrite spirit, for we are in the presence of the Creator, God: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereupon thou standest is holy ground” (Ex 3: 5). Ellen White cautions “All the (worship) services should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master” (Testimonies for the church, 5: 493). Performance mannerisms and styles should avoid mixing of “Sacred and secular in an attempt to make the gospel palatable (Pete Geli, Jr. Bible principles for Christian music, in Adventist Affirm, Vol. 12, No.1 Spring 1998).

The Bible also speaks of the need to separate the sacred from the profane: “They have put no difference between the holy and profane (Ezekiel 22:26) and “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness (2 Cor. 6: 4)

5.2 Melodic and rhythmic Content

A good African melody has balance in the choice of conjunct and disjunct melodic patterns that are in consonance with tonal inflections of the text when uttered in ordinary dialogue. Melodies that accompany vigorous dances are generally unsuitable for use in classroom situations and worship.

As already noted, melodies that employ peculiar texture, erratic rhythms and intervals, excessive syncopation, should be avoided. Rhythmic patterns should be closely associated with the rhythm of text in spoken dialogue.

Purely indigenous melodies adapted for Christian worship are not readily available. Teachers and their students can embark on projects to adapt carefully chosen folk melodies for use in class as well as in worship.

There is a large number of choruses specially composed for evangelistic purposes. Although most of these choruses are hi-breed forms which I would refer to as synthetic melodies, the melodic contours and rhythmic content are more or less consonant with indigenous folk melodies. They are deliberately composed in a style we may refer to as “otherworldly.” The reader should refer to appendix A and B for examples of two choruses that are quite popular in their countries of origin.

5.3 Harmonic content

African melodies should be harmonized in indigenous styles. There is a variety of vocal harmonic techniques applied in the tribal music of Africa. This multiplicity of harmonic styles are attributed to the manner in which different tribes and ethnic groups speak and the effect of speech mannerisms on the development of melodies.

Any polyphonic and homophonic devices employed are, to a large extent, dependent upon the pattern of intervals in the melodies. Intervallic parallelism in which the tune is essentially linear but singers sing a 3rd, a 4th, or a 5th below or above the entire melody or part of it is a common feature in African music. Some tribes harmonize their melodies in consistent parallel 3rds while others use superpositioned 3rds forming a kind of vertical densities of three different pitches achieved through parallel block motion. Others use conjunct 4ths at cadential points as a decorative device.

The examples above indicate that music teachers should study the nature of harmonic devices employed by various tribes so that melodies are harmonized in such a way that the music is not distorted. Creativity and inventiveness is expected of the music masters so that melodies are harmonized in such a creative way that students brought up from different music backgrounds will be able to identify with the music.

5.4 Text

Music text, if intended for worship, should be based on Adventist doctrines, beliefs and Christian values. The text should also be of poetic worth and should carry messages that audiences can relate to according to their Christian experience as long as the Christian world view is maintained. Text which is not on Christian experience and not on scriptures should avoid content that is not in keeping with biblical content. Secular music should promote spirit of cooperation, nationalism, and love for the created order. Frivolous text should be avoided.

5.5 Movement

Seventh-day Adventists in Africa do not entertain the type of dancing one often sees among Pentecostal congregations. Movements of some kind are finding their way into worship services especially among some youths.

If musicians have to accompany their singing with movements, only movements that are intended to maintain the rhythm of the music and are graceful, may be performed. In Kenya, the Kalenjin tribes dance movements are generally slow, graceful and void of any eroticism. Such movements could be used to accompany indigenous styles of performance without detracting attention from the act of worship. For example, victory dance movements of the Kalenjin or Ngoni people of Malawi could be used when performing music based on biblical themes about spiritual warfare. Praise music lends itself to easy adaptation. Kuyabila (praise singing) of the Tonga people of the southern province of Zambia may be adapted into Christian praise songs. The movement to accompany **ngoma ya bukali** (drum of anger) could be used and praising Jesus as well as challenging the devil with powerful **Word** of God.

Students may perform other dance movements for entertainment so long as the movements are

not based on or associated with night club dances, or questionable traditional rituals or pleasure dances.

Most Adventists will not allow movement or dance associated with entertainment to be performed during divine service. This essay recommends that musicians should not use performance styles that will offend worshipers. Any performance style that may cause disquiet should be discussed with elders of the local congregations.

Most people who subscribe to dancing or making movements to accompany singing for worship quote Psalms 150 to justify their interest in movement and dance. Ellen White comments about David's dance:

“David's dancing in reverent joy before God has been cited by pleasure lovers in justification of the fashionable modern dance, but there is no ground for such an argument. In our day dancing is associated with folly and midnight reveling. Health and morals are sacrificed to pleasure. By the frequenters of the ballroom God is not an object of thought and reverence; prayer or the song of praise would be felt to be out of place in their assemblies. This text should be decisive. Amusements that have a tendency to weaken the love of sacred things and lessen our joy in the service of God are not to be sought by Christians. The music and dancing in joyful praise to God at the removal of the ark had not the faintest resemblance to the dissipation of modes of dancing. The one tended to the remembrance of God and exalted His holy name. The other is a device of Satan to cause men to forget God and to dishonor Him.”³⁷

The sentiments expressed by Ellen White are a caution to the Adventist young people not to be tempted to engage in dancing that would bring dishonor to God, whether for worship or mere entertainment.

6. Musical instruments

The Bible is replete with statements that refer to the use of musical instruments. Psalms 150 is an example that encourages the use of instruments of various types: trumpets, psaltery, harps, timbrel, and cymbals. King David directed the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren “to be singers with musical instruments”. (I Chronicles 15: 16).

African musical instruments such as thumb piano, the music bow, friction drum, the ordinary drum, single or double headed, large xylophones, and many others can be used during worship as well as for entertainment. The use of drums is also discouraged by Adventists in most parts of Africa. Music teachers should develop drumming techniques that are suitable for worship so that secular drum rhythms will be restricted to entertainment music and not for worship. The large Lozi xylophone (silimba) of the western province of Zambia and similar one found in other countries of Africa, can be put to good use in accompanying singing during worship song services. Two player can play melodies on large silimba with one of the players playing basso ostinato while the other plays the melody. Students will the silimba very handy for group music making.

This writer has developed silimba playing techniques that combine traditional harmonic

combinations and contemporary vertical harmony. The silimba can be used very effectively to accompany choirs or even congregational singing. phrasing, poor poetry, sentimentality, or frivolity should be avoided.

8. Vocal Treatment and Performance Styles.

Students should be encouraged by their teachers to avoid the popular night club techniques of voice production: the suggestive distortions of the voice intended to draw attention to the performer. Artistic simplicity is required in the performance of music particularly for worship. Body gestures that suggest night club behaviour should be avoided. The popular improvised contrapuntal textures that prevent audibility of text should be avoided. Straight forward indigenous textures are recommended.

9. Classroom Music Activities

9.1 The teacher and the students can embark on the collection of folklore songs selected from a repertoire of those that teach good moral lessons. These moral lessons can be compared with Christian values.

10. Adaptation of indigenous melodies

The Adventist Church worldwide, and in Africa in particular, have not taken any official stand with regard to the development of an official African Hymnal. The African music that is generally sung in educational institutions is collected by interested individuals, mainly, but not exclusively, from other denominations. A large repertoire is of choruses generally sung during song services in church or during crusades and camp meetings. These songs are not written down but are transmitted orally. African Gospel songs and spirituals are only performed as special items by choral groups. As a matter of fact, this repertoire and that of choruses are of a synthetic nature. Syncretic and indigenous forms are hard to come by.

But Adventists should contribute to the body of African indigenous music by engaging in the process of adapting indigenous melodies for use in our schools and churches. Adaptation of secular melodies entails the process of composing appropriate biblical text and matching it with the existing melody.

The melody will be slightly modified to suit the phonemic syllables of the new text. Such melodies may be developed further and arranged in either traditional harmony or syncretic four-part harmony for congregational singing.

Secular music should not be incompatible with Christian ideals. Compositions that contain trite phrasing, poor poetry, sentimentality, or frivolity" should be avoided.

11. Summary

In this essay a number of issues pertaining firstly to the status of African Music in Adventist institutions of learning have been addressed. Although there has been no official church policy on the development of church music or secular music in consonance with the seventh-day Adventist world

view, church musicians have gone ahead in composing African choruses and songs which are mainly hi-breed in form. These choruses are used during Sabbath school song services, vespers, crusades, A. Y. programmes and camp meetings. Other songs are arranged for choral groups such as choirs, male quartets, ladies trios who perform them as special songs. Mention has been made of opportunities available in music education for integration of faith and learning. Attention has been drawn to the power of music not only in influencing students positively but for evil as well when bad choices are made.

The nature and role of African music have been discussed and definitions of types of African music currently in practice, given. The African world view or philosophy of music has been discussed in detail to provide information to support informed choices.

Homogeneous characteristics that provide unity in diversity have been discussed. One of the unique characteristics of African melody is its close association with the rise and fall of syllables in spoken dialogue.

The rationale for the choice of African music has been given; and that all cultures have developed as a sequel to the cultural mandate given to our first parents: Adam and Eve. This mandate applies to Africans as well. It follows therefore that African music has a legitimate place in Adventist educational institutions.

Finally, criteria for choice of African music has been suggested in such a way that only African music that promotes Christian spiritual, social, and cultural values should be chosen for both worship and classroom purposes.

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