

# LIFE IS SHORT, ART AND SCHOLARSHIP ARE LONG: A TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR WILLIE OSCAR ANKU

*by*

GEORGE DOR

## Introduction

This tribute, which memorializes Professor Willie Anku, is in two parts. While Part II offers insights from his scholarship on African rhythm, Part I is modeled on a typical Ghanaian eulogy, because I think it appropriate to honor an Africanist with a tribute that draws on elements of his own African culture. Accordingly, the three traditional Ewe, and broader African characteristics that I privilege in Part I are 1) the changing addressee in tributes, dirges, and female laments (the Ewe practice of talking directly to the deceased is an expression of a traditional Ewe belief in afterlife in the metaphysical realm); 2) African communality that recognizes the unique personhood of Anku as well as the extent to which his life and work intersected with members of the various communities within which he was located; 3) the poetic tone that traditional musicians, who are normally capable of multiple artistry as composer-poet-lead singer, use in remembering deceased traditional African musicians.<sup>1</sup>

## PART I

### Salutation

*Togbuiwo, Mamawo*<sup>2</sup>, The Anku family, University of Ghana's Music Department and School of Performing Arts, scholars, musicians, and other dear mourners, thank you for gathering to celebrate the life of Professor Willie Anku, our friend and brother. I am compelled by Dr. Anku's untimely death to once again invoke the lyrics of "Afeto Demí tso kudidamewo me" ("Lord, redeem us from untimely deaths"), composed by the late Professor N. Z. Nayo.

### Formative Years

I first heard of the name Willie Anku in 1972, when Professor N.Z. Nayo introduced him as the composer of an orchestral piece that the visiting University of Ghana's Student Orchestra performed, and described Willie Anku as a promising Ghanaian

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Diane Thram, Editor of this journal, for agreeing to publish this tribute. While I originally wrote Part I purposely for the burial rites of our colleague, hence the "Ghanaian style," Diane's suggestions have inspired me to write Part II.

<sup>2</sup> The two Ewe words mean male and female elders, which include kings, chiefs, linguists (*okyeame*), chief-makers, and queen-mothers.

composer and musician. I recall it was at the old campus of Hohoe E. P. Secondary School (HEPSS), Dr. Anku's alma mater and an institution which is now mourning another prominent musician alum's death with the passing of Kosi Adom<sup>3</sup>. It was an evening in which the Alavanyo Wudidi and Kpeme orchestras as well as the E.P. Church Choirs of the preceding towns and that of Hohoe joined Legon's orchestra to rehearse Professor Nayo's "Mitso Dzidzo Seye na Mawuga Egbe" ("Rejoice in the Great God Today") in preparation for the 125th Anniversary of the E. P. Church, Ghana, at Peki.

Although our paths crossed decades later at Legon's Music Department in a lecturer-student relationship, and in the production of the E.P. Hadzibale Hymnbook and the Hymnal for the Ghana Apostolic Church, for which I harmonized hundreds of their tunes, I choose to leave these aspects of Professor Anku's life to others to speak to in detail. Rather, I focus on what I discovered about Fo<sup>4</sup> Willie at the University of Pittsburgh where he received his Masters and Doctorate in Music, with an Ethnomusicology concentration.

### University of Pittsburgh

Professor Anku, all your Ghanaian Pitt Alumni including Professors William Amoako and Kwesi Ampene, Dr. Eric Beeko, Dr. Kofi Stephen Gbolonyo, and myself bid you a special farewell. Indeed, your death has reminded us of the extent to which "life is short." However, as we take consolation in the saying that "art and scholarship are long," we will continue to remember you through the significant and indelible contributions you have made toward African music study. Yes, Fo Willie, who can forget that it was you who founded and directed the University of Pittsburgh's African Music Ensemble in the early 1980s? Yet, Dr. Anku, your thought-provoking scholarship on African rhythm has propelled you into a pride of the Pitt Music Program. Accordingly, Professor Akin Euba, the Africanist at Pitt, and Professor Matthew Rosenblum, Chair of the Department, and indeed the entire Pitt music faculty, and many former and current students who know your work are very saddened by your untimely death.

### Drummer's Advocate

Professor Anku, you not only epitomized a cutting edge intersection between ethnomusicology and music theory, but also interpreted your study of sub-Saharan African drummer's art through technology. I salute the great drummers who are celebrating Professor Anku's life during these final rites. *Ayekoo!*<sup>5</sup> For, Fo Willie was your advocate, he spoke on your behalf to the larger academic community, explaining the "secrets" behind your compelling creativity and sublime indigenous knowledge to the world through modern presentational approaches. Dr. Anku, your Masters and

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<sup>3</sup> Kosi Adom was a Research Fellow of the International Centre for African Music and Dance at Legon. Like Dr. Anku, he died an untimely death from a motor accident when returning from a funeral.

<sup>4</sup> *Fo* in Ewe is a honorific word for a senior brother

<sup>5</sup> "*Ayekoo*" means "great job" and "congratulations."

Ph.D. theses, numerous articles, work as Visiting Professor at US universities, and a body of international presentations affirm you as a great and astute thinker. You have established yourself as an authority in scholarship on African rhythm, at times sounding psychoanalytical as you attempted to represent our great *Akyerema* and *Azagunowo*<sup>6</sup> by first “getting into their minds.” Who can fully discuss the theories of African rhythm without drawing on the perspectives of the man death has taken away from us? Just two weeks before we received the devastating news about your passing, Professor Kofi Agawu, your brother and friend, told me that you would be visiting him in Princeton to participate in a graduate seminar that he was teaching on “Theories of African Rhythm.” I can imagine how Professor Agawu’s students at Princeton engaged your work in a bittersweet spirit, in which they might have found your scholarship very insightful, and would have wished that you had lived longer and continued contributing to the discourse.

### **International Academic Community**

Condolences sent by Africanist ethnomusicologists (including Kwabena Nketia, Kofi Agawu, David Locke on behalf of AfMS, Cynthia Tse Kimberlin, Mosun Omibiyi-Obidike, Meki Nzewi, Diane Thram, Jean Kidula, Barbara Taylor, Peter Hoelsing, and others) should suggest to the School of Performing Arts and Professor Willie Anku’s family the extent to which we highly regard his scholarship. For example, Professor Willie Anku was a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of *African Music*, the journal of the International Library of African Music published in South Africa. Also, he deservedly gave the opening presentation at “Africa Meets North America: A Dialogue in Music Project,” held in 2009 at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). I vividly remember Dr. Anku’s usual persuasive presentation of his ideas, and how he introduced Professor Emeritus Olly Wilson, the renowned African American composer before his presentation. Other notable African-born music scholars and musicians who participated in and shared wonderful moments with Professor Anku at AMNA included Professor Emeritus Kwabena Nketia, Professors Mosunmola Omibiyi-Obidike, Akin Euba, Meki Nzewi, Bode Omojola, and Sister Agatha Ozah (all from Nigeria), Professor Jean Kidula (Kenya), Dr. Anicet Mundundu (DRC), Girma Yiflashewa (Ethiopia), Dawn Padmore (Liberia), Kobla Ladzekpo, Sowah Mensah, Kofi Stephen Gbolonyo, Ebo Addy, Eric Beeko, and George Worlasi Kwasi Dor (all from Ghana). Professors Jacqueline DjeDje, Cynthia Tse Kimberlin, and Kimasi Browne (USA) co-organized the symposium with Akin Euba. How could we have known that Professor Anku was bidding us farewell at this symposium?

<sup>6</sup> Akan and Anlo Ewe names for a master drummer, respectively.



Photo 1. Fo Willie Anku and the Pittsburgh 'Africanist Family' present at AMNA Akin Euba (seated), Agatha Ozah, Kwabena Nketia, Anicet Mundundu (middle row) Eric Beeko, George Dor, Kofi Gbolonyo, **Willie Anku** (back row).

I am in no way essentializing Professor Anku's scholarship. Admittedly, scholarship should give room to criticism, but not that which emanates from preference for alternative approaches or mere ignorance. For, although Jesus Christ has asserted how prophets are hardly accepted at their homes, I suggest that no one discredits or diminishes Dr. Anku's work. Drawing on an excerpt from Dr. Ephraim Amu's "Nenyo nede wo dede," he advises us that every individual should pursue whatever he/she believes in to a level of perfection. Professor Willie Anku was whole-heartedly committed to his claims and methodology in African rhythm scholarship, and he rigorously pursued them until his death. Is it not gratifying to note that Professor Richard Cohn, a world-renowned music theorist from Yale University recently drew on Dr. Anku's theoretical perspectives in a conference presentation near the time that he passed away?

Professor Anku, given the devastating blow your passing has caused us, the manner in which we acknowledge your scholarship as we return to UCLA for SEM 2010, where we last met you, the African Music Section of SEM is planning a special memorial tribute session to honor you. During the Special Session to be held on November 11, world-class theorists and ethnomusicologists, seasoned mother/master/lead drummers, colleagues, students, friends, and admirers will meet to mourn your death, but celebrate your departure to your God and/or ancestors; create awareness of your scholarship; and regenerate interest in structural analysis of African music.

Finally, I am sure that our colleagues on the African continent could do the same, so that although life is short, we can ensure that Willie Anku's art and scholarship endure. May His Soul Rest In Peace.

## PART II

Although Willie Anku was a man of many talents—scholar, performer, teacher, composer, recording engineer, and administrator, I elect to concentrate on his scholarship on African rhythm. I focus on three key articles that he authored, pointing out the pervasive recurring themes and other important perspectives that suggest Willie Anku's contribution to knowledge in African music. Hopefully, this discussion will prompt readers to seek personal engagement with Anku's scholarship. For, reading these articles more closely for this tribute, the enormity of Anku's loss to the academic community became even more apparent to me. Throughout Part II, I acknowledge all ideas that are Anku's, whether quoted or paraphrased and indicate other sources whenever I situate Anku's work within the broader scholarly trajectory.

The three articles I have privileged are 1) "Inside a Master Drummer's Mind: A Quantitative Theory of Structures in African Music" (2007, *Transcultural Music Review*), 2) "Circles and Time: A Theory of Structural Organization of Rhythm in African Music" (2000, *Music Theory Online*), and 3) "Principles of Rhythmic Integration in African Drumming" (1997, *Black Music Research*). I use the years in which the articles were published to reference the articles in what follows.

### Circular Perception of African Dance Drumming

"African music is perceived essentially as a circular concept rather than linear" (2007). One major contribution by Anku to the understanding of African dance drumming is his meticulous explanation of how the performers of the music perceive time. Even though the structural role of the recurring time line and the predominance of repetition in African music, as manifest in various ramifications of ostinato, are a commonplace in writings on African music, most listeners to African dance drumming are likely to conclude that they hear the music unfolding in a linear progression in time. This position is not surprising for, although Africans are familiar with the revolving nature in which they count market days, recurrent patterns of days of the week, and rhythms of the seasons (rainy and dry, or the four seasons in southern Africa), resonating with the various kinds of rhythms that Agawu (1995) discusses, many Africans perceive some aspects of life's rhythms linearly.

Drawing on Sowande's (1966) article on rhythmic organization in Yoruba drum ensemble music, Kauffman (1980: 398) writes "Not only are the ensembles large with many multi-linear parts, but the many lines can often be distinguished rather easily by varied timbres of the idiophonic instruments and drums." Although it is unclear whether the use of "multi-linear," and "many lines" reflects Sowande's or Kauffman's perception, it is certain that the linear perception and dimensions of drumming is important for scholars, depending on their subject matter. But, how do drummers

think of the sounds they create?

Anku advocates the need to configure what happens “Inside the Master Drummer’s Mind,” by conducting what may be called a psychoanalytical ethnography – privileging questions relating partly to musical cognition. Anku’s (2007) defense of the circular structures in African drumming begins with the following “theoretical foundations” of the underpinning “principles of organization.” 1) Rhythmic syntax must be located in ethnicity. 2) Drumming is a microcosm of African communality in which a collective creative experience produces the polyrhythmic matrix. Notwithstanding, the individuality of the percussionists is equally important.<sup>7</sup> 3) The collective experience is controlled by a “recurrent rhythm” normally played on the bell and called “time line.” In some cases, this revolving structure may be internalized as a guiding principle for xylophone or *mbira* players also. The circular perception becomes more readily comprehensible by the mention of the time line. Yet, Anku further breaks down the structure of the time line, into: “time span,” “structural span,” “time cycle,” or “set span.”

An important component of the structural span is a “regulative beat per circle,” which is “culturally perceived.” With the aid of diagrams, Anku illustrates how the span can be divided into two or four equal parts. He further explains his claim that the set structure applies to both the ostinato instruments and the master drummer’s parts. After proving the applicability of the circular perception, as evident in the time cycle and its inherent and synchronizing regulative beat, to the structural roles of all instruments and other events of the dance drumming ensemble, Anku goes further to explain the set theory that he believes underlies the principles of African dance drumming by arguing that a “set span is a structural module, the basis of the performance“ (2007).

Certain aspects of Anku’s theories are an expansion, and perhaps a refinement of earlier studies, though the circular perception of African drumming was not emphasized in his earlier research. For instance, Kauffman discusses “The Theory of a Common Fast Beat,” as common, acceptable, and a reconciling rhythmic unit to which African multi-rhythms can be related (1980: 396). While he notes that Richard Waterman (1952: 211-211) describes such a rhythm as “structured along a theoretical framework of beats regularly spaced in time...”, Hood (1971: 114) is credited to have suggested “calling the fastest regularly recurring event the ‘density referent’...” (Kauffman 1980: 396). And, although Nketia has also used the term density referent in his writings to refer to the smallest rhythmic unit normally performed in African music such as drumming, I agree with Kauffman that Nketia’s definition of the “time line” is a better contribution toward the understanding of African rhythm (Kauffman 1980: 399). Further, in their Time Unit Box System (TUBS) of notation, Philip Harland and James Koetting adopted this concept of density referent as their time unit, whereby an eighth note was the time unit of African dances perceived to be in compound meter, and a sixteenth note represented the density referent in simple metered music, even though there was no

<sup>7</sup> See Anyidoho (1983: 132-158) for “communal ethos,” Dor (2004) for “communal creativity,” and Agawu (2005: 153-164) for “communality.”

metrical representation in TUBS, as Agawu (2003: 65) notes. Also, Kauffman (1980: 396) contemplates “Density referent is useful as an analytical tool, but is it in any way an organizing factor for the performing musicians?” Although Anku did use the concept of density referent in his earlier works, he supports Nketia and considers the time line a better organizing structure than density referent. He contends, “In all these, the span of the ‘time line’ pattern (also referred to as the time span) is the main structural referent” (Anku 1997: 215). Moreover, Anku’s subsequent attention to principles, procedures, and “inside a master drummer’s mind” led to new theorizing that provides what is lacking in the concept of density referent.

For Anku (2000, 2007), these smallest time units must be perceived and appropriately named as constituents of the time cycle or span. Hence, he explains them as rhythmic cells of the time set. Anku identifies three types of grids within a set as evidenced in dance drumming. These are: a 12 grid set, a 16 grid set, and a cross-grid set that features combinations of the first and second categories. Anku also provides illustrated examples of dances that use 12 grid sets and that use 16 grid sets. He extends his discussion of grid types to preferences dictated by functions of dances, while elucidating ways in which only one instrument may play in a 12 grid set throughout the piece against the 16 grid spans in which all the other instruments and rhythm of songs are created. Other examples of cross grid organization may include momentary alternations of variant grid structures by a master drummer.

Anku did not spend much time discussing meter in these articles. However, he asserts that one should not confuse the four equal divisions of the time span with 4/4 meter. Also, he categorically stresses that African dance drumming music is always in a single meter. This statement alludes to his awareness of the debate on polymeter. Anku thus adds his voice to those of many other scholars who have corrected the misleading claims posited by A. M. Jones, William E. F. Ward, and Alan Merriam that a traditional African musical piece has concurrent meters.<sup>8</sup> It then follows, in Anku’s terms, that rhythmic structure including “hemiola patterns,” and “cross-rhythms” are all products of cross-grids within time cycles.

### **Improvisation by the Master Drummer: From Recycling to Theorizing**

Writing on “Master Drum Set Manipulation Procedures,” Anku observes that the master drummer does not play “many variant and complex rhythms” as many people think. Rather, the master drummer’s role is “dependent on how [he] structurally manipulates relatively few rhythms.” “The rhythms are not invented in a spur of the moment each time,” but the master drummer draws the set rhythms he manipulates “from a stock of generatively rhythmic vocabulary associated with specific genres,” and these set rhythms are “often known to a community of users” (2007: 5).

To situate the preceding further, Anku’s contribution to understanding the master drummer’s art reveals that culturally prescribed principles and procedures underpin

<sup>8</sup> See Agawu (2003: 79-86)

their creativity, and African musicians are very much conscious of these principles. Generally, composition does not involve a process of creating only new musical ideas throughout a piece. Culturally extant musical ideas and previous ideas within a particular composition are often repeated, varied, developed or transformed as motives through a number of devices. As Euba (1990: 387-388) rightly observed, a master drummer is a composer, and it can further be observed that he engages in a process of “re-composition” because of combining the “stock set rhythms” that Anku mentions with the master drummer’s own newly created variants. If we call those “stock rhythms” motives, then the master drummer engages in motivic transformation<sup>9</sup> that is located in other guiding principles and procedures that Anku theorizes on.

### **Principles of Rhythmic Integration in African Drumming**

“The most significant aspect of ‘multirhythm’ perception in drumming is that the various composite patterns are heard in integration and not as isolated units” (1997: 212). In this article, Anku “parades” all the relevant words that will foster readers’ understanding of integration of rhythm in African music. Thus related terms in the text include “integration,” “holistic,” “composite,” “emergent,” “resultant,” and “monolithic.” Anku asserts that when African drumming is tight and reaches a state of groove, one moves from the analytical to the experiential realm of music in which individual instrumental parts not only integrate into a composite whole but also into a monolithic entity. Yet, if this article’s main theme is “rhythmic integration,” then the second major theme, which may be described as underpinning, generative, or methodological, is “perception norms” in ethnography, a perspective that must be represented in research. Anku bases this article on the *adowa* ensemble of the Akan of Ghana. It is typically rich in illustrative transcriptions, use of local expressions of concepts, and the author’s systematic approach as a theorist and an ethnomusicologist is evident.

Anku situates the article in terms of 1) previous relevant studies, 2) defense of his use of the correct perception to affirm the realism of the music being discussed, and (3) other African music genres and phenomena that display the conception of integrated music. After noting that African rhythm is one of the most researched subjects in African music scholarship, Anku however notes the absence of consensus on theories because each researcher’s predilections and knowledge in Western music and theory tend to take a toll on their interpretation of African rhythm. Locke (1982), Chernoff (1979), Jones (1954) and Koetting (1982), Anku acknowledges, resonate with this article, though with different perspectives. However, it was Jones’s methodology—interviewing Tey, an Anlo Ewe master drummer without observing Anlo music within its real ethnographic context, and Jones’s transcription machine, which emphasized the linear dimension of the individual drum parts—that constitute an antithesis to Anku’s advocacy for an “ethnographic account of perception norms” (1997: 212), and the importance of both vertical and linear relationships within drum ensembles

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<sup>9</sup> See Reti (1961)



to grasping the concept of integration in drumming. Although Anku does not favor Koetting's TUBS as a better notation system for transcribing African dance drumming, he wholeheartedly supports Koetting's advocacy for a holistic approach to analyzing African drum ensemble music. Koetting deplors analyzing "patterns of a drum ensemble piece individually," because one will "miss the main characteristic of the music, which is the totality of sound produced by the interrelation of the various parts" (1970: 30). In agreement, Anku asserts, "I endorse the formulation of the problem by Koetting, since it confirms my own experience as a native scholar (Anku 1986; 1988, 1992, 1993, 1995a; 1995b)." By remarking "as a native scholar," Anku draws attention to a position that seeks not to only legitimize Koetting's view, but also the claims that Anku would be arguing in his article. Yet, given the richness of ethnographic insights including Akan local terms for concepts and instruments, Anku left out the names of his key ethnographic consultants.

In order to prove that the holistic approach to the analysis of drum ensemble derives from the perception norms of master drummers, Anku draws on two celebrated Ghanaian drummers who could individually play multiple drums concurrently to simulate the collective roles and sounds from multiple percussionists. Anku's argument is that whenever Okyerema Asante (Akan) or Gideon Foli Alorwoyie (Ewe) play multiple drums, they hear and try to reproduce the dances they perform as a composite whole. This example is very persuasive and appropriate in explaining the concept of integration, although it sacrifices the communal creativity of multiple ensemble members.

Additionally, Anku in this article reminds readers of several other forms of integration in other African music genres beyond ensemble drumming. He explains the extent to which the procedures of the ubiquitous call-and-response form in African songs also apply to ensemble drumming and illustrates how the concept of integration structurally and generatively implicates hocketing, stratification, and interlocking music-making processes.

Before focusing on *adowa*, Anku points out the need to differentiate between an "emergent rhythm" as "random and aesthetic selection of a continuum of 'peaks of prominence' of sound patterns," and "resultant rhythm" as "a more definite outcome of integration, conceived monolithically" (1997: 213). He also emphasizes the importance of "the intensity factor of drumming." Anku then uses the "time span" as a structural framework for discussing the principles of integration. He identifies articulated structural units of rhythms as those that span 1) two time patterns (third synthesis unit); 2) a time pattern unit (second synthesis level); 3) groups of half patterns (third synthesis level); and 4) four equidistant divisions of the (time) pattern as beat units. Understood within the framework of the time line, with its regulative beat, it is easy to follow the integrative relationship between two or more parts through procedures of "(a) overlapping, (b) interlocking, and (c) adjacency and alternation" (215) of patterns. Although the visual illustrations are not re-printed here, it is easy to understand "overlapping relationship" through our familiarity with overlapping call-and-response

structures in which one part does not finish before the second part enters. Similarly, our knowledge of “alternation” of antiphonal sonic blocks should help us visualize “adjacency relationships” in the integration process. “Interlocking relationships” happen with two concurrent patterns when different time cells are arranged through a patterning that Nketia (1974: 136) calls “spacing.”

Further, Anku provides analytic insights on integration of every instrument with the time line or bell; secondary relationships between multiple instruments other than with the bells; relationships between two composite parts played on two bells, or two *donno* drums; and roles of structural patterns that keep ensemble members in sync even during moments of groove, or intensity with staggered rhythms. A proof of Anku’s thorough and comprehensive analytical disposition is evident in ways in which he explains how every instrument of the *adowa* ensemble is integrated with another member.

### **Other Notable Features of/in Anku’s Scholarship on African Dance-Drumming**

Anku considers Western staff notation as sufficiently accommodating for transcribing African music. However, for transcription to capture the composer’s intent, and for its use to represent a particular compositional idealism, Anku reiterates Nketia’s (1985) position that experience with the music must be integrated into transcription. As such, paying attention to collective ethnic perception of the music should take precedence over the analyst’s “speculations,” “negotiations,” (and if I may add, compromise of ethnic perspectives), or subjective approaches that Anku (2007) thinks destroy the identity of the music. To Anku, transcription is an inevitable tool for “transforming” African drumming, which exists in oral tradition and is practiced in an “intuitive” manner, into “quantifiable” configurations necessary for analysis and theorizing that targets the broader academic community.

For Anku, the source of the intellectualization of African drumming is the respective indigenous cultures themselves. He not only emphasizes the importance of ethnic cultural perception, but also has a high regard for the intellectual acumen and creative ingenuity of the custodians of traditional African music cultures, including master drummers. The compositional procedures and organizational principles embedded in African drumming practices, Anku observes, constitute a sublime artistry worthy of theorizing. Hence, the correction of marginalizing claims made by some Western scholars about African musicians abounds in his works, presented in subtle ways and an inoffensive tone that match his soft-spoken and quiet demeanor.

To buttress Anku’s valorization of previously demeaned traditional African musicians, a commonplace theme in works of other African-born scholars including Nketia, Nzewi, Euba, Agawu, and Avorgbedor, I now juxtapose two assertions, one by A. M. Jones and the other by Anku. Agawu (2003:63) decries Jones’s dicta (1959) “‘The African,’ as he [Jones] was fond of saying, was an informant, not a theorist. The African ‘is utterly unconscious of any organized theory behind his music. He makes his music quite spontaneously.’” On the contrary, Anku (2007) notes, “African drummers

have precise notions of minutest details of the rhythms they play and of the prescribed combinations thereof.” Admittedly, half a century separates Jones and Anku’s work. Yet, several readers may not question Jones’s research methodology before believing his marginalizing claims. Simha Arom asserts, “The trouble is that the theory is implicit. The outsider trying to understand the music of a given culture or people is ignorant of its underlying rules” (1991: 139). While the preceding suggests a way in which Anku’s scholarship addresses some of the challenges that other Africanists engage and confront, his contribution to this debate must remind all researchers of the need to be better listeners to their African consultants, and that our written reports should reflect a balanced and positive reflexivity that presents both the researched and researcher as knowledgeable beings.

Anku often cites dances from multiple ethnic groups whenever discussing rhythm-related themes. A case in point is his discussion of preferences for either the 12 grid or 16 grid sets as well as cross-set practices in which he drew on *Yeve*, *Akom*, *Trovu*, and *Santería* and *Condomblé* of the African Diaspora—all religious dances; *Adowa*, *Kundum*, *Fontomfrom*, *Gahu*, and *High-life* (in 2007). Indeed, he wrote an article (1995b) on the parallels between African American drumming in Pittsburgh and jazz drumming, a content that bears testimony to his expansive ethnographic field. As can be seen from the preceding, Anku is not a unanimist, to use Agawu’s term (Agawu 2003: 58-61). Anku did not homogenize African drumming traditions, and although he implied the presence of certain overarching principles that underlie the various traditions, his advocacy for ethnic collective perception, a position that runs through most of his work, gives evidence of the idiosyncratic features of African dance-drumming genres.

### **Computer-Digital Technology in Anku’s Research**

For these and other articles, as well as his theses, Anku characteristically uses copious computer generated diagrams, figures, and notations to provide visual images and representations of all details of his theorizing to complement his accessible prose. This communicative tool illuminates sonic structures whose comprehension may at the first instance seem abstract, especially for visual learners. This methodology did not escape criticism from some. I recall two memories regarding the computer debate surrounding Anku’s work.

In the late 90s, I took a graduate seminar under Professor Akin Euba, who made us read an excerpt from Anku’s doctoral thesis. A conundrum that emerged from our discussion was whether Anku’s innovative and substantial use of computer-generated diagrams facilitated or complicated the understanding of his theories on African rhythm. The answer may not reside in the use of the computer per se, but rather in the extent to which Anku revolutionized theorizing on African rhythm. More recently, in October of 2009, when Anku presented at AMNA, he typically used his digitally processed audiovisual aids. Two members of the audience asked separate questions that reverberate with the “computer debate.” The first was whether the presentation

would have been different had Anku used recorded live drumming rather than digitally processed music. Anku explained that although there is a difference in the sounds of recorded live music and computer aided simulation of instruments, his focus was not on timbre, but to use transcription and diagrams to explain rhythmic principles and structures. But, as I have mentioned earlier in discussion of his article on “rhythmic integration,” Anku’s use of technology in presenting his ideas involves his translation of recorded ethnographic data provided by reputable master drummers. The other wanted to know who were Anku’s usual target audiences, and what were their levels of understanding of his ideas. Anku answered that his audiences were diverse, and went on to say that high school students follow his theories and that middle school students could understand his presentations.

### **Anku’s Charge to All African Music Scholars and Students**

Anku concludes his (1997) article by quoting Jairazbhoy, “students of ethnomusicology are delving so deeply into the music of other cultures that many are now bi-musical.... They are beginning to approach one of the goals of ethnomusicology—the ability to identify not only those structures ‘familiar to us in the notation of the accidental art’ (which is in itself a legitimate aspect of the field), but to identify and be able to isolate structures recognized by the native musicians themselves” (1977: 270). In the same light, the role of the bi-musical native contributors in meeting the challenges of explaining and expressing their own native arts adequately in “global” terms would continue to be a welcome contribution to the field’ (238).

Anku’s invocation of Jairazbhoy’s dictum addresses non-African bi-musical scholars, and Anku’s own charge targets African-born bi-musical researchers. Yet the common ground is advocacy for fair representation of indigenous African musicians’ perspectives and inclusion of their perceptions in our research outputs. This is the wish Anku lucidly stated and exemplified in his scholarship.

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