

reviews

Kofi Agawu. *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xx, 217 pp., 19 plates; compact disc.

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Among the three branches of musicology—historical musicology, theory, and ethnomusicology—it is the relationship between the last two that is most distant and tenuous. It is not difficult to see why. In terms of their subject matter, the theorist's domain (mainly Classical, Romantic, and twentieth-century art music) is essentially a subdomain of the historical musicologist's (Western art music as a whole); and this, in turn, is non-overlapping with the ethnomusicologist's (everything else).¹ The more serious divide between ethnomusicology and theory, however, is in their philosophy and approach. The theorist's main activity is intensive study of the score of a piece, more or less in isolation from its historical context: the circumstances of its creation, the life and personality of its composer, and its historical milieu. (This is an oversimplification, but it fairly characterizes the way most music theory and analysis—Schenkerian analysis and pitch-class set theory, for example—is done.) If this approach is troubling to many musicologists, who see the score as but one source of evidence toward the understanding of a work,² to ethnomusicologists it is positively anathema. Indeed, to some ethnomusicologists, even the relatively broad perspective of the historical musicologist has seemed too narrow—excessively concerned with limited documentary evidence and factual questions of chronology and authorship, and not enough with larger issues of social context, function, and meaning.³ From the ethnomusicologist's perspective, confining one's attention to the score alone is simply the extreme of this unhealthy tendency. It represents the ultimate embrace of a dangerous fiction: the autonomy of the musical work.

This portrayal of the situation implies that theorists and ethnomusicologists have nothing to talk about (and there are some on both sides, I believe, who feel this way). But in truth, there is no insurmountable conflict between the two approaches, and indeed, much room for interaction and cooperation. All that is required from ethnomusicologists is the concession that intensive and "autonomous" study of musical objects, represented by scores or in some other way, can be a valuable route to the understanding of music of any kind; and the conces-

sion by theorists that this is not the only route to such understanding, and hardly ever a sufficient one. (I will explain further what I mean by "autonomous" study of musical works.) If this much can be agreed, the way would seem clear for a fruitful reconciliation between theory and ethnomusicology, both in philosophy and in subject matter. Plenty of people on both sides, I expect, would make the necessary concessions; now all that is needed is for someone to actually do the work.

Under such circumstances, Kofi Agawu's *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* is particularly welcome. The author is an accomplished theorist, who has written extensively about Classical and Romantic music; most notably, his book *Playing With Signs* (Agawu 1991) is a semiotic study of the "topics" operating in Classical chamber music. However, Agawu has also been working for some years in the field of African music, as his numerous articles attest (see 1986:64–83; 1987:400–18; 1988a:127–46; 1988b:75–105; 1990:221–43). In *African Rhythm*, Agawu crowns this body of work with an extended ethnomusicological study of the music of the Northern Ewe. One point is worth stressing here: *African Rhythm* is, among other things, most certainly an ethnomusicological book. (On page 3 Agawu claims that his book is "a contribution to African music study rather than to ethnomusicology," but I find this questionable; in any case, it seems odd to think that this single sentence should affect the way the book is construed.) It involves close ethnographic observation of the musical life of the Ewe people: their music, the manner and contexts in which it is performed, and its functions and meanings in the larger context of Ewe life. I can see no reason why *African Rhythm* is any less ethnomusicological than, for example, Blacking's *Venda Children's Songs* (1967), Nketia's *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana* (1963), or Keil's *Tiv Song* (1979). Alongside its ethnographic aspect, however, the analyses in *African Rhythm* very much reflect Agawu's background as a theorist. And this brings us to an important point, one that qualifies the theory/ethnomusicology divide discussed earlier. In the broadest sense, analysis—the study of patterns of pitch, rhythm, timbre, form, and other aspects of musical structure—is a central part of ethnomusicology; it features heavily, for example, in the studies by Blacking and others just mentioned. But analysis as practiced by theorists is of a rather different character. In the first place, it entails intensive study of individual pieces, in all (or many) of their structural aspects, with an interest in what is individual or unique about them. Secondly, it entails an interest in musical structures and relationships whose extramusical function or cultural meaning may be unknown or unclear, simply because they seem musically important. This kind of analysis assumes that music is, to some extent at least, "autonomous," in that it cannot be fully explained in terms of its cultural context (at least, not by

any means known to us at the moment). That music is (to some extent) autonomous in this way is, I think, profoundly true. It is this perspective that Agawu brings to bear, and that makes *African Rhythm* a work of music theory as well as ethnomusicology.

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As the title suggests, Agawu's study is concerned with the music of one African ethnic group, the Northern Ewe of Ghana, although he often extends his conclusions to African music as a whole. To describe the book as a study of Northern Ewe music, however, is not quite accurate: Agawu addresses himself not only to music, but to all the "rhythms" involved in Ewe life. Agawu begins the book with a description of the "rhythms of society" encountered in the course of a hypothetical day. These include rhythms of work (the pounding of cassava by girls and the pounding of nails by carpenters), rhythms of children's games, the rhythmic calls of market vendors, and, especially in the evening, the rhythms of drumming, singing, and dancing. At the end of the first chapter, Agawu presents a model of what he considers the primary "modes of rhythmic signification" in Ewe society, showing how each mode is generated by another (28):

Gesture → spoken word → vocal music → instrumental music →
dance → Gesture

Gesture is "the primordial rhythmic event" (27). Gestures generate words, in that any linguistic understanding between two people assumes a shared gestural language. Word generates song; this is amply shown by Agawu's analyses of the role of speech tones in melody. Song generates instrumental music, instrumental music generates dance—these connections seem apparent enough—and dance generates gesture, to complete the circle. As Agawu emphasizes, there are other links and dependencies here as well. Speech, for example, can generate instrumental music directly, as in the well-known "talking drum" music of the Ewe and other groups. Moreover, each kind of rhythm has its own internal generative power (e.g., while vocal music is clearly influenced by language, it is also guided by purely musical factors). Instrumental music, too, despite its connections to melody and speech, is also motivated partly by considerations internal to music—for example, "a fascination with a particular rhythm" (29).

This model is too idealized to be taken very far, as Agawu readily admits. But it provides a useful preview of the topics Agawu intends to discuss, and the order in which he will discuss them. Following the first chapter, Agawu devotes chapters to the rhythms of language (chapter 2),

song (chapter 3), and drumming and dancing (chapter 4). Following this are two extended analyses of Ewe performances: a drumming-dancing performance (chapter 5) and a folktale (chapter 6). A short concluding chapter offers some general points about African rhythm.

Agawu's discussion of language begins with an overview of Ewe prosody. Syllables in Ewe have three properties: length, tone (low, medium, or high), and stress. While length and tone pattern can impose an accent on a syllable (with longer and high-tone syllables being accented), these accents are distinct from, and independent of, actual "stress." In the word *adevu*, for example, the tone pattern is low-low-high, creating a tone accent on the last syllable, but it is the middle syllable that is stressed (37).⁴ Agawu goes on to consider some uses of language that he finds particularly musical: greetings, a town crier's announcement, children's riddles, and the prayers that accompany the pouring of libations. As Agawu notes, an essential aspect of this musicality is periodicity and repetition. This may take the form of exact repetition; for example, in a prayer to gods and ancestors, each of the narrator's lines is followed by a co-narrator's affirmation ("Yoho"). It may involve near repetition, as in the many similar phrases in an extended greeting exchange ("Did you sleep?" "Did yours sleep?" "Did you sleep peacefully?"). More subtly, it may consist simply of a sequence of phrases of roughly comparable length, establishing a latent metricality. In the second prayer Agawu considers, this metricality is prominent enough to place it "on the threshold of musical rhythm" (60).

The book is accompanied by a CD, containing over 30 examples of speech, song, and instrumental music, including both of the extended performances analyzed in chapters 5 and 6. In some respects, Agawu's analyses and discussions apply only to specific performances, since many aspects of Ewe pieces—songs and dances—are improvised and will vary from one performance to another. Agawu handles this matter well, making it clear which aspects of a performance are improvised and which ones are fixed.

Agawu begins chapter 3 with a discussion of children's songs. One of his main points here is that children's song is no less complex, nor indeed different in any fundamental way, from adult music. Frequently children's songs are accompanied by physical movements such as clapping, pointing to objects (as in counting songs), or moving stones. In some cases, a single melody may be aligned with physical movements in different ways, creating challenges of coordination for the participants. Adult songs are divided into two categories, those in "free rhythm" and those in "strict rhythm." (Agawu suggests that free rhythm might just as well be called "speech rhythm.") A number of songs are analyzed here. Two improvised songs in free rhythm by a singer-composer reflect complex patterns of line

repetition, which Agawu represents in a "paradigmatic arrangement" reminiscent of semiotic analyses. Several of the songs analyzed here and in chapter 5 reflect large-scale structural pitch patterns, which Agawu represents using quasi-Schenkerian graphs. Among the complexities of these pieces are the shifts between improvised and "set" portions and the shifts between strict and free rhythm (which are not always clear-cut). The chapter ends with an extended analysis of an Ewe lament.

Agawu's discussion of drumming (chapter 4) is framed in terms of a model proposed by Nketia. Nketia posits three main modes of drumming in African music: speech mode (actual "talking drums," which imitate the rhythms and tones of speech), signal mode (in which drums convey information through arbitrary signals), and dance mode (in which they accompany dance) (Nketia 1963:17-31). The third is by far the most prevalent in Ewe culture and the main object of Agawu's attention. Agawu divides dances into two types, serious and recreational, and discusses several examples of each, culminating in a fairly detailed account of the *Gbolo* recreational dance. Agawu says relatively little about the musical details of Ewe drum ensemble pieces, which, as he notes, have been widely analyzed elsewhere; rather, he focuses here on the social context of dances, their narrative content, and their broad outlines in terms of both music and dance. Among the most fascinating is *Adabatram*, a dance done to mark the funeral of an important chief, in which a large drum is carried around by a specially chosen (and in this case very reluctant) carrier. The drum is said to dictate where the carrier will walk, and inspires great fear in anyone who encounters it.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of a performance by the *Ziavi Zigi* group. The entire sung text of the 35-minute performance, and the notated first line of each musical section, is included in the book. Here Agawu has the opportunity to describe aspects of the performance that are inevitably neglected elsewhere: the physical setting, the costumes, the performers, the dynamics of performance space, and the interaction between audience and performers. On this last matter, Agawu makes an important point. It is sometimes claimed that in African performance everyone participates and there is no performer-audience distinction. Agawu argues that this is mistaken: the boundary between performers is usually quite clear, and participation by the audience (clapping, etc.) is usually fairly limited.

The *Ziavi Zigi* performance involves an introduction followed by a series of four dances, each one comprising several short songs. Each of the dances has an underlying theme, or at least a traditional context associated with it (i.e., the first two dances center around young couples, the third is a hunting dance, and the fourth concerns death and ancestors),

but these themes are only very loosely reflected in the texts of the songs, which touch on a wide variety of subjects. (The inclusion and ordering of songs varies from one performance to another.) However, Agawu notes many musical connections between the songs: rhythmic motives, archetypal pitch patterns, and long-range peaks and valleys of energy that give the performance an overall shape. Another recurring theme in Agawu's discussion here is the clash between tradition and modernity—elements of the latter including an incongruous spoken introduction halfway through the first dance (132), and a song dedicated to the governing party of Ghana (133–34).

In chapter 6, the telling of a folktale is analyzed. The folktale describes a childless couple and their discovery of a child whom they adopt; the child is kidnapped by animals and eventually escapes. In the course of this, it is explained how various animals—the rat, the dove, and the butterfly—came to have their characteristic sounds and movements. The musical aspects of the narration are discussed: the strategic use of repetition; the modulation of speed, pitch and intensity to depict what is being described (e.g., the motions of the different animals); and the use of nonsense syllables as sound effects. An intriguing aspect of this performance is the “interludes”: brief songs (more or less relevant to the story) interpolated by members of the audience, unscripted and spontaneous, but welcomed and incorporated by the narrator.

The book concludes with a brief chapter of general discussion. First Agawu reconsiders his model of rhythmic modes in Ewe society. He then offers a critique of A. M. Jones's transcriptions of Ewe songs; in so doing, he presents some general conclusions about African rhythm, to which I will now turn.

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Since this is both an ethnomusicological and a music-theoretical book, it requires evaluation from both of these perspectives. I am not an ethnomusicologist, and will leave it to others more qualified to assess that aspect of *African Rhythm* in depth. From some acquaintance with the field, however, I can say that Agawu's observations and discussions of Ewe culture seem exemplary. They are sensitive, careful, and admirably free of preconceptions and facile generalizations, making *African Rhythm* a worthy successor to pioneering studies of African music by Jones, Blacking, Nketia, Keil, and others. My focus here will be on the analytical aspects of the book, which I am more qualified to address.

The first thing to note is that Agawu devotes considerable space to analysis of the music-theoretical kind discussed earlier—analysis that con-

siders a piece in many aspects at once (pitch, rhythm, motive, form, music-text relations, etc.), trying to make sense of them however possible, without any fear of making observations whose significance appears to be purely musical. The analyses in chapter 3 are perhaps the best examples of this. On several occasions Agawu feels compelled to defend this analytical approach. Before embarking on the analysis of the lament in chapter 3, for example, he notes that some readers might find such detailed analyses to be "ill-founded, premature, or at best of doubtful relevance" (83). Similarly, on page 4, he argues energetically against the view that one cannot simply "listen" to African music (i.e., that it can only be understood in conjunction with its extramusical—particularly visual—elements and other aspects of context). These remarks seem to suggest that Agawu, too, senses the tension between music theory and ethnomusicology to which I earlier referred, although he does not describe it in these terms. (His repeated insistence that vocal music and drumming are not determined only by language, but also by musical considerations, is significant here as well, drawing attention in another way to the importance of musical factors.) By giving this kind of analysis a major role in his book, Agawu brings a new approach to the study of African music, one which should be given serious consideration.

In general, the analyses in *African Rhythm* are of a very high order. Agawu's Schenkerian analyses are musical and plausible; indeed, the underlying melodic archetypes he finds, such as those in the Ziavi Zigi performance (129–30), are more compelling than many in similar analyses of Western music. As in much analysis, Agawu searches for the unifying features of each piece, but without imposing unity to a degree that is musically unjustified. Particularly impressive in this regard is the analysis of the lament at the end of chapter 3. Agawu shows that the singer, using what seem to be very simple resources of pitch and rhythm, constructs a work of great complexity, through shifts of register, intricate motivic connections, and subtle tonal focus. Another factor here, less accessible to the non-Ewe-speaker, is the tension between the inherent "tone" of the words spoken and the contour of the melody.

On several occasions, Agawu cites as a main characteristic of Ewe music the frequent conflicts between accent and meter. By "meter" he means—I assume—a framework of levels of beats, not necessarily always expressed in sound, but present in the mind of the experienced performer and listener. Some time-points are high-level (or "strong") beats, while others are not, so that different time-points have differing degrees of "metrical accent." Frequently the "phenomenal accents" of Ewe music—events marked by loudness, linguistic stress, high pitch, length, or other means—do not coincide with metrical accents, and therefore "conflict" with the

metrical structure (64, 68, 110, 189, 192, 193). As Agawu notes, this conception of African rhythm is at odds with that of some earlier writers, notably A.M. Jones, who posited constantly shifting metrical structures, so that every accented event was metrically strong (Jones 1959). Agawu argues convincingly that African rhythm, like Western rhythm, is based on a regular metrical framework; thus the differences between Western and African rhythm are not as fundamental as Jones and others have maintained (193). "If there is a Northern Ewe difference," Agawu suggests, "it resides in their ability to test the limits of a stable background without relinquishing dependence on that background" (190). While this is no doubt true, it is important to note that this is a matter of degree rather than a fundamental qualitative difference. Certainly Western classical music contains many examples of conflicts between metrical structure and phenomenal accent. Agawu's discussions of metrical conflicts in Ewe music would have benefited from some acknowledgment of this, especially given his general point that the differences between African and Western music have often been exaggerated.

A related issue concerns the connection between meter and phrasing. Several times Agawu notes that meter and phrasing are frequently out of synchrony in Ewe music, so that phrases begin on weak beats (64, 66, 110). Again, this is undoubtedly true; what is odd here is the implication that it is not also true of Western music. Agawu comments that "[s]ome listeners to African music are often thrown by the consistency with which, and extent to which, phrases suppress a normative strong beat pattern, originating and terminating elsewhere in the bar. Their instinct is to regard the first sound as the origin of whatever cycle of beats is operative in the music" (64). But in Western music, too, it is common for meter and phrasing to be somewhat out of phase, so that the phrase starts slightly before the strong beat; any melody that starts on an upbeat is an example of this. (Consider—out of innumerable examples—songs such as "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Dixie," and "Happy Birthday.") There may be a difference in degree between Western and African music with regard to the asynchrony between grouping and meter that is tolerated. But Agawu has not shown any fundamental difference here between African and Western rhythmic perception. Indeed, Agawu's example 3.1 (which is the context in which the above comment is made) contains a two-note anacrusis that seems no different from many anacrusis in Western music.

These issues—the distinction between metrical and phenomenal accent, and between grouping and meter—are complex and subtle. Although strong beats and phenomenal accents may not always coincide, it is from the phenomenal accents that we infer the metrical structure (in Western music and presumably in Ewe music as well); therefore, there cannot be

too much syncopation without the metrical structure being undercut. Similarly, the relationship between grouping and meter is complex; although they are in principle independent, there is a tendency (other things being equal) to hear them as roughly aligned. Understanding of these issues has come relatively recently in music theory. The main achievement of Lerdahl and Jackendoff's *Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (1983) was to present a satisfactory (and relatively formal) model of these structures and the way they are inferred.⁵ Agawu's comments suggest that something similar to the *GTTM* model might be applicable to Ewe music (and other African music as well) although this would require much further study.⁶ It is unfortunate that Agawu did not give greater emphasis to these commonalities. Again, this is particularly ironic in view of the fact that one of Agawu's stated goals is to debunk the myth of irreconcilable "difference" between African and Western music (4–5, 188, 193). It seems, actually, that the affinities between African and Western rhythm are even deeper than he suggests.⁷

One further point Agawu makes about rhythmic structure is truly puzzling. He comments several times that the time signatures in his examples should be taken primarily as an indication of grouping. Meter in Ewe music, he suggests, is mainly a "grouping mechanism" that does not imply any "accentual hierarchy" (70–71, 110, 188, 200). This would seem to directly contradict Agawu's other point: grouping—or in Agawu's terms "phrasing"—is frequently not in synchrony with meter. And in any case, if meter implies only grouping, without having accentual implications, then where is the conflict between meter and phenomenal accent that Agawu repeatedly mentions? Perhaps Agawu takes this step to avoid what he sees as the contradiction of having a metrical structure in which not all the strong beats are explicitly accented; however, as I have noted—and as Agawu seems to acknowledge elsewhere—this is not a contradiction but is rather the normal state of affairs.

Let us pursue this line of thought one step further. Agawu's musical examples are notated in Western music notation, with traditional time signatures. I take this to mean that Agawu understands Ewe melodies (at least the ones in strict rhythm) as having metrical structures similar to Western music (notwithstanding the confusing remarks just mentioned about meter and grouping). Consider example 3.5 from Agawu's book, shown here as example 1: a melody with a clapping accompaniment. In *GTTM*'s terms, the metrical structure indicated in Agawu's transcription would be represented by structure A in example 2: three levels of beats, corresponding to eighths, quarters, and half-notes. In this case, Agawu notes that the even-numbered measures are heard as strong. We can represent this by adding a fourth row of beats at the two-measure level, as

Example 1: From Agawu, *African Rhythm*, page 64.

♩ = 116

Clap

Voices

The musical score for Example 1 consists of three systems. Each system has two staves: the top staff is labeled 'Clap' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Voices'. The time signature is 2/4. The tempo is indicated as ♩ = 116. The Clap part uses a single staff with a treble clef and contains rhythmic patterns of eighth and quarter notes with rests. The Voices part uses a single staff with a treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes.

Example 2: Possible metrical structures for example 1.

A) : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : .

B) : . . : . . : . . : . . : . . : . . : . . : . .

C) : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : .

D) : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : . : .

The four options (A, B, C, D) represent different metrical structures for the rhythm in Example 1. Each option is a sequence of dots and vertical lines (representing stems) corresponding to the 16 beats of the 2/4 time signature. Option A shows a regular 2-beat pattern. Option B shows a 4-beat pattern. Option C shows a 2-beat pattern with a 4-beat pattern in the middle. Option D shows a 4-beat pattern with a 2-beat pattern in the middle. Below the options is a partial musical score for Example 1, showing the first two staves (Clap and Voices) for the first system.

shown in structure A. I have full confidence in Agawu's intuitions about how Ewe music should be heard, and in most cases, the metrical structures he suggests are exactly the ones I would infer. A question arises here, however: why do Ewe listeners infer this particular metrical structure for this melody? Why do they not hear the melody as being in 6/8 (structure B), as they do in many other cases, or in 2/4 with the strong beats one quarter-note later (structure C), or with odd-numbered measures strong (structure D)? *GTTM* offers a general solution to this question, which seems to work well here. The *GTTM* model is stated in the form of a series of "Metrical Preference Rules" (i.e., we choose the structure that best satisfies the preference rules). For example, we prefer a structure in which long notes coincide with strong beats (1983:84); in this case, structures A and D seem to align strong beats with long notes (both in the melody and the clapping) better than structures B and C. We also prefer a structure in which parallelisms (i.e., motivic patterns) are aligned with the meter, so that strong beats occur in the same place at each repetition of the motive (1983:75); this favors structures A, C, and D over structure B, since in the former cases the metrical structure is aligned with the clapping pattern. We also slightly prefer to locate strong beats at or near the beginning of "groups" (i.e., groups of notes that are close together in time—separated by rests—and similar in register) (1983:76); this tends to favor structure D over the other three (since the entire four-measure phrase clearly constitutes a group). But structure A is preferred to structure D in another way, since it gives greater metric strength to the long notes at the end of the clapping pattern, as well as the final long note of the melodic phrase. (Personally, I think I hear structure D here—contrary to the Ewe hearing reported by Agawu—but structure A is certainly not out of the question.) Suppose, however, that the clap pattern shifted (relative to the melody), as in example 3 (which, Agawu notes on page 67, sometimes occurs in performances of the song). Now the long notes in the clapping pattern are aligned with odd-numbered measures of the melody rather than even-numbered ones. According to *GTTM*, this would make hearing D stronger (with odd-numbered measures of the melody metrically strong). If we assume that, in example 2, structure A is the preferred hearing, example 3 might be ambiguous between structure A and structure D. (According to *GTTM*, an ambiguous passage is one in which the metrical preference rules favor two interpretations roughly equally.) And this is exactly what Agawu suggests; in his words, there is now a conflict between "clap accent" and "melodic accent" (68). In short, this example suggests that the *GTTM* model could do a good job of predicting the metrical structures inferred by Ewe listeners. It may well turn out that Ewe listeners had somewhat different "weightings" of the rules, causing slightly different interpreta-

Example 3: Example 1, with the clapping pattern shifted.



tions to be formed by Western and Ewe listeners in some cases (and, as I noted, this example is perhaps such a case); perhaps even somewhat different rules would be involved. One possibility relates to the alignment of linguistic stress with metrical accent; Agawu suggests that this principle operates rather weakly in Ewe music (192), whereas it is of great importance in Western music. In this sense the *GTTM* model could perhaps provide a way of representing the differences in rhythmic perception between Ewe and Western listeners, as well as the similarities. The same point might be made regarding the conflicts between meter and grouping that Agawu discusses. All this requires much further study, but it seems to me that *GTTM* offers some promising possibilities here.

With his many careful transcriptions of Ewe performances, and his thoughtful comments and analyses, Agawu provides us with a valuable body of information about Ewe music. It is a pity that he did not take the final step of integrating his observations about Ewe rhythm with recent theoretical work on the subject; still, this book makes an important contribution to such a comparative project by giving us a much clearer picture of how rhythm works in Northern Ewe music.

Since I have undertaken to evaluate the analytical portions of *African Rhythm*, it seems appropriate to point out errors of detail, but I find very few. Line 5 of page 66 should read, "So, although phrase boundaries occur after the second crotchet of bar 2 . . . and after the downbeat of bar 5. . . ." Page 81, line 9, should read ". . . of the downbeat of m. 9." On page 190, Agawu retranscribes three of Jones's transcriptions of children's songs. While Agawu's discussion here relates mainly to the barring, there are also differences in actual rhythmic values (especially in example 7.4). Some comments about these differences would have been appreciated. Was Jones's transcription simply inaccurate, or is there some reason that Agawu's makes better "sense" in Ewe terms? On page 192 Agawu says that Jones's insistence on the alignment of stress and meter led him to set the word *abaye* with the second syllable metrically strong, but Agawu's retranscription does exactly the same thing.

A few other thoughts I have about the book are more in the nature of questions than criticisms. Agawu's discussion of children's songs includes

a section on what he calls "rhymes." These do not appear to be rhymes in the Western sense; perhaps Agawu has a reason for calling them rhymes, but it would be interesting to know what it is. Secondly, Agawu comments at one point that Ewe children's music involves many of the same rhythmic devices as adult music, including syncopations and "displacements" (62); however, Agawu says virtually nothing about displacements anywhere else in the book. I have argued elsewhere that many syncopations in rock can be understood as displacements—as deviations from an implied "deep structure"—rather than merely as metrical conflicts (Temperley, in press). It would be interesting to know if syncopations in African music also involved displacements, but to my knowledge this question has hardly been addressed. A final question concerns Agawu's discussion of the "rhythms of [Ewe] society": rhythms of everyday work, speech, and play. I wonder if similar scrutiny would show that Western society, too, was every bit as "rhythmic" as Ewe society. If this were true, it would not in any way diminish the value of Agawu's insightful observations about the Ewe; however, in stressing the "rhythmicity" of Ewe society, Agawu is setting up, or really reinforcing, a kind of "difference" between Africa and the West. As Agawu rightly reminds us, this is something to be cautious about.

I have tended to emphasize here how Agawu's theoretical perspective enriches the study of African music, and how bringing to bear other theoretical ideas could enrich it further. In short, I have emphasized what music theory can do for ethnomusicology. But the other lesson of this book, of course, is what ethnomusicology can do for music theory. For there is no doubt that our appreciation of Ewe music—and Agawu's analyses of it—are greatly enhanced by the ethnographic context he provides. Agawu is right that just listening to, say, the performance of the Ziavi Zigi group is a deeply satisfying way to approach it. And yet knowing something about the physical situation, the elaborate rituals of introduction and of asking permission that must be followed, the words being sung and their complex and sometimes hidden meanings for Ewe listeners, the uneasy mixture of tradition and modernity—all these things add an invaluable dimension to the experience. How much less satisfying Agawu's analyses would be if they were presented in the usual "music-theoretical" manner, with no context at all. For anyone interested in bridging the gap between theory and ethnomusicology, *African Rhythm* offers an inspiring example of how to proceed.

Notes

1. These are rough generalizations, as are several statements that follow. Ethnomusicologists have recently begun to seriously address the issue of applying their methods to Western art music, and historical musicologists have broadened their horizons as well; generally, however, these divisions still hold.

2. For a lively debate over this issue, see Taruskin (1986:313–20) and Forte (1986:321–37).

3. See, for example, Nettl (1964:11–12) and Hood (1965:261–62). Perhaps few ethnomusicologists would make these criticisms today; certainly they would be less justified now than they were when they were made. More recently, however, similar contrasts between historical musicology and ethnomusicology have been drawn by historical musicologists themselves. In their critique of “formalist” musicology, Richard Leppert and Susan McClary point to ethnomusicology as a model to be emulated (1987:xviii). Joseph Kerman, too, while finding ethnomusicologists’ criticisms overstated, agrees that “many musicologists pay too little attention to anything outside the strictly musical context they are studying” (1985:170).

4. This distinction seems a little confusing. In linguistics, stress is usually taken to mean the marking of some syllables as more prominent than others. This can involve various phonological factors, including length, pitch, and volume (see Spencer 1996:240–41). It seems wrong, therefore, to speak of stress as a characteristic of syllables alongside length and tone; rather, stress is a more abstract property of syllables, which can be influenced by length and tone.

5. Lerdahl and Jackendoff build on the work of others, notably Carl Schachter (1976:281–334).

6. In many cases, Agawu generalizes his observations about Ewe rhythm to African music in general; to what extent this is justified I am not qualified to say.

7. Agawu in fact cites Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s concept of “phenomenal accent” (201). However, he could have acknowledged more clearly that the conflicts between phenomenal and metrical accents he finds in Northern Ewe music are common in Western music as well.

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