

POLYPHONY IN AFRICAN MUSIC*

Siyavula Uploaders

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1 ARTS AND CULTURE

2 Grade 8

3 CRITICAL AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

4 Module 11

5 the use of polyphony in African music

MUSIC

6 Activity 1:

7 To research the use of polyphony in African music

8 [LO 2.6]

- To understand the activity, you must know the meaning of the concepts *Africa* and *polyphony*. As soon as we understand these, it will be obvious how African music uses polyphony to give each participant equal space in the making of music.

Background

- Research the culture and way of life of the people of Africa, paying special attention to their attitude towards family life (this includes interviewing different people). Remember, when we talk of African music, we are referring mainly to the music of the Sub-Saharan region. This region is south of the Sahara Desert and includes West, East and Central Africa. The style of North Africa is linked to that of the Middle East.

Write your research in the form of a diary entry and paste examples into your learner journal.

Compare a Western concert to an African musical presentation using the information obtained through your research. (Write inside the illustration of a stage.)

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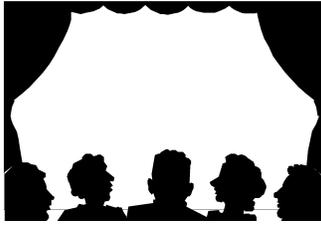


Figure 1

The use of polyphony in African music
 What is the meaning of the word ‘polyphony’?
 Variety of parts
 Performance 1: Melody of round sung in unison

Melody	How many melodic parts are there?
	Are the melodic parts clearly recognisable?
	Motivate
Harmony	Have harmonies been formed?
	If so, is the harmony clear or vague?
	Motivate

Table 1

Rhythm	Is the rhythmic pattern clearly recognisable or is it difficult to recognise?
	Motivate
<i>continued on next page</i>	

Texture	Is the texture thin or dense?
	Motivate
Style	Is it a mono-, homo- or polyphonic performance? First determine the meaning of each prefix, before making your deduction!

Table 2

Performance 2: Melody of round sung with accompaniment, e.g. on piano

Melody	How many melodic parts are there?
	Are the melodic parts clearly recognisable?
	Motivate
Harmony	Are harmonies formed?
	If so, are these clear or vague?
	Motivate
Rhythm	Is the rhythmic pattern clearly recognisable or is it difficult to recognise?
	Motivate
<i>continued on next page</i>	

Texture	Is the texture thin or dense?
	Motivate
Style	Is it a mono-, homo- or polyphonic performance? First determine the meaning of each prefix, before making your deduction!

Table 3

Performance 3: Round sung in three parts

Melody	How many melodic parts are there?
	Are the melodic parts clearly recognisable?
	Motivate

Table 4

Harmony	Have harmonies been formed?
	If so, is the harmony clear or vague?
	Motivate
<i>continued on next page</i>	

Rhythm	Is the rhythmic pattern clearly recognisable or is it difficult?
	Motivate
Texture	Is the texture thin or dense?
	Motivate
Style	Is it a mono-, homo- or polyphonic performance? First determine the meaning of each prefix, before making your deduction!

Table 5

Summary

- Monophony means
- Homophony means
- Polyphony means

Listen to the recording of the *Ritual Healing Music* from Malawi which your educator will play you.

- How many music parts do you hear?
- Can you identify each part?

- Independence of the parts.
- Independence with regard to rhythm.

In African music each part is rhythmically independent from the other, but a unit is still formed. Follow the educator’s instructions:

BEATS						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pattern 1						
Pattern 2						
Total pattern						

Table 6

- Each of the two patterns can be identified and a third is formed as a result of the combination of the first two. This technique is called hocketing: Although each party has its own individuality, **co-operation** and **interaction** take place despite the **independence**.

What do you understand under the following terms. Explain by using the above-mentioned example.

Independence	
Co-operation	
Interaction	

Table 7

- Independence with regard to melody.
- Independence with regard to timbre.
- Imitative entrances which cause overlapping.
- Research one of the following:

- The Shona community
- Mbira music
- Fugue
- JS Bach
- Paste your research into your learner journal.

MBIRA MUSIC (Im-BEE-rah)

Answer the following questions:

1. Which Western music form makes use of imitative entrances?
 2. With which composer do you associate this form?
 3. Which instrument was used in the example to which you listened?
 4. Which country is especially famous for its mbira music?
 5. Which tribal community of this country practises mbira music?
 6. Which other music instrument is often combined with the mbira?
 7. Why do mbira players sometimes begin at any place in the cycle?
 8. Motivate why mbira music from up to 700 years ago is still in use?
- Give a schematic presentation of the entrances of the various participants.
Try the following:

- You will be divided into 3 or 4 groups. (As soon as you have mastered the principle of ‘hocketing’, more groups can be used.)
- The groups decide on possible rhythmical patterns by entering crosses on the beats. The groups present their patterns to the other learners - then all learners complete the graph.
- Each group decides on a specific presentation medium.
- The groups first practise their patterns separately before it is joined.
- The educator will count out loud, so that everyone can co-operate to obtain hocketing, otherwise it will turn into a cacophony.
- Finally the participants act imitatively to demonstrate imitative entrances.
- Then you enter the new pattern, which has been formed, in the following graph.

BEATS						
INSTRUMENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
Combined pattern						

Table 8

- Which genre that you know of also makes use of imitative entrances (it can be sung)?
- Is overlapping caused by the various voice parts?

9 Assessment

Learning Outcome(LOs)
LU 2
REFLECTINGThe learner will be able to reflect critically and creatively on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles in past and present contexts.
Assessment Standards(ASs)
We know this when the learner:
COMPOSITE
2.2 discusses how the Arts have contributed and can contribute towards social and cultural change (e.g. as a mirror, in documentaries, as suggestions, commentaries, predictions).
MUSIC
2.6 listens to and demonstrates how the use of polyphony in African music accords participants equitable space in the making of music;

Table 9