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Composition Processes in Popular Church Music in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

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Popular church music is one of the newer musical genres in Tanzania. It is characterized by incorporating improvisation, by the use of electric guitars, keyboards and drum machines, and by the body movements which accompany its performance. This paper shows that composition processes in this style are collaborative and take place in multiple stages.

Keywords: Composition; Church Music; Music Of Tanzania; Popular Music; Music And Dance

Introduction

Popular church music is one of the newer musical genres in Tanzania. It has grown out of the church music traditions that have been developing since the late 19th century. In these traditions the choirs sang Western church hymns that were translated into local languages. Later, from the 1960s on, some traditional Tanzanian tunes to which Christian religious words were set were added into the repertoire of some choirs. During this time, most of the choirs sang without accompaniment. A few used the harmonium or traditional instruments such as *kayamba* (shakers) and drums (Weman 1960; Mbunga 1963; Barz 1997, 2003). Popular church music started to become a distinctive genre in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was distinguished by the performers' use of body movements, by elements of improvisation and by the use of electric guitars and keyboards, all of which were uncommon in the mainstream church music traditions. Sometimes it is referred to as *Muziki wa Injili* (lit. gospel

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music). With recent developments in recording, including the advent of cheap cassette-dubbing technology and growing broadcasting opportunities in TV and radio stations (some of which are owned by church organizations), popular church music has grown rapidly in popularity in the last two decades (Barz 2003; Sanga 2001). This article examines the composition processes in this music.

Research for this article was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2004. I conducted interviews with popular church musicians from Lutheran, African Inland Church (AIC), Anglican and Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG) churches. I also joined the *Kwaya ya Uinjilisti Sayuni* (Sayuni Evangelical Choir) at Kinondoni Lutheran Church and learnt the choir's music culture by participating and observing various processes in the making of this music. In addition, I filmed some choir concert performances and some dance class sessions in which dance designers[1] of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir demonstrated and taught me the dances for selected songs of the choir.

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Conceptualizing Popular Church Music

Let me begin with a brief look at the problem of defining popular music. Popular music is usually considered to be the music of the people, not of the elite, appealing to as wide a spectrum of people as possible (Barz 1997, 268; Willoughby 1999, 113; Manuel 1988, 1). This basic definition has been used to differentiate popular music from art music and from traditional music. However, it seems inappropriate in many African societies where traditional music performances still play a central role. The African music scholar, Akin Euba describes the nature of this problem:

> The term "popular music" is problematic when applied to Africa where, in traditional cultures, all music is "popular" in that it always attracts a sizable audience. This includes such difficult musical genres as *pipe orisa* or "calling the divinities", which consist of poetry in praise of Yoruba gods. (Euba 1999, 69)

It has also been pointed out that another distinguishing feature of popular music is its dependence on recording technology and mass media such as radio and television (Willoughby 1999). As Peter Manuel writes:

> It should be clear that the most important distinguishing feature of popular music is its close relationship with the mass media. Popular music, as we are employing the term, arose hand-in-hand with the media, is disseminated primarily through them, and is embedded in a music industry based on marketing of recordings on a mass commodity basis. (Manuel 1988, 4)

Richard Middleton gives two reasons as to why this definition is unsatisfactory. He writes:

> The development of methods of mass diffusion (first printed, then electromechanical and electronic) has affected *all* forms of music, and any of them can be treated as a commodity; if a widely distributed recording of a Tchaikovsky symphony turns

> the piece into "popular music", then the definition is, to say the least, unhelpful. At the same time, *all* forms of music of what would usually be considered popular music can in principle be disseminated by face-to-face methods (for instance, in concerts) rather than the mass media, and can be available free, or even structured as collective participation, rather than sold as a commodity; it is hard to believe that a few friends, jamming on "Born in the USA" at a party, are not producing "popular music". (Middleton 1990, 4–5, emphasis in original)

In the case of church choir music in Tanzania, in recent years both types of choirs, that is, choirs that perform "art" church music and those which perform "popular" church music, have engaged in recording and releasing albums. Likewise, radio and television stations have been broadcasting both genres of music at a more or less equal rate. Of course this varies from one radio station to another depending on the church denomination that owns the radio station. For example, while more art church music featured in Upendo FM and Radio Tumaini (owned by the Lutheran Church and Roman Catholic Church respectively), more popular church music featured in Wapo Radio and Praise Power Radio (both owned by Assemblies of God denominations). Partly this is because there were more art church choirs in Roman Catholic and Lutheran denominations than in Assemblies of God denominations. Clearly, then, involvement with mass media is not what defines the music of a particular group as popular church music.

Middleton also rejects the notion that popular music is characterised by simplicity or being unserious as opposed to the complexity or seriousness of art music.

> 'Art' music, for example, is generally regarded as by nature complex, difficult, demanding; 'popular' music then has to be defined as 'simple', 'accessible', 'facile'. But many pieces commonly thought of as 'art' (Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus', many Schubert songs, many Verdi arias) have qualities of simplicity; conversely, it is by no means obvious that the Sex Pistols' records were 'accessible', Frank Zappa's work 'simple' or Billie Holiday's 'facile'. (Middleton 1990, 4)

His argument is shared by both Kofi Agawu (2003b) and Simon Frith (1992). With a Tanzanian musical context in mind, I find the complexity/simplicity criterion irrelevant to the differentiation of popular church music from art church music. It is quite possible, for example, to find a number of popular church songs that are more complex than some art church songs in terms of their structural organization, layering and blending of voices and instrumental parts as well as other aspects of the music such as body movements.

Theodor Adorno has argued that popular music is characterized by standardization. In his article, "On popular music", Adorno writes:

> A clear judgement concerning the relation of serious music to popular music can be arrived at only by strict attention to the fundamental characteristic of popular music: standardization. The whole structure of popular music is standardized, even where the attempt is made to circumvent standardization. Standardization extends from the most general features to the most specific ones. (Adorno 1998 [1941], 197–8)

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Tanzanian popular music and popular church music in particular draw from a variety of musical styles. Some songs draw from global popular music styles (themselves varying greatly from one style to another). Other songs are organized in relation to some Tanzanian local music styles. Yet others fuse these styles. For example, one song may fuse a rumba style with Zaramo traditional rhythm while another song fuses rumba with Ngoni traditional rhythm. Hence standardization becomes a questionable characterization of Tanzanian popular church music.

I believe that any definition of popular music has to take into account the spatio-temporal context of the music in question. In this article I focus on a particular type of church music which people at the local level differentiate from other types of church music in discourse and praxis. My definition of popular church music takes the Tanzanian musical context into consideration and draws from this local discourse.

I use the term popular church music to designate a church musical genre in Tanzania which is characterized by the use of electric guitars and drum machine and/or keyboards. In most cases the choirs or musicians use a set of three guitars: solo (lead), rhythm and bass guitar. The primacy of guitars has at times earned the choirs that perform this music names such as *kwaya za magitaa* (lit. guitar choirs) or *kwaya za vyombo* (lit. choirs of instruments). This is one factor that distinguishes the style from what I call art church music. Art church music is normally performed either unaccompanied or accompanied by organ or electric keyboard. Art church choirs normally perform Western hymns (translated into local languages, mainly Kiswahili) and traditional Tanzanian songs that are adopted for choir use by arranging them in four parts and setting religious words to the music. They also perform newly composed songs by choir teachers. In most cases the songs for these choirs are written in either staff or sol-fa notation. The use of these notation systems has earned these choirs the name *kwaya za noti* or *kwaya za noten* (lit. choirs of notes, meaning the choirs that perform notated songs). I do not suggest that the use of notation (staff or sol-fa) and the use of Western hymns are the distinguishing features between these musical styles since, as I will illustrate later in the article, there are a few popular church choir teachers who write their music in either staff or sol-fa notation. Likewise, a number of Western hymns and well-known pieces from oratorios like Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" are performed by popular church choirs.

A second important feature of this music is that it is commonly performed in various global popular music styles such as rumba, reggae, twist, R&B, soukous and rap as well as taarab and various styles inspired by the traditional musics of Tanzania. These styles are used in the same way as in secular popular dance music in the country. The use of these styles differentiates popular church music from art church music which is not organized in accordance with these styles.

Dance has been employed in both of these styles (although less often in art church music). In art church music it is used particularly when the song performed is an arrangement of a traditional tune or composed following the rhythm of a certain traditional music culture in Tanzania. When used in popular church music, dance

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styles have been composed so as to relate to the musical styles of the songs in question. For example, songs in the reggae style are accompanied by reggae-style dance movements (apart from the actions that are designed to describe the meaning in the lyrics).

A practical way to distinguish these musical genres in Tanzania is through the musical events in which they participate. Let me use a Lutheran church as an example. Nearly every congregation has both art and popular church choirs, and most choirs that perform art music are *kwaya kuu za usharika* or, in short, *kwaya kuu* (the main choirs of the congregations). Popular church music is performed mainly by choirs which are referred to as *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs). There are also youth choirs in most congregations. Some of these youth choirs perform art church music like the *kwaya kuu* and in this case they may share choir teachers with the *kwaya kuu*. Examples of these youth choirs include the Sinza Youth Choir, Ubungo Youth Choir and Mwenge Youth Choir. Other youth choirs perform popular church music like the *kwaya za uinjilisti*. Some of these choirs include the Mabibo Youth Choir and Kimara Youth Choir. There are other youth choirs that perform both musical styles. These can be exemplified by the Kijitonyama Youth Choir. At Kinondoni Lutheran Church, for example, there are four church choirs, including one *kwaya kuu* (main choir of the congregation), two *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs), that is, the Sayuni Evangelical Choir and Amkeni Evangelical Choir, as well as one youth choir.

The Lutheran church has different yearly musical events: two for *kwaya kuu* (main choirs) and one for *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs). The first event for the *kwaya kuu* is commonly referred to as *mashindano* (choir competitions). During this occasion choirs from various congregations come together and each performs three songs (a set song selected from the Lutheran hymn book *Mwimbieni Bwana*, a song of the choir's own choice and a traditional song normally arranged by a choir teacher). Adjudicators listen to the performance of each choir and give points for various aspects of the performance. Normally the first three choirs receive awards. Another musical event for *kwaya kuu* is commonly referred to as *cantate*. This is a singing festival in which choirs from various congregations come together and perform one after another. As in *Mashindano* each choir normally performs three songs of different types. Here music advisors (not adjudicators) assess the performance of each choir but they do not grade the choirs. At the end of the event they give general remarks concerning the performance and give some advice in order to improve the future performance of the choirs.

In the case of *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs) there is a yearly event named *tamasha* (music festival or concert). During the event, as in *cantate*, choirs from different congregations perform one after the other (normally three songs each). While in *cantate* the set song is selected from the hymn book (that is the same song is performed by all choirs), in *tamasha la kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs' concert) each choir composes its own song adhering to the content of a Biblical verse selected for the event. This is referred to as a "set song". In addition, there are no

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adjudicators to assess the performance of these choirs. They normally have a guest of honour who, in most cases, is a church official, that is, not a music expert, in contrast to the adjudicators or advisors in *mashindano* and *cantate* respectively. It is not the case that there is no competitive spirit among *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs) as there is among *kwaya kuu* (main choirs). A visit to the *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs) during their rehearsals for the *tamasha* reveals how intensive the rehearsals are, and at this time the number of "choir days" (days that choirs meet for rehearsals) is often increased to six or seven per week. Each choir tries to prepare itself well so that it performs better than other choirs. The nature of the competition among these choirs gives more room for self-evaluation rather than depending on external critics (advisors and adjudicators) as do the *mashindano* and *cantate*.

There is also a yearly musical event for youth choirs. This is referred to as *mashindano ya kwaya za vijana* (competitions for youth choirs). Normally the competition is organized in the same way as the competition for *kwaya kuu* (main choirs). In this case all the choirs normally perform without guitars or keyboards, even if the choir would normally perform with these instruments. The choirs sing a set song selected from a hymn book (*Mwimbieni Bwana*) and they are required to submit a music sheet to the adjudicators for the two other songs (the choir's own choice and a traditional song) as it is the case with the *mashindano* of *kwaya kuu* (Barz 2000). In other words, during this event the youth choirs (even those that back in their congregations normally perform popular church music) perform art church music. It should also be noted here that, during the *mashindano ya kwaya za vijana* (youth choir competitions) or *mashindano ya kwaya kuu* (main choir competitions), some *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs) or some members of *kwaya za uinjilisti* may be asked to join and assist the youth or main choir of the same congregation. The practice of choirs of the same congregation helping one another during choir competitions is also common between youth choirs and the main choirs. However, in the case of youth choir competitions, only the young members of the main choirs may join the youth choirs. Recently, for example, I was informed by a teacher of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir that during the youth choir competitions of July 2005 the Sayuni Evangelical Choir joined the Kinondoni Youth Choir. They learnt the songs, rehearsed and performed together as the youth choir from Kinondoni congregation. The choir won the first award at both *jimbo* (province) and *dayosisi* (diocese) levels of the competition. In such contexts the *kwaya za uinjilisti* (evangelical choirs) may perform art church music.

Theorizing Composition in Popular Church Music

Composition has been taken to mean two things. First, it includes a series of activities done by an individual or individuals to bring a musical work into being. Second, it is conceived as a product of the above creative activity, as a musical work or a song (Strumpf et al. 2003, 121). In the context of popular church music the first conception involves a number of processes such as conceiving a basic musical idea,

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teaching a song, rehearsing it, designing dance movements, instrumentation and performance. As a product composition includes all the various elements that are part of the work such as vocal lines, instrumental parts and dance movements. We may also talk in terms of harmony, rhythm, texture and melody and the way these elements are organized within a musical work.

There are two commonly used approaches to composition in popular church music, namely improvisation and collaborative composition. These approaches are common in popular music worldwide (Agawu 2003b; Brown 1997; Kamien 2000; Waksman 1999) and in the traditional music of many cultures (Merriam 1964; Agawu 2003a; Strumpf et al. 2003), and they are increasingly used in contemporary art music be it Western or non-Western (Dallin 1974; Kamien 2000; Machlis 1979).

In some contexts a work is regarded as the property of a group or community. In describing collaborative composition in many African music cultures, Strumpf et al. point out that "members of performing groups often compose with a 'give-and-take' approach governing the whole process and therefore a single individual is not credited as the sole creator of the work" (2003, 121). However, in other contexts an originator (the person who conceives the basic idea of a song) or a performer of a song may be credited in spite of the fact that other people also play important roles in the creation of a song. Agawu observes how this works in the context of popular music.

> In the world of popular music, for example, intense behind-the-scenes choreographing of sonic production before it is outdoored may draw on different kinds of expertise, including studio engineers, sound engineers and musicians. So, although the originator of the sounds may eventually emerge as a named, individual composer or performer, the actual product represents the composite work of several hands. (Agawu 2003a, 6)

In Dar es Salaam a number of popular church music albums, particularly those by church choirs were named after the choirs. Individual songs in most of the albums were not attributed to individual composers. However, in a very few cases one could find the names of individual composers against the names of the songs on the album covers. The practice was different for those independent musicians who recorded their own albums out of the church choir context. Their albums featured their names even when other people played important roles. Of course, most often the roles of others appeared in the list of acknowledgements on the albums' covers. However, regardless of what acknowledgement was made, composition tended to be a multi-stage, collaborative process.

"*Kutunga*" (to compose) and "*kutengeneza*" (to make, to construct or to create) are used to designate the processes of creating a new musical work. Another term that is commonly used is "*kuweka*" (to put something). The term is often used when a person contributes either the lyrics or the tune of a song. "*Kubuni*" (to invent or design, usually imaginatively) is used particularly in relation to improvisation. In

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addition, *utunzi, utenzi* and *tungo* are normally used to designate a musical work, a composition. The same words are also used to designate a poem (TUKI 2001).

Processes in the Making of Popular Church Music

In this section, I discuss various processes, including composing the basic ideas of a song (i.e. melodies and/or lyrics), teaching and rehearsing, instrumentation, dance designing and performance.

Composing Basic Ideas

Most of the basic ideas of the songs are composed by choir teachers. In a very few cases other people, such as instrumentalists or some choir singers, compose these ideas for the church choirs. In the case that someone else came with a new song to the choir, he or she was called a choir teacher at least during the teaching of the song. Most of the choirs had more than one choir teacher. For example, *Kwaya ya Uinjilisti Sayuni* (the Sayuni Evangelical Choir) had three teachers, the Mabibo Youth Choir had three and *Kwaya ya Uinjilisti Kijitonyama* (the Kijitonyama Evangelical Choir) had six. Most often the choirs nominated one of these teachers to be a principal choir teacher responsible for coordinating other teachers and planning the song teaching, rehearsals and performances. I should also point out here that some of these choir teachers were also instrumentalists for the choirs. Choir members could become choir teachers if they were able to compose and teach new songs to the choir.

Gregory Barz lists a number of responsibilities of choir teachers in Tanzanian church music culture (with particular reference to art church choirs) which included to:

- compose songs for the choir
- teach the songs to the choir
- conduct the choir during Sunday service and other events
- preserve the repertoire of the choir in his or her memory. (Barz 2004, 67)

This is also the case with choir teachers in popular church choirs excerpt that in most cases popular church choirs perform without conductors. In the Sayuni Evangelical Choir, for example, the teachers conducted the choir only when the electricity went off and the choir had to perform without instruments. During rehearsals a teacher would conduct only when the song was not yet mastered by singers; otherwise people had to follow the rhythm provided by a drum machine and cues provided by a solo guitar or a keyboard.

Independent musicians, such as Jennifer Mgendi, Bahati Bukuku, Rose Muhando and Dr Remmy Ongala, took responsibility for the process of composing all the songs that they recorded. The musicians used a number of approaches in their compositions. Below I quote at length the replies to the question about this by four musicians.

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Jennifer Mgendi was one of the first female musicians to record her own album of popular church music in 1995. By 2004 she had released four audio albums and two video albums. She says:

> I compose my songs using at least two approaches. With the first approach, I sit down and decide that now I want to compose a song about something. Let's say I want to compose a song about *mji wa Yerusalemu*[2] (the city of Jerusalem). So I have to take a Bible and read various verses about the city of Jerusalem. When I have found it and I have read and understood the verses well, I start to write those *mistari* (lines or verses) which I want to appear in my song. After writing those lines I try to sing them. When I sing I check if the lines are longer than the *sauti* (tune, lit. voice) which I have composed. So I shorten the lines as I wish them to be.
>
> The second approach, I would say, the song just comes. I may be sitting somewhere and I hear a song being sung *moyoni mwangu* (lit. in my heart). For example, a song that I composed using this approach is that song called *Heri Kumtumaini Bwana*[3] (It is good to trust in the Lord). I remember I was sitting somewhere . . . I was cleaning somewhere when I just heard a *kipande* (melodic segment) being sung in my heart. [She sings a section of this song.] That piece came repeatedly in my heart, so I had to go and find some Biblical verses about trusting the Lord. I found the verses and I started to add some other verses. So I can say that those are the two ways I use to compose my songs. (Jennifer Mgendi, interview 18 September 2004, my translation)

During another interview she mentioned a third approach:

> Sometimes I find myself playing a certain chord progression on a guitar, such as A E A. I play those chords in a certain way and I begin to find a melody or a tune. From that tune. . . . If it is a happy one I *weka* [put] happy words or if it is a sad one I put sad words. (Jennifer Mgendi, interview 14 September 2004, my translation)

Dr Remmy Ongala, who was born in Congo in 1947 and came to Tanzania in 1978, has been very popular in Tanzania as a secular popular dance musician with both Makassy and Matimila bands since the late 1970s. In 2004 he was "saved" (converted to Christianity) and began to play popular church music. By the time of my fieldwork he had recorded and released an album with another Congolese musician, Modest Mogan, who had been singing with the Kijitonyama Evangelical Choir. The title of their album is *Kwa Yesu Kuna Furaha* (There is joy in Jesus). He explains his approach to composition as follows:

> I do not compose my songs like my fellows. Up to this day I have never sat down with a piece of paper . . . to compose songs like [he looks at me and smiles] *wasomi* [the educated ones][4]. I do not think. . .like, let me compose this way or that way. No. When I walk along and see things happening. . .I am like a journalist. If I see somewhere people shouting, "Thief, thief. . ." I have to go and ask, "What has this person stolen that you beat him or her this way?" I listen to them. They tell me what has happened. When I go home I pick up my guitar and start to play, composing lyrics about the incident. (Dr Remmy Ongala, interview 25 October 2004, my translation)

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Yet another response was made by *Mwalimu*[5] Archbold Tesha, a choir teacher of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir. He also played both rhythm and solo guitar. He told me that he had learnt some music theory. For him, composing strategies differed from one context to another:

> Sometimes I may have the words already. I need to compose a song. So I may start thinking what kind of melody to put to them. I mean what kind of *mdundo* [beat or rhythm] I want it to have. So when I have already made a melody, following my feelings, I start to use it as soprano or melody and I work on harmonization. That is setting the remaining three parts so that I have four parts.
>
> At other times I work on the tune that just come in my heard and I like it. I make it a soprano and sometimes I even harmonize it without having words. Later, I begin to think; as I see this song, what kind of words I would like it to have. So I start arranging those words and set them to that tune. (Archbold Tesha, interview 22 December 2004, my translation)

The final account is from Mercy Nyagwaswa, a female musician who performed regularly in popular church music concerts in Dar es Salaam. In the year 2004 she released her first album titled, *Mbingu Zahubiri*:

> I compose myself the songs that I sing. I use a Bible. For example, that song *Daudi* [David] in my CD, I looked how David danced for his God. That last stanza, I sing, "We have to dance for the Lord like David since God has done many things for us". So my main guide is the Bible. Some other words I draw from the Biblical context as I perceive them. There are about two songs [in the album] that I have taken from a hymn book, *Tenzi za Rohoni*. But I have sung them in my own rhythm though the melody is the same.

I interrupted her by asking how she composes a tune.

> A tune? I normally sit down during a quiet moment and find a tune. When I find it I record it with my small recorder since the head forgets easily. You know... there are so many things. So I compose them myself. They just come. Sometimes I start by finding a beat[6] and when I find a beat it is easy to compose a tune. But at other times I begin with a tune and then find a suitable beat for it. (Mercy Nyagwaswa, interview 1 November 2004, my translation)

The details of each of these approaches, I suggest, are best read within the context of each musicians' account. However, I would like to make a few general observations with regard to composition in popular church music in Dar es Salaam as expressed in the above accounts.

First, lyrics seem to play an important role at this stage of composition. The importance of lyrics in composing church music has also been observed by Catherine Gray (1995, 136) among Roman Catholic composers in Uganda. In most of the accounts above, composing words was taken to be as much a part of the composition process as composing a tune. Words also determined the nature of the melody. In cases where words were composed first, the tune composed for those words had to

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reflect the mood of the words. In addition, Biblical stories and messages were a source of most compositions by most of these musicians. Sometimes verses were taken directly from the Bible. At other times they were slightly changed to fit with the melody composed. At other times Biblical stories or messages were interpreted in the songs without actual borrowing Biblical words.

Second, I would like to comment on the two ways in which the tunes of the songs were composed. There were those tunes that were intentionally composed by the musicians. Alan Merriam calls this "conscious composition". He defines it as "the deliberate and planned process of creating new music material, carried out by individuals who are aware of their specific and directed actions to the desired end" (1964, 166). Most of the musicians interviewed said that they decided to work with certain Biblical stories or verses. The stories or words guided the musicians to compose tunes. On the other hand, there were those tunes that, as most musicians said, just came into their "minds", "hearts" or "heads". The tunes seem to come automatically, without effort from the composer. However, the musicians must find the tunes to be important and worthy enough to be worked out and developed into complete songs. Without their deliberate actions the tunes would come and go or would remain in their heads, minds or hearts. Some musicians believed that the tunes, or whole songs, came from the Holy Spirit. Bahati Bukuku, a female musician who rose to fame in the year 2003 with her album *Yashinde Mapito*, said that composition "is a work of the Holy Spirit". She gave an example of her song "*Ni Nyakati za Mwisho*" in her album. She said she never wrote down the words for the song. Most of the words just came to her when she started to sing it in the studio (Bahati Bukuku, interview 27 September 2004). Cosmas Chidumule was a very famous popular dance musician in the 1980s. Later he became saved and began to sing popular church music. He has recorded and released two albums of popular church music: *Yesu ni Bwana* (Jesus is Lord) and *Kimbilia kwa Yesu* (Run to Jesus). The credits on the covers of both albums include the Holy Spirit as the composer. He credits himself not as a composer but as a writer, an arranger and a lead vocal. As a writer, arranger and lead vocal he is a *kiatu cha Yesu* (shoe of Jesus), the words that are written beneath his name on the front covers of his albums, that enables Jesus, the word, to reach people (see Figure 1).

Third, the reworking of old existing materials was also taken to be part of composition. The reworking, as a creative process, included composing new words for existing tunes, changing some aspects of the song such as rhythm or adding some other verses. Other sources of the materials included church hymns and traditional tunes from various music cultures in Tanzania.

Finally, I would like to note the different methods used by musicians to aid their memory. In some cases they used tape recorders to record musical ideas so that they would be able to retrieve them. In other cases (as with Dr Remmy Ongala) the musicians would play or sing a song several times until it was not easy for them to forget. Others wrote their music using staff or sol-fa notation, as with Archbold Tesha

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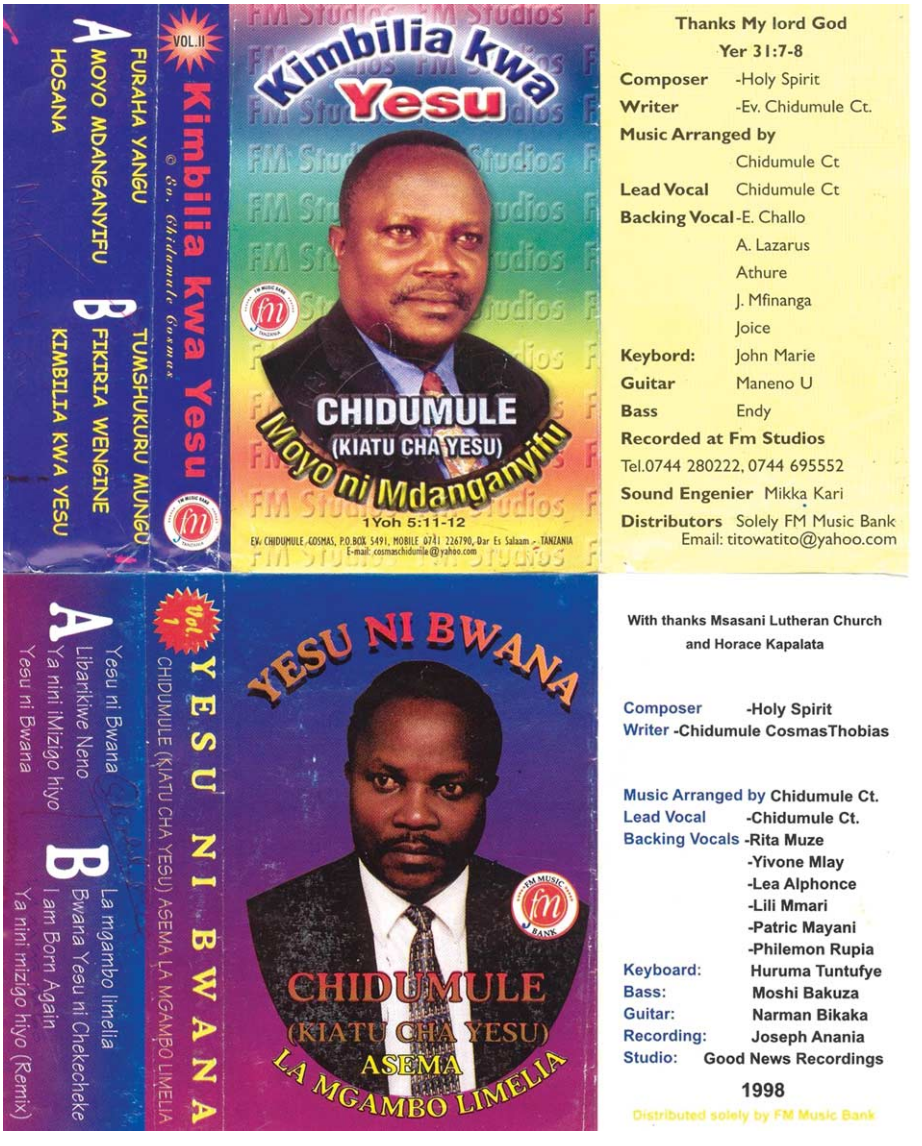


Figure 1 Covers of Chidumule's Albums *Yesu ni Bwana* and *Kimbilia kwa Yesu*.

who pointed out that he wrote down the songs because he wanted to keep them for future use. He also wished to publish his songs.

Teaching and Rehearsing the Songs

The process of teaching and rehearsing a song took different forms in different contexts. There were those individual singers like Jennifer Mgendi and Mercy Nyagwaswa who normally sang all vocal parts (two or three) themselves without

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involving any other backing vocalists. Other individual musicians sang and recorded with other people singing backing vocal parts. In this case the musician would teach the song to the singers. In most cases he or she could teach one part (soprano) and the rest would create their own parts to blend with the first. If the lead singer found that some parts were not "cooked in the same pot",[7] to borrow from a Kiswahili saying, he or she would ask the backing singers to change and create something else. In some cases he or she corrected the "un-agreeable" part. On other occasions, other members of the group noticed the "un-agreeable" parts and asked the singers of those voices to correct their own parts.

In choral contexts the teaching took different forms depending on whether the parts were written down or not. When the parts of songs were not written down (which was the case with most popular church choirs in Dar es Salaam), a teacher would start to teach a song to singers of the first part (sopranos). When the sopranos had mastered their part, the teacher would start trying out the second part (alto). The process could be repeated for the rest of the parts (tenor and bass). When the parts sang together, the teacher might detect that some parts were not in agreement with the rest. The parts would be changed either by the teacher who was teaching the song or by another teacher present. At other times other choir members could detect the wrong parts and help in finding alternative parts. In this case the teacher would recommend parts if he or she found them appealing. When the teacher taught a song that had been written down in notation (as it was the case with two teachers of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir) the teacher would teach the parts of the song by reading from the score, beginning with any part. It was also common for the teachers to notice some that parts did not sound good. In this case the teacher would promise to come with a revised version on the next choir day. Sometimes a teacher would stop for a while and amend the section before proceeding with the teaching.

Rehearsals included mastering newly taught songs and rehearsing the old songs. Singing the tune correctly, pronouncing the words properly, being able to sing in time with the beat, and blending one's voice with the rest of the singers and with those of the instruments were important aspects of the rehearsals. The rehearsals also included voice exercises and warm-ups. The activity of leading these rehearsals was sometimes referred to as *kukochi kwaya* (choir coaching). Sometimes the teacher who led these rehearsals was referred to as *kocha* (a coach), the same term that is used in football. During fieldwork in 2000, I found a teacher of the Kijitonyama Evangelical Choir who was called Zagalo (after Mario Zagalo, the coach of the Brazilian team during the 1998 World Cup). Another term used in rehearsal was *kunoa sauti* (to sharpen the voices).

I posit that the teaching and rehearsing were part of composition process in so far as most of the parts were created and some amendments were made during this process. In addition, lead singers and instrumentalists were expected and encouraged to improvise, and the parts created through improvisation became part of the songs. Let me illustrate this with an account of my own experience of working with the Sayuni Evangelical Choir.

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It is the beginning of Christmas week (21 December 2004). The Sayuni Evangelical Choir rehearses its Christmas songs. We, the instrumentalists, have come earlier to rehearse before the singers join us. I watch the other instrumentalists as they play the first song. When they begin the second song a choir teacher who plays keyboard, *Mwalimu* Sebastian Henry, calls me and tells me that I should play keyboard in this reggae-style song. He shows me the chord progression that I have to play in most parts of the song, and another for an instrumental interlude. "It is not difficult", he encourages me. We start to play the song which begins with a bass guitar playing repeated figures (grooves) alone. As other instruments join in, the solo guitar plays an improvisatory section above the repeated chord progression, //C/G/D7/em/am/ bm/D7/G//. We play a similar segment between the first and second verses. Then the solo guitarist, Laban Mwasimba, stops and says I should play something after his section. I am surprised since the teacher did not tell me I should play anything here. I ask him, "What do you usually play here?" They reply in unison that I should *buni* (invent or make up) something of my own. After some painstaking attempts I come up with a tune and its variation. It is basically an improvisation of the tune at the end of the chorus and the rhythm that is played by a drum machine.

But something seems to sound wrong. The solo guitarist suggests that we all change the first chord in the progression during my section. The chord progression becomes: //am/G/D7/em/ am/bm/D7/G//. I have been playing note C and harmonize it with the note a third below, as with the singers (sopranos sing note C and altos sing note A). Hence they feel that chord A minor (am) should replace chord C Major (C) during my section. Later we rehearse the song with the choir. When we play this part the teacher comes and increases the volume of my keyboard saying, "Here you are leading the song so you should be heard clearer".

The song is to be performed during two Christmas church services on the 25th and 26th. I attend the Christmas Eve service at the chapel of the University of Dar es Salaam since I am staying a long way from the Kinondoni Lutheran church where the Sayuni Evangelical Choir belongs and there are transport problems at night. When I come to the church on Christmas morning, I am met by the choir members with an interesting greeting, "We missed you last night and we sang your song!" Later the teacher tells me that they performed that song but they played the older version (without my section). He says the singers turned to the instrumentalists when they didn't hear that section. We perform the song during the Christmas service and I play my part. At the second Christmas service the song has to be performed again. But another teacher who normally plays rhythm guitar in this song has not come. As it seems to me that we have to play the song without rhythm guitar, I suggest that I play the rhythm guitar and the teacher (a keyboardist) plays keyboard since I have also learned to play rhythm guitar in this song. The instrumentalists seem happy with my suggestion. So we perform the song in its original version without my keyboard section. I can see some choir

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members turning to us (the instrumentalists) as the interlude ends and the solo guitarist plays a cue for them to start the next verse.

Three general observations can be made with regard to this incident in relation to improvisation. First, improvisation was expected of individual musicians. Thus my question: "what do you usually play here?" was answered with a chorus, "create something of your own". The improvised parts became a part of the member's identity and place or role within the choir, hence "we sang your song" or "we missed you". Thus, some songs were not performed when instrumentalists or lead singers who played important roles in those songs did not come to the choir. Second, improvisation was expected to fit in with the existing musical elements. Finally, improvised parts may not only change the chord progression of the song, but also lead to changes in the overall form of the song.

Instrumentation Process

The instrumentation process within popular church choirs differs from that of independent popular church musicians. In a choir context, the instrumentation of songs was done by instrumentalists who were members of the choirs and who also sang with the choirs when they were not playing an instrument. They became instrumentalists not by being nominated by choir members but by their ability and zeal to learn to play one or more instruments used by the choirs. As I pointed out earlier some choir teachers were also instrumentalists of their respective choirs. The most common instruments in popular church choirs included the following electric instruments: solo guitar, rhythm guitar, bass guitar, a drum machine and/or keyboard. Instrumentalists were expected to compose instrumental sections of choir songs (particularly the new ones).

Independent popular church musicians such as Jennifer Mgendi and Bahati Bukuku asked friends who were instrumentalists to play for them when they wanted to record their albums. Most of these instrumentalists belonged to popular church choirs in Dar es Salaam. Jennifer Mgendi, who was a member of the University Student Christian Fellowship (USCF) choir at the University of Dar es Salaam, for example, recorded her first album with instrumentalists who were members of the USCF choir. She continued to record her later albums with the same instrumentalists even when they had graduated from the university and were no longer members of that choir. Bahati Bukuku, who attended services at Kinondoni Assemblies of God church, recorded her album with the instrumentalists of the Kinondoni Revival Choir (the choir of the same church). In other cases studio musicians composed the instrumental parts of the songs by some independent musicians, as in the case of Mercy Nyagwaswa. In all cases, it was evident that the process of composition was a collaborative activity. Below I provide three quotes from interviews with Archbold Tesha (teacher and instrumentalist of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir), Jennifer Mgendi (independent musician) and Mercy Nyagwaswa (independent musician who also

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sings with the AIC (African Inland Church) Magomeni Choir). The quotes illustrate the practice of instrumentation in various contexts.

> About instrumentation . . . when I have composed a song and have some ideas that a certain instrument should be played this way or that way, I write down those parts. But most often when I have taught a song to that choir [Sayuni Evangelical Choir], I invite suggestions from the instrumentalists and choir teachers. I ask them: in what way do you think the songs should be played? So we make instrumental sections that fit well with the song. But if I had a certain idea when I was composing the song then first I explain to them, "Maybe a solo guitar or a keyboard should begin this way and let's see how it sounds". They may agree with me. Sometimes they add other ideas or change some things. (Archbold Tesha, interview 22 December 2004, my translation)

Jennifer Mgendi says:

> When I have composed my song, and have done satisfactory rehearsals myself and find that the song is ready for recording, I go to see the instrumentalists. I find those instrumentalists such as Msegu[8] and others. I go to the studio . . . . I have recorded all my albums with a sound engineer called Malon Linje. So I sing those songs to them. They listen. Then we talk, but normally they are the ones who come up with suggestions that the song should be played in a particular way. They suggest whether the song should be played fast or slow. They also suggest the *ngoma* (rhythm or beat) for the song. Although I have the final word most of the suggestions come from them.

I interrupt her by asking whether she rehearsed with the instrumentalists before going to the studio or just in the studio.

> In most cases . . . for example, with that first album, we did some rehearsals before. Even when we recorded the second album, we had a short rehearsal before. Just to let the instrumentalists hear how the songs sound. But frankly speaking, we do most of the rehearsals in studio. The reason is, you may arrange your ideas this way, but maybe the studio engineer says, "No, that will not sound nice". So most of the time we do the rehearsals there. Though it is for a short time. (Jennifer Mgendi, interview 18 September 2004, my translation)

Mercy Nyagwaswa says:

> I really thank God that I was lucky to have a sponsor, the manager of Clouds FM [one of the private radio stations in Dar es Salaam where Mercy works as a news reader], Mr Mutahaba, who heard me singing at Diamond Jubilee Hall during the visits of Rebecca Malope [a South African Gospel musician] and the Makoma [a Congolese Gospel music group that resides in Belgium]. So he sponsored me to record in four different studios. . . . So four producers have played my songs and I sang all the vocal back-ups myself. (Mercy Nyagwaswa, interview 1 November 2004, my translation)

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Dance Designing

Dance is an important aspect of popular church music. Dance movements are designed according to other elements of the music; reggae-style songs, for example, use reggae-style dance steps. Other styles include rumba, hip hop, twist, soukous, Tanzanian traditional dance styles, salsa or charanga, to name just a few. Changes from one dance style to another within a song relate to particular musical phrases. Dance styles are referred to as *stepu* (steps) and are normally identified by the rhythm of the foot steps and direction of the body movement (left, right, backward or forward). Other kinds of body movements are referred to as *matendo* (actions), and include signs made with the hands, facial expressions and mimes of other activities or movements such as running. These relate to the message conveyed by the lyrics of the songs. For example, when the singers sing words about going to heaven they look up and point their hands or fingers upwards. In this way the actions serve as bodily signs that interpret and elaborate the message in the lyrics of the songs. In other words, dance is "a bodily language" (following Bakare and Mans 2003, 217). When two vocal parts have different entry points in a song or have different words, this contrapuntal organization may be reflected in the dance actions.[9]

In some choirs the task of designing steps and actions was undertaken by choir teachers. In other choirs, a few individuals were appointed by choir members or choir teachers to perform the task. In other choirs all members worked together on the dance steps during rehearsal sessions of the newly taught songs. It should be noted that even in the first two cases other choir members would suggest some changes or additions when rehearsing the steps.

In the Sayuni Evangelical Choir dance designing was done by a few people appointed by the choir members. I became acquainted with three young women who normally taught us (the choir members) the dances. I interviewed two of them (Julieth Masanja and Martha Mkindwa) and filmed the dances of some choir songs with them. They explained that when a song was taught to the choir they began to think of the steps and actions. Sometimes they tried the dance during the rehearsal when others were just singing. When the song was ready the dance designers discussed among themselves and decided on the steps and actions for each phrase or important words in the song. The steps and actions were then taught to the choir during rehearsals.

The choir had developed a sign system which these designers drew on in their dances. Some signs were drawn from everyday conversations in Tanzania, but in most cases the designers invented new signs for particular messages or words. Dance was another way in which the audience experienced music, not only by listening to it or by viewing it, but by taking part in performance. During performances, especially in concerts and evangelical meetings, some audience members would stand and dance following the dance styles of the performers. This was not often the case during church services.

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Reading Steps and Actions in Mji wa Sayuni

Here I provide a reading of one of the songs of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir. The song is titled "*Mji wa Sayuni*" (City of Zion), and it illustrates many of the ways in which dance is used with music. The song is played in march style (named after a similar rhythmic pattern in most electric keyboards).

Let me begin by describing the method I use in presenting the dance in relation to this song. The feet actions are presented in a chart with three rows. The first row is used to show the steps of the right foot. The second row is used to show the steps of the left foot. The third row is used to show the direction in which the foot and the body move, using the following signs: (←) moving left, (→) moving right, (↑) moving forward, (↓) moving backward. Each column represents a pulse; in this case a crotchet beat. Actions that are performed by hands or head are described in relation to the word or group of words they interpret. Finally, a foot stepping on ground is indicated with a black mark (●) and when the foot is lifted up I use a white mark (○).

The song begins with a brief rhythmic introduction (Figure 3, bar 1) and the beat changes in the second bar as other instruments join in. The second configuration (Figure 3, bar 2) is repeated over and over throughout the song.

The dance begins at the second bar with the entry of other instruments and the second rhythmic configuration. Figure 4 is an illustration of the dance movements. This dance movement (step) is repeated over and over during the instrumental introduction, and interludes and through out the first section of each verse. When the choir starts to sing the chorus, the dancing of this step stops and actions begin. Table 1 presents a chart that shows the actions performed in relation to the words in the chorus.

The chorus is sung twice and the same actions are performed when repeating the chorus. The actions stop during the instrumental interlude and the earlier steps resume and continue when the choir sings the second stanza.

A few observations can now be made with regard to the above dance description. First, the dance relates to both the rhythm and to the melodic segments sung by the choir and played by the instrumentalists. In the description above I have illustrated

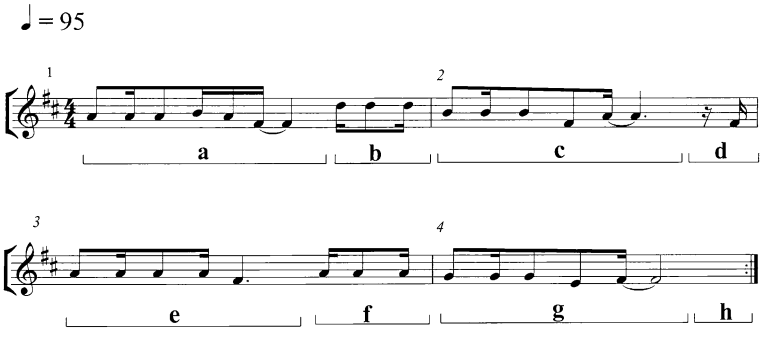


Figure 2 Melody of the Verse (my Transcription).

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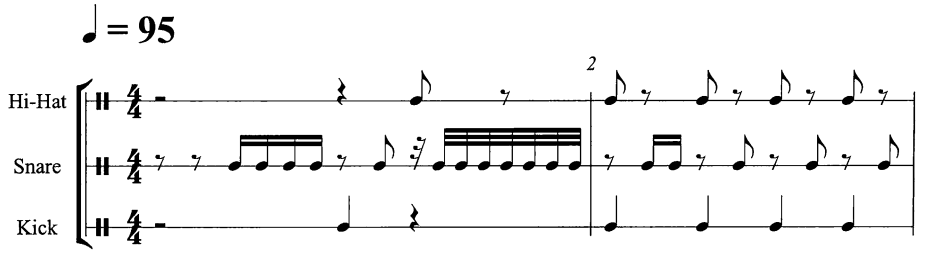


Figure 3 Rhythmic Configuration (my Transcription).

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how the steps are performed in relation to the rhythm of the song. Let me illustrate how it was related to the melody and melodic segments of this song.

In bars 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Figure 2 melody section) the left and right side movements start and end with the melodic segments a, c, e and g, which end on the third beat of the measure. The fourth beat in a bar is used as a turning point where the dancers' feet do not step on the ground. Although the melodic segments on this beat (Figure 2 melodic segments b, d and f) are part of the melodic segment that come on the next bar, the dance here obeys the strong beat of the rhythm that begins on the first beat of the bar. In addition, the divisions between verses and choruses within the song were also reflected in the organization of the dance between steps and actions.

Second, some dance movements or actions were imitations of real human actions or shapes of things. Referring to Table 1, for example, the running movement (3) is an imitation of a real running action although here it is performed within the rhythm of the song and it involves running forwards and backwards. Another example is that of the shape of the world. The action performed when singing the term "world" (6) is that of drawing a circle on air using an index finger of the right hand (although the circle is not complete). In short, on the one hand, dance imitates real human actions or shapes; on the other hand, it transposes them into the world of dance and makes them different from the real human actions or shapes as Paul Valéry puts it:

> For the dance is an art derived from life itself, since it is nothing more nor less than the action of the whole human body; but an action transposed into a world, into a kind of *space-time*, which is no longer quite the same as that of everyday life. (Valéry 1983, 55, emphasis in original)

Third, the above actions are used to refer to some actions or shapes outside the music itself. Let me point out that in other songs there were actions that were performed to imitate actions within the music performance itself. An example here

Right Foot	( )		( )			( )		(o)
Left Foot		( )		(o)	( )		( )	
Direction	(→)	(→)	(→)		(←)	(←)	(←)	

Figure 4 The Dance Movements (Verse Section).

Table 1 Actions Performed When Singing the Chorus Section

S/N	*Lyrics*	*English translation*	*Actions*
1.	Yakabidhi maisha yako	Surrender your life	Touch the chest with both hands
2.	Kwa Yesu	To Jesus	Lift the right hand above
3.	Kwani yeye ni kimbilio	Because he is a place where we should run to	Imitate running movement forward and backward
4.	la uzima	(a place where there is) eternal life	Lift the right hand above
5.	Usidanganywe	Do not be deceived	Touch the head with an index finger of the right hand
6.	na dunia	by the world	Move the hand from the head and draw a circle on air using an index finger
7.	Inapita	It passes by	Move the right hand from the chest position and stretch it to the right
8.	Wokovu huo ni wa bure	That is free salvation	Lift the right hand above
9.	Upokee	receive it	Stretch both hands and lift them up as if receiving something from above

includes the performance of a song by the Sayuni Evangelical Choir *Nitamtukuza* (now on an audio cassette of the choir's album Volume 14, namely, *Mungu yu Mwema*). During the instrumental interlude where the bass and the solo guitars play their improvisatory segments, the singers dance by swaying from one side to another and by imitating the guitar-playing position and actions (see Figure 6). I posit that the actions played the role of calling the audience's attention to the sounds of the guitars during this section.

Finally, some signs were drawn from those that were normally used in day-to-day conversation. For example, being cheated was expressed in the song by pointing an index finger to the head (brain). This is an expression that is used to indicate somebody who does something foolishly. A remark like "use your brain" or "you don't use your brain" would go together with this sign. It is easier to be deceived when one does not use the brain. Hence this song draws this sign from this commonly used sign in society and advises people to "use brains" so that they are not deceived by the "world". Other signs were created by taking into account religious beliefs. For example, the belief that God dwells in heaven (above) and that life and salvation come from him is used in creating some signs in this song (2, 6 and 8), where singers danced looking up and raising their hands. In addition, while the

Right Foot	( )		( )		( )			
Left Foot		( )		( )				
Direction	(↑)	(↑)	(↑)	(↓)	(↓)			

Figure 5 The Running Movement (Action Number 3 in Table 1).

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Figure 6 Members of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir Demonstrating Dance Movements of a Song "*Nitamtukuza*". The lead singer Martha Mkindwa (left) is still singing her solo part; hence, she performs different actions from the rest of the choir – now represented by Juliet Masanja (right).

action which is performed to indicate receiving something (9) seems to imitate an ordinary human action of receiving something with one's two hands, the position of the hands in this action needs a comment. The hands are lifted as if someone receives something from above. This mimics the position of a child receiving something from a parent, reflecting the belief that God is a giving Father, and, like the signs numbered 2, 6 and 8, it reflects and expresses the belief that God (from whom one receives salvation) dwells in heaven.

Performance

Performances of popular church music took place in a number of spaces and contexts. The music was performed during weekly Sunday services in churches, during popular church music concerts that took place either in concert halls or in churches, during evangelical meetings that took place either outdoors or indoors (in conference halls or churches) and during studio recording sessions. On a few occasions the music was performed for family celebrations such as weddings, baptisms or confirmations. This was the case when a person closely involved in these

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events was a member of the choir or was a close relative of the choir member. In this case that choir member would ask the choir to attend and perform during the celebration. Likewise, when a choir member was bereaved with a close relative, the choir would go to the house of the person either during or following the days of mourning and sing to comfort the mourners or family members.

In what ways were these performances part of the music creation process? First, as argued before, improvisation was a common feature of the music. Lead singers and instrumentalists were expected to improvise to varying degrees during performances. It was common practice among lead singers to change the lyrics of songs or add some words of *mapambio* (short call and response popular choruses) in relation to the event, such as mentioning the names of the bride and the groom or of the bereaved person. Second, some other aspects of the songs, such as the length of musical segments or number of repetitions of a chorus, could be changed during live performances. For example, when the audience seemed to respond positively by joining the dance or by singing the chorus with the performers, the performers would repeat that part more times than they normally did. Third, a performance during a studio recording involved changing or adding some aspects in response to the advice given by a studio engineer. Sometimes it was the studio engineers or studio instrumentalists who composed and played the instrumental parts of the songs recorded. In this way performance during recording sessions was an important part of the process of creating popular church music. In short, on the one hand, the music was one involved in shaping people's experiences of various occasions (e.g. baptism, confirmation, weddings or death) which were themselves (as Gadamer puts it) "milestones in the individual's path through life" (1977, 42). On the other hand, these occasions were involved in shaping the music creation process during which the music underwent metamorphosis in terms of its structural organization and/or lyrics.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored a number of processes in the making of popular church music and various elements that constitute this music. In the discussion I have put forward two arguments. First, I have argued, and illustrated through a number of examples, that the composition process in this music is a multi-stage process. That is, it took place in a number of stages, including conceiving basic ideas, teaching and rehearsals, dance designing, instrumentation and performance. The musical work accumulated elements that were added to it in each of these stages. Though a general "beat" (*mdundo* or rhythm) or chord progression could be repeated throughout the song, through improvisation some layers of the "beat" or chord progression changed during each repetition. I have argued that those improvisatory segments sometimes gave the songs new identities. Second, I have shown that the process was collaborative. A number of "creative brains", including choir teachers or independent musicians, dance designers, instrumentalists and singers, made their own contribution to the various processes of the song's creation.

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Notes

[1] I use the concept of "designing" dance movements rather than choreographing them because "designing" is derived from the Kiswahili word *kubuni* (to design or to create), the word that was commonly used in Dar es Salaam to designate this creative process.
[2] "*Mji wa Yerusalemu*" is the name of her song in her third album titled *Nikiona Fahari*.
[3] "*Heri Kumtumaini Bwana*" is the name of her song in her third album titled *Nikiona Fahari*.
[4] I became aware that I was holding a piece of paper with a list of topics I wanted to ask him. I referred to it occasionally during the interview.
[5] *Mwalimu* is a Kiswahili word for teacher. It is usually used as a respectful title for a school or choir teacher.
[6] She uses the English word "beat". Normally it is used interchangeably with the *mdundo* which may be translated as rhythm. Sometimes (especially in contemporary popular music) it is used to designate the whole instrumental section made by studio engineers for those who want to record rap or hip-hop songs.
[7] *Hawaivi chungu kimoja* (not cooked in the same pot) refers to people who are not in harmony with each other.
[8] Jennifer Mgendi has recorded all of her albums with Msegu as an instrumentalist.
[9] Cf. Addo, Miya and Potgieter's identification of the "basic underlying principles" of choreography, in their study of integrating the arts in musical arts education in Africa (2003, 240).

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