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TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESSES IN *MUZIKI WA INJILI* IN DAR ES SALAAM

by

IMANI SANGA

Introduction

This article is concerned with teaching-learning processes in *Muziki wa Injili* (Gospel Music) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It discusses two methods of teaching and learning that are commonly used in *Muziki wa Injili*, namely, imitation and peer-directed learning. The teaching-learning processes involving members of groups of *Muziki wa Injili*, and children who are not members of these groups, are informal in that they do not take place in a formally organized music classroom. Informal methods such as those found in most traditional music cultures in Tanzania and in many other oral music cultures are used. I argue that the adoption of methods from traditional music contexts into this contemporary music genre is made possible (and even necessary) by the fact that *Muziki wa Injili*, like many other popular music genres, is an oral music culture. This transference is also possible because some members of groups of *Muziki wa Injili* acquired their music skills in traditional music contexts where aural/oral teaching and learning by imitation is the norm. The title of this article intentionally evokes Lucy Green's book, *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* (2002). In it Green discusses a number of teaching and learning methods used by popular musicians in the UK, including peer-directed learning and imitation (also used in *Muziki wa Injili*) and advocates the adoption of these methods in formal music schools.

In what follows, I describe some features of *Muziki wa Injili*. Then I review pertinent literature on teaching and learning processes in various music cultures in Africa, and Tanzania in particular. Finally, I discuss the two methods of teaching and learning (peer-directed learning and imitation) used in *Muziki wa Injili* with reference to ethnographic accounts from my field research conducted in Dar es Salaam in 2004 and 2005. I conducted interviews with musicians from Lutheran, African Inland Church (AIC), Anglican and Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG) churches. I also joined and sang with two groups of *Muziki wa Injili: Kwaya ya Uinjilisti Sayuni* (Sayuni Evangelical Choir) at Kinondoni Lutheran Church and The Patmos at the University of Dar es Salaam. I learned by participating and observing the various processes of learning and music making in *Muziki wa Injili*.

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Muziki wa Injili

Muziki wa Injili is a church music genre in Tanzania characterized by employing body movements, improvisation, use of electric guitars and keyboards and a variety of popular music styles, such as rumba, soukous, reggae, zouk, R&B, rap, salsa (*charanga*) and taarab among others. Most of these features are uncommon in mainstream church music (or art church music), which is normally performed either unaccompanied or accompanied by organ or electric keyboard. Furthermore, unlike church art music, which is notated in either staff or solfa notation, *Muziki wa Injili* is composed, transmitted and preserved orally and aurally. It is performed during church services, in evangelical meetings (indoor or outdoors) and in concerts of *Muziki wa Injili* in Dar es Salaam (Barz 2003; Sanga 2006, 2008). Apart from being performed by church choirs, *Muziki wa Injili* is also performed by individual musicians who record and sell their albums privately. Thus, the use of the designator *Muziki wa Injili* is broader than that of *Muziki wa Kwaya* (music performed by choirs). Scholars have noted the growing popularity of gospel music in other African countries, such as Kenya (Kidula 2000), Zimbabwe (Chitando 2002) and Nigeria (Euba 1989). In Tanzania, the growing popularity of *Muziki wa Injili* can be attributed to the increased broadcast of the music by television and radio stations, some of which are owned by church organizations, and its growing circulation through recordings such as CDs, DVDs, video and audio cassettes.

Given the diversity of musical forms from which *Muziki wa Injili* draws its materials – including global and local popular music styles, Tanzanian traditional music and western church hymns translated into Kiswahili – general statements about its characteristics are difficult or impossible to make. Consequently, the following remarks are made with reference to specific songs and are not meant to be representative of all songs in this wide-ranging musical genre.

Rhythmic Organization

Various songs of *Muziki wa Injili* employ rhythmic configurations that identify a particular global popular music genre such as rumba or reggae. For example, songs that use a reggae style are organized so that the second and fourth beat (in a four-beat measure) are accentuated on a snare drum. The first and third beats are normally played on the big drum or "kick", as it is referred to in this music.

Figure 1. One 12/8 measure of basic rhythmic configuration for reggae style usually played on a drum machine or drum kit. A unit beat is a dotted crotchet.

Unit beat	**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
Hi-hats	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Snare				●						●		
Kick	●						●					

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The rhythm of the songs in rumba style, on the other hand, is organized so that a measure with eight quavers is subdivided into three unequal units – the first and second units having three quaver beats each, while the third unit has two quaver beats. This basic rumba rhythmic configuration can be represented thus: 3/3/2. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2. One 4/4 measure of basic rhythmic configuration for rumba style. A unit beat is a crotchet and the snare plays the basic pattern of this style: 3/3/2.

Unit beat	**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
Hi-hats	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Snare	●						●			●		
Kick	●											

For songs that draw their rhythmic and melodic material from various traditional music cultures of Tanzania, the roles of the traditional musical instruments are re-assigned to the instruments used in *Muziki wa Injili*. For example, in a song which adopts a traditional Ngoni rhythm from the Songea area of southern Tanzania, the rhythm played on a big drum is played on the "kick" and the rhythm played by striking a hoe with a small iron rod is played on the snare drum. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3. One 2/4 measure of a rhythmic configuration of a Ngoni-derived song by Cosmas Chidumule titled "Mshukuruni Mungu". A unit beat is a crotchet.

Unit beat	**1**				**2**			
Snare	●		●	●		●	●	
Kick	●				●			

Harmonic and Melodic Organization

Most songs in this music genre use the I–IV–V chord progression. Other songs employ more complex harmonic progressions comprising both primary and secondary chords. In most cases the voices are organized in parallel thirds, sixths and octaves. In other cases parallel fourths and fifths are also used. While in some cases all the voices sing together, at other times the groups sing in call-and-response pattern with a lead singer or one voice singing the call segment and the rest of the group singing the response segment.

Musical Instruments

The main musical instruments in this music genre are electric guitars, keyboards and drum machines. In most cases choirs use three guitars: solo, rhythm and bass guitar. Solo guitar normally is used to play melodic segments such as introductions or interludes

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and short melodic figures to fill gaps between sung melodic phrases. In some cases these figures are different from the sung melodies and have different entry points from the entry points of vocal parts and those of other instruments. This organization produces an intricate contrapuntal effect. Rhythm guitar is used to play chords in various styles such as finger picking the strings, using plectrum and strumming. At other times it is used to play melodic segments as is the case with solo guitar. Bass guitar plays a harmonic function by playing the roots of the chords, though sometimes inversions are also used. It is also used as a rhythmic instrument by playing (grooves) in relation to the rhythm played by a drum machine. In some songs that use traditional melodies, the bass guitar imitates drumming patterns of the traditional song. At other times it is used to play a melody in unison with the bass singers or plays in octaves with the solo or rhythm guitar. The keyboard is normally used to play chords in various styles and melodies that are sung by the choir. Sometimes it is used to play melodic segments or "fills" as it is the case with the solo guitar. A drum machine is employed to provide the rhythm. A rhythmic configuration (or a "beat") for a particular song is programmed by an instrumentalist, and it is replayed when performing the song. In the absence of a drum machine, the choirs usually select and use rhythmic patterns available from the electric keyboard.

Literature on Music Teaching-Learning Processes in Africa

The transmission of music and music skills (e.g. singing or playing musical instruments) has been a central concern for ethnomusicologists and scholars of African music in particular. With reference to specific music cultures, scholars have asked: How are music skills and music transmitted? When does teaching-learning take place? What is actually learned during these processes? Who is involved in these teaching-learning processes? (Merriam 1964:154–164; Nettl 2005:390). Kwabena Nketia (1974) describes processes through which musicians in various African music cultures are recruited and trained. He points out that in most cases the training of musicians in African cultures is an informal activity and takes place through exposure and participation of members of particular societies (including children) in various social activities and rituals in which music plays an important role. He also observes that in some cases training takes place through formal teaching given to young musicians by a master musician in a community (1974:58–64).

Other scholars of African music, such as Meki Nzewi (1998), Alexander Agordoh (1994), Minnete Mans (1998), Dave Dargie (1998) and James Flolu (1998, 1999), discuss various methods through which teaching and learning of music is carried out in African traditional cultures. These methods include careful listening and observation, creative imitation and peer-directed learning. These scholars (particularly Dave Dargie) advocate use of African indigenous-based teaching-learning methods to teach African music in contemporary African schools and churches. Gregory Barz describes teaching-learning processes as used in both traditional and modern school systems in Uganda by Ugandan

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musician, Centurio Balikoowa, who plays a number of Ugandan traditional music instruments including the *endere* (flute), *ntongooli* (bowl lyre), *endingidi* (tube fiddle), and the *embaire* (xylophone). He learned to play these instruments by observing and imitating adult musicians (including his own parents). When still in school Balikoowa himself was teaching his school mates (Barz 2004:86–87). As an adult, Balikoowa brings traditional music from various parts of Uganda to schools where he teaches it to children who haven't had the opportunity to learn the music in a traditional context. Kenyan scholar Emily Akuno (2000) advocates the use of traditional Kenyan songs in Kenyan schools because children while learning musical skills also learn history, religion, riddles, proverbs, poetry, vocabulary and pronunciation from various Kenyan cultures.

A number of studies that discuss teaching-learning processes in relation to musical arts in Tanzania have focused on the role of traditional musical arts in teaching various aspects of culture (Mlama 1981; Fair 1996; Tsuruta 2008). Penina Mlama (1981), for example, discusses the role of *digubi* dance in teaching life skills, marital relations, reproduction health and parental roles to girls among the Wakagaru of Kilosa district in Morogoro, Tanzania. A recent study by Albini Saragu (2008) examines the role of musical activities in promoting children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. However, the main focus of all these studies is on the teaching and learning of extra-musical activities, skills and roles. Detailed accounts of how the music itself and music skills are taught and learned are not found in these studies.

In what follows I discuss how indigenous-based teaching and learning methods (especially peer-directed learning and creative imitation) are used in the contemporary music genre, *Muziki wa Injili*. I do this by narrating selected observations taken from the practices of *Muziki wa Injili* in Dar es Salaam among the people with whom I conducted my field research in 2004 and 2005. I acknowledge these forms of music teaching and learning are also used in most oral-based music cultures. The details of my observations are meant to contextualize these practices and show how teaching-learning processes take place within the conditions available in *Muziki wa Injili* in Dar es Salaam.

Teaching and Learning during Rehearsals and Performances of *Muziki wa Injili*

Most musicians of *Muziki wa Injili* receive training through choir rehearsals (three to four "choir days" per week) and performances and directives from experienced singers, choir instrumentalists and choir teachers. When the choir prepares itself for a special event such as a concert or a visit to another congregation, the number of "choir days" are often increased to six or seven per week.

The Patmos, a music group based at the University of Dar es Salaam that performed *Muziki wa Injili* at the time of my research, recorded an album *Amekamilika* in 2003 of songs composed by their leader, Chedieli Nyirenda, who invited me to participate in

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the recording of this album as a keyboardist and a guitarist.[1] Nyirenda taught his songs, which were sung by at least two singers on each of three parts (Soprano, Alto and Tenor), to the group. In most cases he taught only the main melody and the singers created their own parts in relation to the given melody. When he found that some parts "did not get cooked in the same pot"[2] (to borrow from a Kiswahili saying), he asked the singers to change them or he corrected the "un-agreeable" parts himself. Sometimes members of the group noticed the "un-agreeable" parts and asked the singers to correct their parts. In this context Nyirenda was the teacher and the group members were learners. In Tanzanian choirs the person who teaches a song to the choir is referred to as *mwalimu*, a Kiswahili word for teacher. However, as shown above, the learners shared some of the work by "composing" the harmony lines during the learning of the song.

In the case of learning to play an instrument, those choir members who are interested in becoming instrumentalists ask experienced instrumentalists to teach them. After being introduced to basic techniques of playing an instrument (guitar or keyboard) and a few songs, they begin to attend weekly instrumentalists' rehearsals in which they learn and rehearse additional techniques and songs. Rehearsals are usually directed toward up-coming performances at Sunday services, concerts or evangelical meetings. If the learning instrumentalists manage to play at least one of the songs, they are allowed to perform it with the choir. Thus the imagined performances (that is, future performances) become part of the teaching-learning process.

When I joined the Sayuni Evangelical Choir, for example, I attended a number of such learning sessions together with other learning instrumentalists. Below I quote an incident from my field notes (5 December 2004) to illustrate the nature of this process. The song learned was performed two weeks later in a Sunday church service.

Vignette 1

After the service and choir's announcement session on 5 December 2004, three instrumentalists (including myself) remain in the church for a rehearsal while the other choir members go home. After playing a few *mapambio* (short call-and-response popular choruses) a solo guitarist Laban Mwasimba decides to teach us (a bass guitarist and myself playing rhythm guitar) to play a song "Nitamtukuza" ("I Will Praise Him", available on the choir's 14th album, namely, *Mungu yu Mwema*). He says that the instrumentalists who used to play this song currently are not attending choir rehearsals. He begins by playing a few phrases to show how the bass guitarist must play. Then the bass guitarist plays those phrases with him. He also plays those phrases that the rhythm guitarist has to play and I play with him a few

[1] In the album (recorded and released in 2003), I am acknowledged together with another guitarist and keyboardist (Ben Ntime), a studio engineer (Bakunde Mbilima) and a solo singer and vocalist (Neema Lomax). During rehearsals in which instruments were not used I joined the tenor section. Likewise, during my 2004 fieldwork I performed with the group in a number of concerts as a tenor, since we performed with a CD playback and hence instruments were not required.

[2] There is a Kiswahili saying, *hawaivi chungu kimoja* (lit. they do not get cooked in the same pot) normally used to refer to people who are not in harmony (or on good terms) with each other.

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> times. Then he sets a drum machine and we play those phrases with the rhythm from the drum machine while Laban Mwasimba plays solo guitar. At times when he notices that one of us plays a wrong note or chord he stops playing the solo guitar and he plays either with the bass guitarist or with me. The process is repeated until we master all the phrases in the song. Then we start to play the whole song through. At some points when Laban Mwasimba thinks that someone may have forgotten a note or a chord he mentions the note or the chord just before we play it.

The account above shows the teaching-learning process in *Muziki wa Injili* in which one instrumentalist takes the role of a teacher and the rest learn from him. In *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education*, Lucy Green observes a similar kind of teaching-learning process among popular music groups in which one member of a band shows new licks or chords to others during rehearsals or during actual performances. Green calls this kind of learning "peer-directed learning" (Green 2002:76–77). She describes it together with another form of learning, "group learning", which is also commonly used in *Muziki wa Injili* when she writes:

> Peer-directed learning involves the explicit teaching of one or more persons by a peer; group learning occurs as a result of peer interaction but in the absence of any teaching. Either type of learning may take place between only two or in groups of more than two; it can arise in causal encounter or organized sessions; it can occur separately from music-making activities or during rehearsals and jam sessions. (2002:76)

The Involvement of Children in Muziki wa Injili

Teaching-learning processes take place in *Muziki wa Injili* also through the involvement of children in the music in at least in three ways. First, during most choir rehearsals there are children playing around. Some of them are children of the pastors or evangelists who live within the compound of the church. Others are from the houses located nearby the church. There are also the children or younger siblings of some choir members who come with their parents, brothers or sisters. At times a group of children come close to the choir and arrange themselves in lines as the choir does and sing and dance to the same song that the choir rehearses. An example from my field research follows.

At a certain rehearsal I attended in 2004 with the Sayuni Evangelical Choir, the choir was rehearsing a song that was not familiar to me so I stood aside, listening and watching the choir. There was a group of about seven children on the side imitating the singing and dancing of the choir. Thus I became an audience for the Sayuni Evangelical Choir and the group of children. When the children sang out of tune the chairperson of the Sayuni Evangelical Choir turned to the children and told them to stop since they misled the choir. But, the children resumed their rehearsal when the chairperson became involved in his choir. One of the children moved out of the group, stood aside and looked at the other children, folded his arms on his chest and then moved them to his waist and at times touched his chin. I was surprised to realise that he was imitating my own position and actions. The children laughed when they saw that I had noticed their play

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and the boy went back to join the other children in rehearsing the song. For them this was part of the music culture they were learning by imitation.

The practice of children learning by imitation in *Muziki wa Injili* is not limited to rehearsals. During concerts, particularly those sessions involving all people in the hall, some children form small groups and imitate the singing and dance movements of the musicians on stage. James Flolu notes a similar practice among children in Ghana. His observation is that the practice does not end with the end of the occasion which the children imitate. Flolu writes:

> It is usual to find groups of children hours or days after the celebration of festival, church anniversary and open day, trying to re-create the music which accompanied those celebrations. It is amazing to see how these children cooperatively coordinate their individual memories to "compose" their personal experiences as an integrated form. Individual members of the group may serve as teachers, conductors, master drummers, singers and soloists according to what they had previously seen. (1999:39–40)

Secondly, choirs and independent musicians of *Muziki wa Injili* allow children who show great enthusiasm and come to the rehearsals regularly to be involved in performances with the choirs. In the years 2004 and 2005 children performed with the Kijitonyama Evangelical Choir, Calvary Assemblies of God Choir, Hosanna Choir and with an independent musician, Ency Mwalukasa. The children were normally placed in the front line of the choir. In an interview in a Christian weekly newspaper *Habari Njema*, a famous musician of *Muziki wa Injili*, Flora Mbasha, points out that she started to sing when she was seven years of age when the choir in which her aunt was singing in Mwanza placed her in the front line during public performances (Luhombo 2004:8).

Thirdly, a number of children learn to sing, dance and sometimes even to play musical instruments through their participation in children church choirs led by performers of *Muziki wa Injili*. Children's church choirs are sometimes invited to perform in concerts of *Muziki wa Injili*. I posit that this exposure makes it possible for the children to learn and thereby become part of the music culture.

In addition to imitation, children's creativity and innovativeness play an important role in their learning. Flolu points out that:

> It is generally assumed that children merely copy adult musical models but more objective listening and observation reveals that this is not always the case. Children re-compose – recreate – the adults' musical model, create new songs to suit their peculiar interests and purposes. (1999:40)

The following example from my fieldwork illustrates how children's creativity facilitated the learning of a song and its dance movement.

Vignette 2

> After teaching a new song to the children church choir at the University of Dar es Salaam chapel, I introduce them to a dance for the song. It seems to me that the dance is difficult to some of them so I ask them to speak rhythmically the directions of their movements

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as they dance: *kushoto*, *kushoto*; *kulia*, *kulia* (left, left; right, right). They turn left when they say *kushoto* and they turn right when they say *kulia*. After a little while I hear a few of them speaking a different word somewhere. Then they all pick it up. I realise that they have replaced *kushoto* with *kucheka* (to laugh). They speak the new pair a few times then they also replace *kulia* with *kununa* (to be sullen). I am fascinated to notice that they have invented a wordplay game during this learning of the dance, the game that makes them move to the correct direction without a need to name the direction. (Fieldnotes 16 October 2004)

The game involved finding an antonym of one word in a pair. The word *kulia* has two meanings, right side and to cry. Likewise, the opposite of *kucheka* (to laugh) is not necessarily *kulia* (to cry). It may also be *kununa*, that is, to be sullen. By using this word-play the children were able to make the learning dynamic rather than static by creating new pairs of antonyms. Their creativity helped them enjoy learning by making it amusing. More importantly, through this word-play the children were able to move in the correct directions at the precise points without the need to name the directions.

Figure 4. The original pair of antonyms and the variations that the children created.

	Moving left	**Moving right**
Original pair of antonyms	*Kushoto* (left)	*Kulia* (right)
First variation of antonyms	** *Kucheka* (to laugh)	**Kulia* (to cry)
Second variation of antonyms	#*Kucheka* (to laugh)	** *Kununa* (to be sullen)

Key: *same word as in the previous pair but assigned a new meaning
** newly created word in a pair
# same word and same meaning as in a previous pair

Conclusion

In this article I have shown how peer-directed learning and creative imitation are used in the teaching and learning of *Muziki wa Injili* in Dar es Salaam. I have demonstrated that the oral nature of *Muziki wa Injili* makes the use of these indigenous-based forms of music teaching and learning possible. I have argued and illustrated with ethnographic observations that through these teaching-learning processes members of the *Muziki wa Injili* groups participate in shaping the future of this music and their involvement in it and also in shaping and reshaping the present musical experiences of themselves and that of their audience. There is a Kiswahili adage *watoto ni taifa la kesho* – children are the nation of tomorrow. When applied to music one can say, children are the musicians of tomorrow. The article has shown that in the teaching-learning processes in *Muziki wa Injili*, children are shaped by a present music culture as they become its musicians of tomorrow.

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