

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The African e-Journals Project has digitized full text of articles of eleven social science and humanities journals. This item is from the digital archive maintained by Michigan State University Library. Find more at:

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/>

Available through a partnership with



*Scroll down to read the article.*

# CONFERENCE REPORT

## AFRICA IN THE WORLD OF POPULAR MUSIC

Klevator Abo<sup>1</sup>

The title of this report was the theme of the fourth bi-annual conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), held in Accra, Ghana, August 12-19th, 1987. Previous conferences were held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (June 1981), Reggio Emilia, Italy (September 1983), and Montreal, Canada, (July, 1985). Besides Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, conference participants came from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. Other interested persons from Cuba, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania and Uruguay could not attend due to financial and other difficulties.

IASPM's decision to hold the Fourth International Conference on Popular Music Studies in Africa stemmed from its

"desire to develop meaningful relations with African popular musicians and scholars of music and to explore ways in which IASPM could meaningfully enter Africa and African musicians and scholars of music can meaningfully enter IASPM ... This desire is motivated by the massive influence Africa has exercised in the world of popular music both in historical and in a contemporary sense.

It is the purpose of this conference to gain therefore a greater understanding of that influencing contribution; to gain a greater understanding of the ways Africa has responded to and assimilated dominant trends in popular music ..., assess the political and economic environment within which popular music in Africa operates,

and investigate ways in which people outside Africa can help foster African popular music in a creative and positive manner." <sup>2</sup>

### WHAT IS POPULAR MUSIC?

Professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia<sup>3</sup> chaired the first session of the conference which began with a continuation of IASPM's efforts at defining popular music. The Amsterdam conference had opened with a confession: "We begin ... under a severe handicap: we're not sure what we're talking about" (Horn, 1982: 3).<sup>4</sup> For the past quarter century or so, various commentators have been attempting to define popular music without success (see Jones and Rahn, 1981). The proceedings of the Reggio Emilia Conference under the theme "What is Popular Music?" made an impressive 517 page volume (Horn, 1985) and included a paper drawing attention to the opinion of many writers who thought defining popular music was an exercise in futility. It suggested:

"Perhaps the question, 'What is Popular Music?' is not an appropriate one to pose at the present time. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to concentrate upon the processes of studying music than on some putative category of music whose existence might only be established with great difficulty" (Shepherd, 1985).

However the persistence of the attempts at defining popular music would seem to suggest notwithstanding the difficulty of achieving precision, that we need some working notions about the subject of our study.

Some define popular music in the negative:

"music that is neither folk nor art music" (Tagg, 1979). For others, the term is applicable to all those musics that are intended for and/or consumed by large masses of people.<sup>5</sup>

In the technologically advanced countries, modern communications, especially the electronic mass media constitute the central pillar of popular music culture. In Western Europe and North America, for example the measurement of popularity in music is done by the music industry in quantitative terms, by reference to phonogram sales records and the charts devised by institutions like *Billboard*.<sup>6</sup> These measures, in spite of their obvious utility, are inadequate even for Western Europe and North America. They leave out of account all those musics that "...fail in the market place" (Cutler, 1965:3); "... only a small amount of the music described (as popular) actually reaches masses of listeners" (Wicke, 1965:47).<sup>7</sup>

Besides, the overwhelming majority of mankind does not measure popularity in music by these quantitative methods. By focussing on indigenous African music, the opening papers of the Accra Conference sought to contribute some ideas (which probably could not have emerged from the study of other musics) that may aid the efforts at clarifying our notions about the parameters for determining popularity in music.

In his paper *Indigenous African Popular Music: A dialectical approach* Dr. Daniel Avongbedor of the School of Performing Arts, Legon, compared empirically, indigenous and contemporary popular music. He noted differences and similarities with regard to the geographical location of performing groups, their audiences and ethnic composition, paying attention to varying performance contexts, economic benefits accruing to artistes, the role of the modern mass media in publicising popular music events and in the transmission of the various types of popular music. He also drew attention to the factors that encourage innovation in styles and the acculturation of popular music forms. He observed that "indigenous

popular music in an urban setting presents the researcher with new questions and challenges that should help us understand better what we mean by popular music". On the basis of Anlo-Ewe examples he advocated "sociological and ethnomusicological approaches that facilitate the identification and explanation of the socio-cultural parameters unique to popular music in urban settings."

In a paper *Amina's crowd: On the Character of the Everyday Musical Cultural of Rural Africa*, the present writer advanced a notion of popular music as that kind of music which is not contextually bound to strictly specified occasions and functions as is the case with ritual and ceremonial music. The types of music which, at least in theory, can be performed anytime, anywhere, everyday: genres of music that are most readily accessible to large groups of people may be considered popular music.

However special attention must be paid to the overall social and cultural circumstances under which and the processes whereby a musical genre may become accessible to large groups of listeners and acquire the status of everyday popular music.

Could popular music also be identified using structural-musical criteria? It is true that individual pieces within a particular popular music genre exhibit certain similarities in their structural-musical features. However individual pieces, or fragments thereof, from categories of non-popular music may 'become' popular if these pieces function in ways associated with popular music. A Bach, Beethoven or Tchaikovsky fragment used in advertising or as a radio station signal becomes (!) popular music.

Conversely, what according to certain criteria are very popular this week, the number ones in the charts, may not be so popular next week. (cf. Beaud, 1982). This has got very little to do with the particular piece's structural-musical features. Furthermore what originally may have been folk or popular music may attain the status of the classical when social and historical

circumstances change. The conclusion therefore is that political, social and cultural factors are the most decisive in identifying popular music.

The most important thing however, as Professor Nketia pointed out by way of summary, is to arrive at a working definition, a kind of label that allows us to pursue popular music research, not the search for definitions as an end in itself.

#### SOME AFRICAN POPULAR MUSIC TYPES AND GENRES

Part of the difficulty in identifying and defining popular music arises from the scant attention that appears to have been paid to the historical processes that account for the emergence and continuity of popularity in music. This shortcoming was addressed by Fleming Harev's paper, *The Origin of Urban Popular Music in West and Central Africa*. Harev sought to establish long historical links, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, between different types of "trans-ethnic popular music in West Africa". These forms of music played on *gounbay*, *goumbe*, or *gome* frame drums were, according to Harev, introduced by Jamaican maroons and gave birth to *asiko* and *maringa* music in West and Central Africa. By the 1880s the box guitar had arrived in West Africa via African sailors. Both the guitar and the performance styles developed around it, together with *gumbe*, *asiko* and *maringa* were in turn taken to Central Africa by West Africans employed by the Belgian colonial authorities to build the Matadi-Leopoldville (Kinshasa) railway.

Mr. Beattie Casely Hayford's presentation on the *Origins of Highlife* gave an account of the contributions of pre-colonial European traders, missionaries and British Colonials to the emergence of the West African form of popular music. The recruitment of Africans to serve as musicians in various European military and missionary institutions began a process whereby indigenous and European musical practices crystalized into what has become *Highlife*. The Gold Coast on account of its geo-political position, became the place where the music first emerged and

defined its social context and form.

The presentation by Dr. Afolabi Alaja-Browne (Lagos University), *From 'Ere e faaji ti o pariwo' to 'Ere e faaji alariwo': a diachronic study of Change in Juju Music* outlined the emergence and development of juju music through the creative effort of young "rascals" in the *Saro* (Sierra Leone) quarter of Lagos in the 1930s. Prominent among these 'rascals' was Tunde King generally acknowledged today as the main originator of juju. The genre developed through contributions from the following sources: Christian hymns to which the 'rascals' were exposed during Christian wake-keeping ceremonies; *asiko*, the trans-ethnic form of musical expression whose origins and development were described by Fleming Harev; the use of tambourines introduced by the Salvation Army missionary sect in the 1920s and believed to have the power of stimulating mental and spiritual consciousness, hence juju; the Brazilian *samba* practised by the Lagos Brazilian community and *orin kurumo*, sea shanties.

Having established a musical style, Tunde King and his cohorts practised an *Ere e faaji ti o pariwo*, a light solemn entertainment music, mainly for the quiet exclusive delectation of the Lagos elite of the 1930s in their homes, in the evenings.

In the 1940s the artistes began to add new musical instruments to the juju orchestra, such as *gangan*, the Yoruba hourglass drum, the penny whistle flute, the organ and the mandoline.

From the middle of the 1940s, under the impetus of the political and social activities leading to Nigeria's attainment of independence, juju music broke out into the public as *Ere e faaji alariwo*, urban dance and party music. The leading artiste during this period was I.K. Dairo who introduced the mouth organ and accordion into the juju orchestra and led a movement that resulted in the appeal of juju music outside Lagos, in other parts of Yorubaland and beyond.

During the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) *Highlife* musicians moved out of Lagos, leaving the popular music terrain to the dominance of juju. The Nigerian oil boom

(1970-1980) created the conditions for juju to become big business, its practitioners overtly publicising the "virtues" of rich, powerful and influential patrons through praise songs. The music began to receive extensive coverage in both the print and electronic mass media. Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey and King Sunny Ade have emerged as the best known juju musicians at the present moment.

The presentations on these genres of indigenous and contemporary African popular music, from historical perspectives, were a welcome addition to the scholarship so far produced within the ranks of IASPM.

### **WOMEN AND POPULAR MUSIC**

An avowedly non-feminist presentation by Dr. Mosun Omibiyi-Obidike (University of Ibadan), *Women in Popular Music in Nigeria* outlined the contribution of women to contemporary popular music in that country.

Until the late 1960s, the contemporary popular music scene in Nigeria was dominated by men. In the 1970s, many more women entered the field. This, according to Omibiyi-Obidike, was probably due to changing attitudes towards women's traditional roles in music.

Besides the explicitly female forms of musical activity, women traditionally played minor roles in musical life in general. Even in female types of music, men usually provided instrumental accompaniment. With changing social attitudes, occasioned especially by the growth in formal education, it has become possible for women to play more prominent roles in musical life.

The rise of individual performing artistes and super stars abroad in the 1970s as against the earlier emphasis on the group identity of bands, must also have had its effects on the Nigerian music scene.

Performances of visiting foreign female singers like Millicent Small and Miriam Makeba inspired a number of Nigerian artistes, some of whom performed with the visitors when they went to Nigeria. Sherry-Patu Oduguwa, alias Queen Decency, a composer, lead guitarist and singer became the leader

of an all-male juju band managed by her husband. Mary Ahono led a seven-member all-female band specialising in highlife, juju, ball room music and Congolese cha-cha.

Later female artists like Nellie Uchendu, Stella Moya, Mona Fini, Dora Efudu, Christy Essien-Igbokue, Onyeka Oweno and Patti Boulaye and other female artistes all with varying levels of formal educational training emerged in the 1970s and 80s specialising in newer genres of contemporary Nigerian popular music. Some of those educated abroad started their musical careers performing the works of foreign, especially Black American artistes like Donna Summer.

In general these female artistes have been exploited by promoters and producers and their purpose as performing artistes has misrepresented.

However their hard work, "brought a little class into the Nigerian music scene. This essentially has contributed to a change in attitude on the part of the general public from looking at them as morally debased people to repositories of the African heritage, communicators, entertainers, innovators and fosterers of national identity and unity".

There was no other presentation on women and popular music. But John Collins' intervention drew parallels with the situation of women in popular music in Ghana and the United States.

Female participation in contemporary professional music-making in Ghana had been very limited until very recently. In the recent years of economic decline in Ghana musicians began to be employed to perform for worship in the Africanized Christian Churches, just as Black American churches attracted musicians during and after the depression of the 1930s. This has led to the emergence of Ghanaian gospel music.

According to Collins, the guitar in Ghana had been associated with drunkenness and nobody wanted their daughter to become a professional musician. But it was more difficult to maintain this association with church music, and young women became choris-

ters and members of gospel bands.

Gospel music in the United States developed into Soul. Collins, a phonogram producer,

#### **AFRICAN POPULAR PERFORMING ARTS: COPYRIGHT, POLITICS, LANGUAGE AND ROLE IN EDUCATION**

A number of conference sessions were devoted to a discussion of African popular arts within the context of the complex duality of the indigenous and the contemporary that the continent, on account of its history, continues to experience. The Ghana Dance Ensemble's Artistic Director, Francis Nii Yartey made an impassioned plea in his paper, **Creation and Presentation of Traditional African Dances**, that the totality of the continent's historical experience and cultural diversity be reflected in contemporary African dances.

Whilst not specifically about a popular performing art, Ofotsu Adinku of the School of Performing Arts, Legon, produced a paper on **Copyright Protection for the Ghanaian Choreographer** in which he raised pertinent questions, that constituted a timely intervention on behalf of practitioners of the dance: the urgent need for the protection of choreographers' intellectual property. Adinku also discussed the forms and methods whereby choreographed works may be lodged with the copyright administrator.

concluded humorously: "So what I am waiting for in my recording studio is the Ghanaian Aretha Franklin".

Dr. Kofi Agovi, (Institute of African Studies, Legon) spoke about **The Political Relevance of Highlife Songs since 1957**. On the basis of a review of the ways in which political events and concerns are reflected in Highlife songs he pointed out the validity of these songs as a "means of assessing the relevance of a regime's political goals, policies and programmes to the lives of the intended beneficiaries". By recounting the ups and downs of Highlife as an art form during the Nkrumah era, Agovi concluded that it is the business of government to inspire not impose the "values of state" they profess.

In the absence of adequate inspiration, Highlife musicians are reduced to "mere outlets for the expression of dissatisfaction with existing conditions by survival".

And the dissatisfaction with these conditions, among other things, have according to Dr. Kwesi Yankah (Department of Linguistics, Legon) been expressed through a variety of linguistic registers: Standard, Pidgin and Broken English, a mixture of English and Ghanaian language colloquialisms and indigenous languages, "depending on the particular variety of highlife ensemble, the social context of the music being played as well as how close the composer is in touch with the cultural traditions and aesthetics of traditional communication".

The relevance of all these to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge engaged the attention of two panels which discussed the place of popular music in formal and non-formal education. The strategic importance of popular music, on account of its ubiquity, as a vehicle for early childhood instruction and as an instrument for socialisation at various levels was noted. Panelists drew attention to the inclusion of aspects of popular music in the West African Examinations Council's 'Ordinary' and 'Advanced' level syllabuses and also in the curriculum of some third cycle music institutions.

Dr. K.N. Bame (Institute of African Studies Legon) presented an account of **Popular Music in the Concert Party Tradition** and a report on the use of the Concert Party in a 1975 birth control campaign programme. Dr. Reebee Garofalo (Boston University, USA) described the use of popular music in the rehabilitation of delinquent youth in Sweden and the United States. Two University of Ghana professors, Professors K.A. Dickson and A.A. Mensah led discussions on the attempts of contemporary Ghanaian gospel musicians to come to terms with Christian theology.

Dr. Bame's report indicated that besides the radio, the concert party proved to be the most powerful means of successfully communicating information, even on a subject

as delicate as family planning whilst Dr. Garofalo's presentation demonstrated the effectiveness of the use of popular music in re-orienting "wayward" youth back into productive channels.

The tentative nature of the discussion on the relationship between Christian doctrine and gospel music implied a need for further investigation on the subject. It was however pointed out that the rise of Ghanaian gospel music is a social fact that cannot be ignored.

## AFRICA AND POPULAR MUSIC ABROAD

Other conference presentations dealt with popular music culture in other parts of the world (Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania) focussing among other things on the character and content of the relationship between popular music in these geo-political areas and their socio-economic and politico-cultural settings on the one hand and the technology and business management arrangements that facilitate or hinder their production and propagation on the other hand.

Special attention was paid to the place of African music in the origins and development of present day popular music cultures in other parts of the world, especially in North America and Europe.

Of particular interest were the presentations made by Dr. Philip Tagg (Gothenburg University, Sweden) and Roland Schmitt, a German radio journalist. Dr. Tagg's paper *Celtic and West African influences in the Popular Music of North America* concerned itself with pointing out that many musical traits in North America popular music, such as "Blue notes", call and response, improvisation and syncopation which are commonly believed to be African in origin can be also found in indigenous Celtic and other European musics. These musical traits had been spurned by the late nineteenth century bourgeois elitist conceptions of European music traditions. The real reason why these traits have been projected by the European music establishment as typically African is to reinforce some of the prejudices and

stereotypes about Africans and their music.

These stereotypes, according to Schmitt's paper "Hot, Hotter Africa": *Stereotypes in the (re)presentation of African pop music in German and European media*,) make it almost impossible for African popular music practitioners, perhaps with the exception of Youssou N'dour, Manu Dibango, Hugh Masekela and Sunny Ade, to achieve any great successes on the European popular music circuit.

## WORKSHOPS

There were two workshop sessions devoted to historical, socio-cultural, and musicological analyses of *Yaa Amponsah*, a very important piece of Ghanaian popular music, and *The Graphics and the Packaging of Popular Music*.

It came to light during Mr. Beattie Casely-Hayford's historical and socio-cultural presentation on *Yaa Amponsah* that *Yaa Amponsah* was a person who actually lived. She was such an excellent performer that anytime she was absent, the group she belonged to found it very difficult to perform. It was to acknowledge her performance excellence that Asante Kwabong composed *Yaa Amponsah*, which was later popularised by Kwame Asare, the famous guitarist 'Sam', in her honour and memory.

Rojo Mettle-Nunoo, Laud Nikoi O'lai and Gyedu Blay Arbooley's presentations on the graphics of popular music packaging drew attention to the need for popular music practitioners, especially phonogram producers to match the sound and the image to the socio-cultural identity of the artistes and their art.

## POPULAR MUSIC AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

A pertinent issue that cropped up during a visit the Ghana Film Industry Corporation's (GFIC) sound recording studio was whether the Third World can expect to have analogue recording equipment as free gifts when they become obsolete with the advent of digital recording technology in the West. Unfortunately, digital sound recording and reproduction technology is still so very expensive

that most European recording studios and companies are still hanging on to their analogue equipment.

However digitally recorded music continues to attain increasing prominence on the Japanese, European and North American popular music market. The quality of digitally recorded music is so high that digital copies are actually clones of the original recording. This had led to some difficulties in protecting the copyright of recording artistes.

The phonogram industry has proposed the introduction of copy code notch device into all digital audio tape equipment in the hope of eliminating all illegal copying. But the system proposed can be easily bypassed. Besides, the proposed copy code notch deteriorates the quality of recording. A resolution was passed strongly recommending the non-passage of copy code legislation (See Appendix).

#### **SOUTH AFRICA**

The session on the role of popular music in the struggle against apartheid brought into sharp focus the difficulties encountered in the use of the performing arts in the efforts to bring official racism to an end in South Africa. This is particularly so after the publication of Paul Simon's award winning phonogram, *Graceland*, which was recorded in South Africa in contravention of the United Nations' and the African National Congress' policies seeking to foster cultural boycott of apartheid by calling on foreign artistes to stay away from South Africa and cultural events sponsored by the South African regime.

The presentation of Dr. David Coplan (State University of New York at Westbury, USA) on the subject made a strong case for anti-apartheid activists reconsidering their cultural policies. For at the same time as Simon's South African adventure(?) was condemned in many anti-apartheid circles, not only was it successful in bringing, through the mass media, aspects of South African popular music to the notice of a very large audience world wide (and was used

by the South African regime for its own purposes), astute anti-apartheid activists like Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba were able to organise the use of the same music to hit back at the South African regime. This they did through their participation in a Paul Simon live concert in Zimbabwe which was watched by the then Prime Minister Mr. Robert Mugabe and other important government ministers and state officials. This concert, according to several reports, was charged with anti-apartheid fervour, very much unlike the original Paul Simon phonogram: beautiful music that was nonetheless completely oblivious to the political situation of the African musicians with whom Paul Simon performed and recorded. Stan Rijven, a Dutch journalist, did a provocative analysis of various popular music events outside South Africa, especially in North America and Europe, intended as contributions to the struggle against apartheid. In the discussion, it emerged that quite often the personal ambitions of some performing artists tended to undermine their anti-apartheid posture.

It was pointed out that the struggle against apartheid involved both a boycott of the South African regime and its programmes as well as an active exposure of the effects of its racist policies. Contributions in this regard can be made by non-South African anti-apartheid activists working inside the racist republic, as two IASPM members who have carried out research within South Africa have done. Thus a generalized call on all foreign cultural workers not to visit South Africa at all may not be in the best interest of the world wide struggle against the evils of apartheid. The African National Congress, it would appear, is beginning to realize this.

A resolution on Popular Music and the anti-apartheid struggle, reproduced in the appendix to this report, was passed by the conference.

#### **IASPM AND POPULAR MUSIC**

It has become customary for IASPM, which has prided itself on being an international,



interdisciplinary, inter-professional and activist organisation, to review its work at its meetings with a view to clarifying its objectives so as to be able to decide on concrete projects for the realisation of these objectives.

The Amsterdam conference which was strictly speaking not a IASPM conference, led to the founding of the association. At the Reggio Emilia Conference attention was drawn to the essentially Euro-American character of IASPM's internationalism, its lack of resources and the inevitability of its having to carry out projects within the framework of other existing institutions, building up documentary and bibliographic sources for popular music studies.

In his Address on the State of the Association, Dr. Philip Tagg, IASPM's Founding Executive Secretary noted the organization's continued existence as a kind of "NATO of Popular Music Studies", the possible dangers of careerism, and the association's likely co-optation by the music establishment. This was at the 1985 Montreal conference.

The continuing growth of popular music studies, he noted, is bound to affect music studies in general in the same way as women studies, hitherto another *terra incognita* like popular music studies, continues to contribute to a clearer understanding of mankind and society. Similarly, IASPM must also seek to become a kind of African National Congress (ANC), promoting, ultimately the study of all musics, just as the ANC is dedicated to a struggle for the equality of all races in South Africa and indeed in the whole world.

On the basis of a paper produced by the present writer, *IASPM and Popular Music: Towards an Agenda*, the Accra conference continued IASPM's search for clearer perspectives on its work. The paper pointed out that just as in Europe and North America, popular music studies in Ghana is in its infancy, but for different reasons.

Even though African popular music is not looked down upon in Africa as mere fun, leisure and entertainment as is the case in Europe, there are not enough music researchers

in Africa for some to be engaged solely in popular music studies. The few available specialists spend most of their energies documenting and analysing different forms of indigenous African music.

But a fairly representative sample of contemporary African popular music is already available on phonograms and can be studied later.

It would appear that contemporary African popular music is not looked down upon by today's African ruling classes because it is the only form of music they can really identify with. The rise of today's African ruling classes was contemporaneous with the emergence and development of contemporary African popular music. Besides, having been brought up half way between bourgeois European and indigenous African traditions, these classes have not developed any musical traditions that are distinctly theirs, the way European classical music is essentially a symbol of the European bourgeoisie.

It was not exactly clear to the writer of the paper why popular music studies in Europe and North America started so late. Why too is it that the the music industry's high level research into popular music culture is not matched by correspondingly large research efforts for distanced and critical perspectives of the kind favoured by IASPM? There is a need to have these issues clarified so IASPM can see its way clear.

It was also suggested that IASPM define its attitude to the information provided through research done by its members, so as to devise projects through which the association could consciously and positively effect the object of its study and activity.

Thus the association could grow out of its present 'stifling scholastic cloister' and participate in preparing the grounds for the "popularisation of all musical traditions and the withering away of popular music".

John Shepherd, referring to himself as belonging to a 'stifling scholastic cloister', on account of his being a full professor with tenure in a music department, also put forward some ideas, in response as discussant for the session which was chaired

by Philip Tagg.

According to Shepherd, the lowly position of popular music studies in the so-called advanced civilizations derives from the fact that the significance of music as a means of social and cultural communication is generally ignored and not considered as important for social existence by these civilizations.

This lack of recognition for the role of music in society has arisen with the advent of literacy (writing and subsequently, printing), one of the principal tools of social control in the so-called developed civilizations dominated by powerful male elites.

Music, as an oral/aural phenomenon, goes behind the back of literacy and through its very existence subverts fundamentally the means of communication in literate societies. Confucius, Plato and Saint Augustine have made pronouncements about the detrimental effects that music may have upon the moral and social order of their civilizations.

Classical music does not pose a threat to these civilizations because it is controlled through the scribal form. Symphonies, concertos etc. could not be conceived and reproduced in a fully oral/aural fashion. They are first and foremost constructed notationally on paper and have become subservient to the exigencies of scribal elites.

Popular music on the other hand is conceived and practised in an oral/aural fashion. When writing and music notation are used in popular music they serve only as *aides memoires*. So popular music can therefore not be controlled by scribal elites through music notation.

One of the means whereby the elites of so-called developed civilizations seek to control popular music therefore is to try to make it inconsequential by relegating it, through declaration, to the limbo of mere fun, leisure and entertainment.

It is because these 'developed civilizations' worry about the subversive potential of popular music that they make it difficult for serious programmes of popular music studies to be set up, especially in University departments. The music industry's

research into popular music culture on the other hand is totally self serving, for purposes of maximising profits, and re-inforces the dominant ideology in these societies.

It is to reverse this state of affairs that Professor Shepherd and other IASPM scholar activists and activist scholars engage in popular music studies and support the idea of popular music activism.

But activism which is not based on an informed theoretical understanding of the nature of what is to be changed can be dangerous. At best the activists' projects can be undermined or subverted even without their knowing. A number of supposed revolutions in music education have fallen into this category of subverted activism because they were not preceded by a full evaluation of the cultural and social significance of the musics that are taught in the classroom.

There also are problems with some activist projects IASPM has, through some of its members, been associated with such as *Rock Against Racism*. Practically all such activism tends to be directed mainly at the context of music, without much attention being paid to the text of the music itself.

In rock music, one finds that the typical gender stereotypes and gender relations are reproduced. *Rock Against Racism* does not seem to address itself to the problem of stereotyping. And this is not good enough since sexism is as detestable as racism.

A number of view points emerged in the discussion:

- i) IASPM's business is to provide information on popular music, not to transform popular music culture.
- ii) IASPM's research activities are bound to affect popular music culture as musicians, journalists, radio disc jockeys etc. use the results of popular music research in their work.
- iii) IASPM's research provides information that is non-aligned, so to speak. Such information can be used by different social groups for different purposes with effects that may be at variance

with IASPM's aims and objectives. The association must therefore pursue activist projects aimed at preventing this.

Eventually there appeared to be unanimity on the need for activism, hence the kind of recommendations that came up at the end of the conference. Indeed IASPM's decision to come to Ghana, despite all the odds, was an expression of activism and a different kind of internationalism!

## PRACTICAL ISSUES

At the conference closing session a number of recommendations aimed at improving the situation of popular music were made. These include the establishment in Ghana of a popular music archive, a national bi-annual conference and festival of popular music, music studios and recording facilities, an Accra Music Centre for part-time music courses and tuition in the playing of musical instruments.

IASPM and the conference also conveyed their commitment to "a constructive and positive development of popular music in Ghana, in Africa and throughout the world".

The intention of IASPM, its branches and individual members to take various actions aimed at tackling some of the problems of music and music life in Ghana was also announced. Such actions include cultural, academic and musical exchanges with Ghana; provision of information on music recording, studio technology, its developments, prices, durability and functions to those working in the Ghanaian music recording industry; information on the music industry at the request of the Musicians' Union of Ghana; the provision of phonograms of music from other African countries and of Ghanaian music produced and distributed abroad for the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.

In order to avoid the undue exploitation of Ghanaian music and musicians (this was an issue that arose very sharply within the context of the conference session on the music business and industry), IASPM undertook "to prepare a formal agreement with the government of Ghana containing measures

regulating the conditions under which music researchers may enter Ghana for the purposes of documenting and recording Ghanaian music, the conditions under which performing groups may enter Ghana from abroad as well as the conditions under which musicians may leave Ghana to perform abroad with a real sense of security".

IASPM also undertook "to examine ways in which the invaluable documentary and aesthetic treasure of African music recorded on reel-to-reel tapes and presently stored at the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies music archives can be saved for posterity".

In order to clarify the association's objectives, and improve the quality of its work, three amendments to the IASPM statutes were made. The first amendment has resulted in the redefinition of the association as "a non-profit organisation with no formal political ties". The second states that IASPM "condemns the violation of the human rights, as defined by the United Nations Charter, of any individual, group or nation". The last amendment made possible the election of Professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia, Koo Nimo and John Collins as honorary life members of IASPM "in recognition of (their) service to the world of popular music and to the Association".

The conference attempted to achieve a balance between the presentation of formal scholarly papers by academics and the less formal interventions of practising musicians like Koo Nimo, Gyedu Blay Ambolley and Nana Agyeman (Geeman), graphic artists, journalists, radio disc jockeys, and other popular music enthusiasts.

The roles played by Professors J.H. Kwabena Nketia and A.A. Mensah in presiding over many conference sessions and orienting the discussion on several subjects helped IASPM achieve this balance to a large extent.

Proceedings of the conference are being edited for publication both in print and as a phonogram on audio cassettes.

The Fifth Conference is scheduled for 1989. It will be held in Paris as part of

the activities marking the bicentenary of the French Revolution.

## NOTES

1. Served as chairperson of the International Programme Committee; Convenor, Local Arrangements Committee and Central Co-ordinator for the Fourth IASPM Conference.
2. From Statement on Purpose of Conference made by IASPM Executive Secretary Professor John Shepherd, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Professor Shepherd has served as IASPM Executive Secretary for two terms: 1983-85 and 1985-87.
3. Formerly Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. Presently Andrew Mellon Professor of Music and Chair, Department of Music, University of Pittsburgh, USA.
4. Professor Charles Hamm, Department of Music, Dartmouth College, Hanover USA was IASPM's founding chairperson, a position to which he was re-elected during the 1987 conference.
5. This does not necessarily mean that the most consumed music is most expressive of the people's objective needs and aspirations. Actually a sizeable chunk of popular music does contribute much to the fulfilment of the needs and aspirations of the people.
6. The International Music-Record-Tape Newsweekly (Los Angeles: Billboard Publications, 1894-present).
7. The commercial success of certain popular music practitioners and their merchandise is often more a function of their business management and public relations expertise than their musicianship.
8. There have been only unsuccessful attempts to introduce the charts in the Third World and the Socialist World, where some of the most consumed pieces of popular music, like A.B. Crentsil's *Moses*, are not allowed air time. This is not to talk about those popular musics that are not available on phono-

grams. A lot of scepticism has also been expressed in the capitalist world about value of the charts as a true measure of popularity in music. (See Hamm, op. cit.).

9. The performance of the Akan *adowa*, for example was until recently done only once a year, in certain areas, or reserved for the entertainment of particular royal households. (See Nketia, 1973: 88) It has however become accessible to a larger public. Nketia (1962: 17 and 1963: 69) includes the *adowa* genre under his category of popular

The Southern Ewe *agbadza* was also originally performed for military purposes or during the funerals of those who died in battle or in accidents. But it has since the last thirty or so years become everyday music performed by voluntary associations.

Similarly the work of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the rise of the so-called Cultural Troupes in Accra and other big urban areas have occasioned the performance of previously restricted musical types like *Kete*, *Fontomfrom* and *Akom* in situations and venues associated with popular music.

10. Certain other forms of music like jazz were in their origins considered folk music but have become popular or art music when they became available to large audiences or received esoteric treatment in the hands of certain composers and performers. Bebop jazz musicians insisted that their art was of the same status as art music. Some scholars (See Van der Plas: 1985: 3) consider that rock music can be art music.

## REFERENCES

- Beaud, Paul, 1982. Et si l'on reparlait d'Adorno, in Horn and Jagg (ed.) *Popular Music Perspectives*.
- Cutler, Chris, 1985. What is popular music? in Horn, David (ed.) *Popular Music Perspectives* 2.

- Hamm, Charles, 1982. 'Some thoughts on the measurement of popularity in music' in Horn and Tagg (eds.) *Popular Music Perspectives*.
- Horn, David and Philip Tagg (eds.) 1982. *Popular Music Perspectives: Papers from the First International Conference on Popular Music Research, Amsterdam, June 1981*, IASPM, Goteborg and Exeter.
- Horn, David ed. 1985. *Popular Music Perspectives 2: Papers from the Second International Conference on Popular Music Studies, Reggio Emilia September 19-24, 1983*, IASPM, Goteborg, Exeter, Ottawa, Reggio Emilia.
- Jones, G. and J. Rahn 1981. Definitions of popular music: recycled, in Battock, G. ed. *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, New York.
- Nketia, J.H., 1962. *African Music in Ghana*, Accra: Longmans.
1963. *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana*, London: Thomas Nelson.
- 1973: *Folk Songs of Ghana*, Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Van der Plas, Wim 1985. Can Rock be Art? in Horn, D. Ed. *Popular Music Perspectives 2*.
- Shepherd, John 1985. Definition as mystification: a consideration of labels as a hindrance to understanding significance in music, in Horn, D. ed. *Popular Music Perspectives 2*.
- Tagg, Philip 1979. *Kojak: 50 Seconds of Television on Music*, Goteborg: Musikvetenskapliga Institutionen.
- Wicke, Peter 1985. Popularity in music: some aspects of a historical materialist theory for popular music, in Horn, D. ed. *Popular Music Perspectives 2*.

## APPENDICES

### I

#### RESOLUTION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF COPY CODE DEVICES INTO DIGITAL AUDIO TAPE EQUIPMENT

With the introduction of copy code devices into digital audio tape equipment, the phonogram industry hopes to eliminate the home taping and piracy of compact discs. In doing so not only does the industry impede the general progress of audio hardware; they are also in practice proposing a deterioration of sound quality by introducing a frequency notch in all compact discs. Moreover since the copy code notch will be extremely simple to bypass at negligible expense to the consumer, the only result will be to increase the cost and lower the quality of both digital audio tape equipment and compact discs.

While we fully support the right of authors, composers, musicians and workers in the recording and phonogram industry, we see no way in which copy code will help them.

We therefore strongly recommend that no

copy code legislation be introduced.

### II

#### RESOLUTION ON POPULAR MUSIC IN THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE

Whereas popular music is a vital cultural resource in the struggle for freedom in South Africa, and whereas cultural workers are developing an effective culture of resistance to apartheid within South Africa.

Be it herewith resolved that the International Association for the Study of Popular Music pursue all practical avenues to aid the cultural struggle in South Africa through the promotion of popular music and to isolate and combat the political and cultural repression practised by the South African regime.

These avenues should include the collaboration of cultural workers and institutions throughout Africa as well as other continents in the struggle against apartheid.