

## Historical Notes on Neo-African Church Music

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### INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to give a brief historical outline of the musical acculturation processes which have taken place in Southern Africa since the early nineteenth century when modern Western colonial contact commenced, the effects of which not only are still at work but also have become more accentuated and profound. The emphasis will be on the role that the Christian churches have played, since they started their mission activities in Africa in modern times.

African musical idioms are by necessity closer to the hearts of the Africans than is music of Euro-American origin. During the time of Western colonialism, however, Euro-American music has been introduced and then repeatedly emphasized as being a music of superior quality. This fact is apparent in the initial stages of the Christian missionary approach in Africa; but by following the different stages in mission history one will see a slow process of change from almost complete rejection of, or at least indifference to, indigenous African music to its acceptance and in some cases its over-estimation at the present time. The tendency to over-estimation can be seen in the way in which the popular terms 'africanization' or 'indigenization' in the present missionary approach have come to mean isolation from acculturation processes. In some of the present church-music activities in Africa, an attitude among some missionaries of accepting compositions only by Africans and containing only pure African musical idioms has emerged.

Such an attitude will necessarily lead African music into isolation and stagnation, and it will come to have only a curio value. In addition, such a limited approach may also be labelled as being 'separatistic'; and in a Southern Africa where segregation is at work, I have several times met the thought that African Christians will also feel 'musical apartheid' if African musical idioms are pursued too pertinaciously within the churches. As the peoples of Africa have accepted cultural traits and ideologies of Western origin, but changed them in meaning and content to suit their own environments, they must also be allowed to accept European musical idioms and change them according to their own concepts without the superimposition of neo-colonial attitudes. Therefore, I have called the present-day church-music activities an acculturation process, and it is quite justifiable to say that the present developments in some churches in Rhodesia represent a neo-African church music style in which the common characteristics of African indigenous music are ingeniously blended with Western musical elements.

In this context it is also essential to point out that ethno-musicological research on the African continent has to a large extent put an emphasis on two main aspects of African music:

1. African music before the Western colonial period commenced; and
2. African musical 'developments' through the superimposition of Western musical influence.

In reference to the first, the common attitude has been that African music before the Western intrusion was 'the music of static or isolated societies and that this music represented the earliest forms made by mankind or forms that could not have departed substantially from those used by early man'.<sup>1</sup> In addition, musicologists have often pointed to a particular music and termed it the 'pure' and 'proper' form of African musical expression. All added idioms in African music after the Western colonial period commenced have either been disregarded, or have been treated with a rather profound scepticism until very recent times.

It is, however, necessary to treat African music and its different styles or different forms of expression during different times with more objectivity. Although Africa does not have a 'written' history to the same extent as some other parts of the world, it still has a history, and it is illogical to believe that no changes took place in African music before the Western intrusion. As the societies changed due to inside or outside pressure, and changes of environment occurred, so also the musical expressions changed. 'So-called traditional styles of African music may often reflect the pre-colonial diffusion of peoples and cultures in much the same way that the sounds of neo-African music reflects the influence of missions and urban living.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it would be a false assumption to believe that the indigenous music in Africa has been completely untouched by the intrusion of foreign cultural traits, be it of pre-colonial origin or belonging to the Western hemisphere. Furthermore, it would also be a false assumption to believe that such foreign traits have eradicated the African musical idioms, although there may have been on the part of Western colonialists and zealous missionaries a wish for such a destruction, or at least the isolation, of African music. The common outlook among colonising European peoples has been to change the peoples on the African continent to make them 'civilized'; and in the wake of the colonialists followed many different mission societies, which took as their main task to convert and 'cultivate the savage'.

Yet, African music has continued to be used, and instead of the old heritage being discarded, new elements have been added; gradually neo-indigenous musical styles have

emerged 'as music whose roots are largely African and whose development certainly follows its own logic'.<sup>3</sup> The new music has come to live in juxtaposition with the pre-colonial music. This fact has been strongly emphasized by the Africans themselves. A leading African composer and musicologist in Nigeria, Akin Euba, says that, 'African societies can clearly accommodate a complex musical structure in which new idioms are simply added to the old ones'.<sup>4</sup>

But due to the increased Western influence it is no longer possible to speak about African music as a folk-music only. It is necessary to delineate the contemporary African music into at least three major groups, such as (a) folk-music, which is largely the music least influenced by Western traits; (b) urban and popular music; and (c) fine-art music.

The church-music activities in Africa which have taken place since approximately the end of the Second World War, and have since become more and more intensified in the continuous search for a modern African identity in Christian worship and general fellowship, should, I suggest, be placed in the group of fine-art music. But it is a form of fine-art music which has much more of an embracing character towards the receiving societies than is probably the case with its Western counterpart, owing to the functional and communicating values embedded in such African-styled music. There is no doubt that, 'The influence of the Christian church in Africa has produced some of the most accomplished examples of modern African music. In recent years composers of African church music have increasingly used traditional elements in their music, and some of the most exciting experiments in neo-traditional music have been carried out in the church'.<sup>5</sup> With the exceptions of Weman's extensive study, *African Music and the Church in Africa* and Mbunga's *Church Law and Bantu Music*,<sup>6</sup> no serious consideration so far seems to have been given to this fascinating process. The subject, however, is vast, and in this context it is impossible to cover more than a few general aspects. Nevertheless, I have ventured to give a very brief outline of the historic developments and of the difficulties involved in breaking the resistance, which has come mainly from missionaries and from a few of the educated and westernized Africans.

## THE BACKGROUND

From the early nineteenth century, Europeans came to Africa with a sense of imperialist mission and an outlook of almost absolute superiority, colonizing the continent not only materially, but also spiritually and philosophically. During the initial mission process, which accompanied or followed the secular colonization, the whole trend was to transplant Europe's concept of Christianity to the African environment, as well as imposing its own denominational divisions: 'Each denomination and missionary organization brought its characteristic denominational one-sidedness, its own particular kind of Christianity.'<sup>7</sup>

As a result of such an outlook the mission societies naturally organized the Christian worship along lines which were familiar to them, and so the essential parts of the worship from the 'home' church were transplanted:

Gerade in Afrika ist die Gestaltung des kirchlichen Lebens sehr oft die simple Imitation aus Europa oder Amerika eingefuehrter liturgischer Formen und Verhaltensweisen.<sup>8</sup>

The reasons for such a one-sided outlook in the mission approach seem to have had two different motives.

Firstly, the Protestant denominations were extremely faithful to their own particular heritage from the time of the Reformation and its aftermath; and by spreading the traditions of their own particular denomination to the young churches in Africa, it was hoped that a deeper sense of universal unity between them and the old churches in Europe or America would be felt.

Secondly, when Protestant missions started on a larger scale during the nineteenth century, the African continent was then spoken of as the 'Dark Continent' having no culture worthy of consideration.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the only possible method of Christian teaching and fostering was to introduce the Christian ideas and traditions in a Western manner: 'Missionaries have commonly assumed that Western civilization and Christianity are two aspects of the same gift which God has commissioned them to offer to the rest of mankind.'<sup>10</sup>

Thus in respect of church-music, the European outlook was dominant; Christian music,

by necessity, had to be Western, as African music was unintelligible to the European ear and regarded as inferior and pagan.<sup>11</sup> The use of such music then, could not be encouraged, but had to be firmly resisted, because of the risks of leading the newly converted African back to the heathen and 'sinful' society.<sup>12</sup>

The bans so introduced by the missions against many activities of the traditional life, and the demand on the African Christian to break totally with his own background and heritage, meant, at least for the first Christian generation, an up-rooting from the familiar society and a transformation to foreign one, where social, political, economic and religious aspects were not inseparable as in his own society:

The conclusion is that if you break up the social structure of the individual, you destroy his roots and he dries up spiritually. Yet it seems this is what the Church has been doing all the time. African Christians are sociologically wretched beings with a divided personality that is neither here nor there.<sup>13</sup>

It must, however, be strongly emphasized that the initial mission approach outlined above was not due to the Christian faith as such, but to the understanding which the nineteenth century Europeans had of the Christian faith. As the Western civilisation was ultimately regarded as built on Christian principles, Europe at that time was also regarded as the only true civilisation and culture. Therefore, nobody questioned that adaptation of Christianity also meant adaptation of Western culture at large: 'We bring you a message which had given the nations of the West their success in the history of the world and their superior culture and and political organisation.'<sup>14</sup>

## CHANGES OF ATTITUDE

In the twentieth century criticism of the former approach slowly emerged, owing largely to the progressive, although paternalistic, attitude of some few missionaries, who devoted much of their time to anthropological studies of the peoples with whom they worked. H. A. Junod, a missionary from Switzerland, who worked in South Africa at the turn of this century gave two reasons for the necessary change in mission approach.

Firstly, missionaries of the twentieth century had profited from the sciences of mankind, and so, 'from a more profound study of the native soul [they] have learnt to distinguish better between elements which are frankly bad and reprehensible (such as the ideas of sorcery), and the praise-worthy aspirations indicated by certain rites.'<sup>15</sup> Secondly, the ideas of evolutionism, already clearly discernible during the late nineteenth century, affected the outlook of the missionaries more profoundly:

Science has shown that primitive and semi-primitive peoples are passing through a phase of development through which our fathers also passed . . . These pagans are our brothers whose growth has been delayed, brothers still wrapped in the mists of earliest infancy; but already they are waking and commencing their forward march.

Missionary teaching [having accepted such an approach] will rightly seek points of attachment in the past, and will thus become more living and intelligible. Christianity will no longer be a crowd of white men's dogmas, to be accepted unreflectively. The native will understand that revealed truth is in harmony with the best elements in his ancient creed, and he will assimilate it much better. For the missionary himself, the study of the pagan system will be investigated with a wholly new interest . . . He will no longer be the theorist teaching the ideas of a superior race, but the elder brother guiding his younger brethren towards the hill of holiness, where the Father bids all his children gather.<sup>16</sup>

Later Edwin Smith expressed ideas along the same lines and he hinted at some practical suggestions to solve the problems of imposed foreignness in the young African churches. Christianity could not be 'rooted to the soil' unless it gave the receiving peoples possibilities of expressing their faith in a familiar way.<sup>17</sup> From this time and onwards the acceptance or rejection of an African expression of the Christian Faith continued to be discussed at innumerable missionary conferences, but not until recently, when the Africans themselves have taken over more and more the direct leadership of their churches, have practical results been clearly discernible.

Another attitude, which may have played an important role in the change of the missionary approach, must also be considered here. The racial segregation introduced in Southern Africa during the nineteenth century affected many societies; and this tendency of the Europeans was met with a reaction from the side of the Africans through the emergence of the many independent church movements. They spoke the motto: 'Africa for Africans'. Lastly, the nineteenth century mission approach had been more a teaching and preaching approach, while the liturgical aspects had been neglected, probably due to the contemporary pietistic trends in Europe and America. The separatistic church movements, however, proclaimed a significant emphasis on ritual, thereby giving the functional aspect, also in music, its natural place in worship.<sup>18</sup>

#### EFFECT ON CHURCH MUSIC

These changes of attitude in the general mission approach had direct effects on the music in worship. Although Hornbostel's article in 1928 on African music mainly deals with ethnomusicological aspects, yet, it must have given missionaries interested in music some hints on the approach towards music in African churches; for he stated that Christian European music could not be a substitute for African music for the simple reason that:

it has not originated and grown within [them. Therefore, Africans should be encouraged] to sing and play in their own natural manner, that is to say, in the African manner. To what extent one can be broadminded in this respect, as far as the Christian church and school are concerned, I am not competent to judge.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first missionaries to raise his voice in discontent over the Western manner of singing in the churches in Africa was Fr A. M. Jones, working at Mapanza in Northern Rhodesia. His main criticism against the Western tunes had two different and essential aspects, which had already been pointed out by Hornbostel. Firstly, the indigenous language seldom or never complied with the rhythmical metre of the Western melody: 'We sing hymns with the metre all wrong and actually come to accept them as normal things.'<sup>20</sup> Secondly, the tonal patterns of the indigenous languages never

fit the European tunes: 'Therefore if we use any European tunes we have to throw the speech-tones to the winds. We have to force the African to distort his own language so cruelly that it is no wonder that on occasions he simply cannot do it.'<sup>21</sup>

Due to the initiative taken by Jones in commencing experiments with African church music with the assistance of an African by his side, others made similar attempts in other parts of Africa; nevertheless, clear signs of progress were not discernible until after the end of the Second World War. Experiments in African church music were mainly attempted within the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in West and Central Africa. Some articles during the late 1940s and early 1950s appeared in the African Music Society's *Newsletter*, in which the results of such attempts were revealed and discussed.

When finally African music started to be introduced into the Christian worship, however, a most astonishing problem arose. Many African Christians did not seem to wish to have their own music in the church. The reason for such opposition can be understood only by appreciating the impact of the initial mission approach. African indigenous music had been condemned, perhaps mostly because of its connection with pagan worship: 'The black man himself has not infrequently been taught to misunderstand the religion of his ancestors and consequently its religious music, so it comes now as a surprise to him to learn that their beliefs can be studied fairly and even with sympathy.'<sup>22</sup> Missionaries had not understood that there are certain musical differences between religious and non-religious music, and had taken little account of music of a purely social and entertaining character. Furthermore, African music could not, it had been assumed, reach the heights of European musical artistry. Everything was doomed. In this manner the Africans had been taught to despise their own musical heritage, and because of the long and deep infiltration of their culture by the mission societies, the young churches in Africa became proud of the 'Western guise' and cherished it.

But as mentioned previously, from the 1940s more and more literature has been published, mostly in the form of journal articles, giving details about the development of a new

approach in church music in African churches. It would go beyond the scope of this paper to consider them all; suffice it to mention the more important recommendations and experiments.

Briefly, two different approaches seem to have prevailed. On the one hand there is the recommendation of a complete break with the old tradition of Western hymnody and liturgical music, and a creation of new music within those fields, written and composed by Africans. Although such an idea was presented rather early in the debate, there were no practical results of it until the 1960s, at least in the area of Southern Africa.

On the other hand there was a more cautious approach with recommendations of (a) adaptation of African indigenous tunes of a secular kind and with no connection with African religion and worship; (b) construction of 'African chants', based on the model of Gregorian chants and fairly often recommended to be in parts instead of in unison (either in parallel two-part harmony or according to proper Western four-part functionality principles), and using what was termed 'African free rhythm'. Of these recommendations, the adaptation method and the construction of 'African chants' are the ones that have been most followed. When studying the approaches towards African music in Christian worship, we will meet these ideas over and over again right up to the present decade.

#### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

As regards the main trends of indigenization of church music in Africa, there is no doubt about the importance played by the Roman Catholic Church. This is especially evident in the rich output of 'African Masses' of different origin from around 1940 onwards.

For nearly two thousand years the most essential music of the central parts of the Roman Catholic liturgy has been the Gregorian chant. This fact has been frequently emphasized, and the second Vatican Council of the early 1960s plainly stated that, 'The Church acknowledges the Gregorian chant as proper to the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.'<sup>23</sup> Partly due to its significant antiquity, and partly due to its origin

in the eastern and southern countries around the Mediterranean, the Gregorian chant has not been considered to be a pure European musical style, but has been regarded as possessing an old, and in a way, a universal Christian musical expression, which branched in all directions from its original area with the expansion of Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the Gregorian chant became part and parcel of the Roman Catholic music in Africa, where it was commonly met with acceptance and satisfaction by the Africans, owing to the similarity in tonality and in singing style between the ancient ecclesiastical music and the indigenous African music.<sup>25</sup> As long as the divergences between certain tones and semitones are partly or completely disregarded, such an assumption of similarity cannot be denied. It must also be remembered that those divergences between tones and semitones — dissimilar from the Western tonal system — can only be practically and truly measured in instrumental music. Hence, with the considerable flexibility of the human voice, coupled with the African's ability to imitate, the performance by Africans of Gregorian chant most often results in a relatively true reproduction of such music.

In respect of the common vernacular hymns, the practice of the Catholic Church in Africa has not been different from the general rule of other mission societies: the hymnody has consisted of transliterations of Western hymns and fitted to Western tunes, thus creating distortion of the tonal patterns and rhythms of the indigenous languages.<sup>26</sup>

In all their undertakings, the clergy and laity of the Roman Catholic Church have been dependent upon Papal Instructions from the Holy See laid down during different stages in the history of the Church. Such dependence has also applied to the mission approach. For example, as early as 1659 the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda sent out an instruction in which was said: 'In no way and under no pretext should the missionaries try or persuade the peoples to change their rites, customs and manners, except those that are only opposed to religion and morals'; and in 1939 Pope Pius XII wrote: 'Respect for the particular genius of each race is the guiding star by which the missionaries should conduct themselves, and

on which they should fix their attention constantly in their apostolic march'.<sup>27</sup>

Such instructions compelled Catholic missionaries to adopt a more cautious mission approach than has sometimes been the case with the Protestant mission societies. Due to such directives, missionaries also realised fairly early the necessity of having African music as the idiom for a sound musical and Christian expression in worship. Thus, from the 1940s, the question of indigenization was brought more and more to the fore by several Catholics, clergy and laity alike.

The early indigenizing attempts, however, were not met unchallenged. Many missionaries objected to an African musical expression in worship, and isolated objections from educated Africans were also raised, inspired by the same reasons as have already been noted within the Protestant mission societies. African music was not regarded as sufficiently artistic and spiritual.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the objections, however, indigenization proceeded although slowly, mainly due to a cautious approach in most attempts. The similarities, as indicated above, between plain chant and African traditional music became the tools to bridge the gulf of difference in conception. The Gregorian chant was regarded as a model, to which African church music should adapt itself.

The first perceptible results came from Central Africa. Tracey records an African Mass composed by Ba Joseph Kiwele in 1949 and called 'Missa Katanga'; and he further notes that similar attempts were made further north at Brazzaville.<sup>29</sup>

Another attempt during the early fifties by the Roman Catholic Church in the Congo, which has come to be known in Europe as one of the most famous examples of African church music, was the 'Missa Luba'. Through the close co-operation between a gifted African musician, Joachim Ngoi and Fr Guido Haazen, the whole Mass, built according to adaptation principles, became a blend of Western influence and African indigenous musical elements. All sections of the Mass are derived from traditional Congolese folk-music but elaborated by Ngoi and Haazen, and this has resulted in a rather ingenious rhythmic, harmonic and polyphonic texture.

Owing to the indigenous musical activities which took place here and there within the Roman Catholic Church, and which as a whole gave significant and positive results, Pope Pius XII sanctioned them more clearly by the Papal Instruction 'Musicac Sacrae Disciplina' of 1955, which was the first of its kind; in dealing with the Catholic mission areas, the Instruction made clear that there was no longer merely a wish for adaptation of secular African tunes, but a desire for a new music similar to the indigenous music. In other words, Africans should be encouraged to compose new music containing an African idiom, and this certainly leaves room for an accultural process.<sup>30</sup>

This trend was confirmed and accepted in the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s, where it is stated that:

In certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, there are peoples who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music, and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only by way of forming their attitude towards religion, but also when there is question of adapting worship to their native genius . . . Therefore, when missionaries are being given training in music, every effort should be made to see that they become competent in promoting the traditional music of these peoples, both in schools and in sacred services, as far as may be practicable.<sup>31</sup>

#### RHODESIAN EXPERIENCE

It has been necessary to give this background in order to follow and understand the similar attempts which have taken place in Rhodesia since about 1954. The church music activities, which took place in West and Central Africa, had their echo in Southern Africa, but at a rather later stage. As there is, to my knowledge, no written evidence of the promotion of African music before 1954, this must be taken as the starting date for such activities in Rhodesia.

These activities were not co-ordinated and were experiments by individual churches in the initial stages, both in Rhodesia or elsewhere in Africa, and for this reason it is necessary to

deal with the material in a somewhat denominational manner. The activities of three churches in Rhodesia will be briefly outlined: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia (E.L.C.R.), sponsored by the Church of Sweden Mission (C.S.M.); the Methodist Church sponsored by the American Methodist Mission Board and the Roman Catholic Church. Incidentally, it should be noted that successful results have been achieved only in Shona society. Although attempts have been made also in Ndebele society, no results of any major importance have yet occurred; the reason for this disparity between the two major African groups in Rhodesia is probably of a sociological kind but space does not here allow for consideration of this phenomenon.

Before 1960 most churches in Rhodesia seemed to have neither the resources nor the special interest to start approaches of their own, although the musical developments and other indigenous attempts in other parts of Africa were followed with interest. True, there were discussions of indigenization at conferences within each church, or together with others, but no practical results on a larger scale seemed to evolve from them. The fact was that Rhodesian churches continued in their conservative manner to use hymns and liturgical music of pure Western origin; and the problems of rhythmic accents and tonal inflections of vernacular words, indicated previously, remained unsolved.

#### *The Evangelical Lutheran Church*

In 1954 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia had a visit by one of the leading church musicians in Sweden, Dr H. Weman. He was then the organist and director of music at the arch-diocesan cathedral of Uppsala. During his visit in Rhodesia and elsewhere in Africa his main interest was naturally turned towards the church music in use in the 'sister-churches' of the Church of Sweden Mission. He came into close contact with Western music in African Christian worship, which he describes as 'compact four-part improvised congregational singing',<sup>32</sup> as well as with the everyday folk-music in the African villages. Furthermore, he noted that the liturgical music in use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church was commonly of a poor quality and that no regulations or recommendations seemed to

direct the clergy and congregations in the choice of the music. The melodic material of the liturgy was mainly according to the Swedish Missal of 1897 which by that time was to a very large extent outdated in Sweden, and the melodies were used in many different manners. A missionary in the church once expressed the view to me that there were almost as many liturgical musical styles as there were priests.<sup>33</sup> The different characteristics of the two musics heard led him to question the exclusion of African folk-music from worship, and to initiate extensive studies in African music.

On the recommendation of Weman after his return from Africa late in 1954, the Church of Sweden Mission formed a special committee, which was given the assignment of drawing up plans to utilize African musical potential in the worship in the African 'sister-churches'.<sup>34</sup> Shortly afterwards requests were brought forward from all the Lutheran churches in Africa sponsored by the Church of Sweden Mission that Weman be made available for a period of time in each church in order to pursue the plans worked out by the committee.<sup>35</sup>

Thus a commission was given to Weman by the Church of Sweden Mission to make a journey to the 'sister-churches' in Africa with the task of encouraging a more africanized manner of singing in worship. As can be seen this action was not ultimately based on the observances reported by Weman, but first and foremost based upon the request which came from the churches. The journey took place in autumn 1956 and lasted to spring 1957; four months were spent in South Africa and two months in Rhodesia.

In his report to the Church of Sweden Mission after the completion of his commission in Africa, Weman drew attention to the main aim of the work, which was to investigate and test the possibilities of an introduction of a liturgical music based on the characteristics of African folk-music.<sup>36</sup> The idea, so commonly brought forward during the 1940s and 1950s, especially by missionaries interested in the development of African church music, that there is a certain resemblance between the Gregorian style and the African folk-music, was further developed by Weman. His report, however, was not in favour of a direct usage of the ecclesiastical modes without modifications. It seems fairly obvious then that Weman had

taken special notice of the methods used by the Roman Catholic Church in West and Central Africa, but as regards the tonality concept he seemed to be willing to accept a more close relationship between the ecclesiastical modes and some African 'tonalities'.<sup>37</sup> Having such an approach, he believed that accultural processes were possible in the creation of neo-African church music, and he clearly emphasised the necessity of the liturgical functions in the music as well as the necessity for an aesthetic attitude.<sup>38</sup>

As the Christian churches from their earliest days frequently made use of the Psalter, Weman found that the best of introducing his ideas of indigenization was to make use of the Psalms. The idea of antiphonal and responsorial singing, so predominant in the music of the Church, strengthened his views that he was on the right road, as African musical styles are mostly antiphonal or responsorial in character. Furthermore, he argued that the free rhythm found in Gregorian chant is similar to the 'African free rhythm'.<sup>39</sup>

Hence, with the Catholic use of the Gregorian chant as a model, Weman argued the possibilities of creating African 'psalm-tunes' from indigenous songs, which resembled any of the ecclesiastical modes. Through the extraction of the melodic 'Umlinie' from several African traditional melodies, recorded predominantly in South Africa, he constructed three different 'African psalm-tunes'. In order not to break too much with the common and cherished custom of Western four-part singing in worship, the 'psalm-tunes' were harmonized according to Western harmonic functionality principles.

Before describing further the results of Weman's pioneer work in Southern Africa, it is necessary to bring forward some points of criticism. There seems to be no doubt that the idea of a certain resemblance between some of the ecclesiastical modes and African tonality can hold true in a few cases, but the question still arises whether it is the whole truth. In West Africa, Carrington and others had, during the forties and fifties, experimented with the creation of new tunes based on the tonal patterns of the spoken indigenous languages, had made them in pentatonic fashion similar to the Gregorian chants and had performed them in a responsorial manner.

Such an approach, however, does not contain conspicuous African musical elements, mainly due to complete lack of rhythmic vitality in such melodies. The concept of 'African free rhythm', advocated by Weman and others during that time as being an African musical element of priority has not to my knowledge been satisfactorily explained.<sup>41</sup> In the Gregorian chanting style 'free rhythm' would mean the word-accent which appear at unequal distance in the melodic flow. Furthermore, these accents are subservient to the melody. In African music the rhythm seldom seems to be subservient. Instead, as the underlying factor to the melody is the rapid and regular pulsation, which, in its turn, is grouped into certain invariable and repeated rhythmic patterns. Rycroft says in connection with his analysis of a West African solo song accomplished by a musical bow that, 'It is tempting at this stage to dismiss the piece as being a clear case of 'free rhythm'. Repeated attentive listening, however, establishes a definite though complex formal scheme within which unequal constituents are loosely but ingeniously blended.'<sup>42</sup> In a similar manner Carrol admits that 'free rhythm' in the Yoruba chanting may be related to a slow handclap or beating of the gong.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, by chanting on a tubanote, which would be the case with Weman's 'African psalm-tunes', the tonal structure of the indigenous languages will be disregarded to a certain degree, although it can never have the same consequences of distortion as the adaptation of vernacular texts to Western hymn tunes.

These few notes of criticism, however, must not conceal the necessity and the real and far-reaching advantages of Weman's approach. Without his initial and thorough-going efforts to bring a certain musical style into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia, the liturgical music as well as the hymnody would have continued in decline.

The direct advantages of the introduction of the 'psalm-tunes' seem to be the following. Firstly, there is a natural 'down-drift' motion in all three of them. As such the melodic movement is typically African in character; all the melodies composed by Weman and based on the 'psalm-tunes' are highly singable by congregations. Secondly, by chanting in free rhythm according to the Western manner, there

can be no faulty word accent. With good leadership the singing may be performed very fluently, in spite of the lack of a vital rhythm. Thirdly, the antiphonal or responsorial usage is highly applicable to congregations, as this singing technique is the most common technique in African vocal music. Lastly, the melodies are short in structure, and this is why they are easily grasped and learnt.

As can be seen from the historical data, Weman definitely played the role of a pioneer worker in Southern Africa in the process of indigenization of church music. He also opened up more possibilities for accultural musical processes through making use of some of the most characteristic musical elements of both Western and African origin. His ultimate aim was to get Africans to create their own music, but the time at his disposal was too short, and the time was not even ripe as ideas of indigenization of church music had not as yet come to be generally and widely accepted in Rhodesia. Finally, an aspect of greatest importance was pursued by Weman, namely that African music must be treated for what it really is and with due respect: 'an artistic medium, which proceeds according to its own rules, though these rules differ at some points from those known in the West.'<sup>44</sup> In other words, the common Western tendency to stamp African music as inferior or 'primitive' should be eradicated. And not only that, for in presenting such a thought he also indicated that African music is governed by certain rules, and that those rules should be studied, learnt, and then taught by Africans and others in order to build up concepts of African musicology as distinctive from Western musicology.

The immediate effects of Weman's short stay in Rhodesia were limited, but his activity gave sufficient material to get the liturgical music in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia working in a more conformed and disciplined manner. K. T. Bergman, born in Rhodesia, and working as a Church of Sweden missionary in the educational field of the church, continued these activities and the new music that was composed was encouraged in all congregations. Through church music festivals and rehearsals with congregations before or after the Sunday services at different places, Bergman's devoted work met with sincere appreciation and the new melodies introduced

in the liturgy became more and more established.

Indigenizing attempts were also encouraged, but the resources within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia were not sufficient and Bergman had many other essential duties to attend to; therefore a request from the church to the Church of Sweden Mission resulted in other visits by Weman, first in 1967 and then in 1969.

At that time church music activities had also started within the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches, as will presently be seen, and there was no musical material by African composers available to Weman, which he introduced into music courses run in 1967. The response from the choir participants and the congregations was very positive, and it seemed as if the time was ripe for African composers to emerge also within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia. This wish, however, was only partly realised but an atmosphere had been created through the introduction of African church music, which was to be fruitful at a later stage. Weman had also changed his method of composing, probably owing to direct contact with and influence from the Roman Catholic and Methodist new church music. His musical output this time was more 'africanized' in character; he tried to create music with more intense rhythm, and he adhered more truly to the tonal patterns of the spoken Shona language. It must also be stressed that all his compositions were created for the sole purpose of encouraging African to do the same, and so to build up their own church music resources.

The desired emergence of African composers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia finally came true in 1969, when Weman returned for a fourth time to Rhodesia. During his four months' stay, five church music courses were held at different places, and each course lasted for a week and ended with a Sunday Mass, in which the results of the course were put into practice at their appropriate places within the liturgy. The main aim in all the courses was to encourage the participants to compose. As the African composing technique is quite different from the Western one, in its great attachment to improvisation, Weman tried to encourage the participants by giving them a great number of

short music formulas — some of them rather similar to the ecclesiastical modes — which the participants were requested to improvise upon. Furthermore, he stressed the necessity of adherence in general terms to the tonal patterns of the language and the rhythmic character of indigenous African music. In the choice of texts for the compositions, the Psalms were recommended.

During the first workshop held at Masase, West Nicholson, in January 1969, two primary school teachers presented their first attempts.<sup>45</sup> The compositions were at once tried in church, and were received with great pleasure by the congregation. From this time the barriers were broken down and many new compositions by Africans have been added to the first two. A fair number of African Christians, especially teachers, have shown great musical gifts, and have come to be more and more established as composers and church music leaders in their own congregations. At the time of writing this article, Evangelical Lutheran Church composers in Rhodesia have created between 60 and 70 hymns and Psalms which are presently being transcribed and edited, and will shortly appear in a songbook called *Imbirai She — Dumisani Nkosi* (Sing to the Lord — Praise the Lord).

### *The Methodist Church*

The initial and devoted efforts in Southern Africa by Weman in 1957 were soon followed by attempts in other churches in Rhodesia. Whether such activities were a result of Weman's pioneer work or a follow-up of the church activities which had taken place in other parts of Africa is rather difficult to determine. Nevertheless the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia is mainly confined to one particular geographical area, comprising the Belingwe, Gwanda and Beit Bridge districts, and all Weman's activities in 1957 took place only in that area, and to it is safe to assume that the activities which commenced in the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches from around 1960 had received encouragements from outside Rhodesia. Furthermore, a number of mission conferences during the 1950s had brought in the new concept of africanization, which seems to have challenged most mission societies to commence activities along such lines.

In 1960 a trained musician and musicologist, Robert Kauffman, was specially assigned by the American Methodist Board of Missions to Rhodesia for a period of five years in order to encourage the use of indigenous music in churches and schools. His first two years were almost fully devoted to language study and music research within Shona society, and the three following years were more or less a direct application of the findings of his research.<sup>46</sup> In the African congregations of the Methodist church in Rhodesia there was in existence from about 1940 a laymen's organisation called the *Wabvuwi*, which had developed an interesting adaptation and assimilation technique in the singing of Western hymns translated into the vernacular. Although the tunes were all of Western origin they had been spontaneously elaborated by the Africans and as a result sounded almost purely African in style. When Kauffman came in 1960 he made an overall and general study of their musical style and came to the conclusion that, '*Wabvuwi* music gives an indication to one direction in which future church music in Africa is moving'. He further stated that if accultural processes took the same lines and 'were as effective as it has been with *Wabvuwi* music, there is more to be gained than lost in the process'.<sup>47</sup> However, the most interesting aspect of *Wabvuwi* musical activities is that they seem to have emerged without any specific pressure from outside sources such as from missionary influences. As such the organisation may be compared with what has taken place in many of the independent churches of Rhodesia, which also deserve detailed music research.

As the adaptation style already existed in the Methodist church, Kauffman's initial attempts to promote new African church music were along such lines. But as adaptation always involved setting a new text to an already existing indigenous secular melody, difficulties almost always arise in balancing such texts to available tunes, due to different tonal patterns occurring in the new text as different from the tonal patterns of the old texts on which the melody might have been based. Thus, Kauffman suggested modified adaptation techniques which briefly were: (a) original secular songs to be used as a point of departure for something new, i.e. slight changes, particularly in the melodic flow;

(b) the use of a particular musical style, i.e. its form, mood, and rhythm to make something new which is similar.<sup>48</sup>

The two approaches were recommended to talented musicians in the Methodist church; and during annual 'Arts Workshops' of a week or so in length, which Kauffman put on from 1960, the participants started to present such compositions. Fairly early in the development of such workshops, participants moved further and further away from the direct adaptation technique and ultimately composed vocal music which was genuinely their own — a process which in fact was exactly what Kauffman had hoped and strove for.

It was due to the idea of workshops that a new African church music emerged in Rhodesia. From 1960 to 1968 such courses were arranged and run by the Methodist church, but invitations were sent to all churches in Rhodesia and members from the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches started to participate at a fairly early stage. Thus, the courses had more of an ecumenical character than a Methodist approach.

Kauffman also played an important part in the formation and establishment of an organization called 'All-Africa Church Music Association'. The aim of the association was to collect ideas and publish the results of the promotion of new church music in Africa, and act as the channel of communication between countries and churches in Africa in all matters relating to church music and liturgy. Such an undertaking, it was hoped, would give the promotion of church music a more profound impact on the Christian societies in Africa. However, political developments after 1965 hindered the Association in its contact with its many members in other African countries.

In order to prevent the decline of the Association, Kauffman's successor as director, John E. Kaemmer, recommended each participating country to establish national or regional church music associations. In Rhodesia this took place in 1968 in a somewhat modified form when the 'Ecumenical Arts Association' was founded in Bulawayo. In this organisation the idea of africanization has been widened to encompass as much as possible of African culture in Christian worship as four different

creative arts are promoted: music, drama, art and creative writing.

Through the direct initiative, then, of the Methodist church since 1960, and the activities of the Ecumenical Arts Association since 1968, quite a large number of new hymns have been composed and come into fairly frequent use in many of the churches in Rhodesia. Many of the hymns have been compiled in two song-books entitled *Ndwiyo dzeChechi dzevu* (Church music of the soil), and the first one also appears in a music edition. In addition a few records have been published.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Roman Catholic Church*

Almost simultaneously with the commencement of Methodist church music activities, the Roman Catholic Church embarked upon the same idea. In early 1960 a Swiss missionary priest and musicologist, Fr Joseph Lenherr, came to Rhodesia and was given the assignment of advancing indigenous music in Catholic worship. As a general background to his work he had all the activities which had taken place earlier in other parts of Africa, and he also came into contact with Kauffman's work at a rather early stage. The approach used by Lenherr was similar to Kauffman's and later gave very positive results. It included the following steps.<sup>50</sup>

1. A rich collection on tape of traditional Shona music was made and this was followed by an extensive study of the general features, techniques and forms used in the music collected.

2. During the time of collection Lenherr tried to find potential composers among the musicians he met, who could later be of help in creating new tunes. Those potential composers were mainly primary school teachers.

3. The composers were not given any formal musical training before they started to compose. Such an approach was due to the belief that the more musical training they were given — which of necessity would be based on Western methods and thought — the more would such training limit their capacity in spontaneous composing along African idioms. In this respect Lenherr differed rather profoundly from the approach taken by Kauffman, who encouraged theoretical musical training during his courses.

4 The only limitation on the freedom of the composers was that, due to the Catholic liturgical tradition, the texts were fixed. Those texts were mainly taken from the Scriptures, especially from the Psalter.

After a time, a few of the composers came up with new tunes, which were immediately tried in the congregations and at courses which were frequently held. The educated Africans, however, reacted strongly against the new tunes when they were introduced in 1962. On the other hand, in the rural areas the same music was almost at once accepted and spread very fast.

Soon after these initial attempts, Lenherr left Rhodesia for a considerable time, but the musical activities were continued through the leadership of an African musician and composer, Stephen Ponde. When Lenherr returned in 1966 he could record the following progress:

- (a) The cause of the indigenous church music had been taken up by educated and illiterate Christian alike and made their own.
- (b) The body of ca. 40 new church songs composed in 1962, although at first badly distorted partly because of insufficient introduction, had become established tradition in liturgy. Practical use had added Western harmonies to parts of songs, and brought about an occasional employment of instruments (drums, rattles, mbira). Even dancing to such tunes could be encountered among Christians when they were sung outside the church building.
- (c) The main composer [Stephen Ponde] had established himself within the church community, even outside of the district . . .
- (d) Songs, composed between 1962 and 1966, show greater sophistication in musical structure . . .<sup>51</sup>

After Lenherr's return to Rhodesia in 1966, church music activities within the Roman Catholic Church have been of a tremendous breadth and have encompassed the whole church area in Mashonaland. In 1969 Lenherr had more than ten gifted composers around him, and all have contributed considerably by

their output of new church music. Through frequent music courses at different places within the area of the church, and through a considerable number of records, the new music has spread with enormous speed.

An important point of comparison must also be made here. The music output from the Methodist initiative has tended to be mostly based on the creation of new hymns, which has very often resulted in new compositions of rather complex structure, and as such not really singable by a whole congregation. In the Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, the approach has been towards a direct liturgical function of the music with complete participation from all church-goers. Because of this direct functional approach, the music had to be composed in such a manner that congregational participation could be envisaged. In this respect almost all new music by Catholic composers has been fully successful as the congregational participation is now more active than ever before. This is probably due to the often remarkable and ingenious simplicity of the songs.

### CONCLUSION

In the output of church music by African composers in Rhodesia from 1960, a few general points regarding accultural processes may finally be summed up here. In regard to African common musical characteristics the following idioms are most often present in the new music:

1. The responsorial manner of singing.
2. The general 'downdrift' in melody.
3. The adherence to the tonal pattern of the language, especially when necessary for the understanding of the thoughts expressed.
4. The polyrhythmic structure based on equal and rapid time units, and grouped into certain invariable and repeated rhythmic patterns.
5. The parallel motion in multipart music, especially in fourths and fifths, but fairly often also in thirds.
6. Contrapuntal motion, especially when different text lines are used for different sung parts.

In addition to these basic and conspicuous African musical idioms there are elements of Western origin:

- (a) Adherence to a more Western tonality concept within the diatonic system; and
- (b) Extension of harmonic feeling in multipart music by addition of thirds.

In other words, a musical acculturation process is at work in which the African composer has ingeniously blended his own musical concept with elements from Euro-America and made them his own. In such a way an African music has emerged in a new dress, bringing to the fore the immense artistic value of African music in general which is fully worthy of our appreciation.

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