The musical enculturation and education of Wagogo children

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This article examines the musical enculturation and early education of Wagogo children of the Dodoma region in central Tanzania. In support of the enculturation premise, long-standing practices in musical enculturation among the Wagogo are described, most of which are continuing today. The Wagogo hold to the belief that the behaviours of both mother and father affect the proper development of the young child prior to birth and this sense of joint child-raising responsibilities continues even as they enter into their school years. The intent of the article is to argue that the facilitation of musical experiences for young children and teachers through music and dance is a vital component of their holistic development, and to offer an understanding of how teachers and parents might incorporate daily singing, dancing and drumming experiences into the lives of children. By providing occasions for music in the lives of young children, and by nurturing their natural musical proclivities, the traditional music of the Wagogo of Tanzania remains a living tradition, a critical component of the identity of young Wagogo children, and an important means of human expression.

Introduction

Schools that divorce themselves from the challenges of the real world of music in the everyday lives of children, that scale back and simplify beyond recognition the meaning of music, and that give little opportunity for children to apply what musical knowledge and skills they have mastered to new contexts, cannot accomplish the noble goals of transmitting and preserving musical cultural heritage. (Bresler & Thompson, 2002)

The Wagogo¹ people, also referred to as the Gogo tribe of central Tanzania, East Africa, in the land called Ugogo, 'believe that both the mother's and the father's behaviour affect the proper development of their newborn child' (Mabilia, 2000, p. 1), that is, their social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical development within the context of Wagogo culture. The enculturation of a child in Ugogo is firstly and fully the responsibility of the parents, notwithstanding that grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings and others living in the village community are also influential in developing the child's language, social skills, often through valued daily routines, and stories, songs and other oral lore that are embedded with cultural meaning. Because they may live near to their extended family, others join in to help raise the child, even though it is understood that the parents are the



Fig. 1 Baobab tree

primary teachers of their children before the school years begin, and that they continue to be highly influential as their children are enrolled in school.

With a focus on enculturation in and through music, I will follow an autoethnographic² method (Bartlett & Ellis, 2009), referring to my experience as a *mgogo*³, in describing my own musical development in a Wagogo village, Chamwino, in the period of the mid 1970s to late 1980s. It is my intent to provide some personal recall and reflection, and to refer to relevant literature in order to contextualise my experiences. As well, I will refer to long-standing practices in musical enculturation among the Wagogo, and will note those that are continuing in the present time. In doing so, this paper will contribute further to an understanding of the processes by which children develop their cultural and musical identities prior to schooling and alongside their formal education (Campbell, 2001a).

The region of the Wagogo people is centred at Dodoma, Tanzania, about 298 miles due west of the Indian Ocean. This region covers an area of 25 612 square miles, with an altitude of 480 m to 12 m above sea level (Cidosa, 1995). Much of the land is situated on an arid plateau dotted with small bushes and the occasional baobab tree. On average, the region has approximately 7.8–23.6 inches of rain during just 3–4 months of the year (Mascarenhas, 2007, p. 376).

The Wagogo are a Bantu ethnic group, one of 120 cultural-linguistic groups living within the boundary of the Republic of Tanzania, formerly known as Tanganyika; they comprise 3% (1735 000 people) of the population of Tanzania. They live largely in rural villages, and are primarily engaged in agriculture and pastoral activities. Many are farmers on small plots of family land, growing maize, millet and sorghum for food, and peanuts and sunflower for trade. Some herd cows, goats and sheep, travelling to and from their family homes every day to wide open fields where there are low grasses for them to feed upon. Cattle are valuable in Wagogo culture. They are useful in trade, finance and for 'bride wealth' (i.e. dowry).



Fig. 2 Herd of cows crossing

The Wagogo of Chamwino are largely Christian, particularly Anglican (98%), with just 2% identifying as Catholics and Muslims. For business, banking and various commercial needs, the Wagogo of Chamwino travel about 30 miles west to the city of Dodoma, which since 1978 has functioned as the capital city of Tanzania. The Wagogo keep their Cigogo language strong within the family, even as they are now speaking Kiswahili, the official national language of Tanzania which is used in telecommunications, trade and commerce. Wagogo occasionally venture out of their villages for education, training and jobs. Life in the village continues as it has historically existed, with only limited modernization visà-vis (some) houses with electricity, (some) houses with radio, and the presence of the mobile phone in the hands of mostly a younger generation of Wagogo with college or secondary school education. Village life continues as it always has, for the most part, with the continuation of farming and herding by families, the daily drawing of water from a lake or river some distance from the village centre, and the day-long procedure of planning and preparing for family meals.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead was fascinated by the informal process by which Samoan youth of the southern Pacific Islands acquired a sense of their cultural priorities (1930). She examined the process of learning a culture from infancy onward, including the values, attitudes and beliefs of a culture and all of its corresponding behavioural patterns. Melville Herskovits (1948) initiated the use of the phrase music (or musical) enculturation, however, and suggested that children acquire music as a part of the 'package deal' of acquiring culture. Alan P. Merriam (1964) expanded the definition by saying that the word 'enculturation refers to the process by which the individual learns his culture, and it must be emphasized that this is a never-ending process continuing throughout the life span of the individual' (p. 146). Recently, William Corsaro (2005) has challenged the classic notion of enculturation by suggesting that children are active agents in constructing their culture, even as they are partly enculturated by their surroundings, and that they engage in

the creative appropriation of features from existing cultures in order to incorporate these revisions into the culture that they build as part of their everyday life. These and other perspectives of anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and educationists offer identification and clarification of concept and process of enculturation.

In more recent years, musical enculturation has become an area of study by educators. Lum and Campbell (2007) examined the musical 'surrounds' of an elementary school, noting the presence of music in the hands of teachers of language arts and physical education (far beyond the music teacher's influence), such that children were regularly experiencing singing, chanting and rhythm-making as components of their learning environment. Lum (2008) studied the school and home environments of first-grade children in Singapore, and traced the nature of the soundscapes which parents, teachers, the media and technology were providing them.

Musical parenting was the focus of Gibson's ethnography (2009), featuring interviews and observations of parents' musical engagement of their young (birth to four years) children at home and in the vicinity of their university 'married students' apartment complex (in an urban setting in the American West). Watts (2009) studied the recollections of the musical childhoods of adult women, featuring interviews with girls and women from ages 10 to 87 years, currently living in one of two American cities. She found that while none were involved professionally in music as adults, most remembered extensive engagement in listening, dancing, singing and singing games. These studies indicate that enculturation is a powerful phenomenon, and the music that is present in the environment and shared by adults with children provides a foundation for their lifelong musical identities. The description to follow of my own musical enculturation raises issues on how children learn within the realm of the Wagogo (as well as among children at large).

Early memories as an Mgogo child

I grew up immersed in music because my father (who died in 1998), and mother (who lives in Chamwino village) were musicians in the Anglican Church during my youth. My father was a drummer, playing in the church-oriented *mapelembo* music tradition. My mother was a singer.

During my childhood in Chamwino, kindergarten did not exist. Instead, my musical participation in mapelembo music served the purpose of developing my musical skills and abilities. As Welch (2005) suggests, music development begins at pre-birth, with musical behaviours in one form or another being evident across the lifespan. Early enculturation, according to Welch, fosters musical development and the realisation of musical potential. For me and for other Wagogo children, mapelembo provided a head-start to knowing music through our participation alongside the singing, playing and dancing of adults who modelled and facilitated for us. Without mapelembo, we would not have known such thorough-going musical engagement; with it, we were immersed in a genre that demanded of us a keen listening sense and the immediacy of response in song, movement and instrumental play.

Mapelembo means 'hunting', usually with reference to animals, although it is used here to refer to food gathering, when the music was played at night while people travelled from one family home to another in search of food: maize, ground nuts, a goat, a cow.

Normally, during this period following harvest, people typically had an abundance of food. The church usually planned to gather food at this time and use it later for all-community Christmas feasts. After a church service, they would celebrate with the mapelembo tradition. People would cook food at the church, as the mapelembo music commenced.

The major musical instrument in mapelembo is a large double-headed lying down drum called *nhunhu*, made of a hollowed-out *muheme* tree that is covered with cow skin on both ends. On the wider side of the drum, a single player uses two large sticks to drum the rhythmic variations for the dancers to follow. On the more narrow side of the drum, another person uses two small sticks to drum a steady tempo-keeping rhythmic pattern. The player on the wider side is the designated leader of the mapelembo music, while secondary drummers can come leaping from the group of dancers without missing a beat.

Another instrument which was used in mapelembo, and which appeared to energise the musical performance when the singing stopped, was a block flute or whistle made of wood. Known as *filimbi*, it has two holes on the mouthpiece and two holes down the side of the mouthpiece. The filimbi is common in most of the Wagogo music traditions (Mapana, 2007).

Although the mapelembo tradition was associated with the food-gathering routine of Anglican Church members in Chamwino village, the music could be played only outside the church. This was due to the fact that the songs did not refer to God, but rather relayed stories of the social lives of members of the Wagogo community. While no particular person's name was sung, the targets of the stories of somewhat questionable behaviours were typically known. I recall one song which was popular in my childhood, and remains so, which was a criticism of a woman whose poor appearance resulted from her selfish and unloving behaviour (and feeling). The song text follows:

Emi gwe nhaule waganda, emi gwe nhaule waganda wagandila lilonga lya munhumbula emi gwe nhaule waganda, wagandila lilonga lya munhumbula, emi gwe nhaule waganda

Emi, why are you thin? Emi, why are you thin? You are thin because of your heart feelings. Emi, why are you thin? You are thin because of your heart feelings. Emi, why are you thin?

The song challenges Emi (the name meant to represent any Wagogo woman), questioning her as to the reason for her thin condition. To be thin in Wagogo culture reflects an underlying problem, for example, a marital conflict; a healthy weight implies stability and contentment.

There was no designated solo singer in the mapelembo tradition of my childhood, and anyone who wished could sing a story. The songs were mostly sung in unison, and in two-part harmonic styles known as *sauti za hasi* (low pitch), and *sauti za mchanyha* (high pitch).

As a young boy, it was during these mapelembo performances at our home that I truly became involved with the music. During the celebration at the home compound, the drums were placed in the middle of a circle of dancers. Normally, men and women formed a line and danced around the drums while singing. Children were always included in dancing and singing with the adults, within the line, and sometimes they stood or danced outside



Fig. 3

the circle. This was musicking at its ultimate, in that all could participate in mapelembo, in any capacity: singing, dancing, playing, watching and listening, clapping and ululating in support of those at the heart of the performance. Children like me were full participants in mapalembo, as it was possible to learn through imitation of adults just how to sing, dance, and play.

My father, Elisha, was an expert in Wagogo mapelembo drumming and I was very proud of him. He also was a prolific composer of songs. Among them was the song I came to love so much, 'Wadala wakulonga', about the captivating sound of his drumming that drew children to dance to its sound. My father's song was powerful music to me as a child. Even as Diamond (2008) observed the powerful music of individuals in Canadian indigenous societies, Campbell (1998) also suggested that every child, adolescent, and adult, in various stages of their life-course, identify with music they consider powerful to them personally.

Wadala wakulonga si gwegwe Elisha ukuceza wanawetu kumigunda wela Soko lilile igoma lyemaduma likuceza wanawetu kumigunda wela.

The elder women say, 'Our children are getting late to the farms ecause of Elisha. When the drum of *Maduma* rings, it makes our children get late to the farms.

Typical of many Wagogo songs, this one features a pentatonic melody that features the pitches do, re, mi, a lowered seventh degree, te, and sol, the fifth below the tonic pitch. This scale is what Nketia (1974) called a non-equidistant pentatonic scale, since it contains no semitones. The consequent tonality is implied, with pitches characteristics of the Mixolydian mode (with particular attention to the lowered seventh degree). A feeling of compound meter is generated by regular use of three pulses within a larger (longer) beat, so that it propels those within listening distance to dance. The melody is constructed of four phrases [abcb], the second and fourth of which are the same eight-beat tune, with a four-beat introductory and intermediary phrase in between. This is typical for mapelembo songs in Wagogo people of Chamwino.

Normally, when my father played the drum at the mapalembo celebration, adults and children would joyfully dance to his music, sometimes well into the night due to the fact that the song and drum rhythms motivated the children to be totally engaged in singing and dancing. Children would forget about time and arrive back to their homes quite late.



Fig. 4

Consequently, they would also sleep late in the morning so as to be delayed in their work on the family farm. Parents thus tried to convince children not to go for the dancing, but this was not easily done, since the drumming was so attractive to them.

I was one of the children in our Wagogo village, Chamwino, who loved dancing to my father's music. One day my mother made the statement, 'You are singing like your father. You have imitated him. You used to go to the *mapalembo* dance late into the night (even when you were not allowed)'. While there was some admonishment within the comment, it was meant (and received by me) as a high compliment, that I had developed my father's musical style. Imitation is a frequent component of the enculturation process, which assumes that attentive listening was also very much in play in order to acquire the subtleties of stylistic nuance (Campbell, 2001b; Gibson, 2009).

Music in the informal system of early childhood education

The Wagogo 'informal' system of educating young children largely relates to the necessity within the culture of transmitting and preserving music for the rites of passage. That is to say, the birth of a child, the initiation of youth into the culture in early adolescence, marriage, death (as well as other contemporary activities not connected to ritual) are all rites of passage, and primary reasons for the presence of music in the lives of the Wagogo. It is a cultural expectation of the Wagogo that young people will know the music to be performed at these rites, for the music is key to ceremonies and celebrations. Learning the music traditions of the culture begins with the birth of the child. Kodály's pronouncement, that music education begins nine months before the birth by the mother (1974), is directly relevant to the belief of the Wagogo in the early musical education of children.

The Wagogo pass on their musical traditions in the child's earliest infancy. In Wagogo, a mother typically carries her baby with her. As she ventures from the home to find water or firewood, she normally carries her baby on her back. On her way, she may sing a calming song to lull the baby to sleep, to stop the crying, or to soothe. The baby is encouraged to sleep or smile, according to the song, and this gives the child an opportunity to obtain a 'feeling' for musical sounds. Music making is linked to a particular activity to suit the environment. An example of this song of calm is 'Mwana Yakulila'.

Wo, wo, wo, mwana yakulila, chimpape kumgongo

Wo, wo, wo, a child is crying, carry her/him on the back.

This soothing song features an undulating tritonic (mi, do and a lowered seventh, te) pattern in duple rhythm. It falls and rises again within three short phrases, and is repeated numerous times, until the child becomes calm. Note that the augmented fourth that is so

typically described as having the effect of tension in the West has precisely the opposite impact in Wagogo culture. Vallejo (2004) observed that musical training in Wagogo begins in the immediate post-natal period, when 'every night women go to the gatherings with their babies. Singing and dancing seem not to perturb the infants. On the contrary, these activities appear to help them sleep profoundly '(p. 82).

The role and responsibility of the mother's care of a baby reflects the Wagogo tradition of distinct male and female spheres of activity. This is similar to the traditional Bulgarian rural societies (Rice, 2004), the Kpelle of West Africa (Stone, 2004), the Inuit of northern Canada (Diamond, 2008), the Bugwere villagers of Uganda (Barz, 2004) and other many cultures around the world. Rice (2004) wrote that 'in traditional Bulgarian rural society, men and women have, and to some extend still have, their distinct spheres of activity, including musical activity. Men for example, had primary responsibility for taking care of the animals, plowing the fields, building houses ... Women had primary responsibility for cooking food ... caring children' (pp. 14–15). Still, both mother and father support one another in child-raising in Bulgaria, as it is also so among the Wagogo.

As I recall my own early childhood musical education, I struggle with precisely how I learned to sing and dance, and who in particular would have taught me. There was never a single day that my father told me to sit down and learn how to sing, dance or play and make a musical instrument. Rather, my father would find me singing, dancing and drumming. Sometimes he would wonder, and also admire, how I managed to learn the songs and movements, and neither of us considered then that it was my own imitation of my father that developed my skills and understanding. This applies to the Wagogo children in Chamwino today, too. Children engage in a musical event, participating alongside adults, in the community and in this way, musical repertoire and skills are imparted. This is similar to Bulgarian music whereby the learning of songs and instrumental tunes is partly a social process, as young people grow into the music as an integral component of their heritage (Rice, 2004). Bartlett and Ellis (2009) seem to agree that 'children are enculturated prior to schooling as they experience, evolve theories, and learn symbols based upon what they see, hear, taste, smell, and touch' (p. 65).

When I was a child, the Wagogo children of Chamwino had their own songs which they normally sang at home before they learned a repertoire of Kiswahili songs at school. These Cigogo songs are rarely heard in Chamwino today because these songs are not integrated in schools and new contemporary and different songs have evolved among the village children. As I remember my childhood, one singing game, or mdawalo, was sung as follows:

Noponkhola?, Mlango mdindwe di, nkhole hai?, mlango mdindwe di

Can I pass through? The door is closed, where can I pass? The door is closed.

This song features a tritonic (mi, do, re) pattern in duple rhythm. A call-and-response technique is evident, as a leader sings a short motif while a group of singers offer a melodic response. The melody is constructed of two phrases [ab], the first [a] introductory phrase is sung by the leader as a call, and the second [b] phrase is sung by other children as a response. The phrases are normally sung repeatedly.

Noponkhola

Transc. Kedmon Mapana



Fig. 5

It is well known among the Wagogo that children call to each other in their neighbourhoods at night, particularly when the moon shines brightly. As we children sang 'Nophonkola', we played a circle game. Children held hands, with one child located at the circle's centre to lead the game. This leader would sing while moving in and out of the circle, seeking a way to pass through under the arms of the children. As the object of the game is to prevent the leader from passing through, it could take a while before one pair of children would finally create a space for the leader to move through. Then, one of the pair would jump into the circle centre as the new leader. Singing games like this one were great fun with friends, and we sang with enthusiasm as we played.

Music in formal schooling

During my primary school education, I grew up musically through every-day singing activity. We had singing events at school, many of which I led. At 6:30 am, primary school pupils were involved in kinesthetic activity in what was known in Kiswahili as *mchakamchaka* (marching) accompanied by marching songs.

The Ministry of Education requires that the mchakamchaka be scheduled into the curriculum in all primary schools. Many of the songs were military in nature, and served to honour the Tanzanian army after the war against Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, and to encourage every student to grow up with the idea of protecting his/her country from enemies. One text, popular as a children's song in my childhood, carried these words:

Maua mazuri

Tranc.Kedmon Mapana

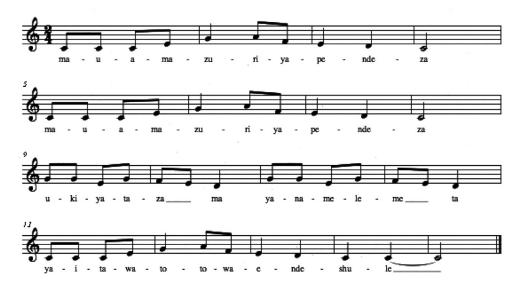


Fig. 6

Idi Amin akifa, mimi siwezi kulia, nitamtupa Kagera, awe chakula cha Mamba.

When Idi Amin dies. Nobody will cry. He will be thrown into Lake Kagera for hippopotamus food.

Another singing event of my years as young student is noted here as an exemple of school music activity among Wagogo children. It was a school order that at every primary school (usually after the morning marching and just after lunch), a parade would be organised. During these periods, any student can stand and lead the singing, which was typically accompanied by hand-clapping. General parade song themes included praise for the school, clarity of thought and disciplined study by school children, as in the case of the following song:

Maua mazuri yapendeza, ukiyatazama, yanamelemeta, yaita watoto waende shule

Good flowers are shining, once you look at them, they call children to join the school.

This song features a sexatonic melody which describes the pitches do, re, mi, fa, so and la. A feeling of simple meter is generated by the even, pulsive rhythms. The melody is constructed of three phrases [aabc]. This song is typical in contemporary music content and structure and text topic to numerous songs for school-attending children in Chamwino.

Simama kaa, Ruka

Transcribed - Kedmon Mapana



Fig. 7

A third noteworthy occurrence of music in schools during my childhood was the presence in the curriculum of the music class itself. A 45-minute music class would begin with the teacher's straightforward comment, 'Let's start singing.' Whoever had a song that he or she liked and wanted to sing would be invited to do so, and so singing would commence among the Wagogo schoolchildren.

Individual students sometimes were given a chance to sing their own composed songs as solo compositions. The music class songs were sung exclusively in Kiswahili rather than the Cigogo mother-tongue, as Kiswahili was (and still is) considered the national language of Tanzania at large and the official language of school. Music class was not compulsory for the schoolchildren of Chamwino. Those who were not interested in singing were allowed to pursue various other school activities and some did, for example, involving themselves in playing soccer, netball and finishing homework of other subjects such as math rather than to go to music class. The subject of music was purely for the amusement of the children; it was not studied seriously, nor was it examined.

A fourth school event where music emerged during my childhood was the singing that would be initiated by classroom teachers so that students could learn other subjects such as English, Kiswahili and maths. 'Simama, kaa, ruka' was my favourite song in my English class, when I was in grade 3, and 10 years of age. My teacher would employ a Kiswahili song to teach English action verbs; simama (stand up), kaa (sit down) and ruka (jump). The song then was sung in English as well as Kiswahili. The manner of singing was to begin the song in Kiswahili, then to follow it with English words, as noted below:

Simama kaa, simama kaa, ruka, ruka, simama kaa

Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down, jump, jump, jump, stand up, sit down.

This song assisted children in understanding the meanings of the featured English words, and it was a straightforward and enjoyable way of learning the language. Typical of many Kiswahili children songs in Chamwino, this one features a sexatonic melody (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la). A feeling of simple meter is generated. The melody is constructed of three phrases [abc] typical for Kiswahili children songs in Chamwino.

Conclusion: Music, lived and learned by Wagogo children

This description of the enculturation of Wagogo children in the region of Dodoma, in Central Tanzania, which the Wagogo call home, contributes to the growing literature on music in the lives of young children worldwide. I have suggested that the living

and learning of music by Wagogo children constitute the enculturation process as it is described by anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and music educators – such that at home, in their earliest days and throughout their childhood, as well as at school, music is a steady presence. Wagogo children come to understand that music is something they do, whether it be singing, dancing and playing it playfully, joyfully, and sometimes with very serious intent. A description of the enculturation process among the Wagogo is aligned with scholarly works relevant to studies of music, education and culture (Mead, 1930; Herskovits, 1948; Kodály, 1974; Nketia, 1974; Campbell, 1998, 2001a; Vallejo, 2004; Welch, 2005; Campbell & Kassner, 2006/2010; Lum & Campbell, 2007; Morrison *et al.*, 2008; Gibson, 2009; Watts, 2009).

In view of the process by which I was musically enculturated and educated as a Wagogo child, I wish to argue persuasively for the facilitation of musical experiences for children (as well as for teachers who work with children, in their teacher education and in-service training), if singing, dancing, and drumming can happen in the daily lives of children in schools, preschools, after-school programmes, and other places where children gather, they will take with them both discipline and joy that will last them their lifetimes long. As a Wagogo adult musician who treasures my own musical childhood, I hope to bring teachers (and other adults responsible for raising children), through music and dance, to an understanding of how they might incorporate daily singing, dancing and drumming experiences into the lives of children. Wagogo children will continue to be musically enculturated and educated, for music (and dance) is valued by the Wagogo for its own sake and for its function as a vehicle to teach the wider world of knowledge and skills. In this way, the traditional music of the Wagogo of Tanzania will be known to all generations as a living tradition, a critical component of their very identity, and an expressive need that is part of their humanity. As music fits the world of Wagogo children, could musical enculturation and education not benefit every child in every culture? For these processes are at work in children's lives everywhere, and those engaged in the musical education of children do well to recognise and honour the music that emanates from home and family prior to and in spite of schooling.

Notes

- 1 Wagogo (wa stands for plural) are many people who are Gogo.
- 2 Personal writing and its relationship to culture (Ellis, 2004).
- 3 Mgogo (m-stands for singular) is one person who is Gogo.

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