

CHAPTER 44

THE COMPOSITIONAL DETERMINANTS OF AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC

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Abstract

This paper discusses the compositional determinant of Afro-American music. The Historical method was used in gathering facts for this paper. It was discovered that various developmental factors cause the musical innovations in the American State. Moreover, the American communal structures made the diversified musical life producing the proliferation of unified musicality in the American Status possible. It was recommended that composers and performers should consider communal setting of any place in the search for musical fabrics for new musical compositions.

Keywords: Afro American Music, Compositional determinant, Diversified musical genres and Proliferation of unified musicality.

Introduction

The utilisation of music in various spheres of human activities has given music unique status among other arts. Employment of music can be found in the various science communities like therapy where music is used in music therapy, and where music is used in some psychological endeavours as in psychology of music.

From the lyrical crises of black street vendors in eighteenth-century Philadelphia to the infectious dance rhythms of the Motown sound, African-American music has been heard at all times and in every corner of America. African-American involvement in the nation's music making has influenced every genre of American music, helping to create a sound now recognized as distinctly American. Reflecting both the hardships and triumphs black Americans have experienced in the United States, their music has also served to shape the national identity, profoundly influencing the lives of all Americans.

African American slaves on southern plantations cultivated their own musical styles, which later evolved into gospel, blues, and what is now known as bluegrass and country music. Slave fiddlers often provided dance music for the southern white gentry, and the sound recognised today as country fiddling is partially the product of slave fiddler. Most slaves were not allowed to own instruments or could not afford to purchase them. However, using makeshift instruments and their own bodies, they created unique musical ensembles. One of the most pervasive holdovers from African music was an emphasis on rhythm and the use of complex polyrhythms still found in African music.

Over time, many distinct practice and traditions of African music were either forgotten or blended with other musical traditions. Nevertheless, African music continued to flow into the New World as a result of the slave, which continued illegally well into the nineteenth century despite its official abolition in 1808.

Many of the characteristic musical that define African-American music have historical precedents. These earlier forms include: field hollers, beat boxing song, spoken word, rapping, scatting, call and response, vocality (or special vocal effect: guttural effects, interpolated vocality, falsetto, melisma, vocal rhythmiction), improvisation, blue notes, texture (antiphony, homophony, heterophony) and harmony (vernacular progressions; complex, multi-part harmony, as in spirituals, Doo Wop, and barbershop music).

Communal Behaviour

This is an entity which should never be overlooked. That is to say, the communal system has great influence on the musicality of the place. It is being mirrored by a network of musical activities of the people in that place. The use musical instruments blends like the case of banjo introduced by the Black Americans in the Southern State. The banjo was associated primarily by the Blue grass music, popular among the White Southerners. Southern slaves adapted the banjo to suit secular (non-religious) musical styles in the eighteenth century and nineteenth century.

There was creation of new musical forms known as the spirituals in the blend with European texts and create distinctive religious songs known as spirituals (religious songs which incorporated melodic and rhythmic themes from popular music). As a fact, Church choruses around the century continue to sing both gospel and spirituals.

Environmental Influence

It is never exonerated in the musical behaviours of a place. That is to say, the environment also has great influence on the people. So the composer's decision in the composition is found to have adapted some materials embedded in the community for the musical composition.

Mixed Culture Format

The travails emanating from migration has given birth to mixed cultural format of the Afro-American music. As men migrated into the States, they settled in different places. Their experiences during migration were not terminated. At their settlement, the uses of their previous musical knowledge were utilised. The interplay of the cultural facet undergone by those composers got interwoven as they came together performing.

Foreign Interest

Countries like France and other world powers contributed to influx of ingenuity from various sectors of the American economy. At this point, America had noticed the interest of other communities in absorbing immigrants. So, there is need to assemble all the immigrants in the American states with the knowledge of the arts, science and technology to build a stronger economy found to withstand other world power at any point of time.

Global Interest

It is overwhelmingly noticeable in the structure and colours of different places. There is always need to harmonize these tendencies created by the global interest. This harmonization is what tears apart and what also brings music together.

Political Influence

The political leadership of the American community also caused a lot of influence on Afro-American music. Situations where composers would be honoured or dishonoured due to their varied patriotic driven tendencies were noticeable.

Individual Tendencies

No two human beings are alike. The difference in behaviour of these human beings results in individualistic ideality. The functionality of the component of the individualistic ideality is highly influenced by personal perception, communal behaviours, environmental influences, as well as global interests. Individual tendencies are products of derived status. Therefore the social status known as derived status acquired by any individual is dependent on the degree of the influence of communal integration capable of permeating the individual sensuous capsule.

Individual Perception

It is the breakdown of patterns of behaviours of the human being addressing the issues of memory involving remembering and forgetfulness as well as the ability of the accessibility of facts. All these traits or peculiarities about that individual resulting from perception are utilised in the total musical behaviours of that individual. These tendencies about the individual will therefore influence the communication line between that individual and the community. Achieved status is product of individual perception. Therefore the social status known as achieved status acquired by any individual is dependent on the degree of projection of the inner personality assembled by any individual.

Congruence Theory

There are at least two important reasons to believe that people's behaviour will converge and cultural practices will be relatively stable. The first and major reason is conformity. Describing early investigations of conformity (Allport, 1924; Moore, 1921), Turner (1999) noted the suggested that 'there are processes of convergence in the group (i.e people seemed to move towards and become more similar to each other)' (P.9).

People look to others for information about how to behave (informational influence), but regardless people should converge (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Whether in comparing the length of lines (Asch, 1955, see Bond and Smith, 1996 for a review), estimating the amount of point of light moved in a dark room (Sherif, 1936), deciding whether to serve intestinal meats to one's family (Lewin, 1947), or evaluating men's suits (Venkatesan, 1966), selecting brands of bread (Stafford, 1966), people choose in ways that conform to the behaviour of those around them, and thus their choices and opinions converge with others (convergence even occurred unconsciously (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Epley & Gilovich, 1999).

Forney, Dell'Antonio and Machlis (2013) gave attention to John Cage's personal expression thus 'once in Amsterdam, a Dutch musician said to me, 'it must be very difficult for you in America to write music, for you are so far away from the centers of tradition.' I had to say, it must be very difficult for you in Europe to write music, for you are so close to the centers of tradition' (P 316). these were clear expressions of congruence, a point where divergence and convergence meet and despair, a point where induction and deduction meet and despair. The meetings of divergence and convergence as well as the meetings of inductions and deduction are always traced to the unity and diversity gestalt activities, at which centre is always mixed ideality factor.

The assertions on convergence are observed as seasoned studies to be complemented. In complementing the convergence studies, the study of congruence has emerged for this study. This study postulates that congruence will then be discussed to encompass convergence and divergence. Convergence here is derived from what the physicists see as concave while divergence is what the physicists see as convex. Therefore, the latter words each of the illustrations can be used in parenthesis thus convergence (concave) and divergence (convex) in

this work. Convergence (concave) is from general to specific while divergence (convex) is from specific to general.

The experience in the convergence (concave) and divergence (convex) is toning the interplay between general to specific and specific to general, making congruence a theory, which express that the congruence the centre of activities between the convergence (concave) and divergence (convex) regions.

Arts Determinant

Stimulating potentiality in Music is found to have characterised musical compositions and musical performances. The potent characteristics in music are found to have stimulated individuals though variedly while listening to the music. People can easily be made to stay on and listen to music for long time due to the potent characteristics inherent in music. During this research, it was discovered that people could listen to music while engaged on other activities simultaneously, and effectively. So, musical exploration is feasible while on jobs at the same time.

Science Determinant

Music is captivating in individuals. This is what makes Julius Caesar wrote that 'if music is the food of love, play on'. It is discovered the captivating characteristics of music is enduring though dependent on the individual. Spontaneous potentialities in music can be characterised in the music to lure people to listen to music without pre-intention. This is where individual can be found know a melody not necessarily in consonant the belief setting of that individual.

Match reaction in music can be found as many people listen to music for a particular message at the same time. Here, nobody is waiting for another for a message to be heard in as much as these people listen to the same music at the same time. This is typically different from reading a written essay about an event for example where people may be expected to tidy up their readings and have their knowledge or understanding about a particular message as the case may be. Not here that some people are slow learners while some can be noticed to play faster than others. So the knowledge or understanding for a particular event at various times as they would finish reading the same essay at various times.

Hybridisation

The issue of cross pollination in biology is clear here. Understanding this way will help to project music cross pollination. In the musical system, culture, individual tendency, communal behaviours of various music from various nations have great interplay in the musical assembling at any point in time.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study discussed the American States era of diversified musical genres which paved way for

the proliferations of unified musicality in in the American States. Various developmental factors cause the musical innovations in the American State. The development brought about African American slaves cultivation of their own musical styles, which later evolved into gospel, blues now known as bluegrass. Rhythm and the use of complex polyrhythms which is one of the most pervasive holdovers from African music was still maintained; though, as things evolved, distinct practices and traditions of African music were either forgotten or blended with other musical traditions but African music kept crippling into the New World as a result of the slave trade.

The paper recommended the need to harmonize the tendencies created by the global interest to enable composers and performers to consider communal settings of any place in their search for musical fabrics and for new musical compositions since this harmonization is capable of bringing music of various cultures together.

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