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Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', & Slam Dunking

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A Reader in African American Expressive Culture

edited by GENA DAGEL CAPONI

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IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM DILLON PIERSEN

(1942–1996)

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The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music

(1992)

OLLY WILSON

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Composer and professor of music at the University of California at Berkeley, Olly Wilson has written widely about African predilections in African American music, based on extensive travel in Africa. He continues his formulation of the African American musical aesthetic with this essay on the preference for timbral contrast. For Wilson, aesthetic practices reflect cultural values, and in attention to timbral nuances he sees a cultural tradition of relatedness and respect for the individual within the group. Talking drums are shown to capture the tonal levels of African speech. And by the same token, singing, dancing, and playing are not just interrelated parts of the performance process but embody connections at a deep, structural level. The heterogeneous sound ideal also suggests an African and African American respect for the integrity of the individual within the group. Wilson conceives of the African sound ideal as a mosaic in which separate elements combine to form a whole, but the whole is not a unified blend of sound. Wilson begins and ends his essay with a discussion of swing, an elusive concept to which the heterogeneous sound ideal opens a few doors.

In 1932, Duke Ellington enriched the repertory of jazz and enlivened popular parlance by creating a new piece of music that contained the following classic line: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Not only was this couplet another marvelous gem of Duke's inimitable verbal wit, but it captured with classic simplicity a basic truth about the musical tradition in which Edward Kennedy Ellington worked. That is, it was at once both an example of and a commentary about the values of that tradition. Duke, of course, was commenting on the music generally referred to as jazz, but he could have been referring to the blues, ragtime, African-American spirituals, or worksongs. In

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any of these cases, the phrase would have been equally appropriate. "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing" tells us something of fundamental importance about basic values within the African-American music tradition. The statement speaks of an essential quality of the music.

For several decades, scholars have attempted to define the peculiar qualities of African-American music. Most listeners who have experienced various types of this music sense that the musical subtypes are related. Similarly, listeners familiar with sub-Saharan African music are aware, again on empirical grounds, that the music, while clearly distinct, has obvious similarities to African-American music. Moreover, the significant role of music in sub-Saharan African cosmology, coupled with the obvious historical-cultural connection of peoples of African descent throughout the world, suggests that all peoples within this diaspora share common modes of musical practice. This is true of any large group of human beings with similar historical, cultural, and ethnic ties. For example, musicologists may still speak intelligently of broad general qualities that characterize western European music, notwithstanding the importance of cultural distinctions within a large population mass sharing a geographically defined region.

The effort to define the peculiar qualities of African-American music is made difficult by the fact that the music of black Americans exists within a larger, multicultural social context, like that of all ethnic groups within the United States. Thus, African-American music has both influenced and been influenced in several ways by non-black musical traditions. Therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the essential qualities that make this music a part of a larger African or black American music tradition. In spite of this fact:

> . . . the empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports the notion that there is indeed a distinct set of musical qualities which are an expression of the collective cultural values of peoples of African descent. This musical tradition has many branches which reflect variations in basic cultural patterns over time, as well as diversity within a specific time frame. However, all of these branches share, to a greater or lesser extent, a group of qualities which, taken together, comprise the essence of the black musical tradition. The branches of this tradition, though influenced in different ways and degrees by other musical traditions, share a "critical mass" of these common qualities. It is the common sharing of qualities which comprises and defines the musical tradition.[1]

In a 1974 article, I proposed an approach to the problem of definition of that broader musical tradition. The substance of that approach is that the essence of the black musical tradition consists of:

> . . . shared conceptual approaches to music making, and hence is not basically quantitative but qualitative. Therefore, the particular forms of black music which evolved in America are specific realizations of this shared conceptual framework which reflect the peculiarities of the American black experience. As such, the essence of their Africanness is not a static body of something which can be depleted but rather a conceptual approach, the manifestations of which are infinite. The common core of this Africanness consists of the way of doing something, not simply something that is done.[2]

An in-depth discussion of all the specific conceptual approaches to the process of music making that constantly interact with one another and collectively form the essence of the black music tradition is beyond the purview of this paper. However, it may be helpful to describe briefly several of these predilections for conceiving music. Among them are:

1. The tendency to approach the organization of rhythm based on the principle of rhythmic and implied metrical contrast—a tendency to create musical events in which rhythmic clash or disagreement of accents is the ideal, and cross-rhythm and metrical ambiguity are the accepted, expected norm. (It is this conceptual approach that accounts for the quality of "swing" that Duke Ellington celebrated, which is the result of the "clash" or contrast that occurs on either a rhythmic or metrical level.)
2. The tendency to approach singing or the playing of any instrument in a percussive manner—a manner in which qualitative stress accents are frequently used.
3. The tendency to create musical forms in which antiphonal, responsorial, or call-and-response musical structures abound. These responsorial structures frequently exist simultaneously on a number of different architectonic levels.
4. The tendency to create a high density of musical events within a relatively short musical time frame—a tendency to fill up all the musical space.
5. The tendency to incorporate physical body motion as an integral part of the music making process.[3]

An analysis of any genre of black music will reveal the existence of demonstrable musical characteristics that consistently reflect the presence of these underlying conceptual approaches. It is precisely the pervasive existence of these qualities that gives the music its distinctive character.

In this paper, I shall discuss another component of that core of underlying conceptions that define African and African-American music. I call this basic

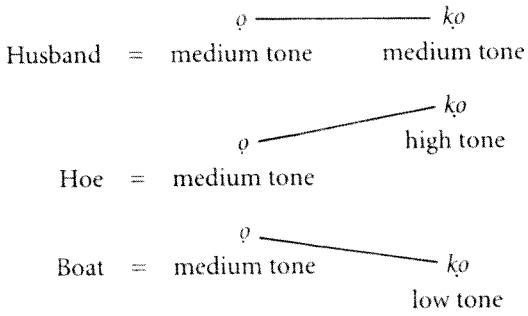
conception "the heterogeneous sound ideal." By this term, I mean that there exists a common approach to music making in which a kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of sound (timbre) is sought after in both vocal and instrumental music. The desirable musical sound texture is one that contains a combination of diverse timbres. This fundamental bias for contrast of color—heterogeneity of sound rather than similarity of color or homogeneity of sound—is reflected in musical practice in at least two ways.

First, it is reflected in the nature of the "sound" texture of musical ensembles. By sound texture, I mean the relationship of the resultant qualities of sound produced when several instruments perform simultaneously. When a string quartet plays, for example, the resultant composite texture may be described as timbrally homogeneous inasmuch as all component instruments (first and second violins, viola, violoncello) produce timbres that are similar to one another. It is sometimes very difficult for the average listener to determine which instrument is playing a particular pitch because of the fact that all four instruments share overlapping musical ranges and timbral qualities. They blend in a timbrally homogeneous manner. On the other hand, when a drum, metal bell, and a flute play together, it is easy to discern which instrument performs within the texture at any moment because each instrument possesses a distinct, contrasting quality of sound. The resultant composite texture may be described as timbrally heterogeneous in this case; the blend it produces is of a different nature than that of the string quartet.

Secondly, the heterogeneous sound ideal is reflected in the common usage of a wide range of timbres within a single line. This is particularly true when the single line is the principal point of musical interest as, for example, in an unaccompanied part for voice or instrument, or the solo line of an accompanied piece. Practically every scholar who has analyzed African and African-American music has noted the presence of a myriad of vocal sounds used in performance (moans, groans, yells, screams, shouts, shifts in sonority), a seemingly inexhaustible repertory of vocal injections used to intensify musical expression. This common practice of using vocal shadings—from the subtle to the extreme—is a manifestation of the heterogeneous sound ideal. This same ideal is present, moreover, in instrumental music. Within that tradition, the single-line instrumental soloist is expected to explore a wide range of timbral variations, so much so that some observers have spoken of the tradition of making the instrument simulate vocal technique, or "talk" or "speak." In this instance, both instrumental and vocal performance are informed by the same basic concept—the heterogeneous sound ideal.

The heterogeneous sound ideal also explains the customary usage of a broad continuum of vocal sounds, ranging from speech to song. This practice

may be due in part to the fact that most African languages are tonal languages and, hence, use tonal levels as a means of defining a specific word. Two words with the same syllables and rhythm may have entirely different meanings if spoken at different pitch levels. In Yoruba, for example, the syllables *ọ* and *ko* may have at least three different meanings, depending upon the tonal level of the syllables:[4]



The simulation of the rhythm and tonal levels of speech on uniquely constructed drums enables Yoruban drummers to imitate some speech and hence develop a repertory of "musical speech." These drums are called talking drums.

Linguistic sensitivity to tonal levels accounts perhaps for the common African and African-American practice of moving easily from a speaking to a singing mode within a musical context. On a more complex level, music and language are interrelated in other significant ways. For example, drum patterns are usually verbalized as a memory or mnemonic device. African drummers use non-semantic syllables to reproduce an aural pattern that is analogous to a drum pattern they wish to convey to another person. This verbalization of drum patterns is used as a means of recalling musical patterns or teaching patterns to novices. Nketia advises, for example, that:

> In drumming, nonsense syllables are chosen to convey the aural impression of one or more series of successive drum beats, or, conversely, to indicate to drummers the sound sequences that are required. They are, therefore, a means of speaking rhythms.[5]

In addition, the pre-existing repertory of drum patterns used by master drummers in many African cultures is based on musical patterns derived from selected genres of oral poetry. The underlying basic rhythmic patterns associated with much of this repertory are derived directly from a body of verbal text and are recognizable as such to some or all members of a particular ethnic group. The musical performance, then, is often literally a statement of a particular poetic form.[6]

Having established this general background, I wish to examine two musical practices in African and African-American music that illustrate the function of the heterogeneous sound ideal. By examining the preference for this concept in these musical concepts, we may gain insight into its importance.

The first performance practice pertains to the organization of musical ensembles. Though musical ensembles in African cultures follow a variety of different formats, a general principle appears to govern the division of a musical ensemble into at least two functional groups. The first is one that I refer to as the "fixed rhythmic group," so called because its instruments maintain a fixed rhythmic pulsation throughout the duration of the composition with little variation. This group has a time-keeping or metronomic function; it is frequently manifest in a relatively complex rhythmic form and serves, according to Nketia, as the "time line."[7] The second is the "variable rhythmic group," so named because the rhythms performed by these instruments change.

A configuration of at least two different strata of rhythm consequently is created, and the function of each is enhanced by a contrast of timbre. Typically, the "time-line" stratum is performed by either a metallic instrument (double or single bell), rattle, sticks, some other idiophone and/or handclaps. In some elaborate ensembles a combination of bells, rattle, handclaps, and high-pitched drum form the fixed rhythmic group. What is important here is that the timbre of the fixed rhythmic group is usually highly distinct. The variable group also is associated usually with one or more contrasting tone qualities that further clarify the musical structure. The central point here is that the structure of the ensemble reflects the working of the heterogeneous sound ideal, in this instance operating in conjunction with the principle of rhythmic contrast. The independence of each rhythmic stratum is highlighted by its timbral distinction. What results is a composite musical texture whose components collectively form a mosaic of varying tone colors. This is part of the music's unique charm.

Nketia describes this aspect of African music as follows:

> In multilinear organization, the use of instruments of different pitches and timbres enables each one to be distinctly heard. It enables their cross rhythms to stand out clearly in front of little "tunes." Hence, although rhythm is the primary focus in drumming, some attention is paid to pitch level, for the aesthetic appeal of drumming lies in the organization of the rhythmic and melodic elements.[8]

What Nketia refers to as "little tunes," I call mosaics of tone color and pitch. In both instances, the resultant composite pattern is what is perceived and valued. The operation of the heterogeneous sound ideal is obviously of vital importance here.

Sub-Saharan African instrumental music clearly illustrates the heterogeneous sound ideal. The most vivid examples result from the timbral mosaic created by the interaction between lead voice, chorus, rattle, metallic gong, hand clapping, various wind or string instruments, and drums, which exist in greater or lesser degrees of complexity in almost all African ensemble music. Though this sound ideal finds its most elaborate expression in the music of West Africa—particularly in the large ensembles of the Ewe of Ghana,[9] the one-string harp ensembles of the Senufo of the Ivory Coast,[10] or the bowed string and rattle ensembles of various peoples of the Savannah region—it is also present in the xylophone and *mbira* ensembles of East Africa, as well as in the stamping gourd ensembles of South Africa.

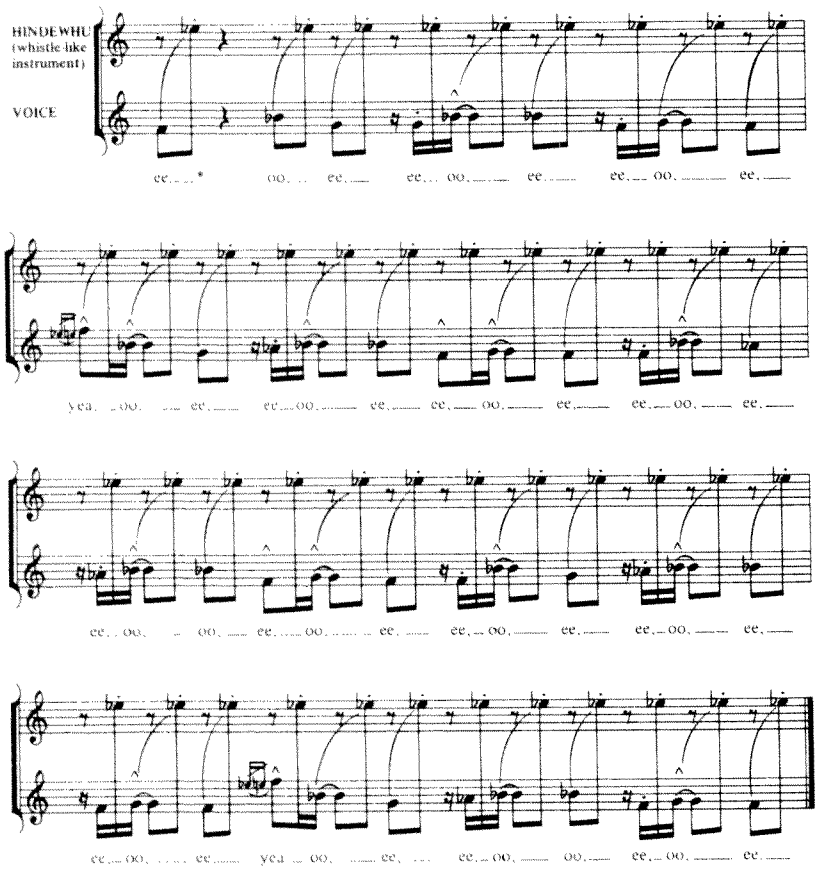
Another manifestation of the heterogeneous sound ideal is found in vocal music. For example, the extraordinary unaccompanied singing of the Dorze of Ethiopia is characterized not only by polyphonic and canonic textures, but also by the use of a wide range of vocal timbres that help define its stratified musical structure.[11] Similarly, the striking vocal technique of the Sidamo (also of Ethiopia), with resultant "roar-like" timbres that are created within the context of varied individual and choral sonorities,[12] or the brilliant combination of the voice and *hindewhu* (a whistle-like instrument) of the Ba-Benzele Pygmies of Central Africa are all reflections of the heterogeneous sound ideal. Thus, the preponderance of timbral differentiation in sub-Saharan Africa's instrumental music, vocal-ensemble music, and solo music underscores a cultural predilection for timbral contrast.

The following music example illustrates the unique vocal-ensemble technique of the Ba-Benzele Pygmies of Central Africa, who create a single musical line through a combination of the voice and *hindewhu* that results in an exciting pitch-timbral mosaic as a by-product of the projection of a single, rhythmically interesting line.

The heterogeneous sound ideal is clearly operative also in African-American music. An examination of writings by early chroniclers of black music-making during colonial times as well as observers of twentieth-century practices make it evident that this underlying conceptual approach has survived in North America for several centuries. Eileen Southern quotes, for example, in *The Music of Black Americans* the following excerpt from an eighteenth-century informant's description of black 'Lection Day festivities held in Newport, Rhode Island:

> Every voice in its highest key, in all the various languages of Africa, mixed with broken and ludicrous English, filled the air, accompanied with the music of the fiddle, tambourine, banjo and drum.[13]

EX. 1 *Hindewhu*, from *An Anthology of African Music*, vol. 3: *Music of the Ba-Benzele Pygmies* (UNESCO recording BM30L2303). Transcribed by Olly Wilson.



* *ee*-like sound

What is interesting about this quote is that the described performance practices reveal several important things. First, when the chronicler describes the situation as one in which "Every voice [is] in the highest key in all the various languages of Africa, mixed with broken and ludicrous English," he reveals that he can discern individual voices within a composite vocal chorus. He assumes that this is ludicrous because it is uncommon in his cultural experience. He does not understand that an ensemble of contrasting timbres is highly desirable from an African aesthetic viewpoint. This quote then indicates to the contemporary student of black music history that the values associated with the

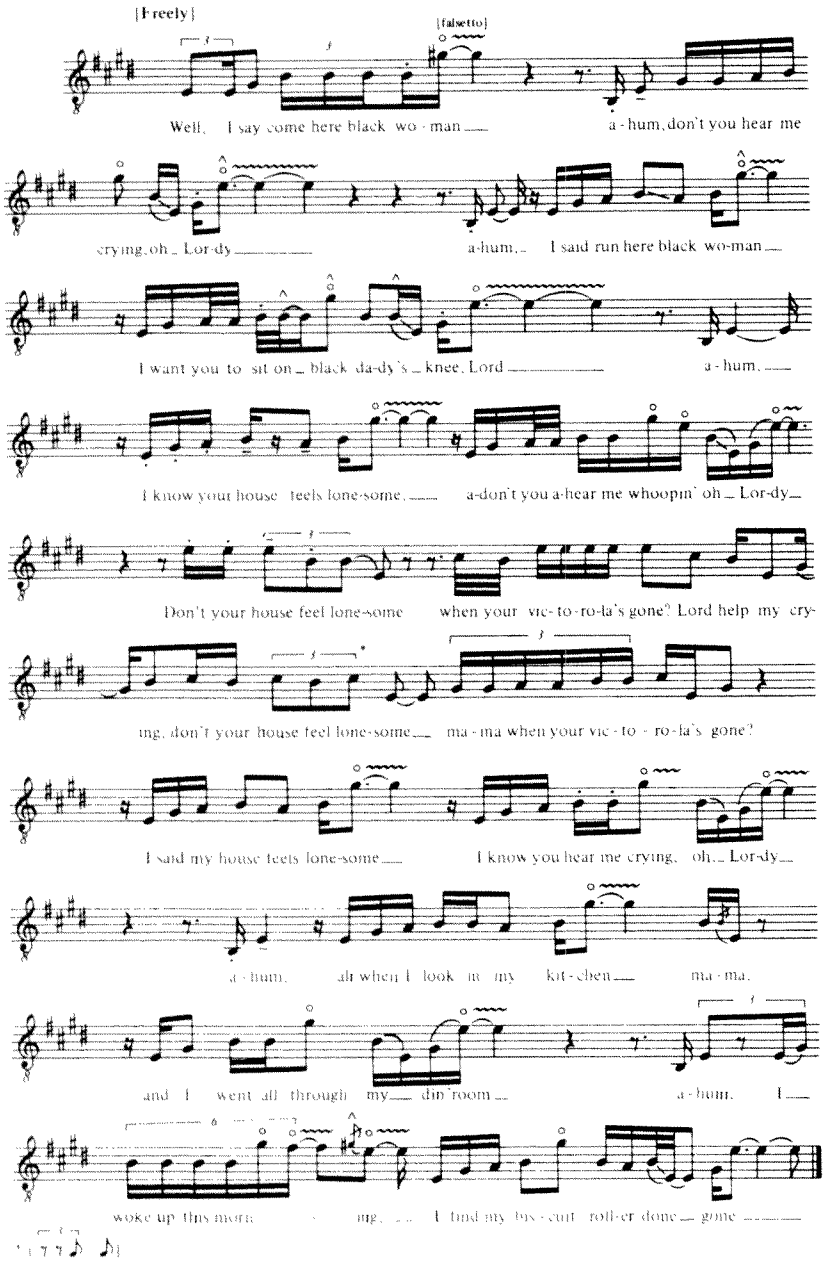
heterogeneous sound ideal were very much intact during the colonial period. Secondly, this quote identifies instruments commonly used to accompany singing in African-American music during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is noteworthy that the fiddle, tambourine, banjo, and drums blend in a heterogeneous manner. Furthermore, it is also significant that these instruments (with the exception of drums) are associated with the minstrel band that whites created in imitation of black plantation performing practices. Instruments associated with secular African-American ensemble music throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (fiddle, tambourine, bones, and various drums) are instruments that were doubtlessly selected and/or conceived because they created a heterogeneous sound texture. Chronicles and iconographic evidence (paintings, etchings, engravings) that describe or illustrate black American music of this period clearly document this fact.[14] The frequency with which one encounters the fiddle, banjo, tambourine, and an idiophone of some type of black plantation music is very high, so much so that the fiddler became an archetypical figure in plantation society.

The second performance practice that I wish to focus upon in this paper is the African-American singing tradition. Writings about black American vocal music in the eighteenth and nineteenth century describe performance practices that commonly feature a wide range of vocal nuances. The contemporary vocal style that comes closest is perhaps the lined-out "Watts hymn" (also referred to as the "long-meter hymn") or lined-out psalm, which is an unaccompanied responsorial style of choral singing generally associated today with prayer meetings in traditional African-American churches. This style of singing dates back to the eighteenth century (or earlier) and clearly reflects the continuity of the heterogeneous sound ideal in black music. Most of the descriptions of this style of sacred song discuss the common usage of a diversity of vocal nuances, a musical texture in which individual voices are discerned within a mass of sound, and the prevalence of an unmetrical rhythm in which each individual choral member's response varies in tempo, melodic contour, and vocal nuances that range from speech to song.[15]

The tradition of African-American solo song that most vividly preserves the heterogeneous sound ideal is the "holler," "cry," or "moan." These textless, single-line interjections illustrate with expressive brilliance the significance of timbral nuance in black music. The hollers, cries, and calls that have been documented from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comprise a folk song repertory that contributed in significant measure to the evolvement of the blues in the late nineteenth century.[16]

The recording of the song "Black Woman" by Rich Amerson (see Ex. 2) combines elements of the holler or call (e.g., a repertory of vocal nuances, glis-

EX. 2 "Black Woman," sung by Rich Amerson, *Negro Folk Music of Alabama*, vol. 1: *Secular Ethnic* (Folkways Records P417). Transcribed by Olly Wilson.



sandos, falsetto, repetition of pitches and pitch contours, unmetrical rhythm) with a text that expresses sentiments commonly found in the blues. This song (and similar holler-like songs like it) is performed by an unaccompanied singer, and represents perhaps a genre of music that preceded the blues. Particularly noteworthy is Amerson's use of the non-lexical intensifier *a hum* (sung on the same two pitches), which functions as a short contrasting musical refrain or anchor to the more florid musical lines associated with the text.

In analyzing historical developments in jazz, it is important to note how fundamental African-American conceptions about the nature of music impact on specific historical choices. For example the practice of marching and music making existed in African cultures prior to the forced migration of Africans to the New World, and the tradition of African festivals, which was characteristic of many sub-Saharan ethnic groups, involved parades of various sectors of society (warriors, nobility, priests), accompanied by drums (which were carried), various other instruments, and ensemble singing.[17] This martial music reflected all of the common characteristics of African music, including the heterogeneous sound ideal. It is equally important to note that the tradition of African festivals (complete with parades and instrumental music) was continued in the United States among early Africans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[18]

Thus, the prior existence of a marching tradition in Africa which found continuity in continental America underscores the notion of cultural syncretism as a principle that shaped cultural adaptation of peoples of African descent in the New World. Because colonial Anglo-American culture contained some musical practices that were congruent with pre-existing African cultural patterns, African-Americans were attracted to these specific practices and reinterpreted them from an African or African-American point of view.[19]

It is my hypothesis that blacks were attracted to European marching bands not only because the process of music making and marching was consistent with African concepts of the association of physical body motion with music, but also because European marching band music tended to focus upon timbral contrast between various sections. In that tradition, cornets and trumpets tended to provide the principal melodic line in a middle register; clarinets and flutes played an embellished obligato melody at a higher register; and the low brass played countermelodies. The resultant texture contained a great deal of timbral contrast. Hence, blacks were attracted to this European musical tradition, participated in it, and adapted and transformed it to conform more completely to their own conceptual approaches. I believe this is why there has been a long tradition of the involvement of blacks in marching bands through-

out American history. This had an important effect upon the development of ragtime and jazz.

In early jazz, the presence of the heterogeneous sound ideal is very strong as a basic concept that affected surface features of the music. The basic New Orleans jazz band clearly was organized into two groups: a) the fixed variable group, consisting of piano, banjo, bass or tuba, and drums, and b) the variable rhythmic group of front-line instruments, most commonly composed of cornet, clarinet, and trombone. The timbral independence of these instruments is clear. The practice of collective improvisation, whereby all three front-line instruments improvised simultaneously, created a musical texture that highlighted the timbral mosaic-like quality of the ensemble. This development was highly significant because it created a new paradigm—a distinctly African-American means of realizing a fundamentally African idea. This paradigm, in turn, then spawned its own modifications.

Preference for a specific quality in jazz required new solutions to achieve the desired end. As big bands evolved in the 1920s, for example, it became impossible for there to be simultaneous individual improvisation among instruments of contrasting timbres. Arranger Don Redman (of the Fletcher Henderson Band) eventually developed the solution of grouping instruments together by timbre, adding additional instruments to each instrumental group in order to create music that highlighted the contrast between groups. This ingenious solution enabled more instruments to participate, yet preserved the basic principle of timbral contrast.

Further developments in jazz reflect a continued observance of the heterogeneous sound ideal. There have been historical movements when a particular performer and/or composer focused more intently upon this aspect of the tradition. For example, the continuity of the heterogeneous sound ideal has been reflected through the innovative performances with mutes of trombonist "Tricky Sam" Nanton and trumpeter "Bubber" Miley in Duke Ellington's early bands, which focused much of their improvisation upon subtle nuances of sonority, much to the delight of audiences. Other manifestations included the so-called "growling and talking brass" of the early Ellington bands; Duke Ellington's own imaginative orchestrations, which created new heterogeneous blends, as in *Mood Indigo*; the striking manner in which the Count Basie Band and other southwestern bands used timbral nuances to illuminate the dynamic interplay of alternating riffs between sections; the dramatic asymmetrical phrasings, extreme shifts in range and timbre, and rhythmic vitality of innovations by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie with bebop; the subtlety and elegance of Miles Davis's muted ballads of the 1950s; the intense wailing and dynamism of the explosive, wide-ranging musical excursions of John Coltrane.

It is in the domain of twentieth-century African-American vocal music, however, that one finds the most highly developed, imaginative realization of the heterogeneous sound ideal. One observes, for instance, that this underlying concept is of much importance both within the secular dimension of blues, rhythm and blues, and soul, as well as in the sacred dimension of gospel music, which have historically interacted constantly with and profoundly influenced each other. In studying the blues and gospel music, several researchers (e.g., Horace Boyer, Pearl Williams-Jones, Charles Keil, Tony Heilbut, Mellonee Burnim) have discussed the ritualistic quality of the performance situation—i.e., a situation in which all participants are aware of what will transpire but are unaware of how a particular performer will realize the predetermined plan. Within the gospel and blues traditions, people familiar with these art forms know that the expected goal is a point in the performance when the expressive power of the performer is so overwhelming that it demands a spontaneous response from the audience. That moment of collective catharsis is extremely important in reinforcing a sense of cultural solidarity. According to Burnim,

> When the expectations of the Black congregation or audience are met, performer and audience merge; they become one. The personalized interpretation of a given gospel selection generates a sense of ethnic collectivity and spiritual unity.[20]

Within the black performance tradition, there is a communion of participants, not isolation between performer and audience.

The means by which contemporary twentieth-century black singers achieve the goal of the heterogeneous sound ideal is primarily through their judicious use of timbral and rhythmic nuances. An imaginative performer will have developed the sensitivity to know precisely when to utilize an extraordinary range of vocal timbres in order to achieve his or her purpose. Performers James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Al Green, Rev. James Cleveland, and Stevie Wonder, like their predecessors Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, and Billie Holiday, are noted not only for voices that have highly distinctive timbres but also for their musical sensitivity and use of timbral nuances in expressively powerful ways at precisely the right moment.

Mellonee Burnim observes, for example, that

> The performer must express emotion, but he or she must also prepare the audience properly for musical and emotional climaxes by alternating peak phrases with periods of relaxation. Herein lies the basis for extreme and often sudden dynamic vocal contrasts and the juxtaposition of different vocal textures so characteristic of gospel music.[21]

She further quotes a church member's critique of a gospel singer:

> See, I was watching for a pattern; I watched how she had a raspy sound; then she went into a real smooth, melodic type thing. Then she went right back into it, so I was trying to see if she was going to do it this time. I was waiting for her, and she said "Yap!" and got real percussive with it, you know. So I was just laughing.[22]

Though space has not permitted a complete discussion of all the ways in which the heterogeneous sound ideal is reflected in all genres of black music, I hope the preceding discussion has demonstrated the significance of this concept as a shaping force in the history of African-American music.

In conclusion, I want to return to the opening point I made about Duke Ellington's composition. When Ellington followed the line "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing" with the line "do-wah, do-wah, do-wah, do-wah, do-wah, do-wah," he illustrated the principle of swing by setting up the implied metrical contrast that I discussed earlier and by tying this metrical contrast to a contrast in timbre. The line was not *do-ooo, do-ooo*, etc.; but *do-wáh, do-wáh*, which accents the affect of timbral contrast working in conjunction with a cross rhythm. This is a perfect example of the operation of the heterogeneous sound ideal. If you recognize the musical difference between these two examples, you understand this principle.

NOTES

1. Olly Wilson, "Black Music as an Art Form," *Black Music Research Journal* 3 (1983): 2.

2. Olly Wilson, "The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music," *Black Perspective in Music* 2 (1) (Spring 1974): 20.

3. John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 27; J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Music of Africa* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 206; Olly Wilson, "The Association of Movement and Music as a Manifestation of a Black Conceptual Approach to Music Making," in *More than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians*, ed. Irene V. Jackson (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 10–13.

4. The syllable *o* is pronounced like *aw* in English.

5. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana* ([Edinburgh]: Published on behalf of the University of Ghana by T. Nelson, [ca. 1963]), 33.

6. Ibid. Nketia devotes a chapter, entitled "The Verbal Basis of Drumming," to this topic.

7. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *Music of Africa* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 131.

8. Ibid., 137–38.

9. *Africa South of the Sahara* (Folkways Records FE 4503). While any one of the thirty-eight excerpts on this album will reflect the heterogeneous sound ideal, no. 30, entitled "Music of the Ewe People," illustrates a timbral mosaic created by dynamic interaction between the lead voice, chorus, rattle, bell, hand clapping, and a consort of interlocking drums that is very striking.

10. "Fodonon," *Anthology of African Music*, vol. 8: *Music of the Senufo* (UNESCO recording BM30L2308), band no. 2. This recording features two men's voices alternating in an elaborate, vocally-infected melody against the accompaniment of a fixed rhythmic group composed of nine one-string harps with sympathetic vibrators and three large calabash rattles. The result is a highly diverse timbral texture that supports the structural rhythmic contrast.

11. Cf. the music of the Dorze, *Ethiopie polyphonies et techniques vocales* (Ocora OCR44), side A, track 1. The Dorze, who are a Cushitic-speaking ethnic group living in the high mountain region of south central Ethiopia (west of Lake Abaya), have an extraordinary style that is not only polyphonic and canonic—something western musicologists until recently had thought existed only in western Europe—but also employ a wide range of vocal timbres. The choral singing in this example is unaccompanied. The music maintains its stratified timbrally defined structure.

12. Ibid., side B, track 1.

13. Quoted in Eileen Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 54.

14. Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, comps., *African-American Traditions in Song, Sermon, Tale, and Dance, 1600s–1920: An Annotated Bibliography of Literature, Collections, and Artworks* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990).

15. See Ben Bailey, "The Lined-Hymn Tradition in Black Mississippi Churches," *Black Perspective in Music* 6 (1) (spring 1978): 3–18.

16. Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 156, 323–33; also Willis Laurence James, "The Romance of the Negro Folk Cry in America," *Phylon* 16 (1950): 15–30, reprinted in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 340–44.

17. Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: John Murray, 1819), 31–40, 358–69, 449–52; excerpts reprinted in 2d ed. of *Readings in Black American Music*, ed. Eileen Southern (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), 8–26.

18. Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 53–57.

19. Melville J. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

20. Mellonee V. Burnim, "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic, and Behavior," in *More than Dancing*, ed. Irene V. Jackson (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 157.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 158.