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Diplomacy, Resistance and Jazz: Twentieth Century Meetings of

Modern Music and Politics in the Horn of Africa

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirement for the degree Master of Arts

in African Studies

by

Dexter Gordon Bryan Story

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Diplomacy, Resistance and Jazz: Twentieth Century Meetings of
Modern Music and Politics in the Horn of Africa

by

Dexter Gordon Bryan Story
Master of Arts in African Studies
University of California, Los Angeles, 2019
Professor Aomar Boum, Chair

This paper surveys a collection of music-related interactions, sanctions, circumstances and figures that embodies the spirit of diplomacy and defiance in the Horn of Africa during the twentieth century. The research will examine historic moments of goodwill, propagation, ingenuity and activism that altered the course of modern music culture in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, where government officials, cultural ambassadors and, most significantly, musicians wield their authority, influence, popularity, instruments and voices beyond the traditional norms of their enterprise. Along these lines, the paper will discuss the expansive concept of *jazz* as symbolically appropriated and re-purposed by the performing artist and diplomat associated with the region. Although far from being exhaustive, this work engages with musical activity as a vehicle for information, identity, nationalism and broad meaning.

The thesis of Dexter Story is approved.

James Weldon Newton

Robin Davis Gibran Kelley

Aomar Boum, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

This thesis is dedicated to the ancestors; my mother and father Ethel and Benny Story; my wife Annette McClanahan Story; my children Cymone Aba Story, Bryan Yusef Kofi Story and Marissa Linda Starks; my mother-in-law Flora McClanahan; my extended family and friends; the late Dr. Olly Wilson; the late Mary "Polly" Nooter Roberts; Dr. Jacqueline DjeDje; my esteemed professors and mentors in African Studies and Ethnomusicology; and the musical universe.

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Keywords: jazz, music, diplomacy, resistance, liberation, ambassador, protest, Horn of Africa, East Africa, Ethio-Jazz, Somali Jazz, Sudanese Jazz

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I. INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.

What would give Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I and American jazz legend Duke Ellington occasion to toast in the iconic 1973 image? The intersectionality of music and politics here suggests a range of possibilities in the study of human expression in social contexts. The East African region above the equator presents a simialr vast and complex academic study of cultural expression at the effect of governing circumstances in the twentieth century. This thesis investigates how shifting power dynamics serve as a powerful catalyst for performative expression, stylistic choice and lyrical content in the biblical and historical lands formerly known as Cush, Punt, D'mt, Kemet, Abyssinia and Axum. Currently home to 150 million citizens and migrants, the sovereign republics of Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea, herein referred to as

the Horn of Africa[1], offer a world of ethnographic possibility and exploration related to the interaction music and politics. During the imperial, industrial and technological advances of the 1900s, the African region's vie for autonomy, stability, growth and identity birthed important activist musicians, music and state-sanctioned musical activities. The featured case studies spotlight this and the jazz music ethos as a defining presence within the respective countries.

Remarkable musicality forms the backbone of this research. These artists, whose lives are linked by region and common aspirations for democracy and equality, exercise creative agency in their compositions, performances and arrangements. Each of the principle players discussed herein: Ethiopia's Tessema Eshete, Nerses Nalbandian and Mulatu Astatke, Sudan's Sharhabeel Ahmed, Kamal Keila, The Scorpions and Mohamed Wardi, Somalia's Maryan Mursal and Dur Dur Band, and Eritrea's Ato Ateweberhan Segid, Tewolde Redda and Bereket Mengisteab either addressed collective hardships with music or transformed the character of jazz music through their own local or "folk" idioms, largely as an expression of nationalism. Moreover, these encounters and hybrid forms were not always political, and when they were, the context determined what kinds of politics the music expressed—whether it was in the service of the state, in opposition to the state, or a different kind of politics altogether that addressed a global, regional, or continental context. In short, these important figures in the Horn of Africa largely adopted the "jazz imaginary" as the vehicle best suited to their expanding cultural and intellectual needs, and to disrupting the struggles presented by their physical and cultural environment.

[1] For the purposes of this research, Djibouti will be replaced with Sudan due to the legacy of interaction and exchange between Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as Sudan's impressive output of high-calibre artistry and activism during the 1900s.

The presented case studies rely on archival research, analysis of recordings, online testimonies, and artist interviews. A chapter overview of American jazz and Africa begins this thesis. Then, the paper is divided by country into chapters that contextualize the national music by elucidating the main state leaders and regimes starting from the late 1800s. Included, as well, is a critical three-part section on the post-World War II U.S. presence in the Horn of Africa, a presence that has had a major impact on local exposure to not only jazz, but to other popular forms of American music such as traditional blues, soul, rock and roll, rhythm and blues. The U.S. military-programmed radio station at the Kagnew communications base in Asmara, Eritrea; the international Peace Corps volunteer program inaugurated by President John F. Kennedy in 1961; and the U.S.-sponsored State Department Tours featuring America's jazz greats were all important in laying a foundation for the cultural innovations in the Horn of Africa. Discussions about these mid-century initiatives bring a deeper understanding of the history of jazz diplomacy within the context of the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement happening abroad.

Aims of the Thesis

The primary aim of this work delineates music and political coexistence in the Horn of Africa within the twentieth century. Far from comprehensive, it aspires to trace the lineage of artistry that was a product of its socio-political environment and of national policy. The musicians and events discussed, of Ethiopian, Sudanese, Somalian and Eritrean origins, are prime examples of diplomacy, activism, patriotism, resilience, and innovation. Moreover, in some cases, the ruling government figure or body exercises agency in conspiring to bring musical activities within state control, sanctioning or endorsement. The years of regional

volatility and regime changes, instead of being a deterrent or inhibitor to the singer, instrumentalist and composer, provided inspiration and boundary-pushing opportunities.

The second aim is to examine the reception and transformation of jazz in the Horn of Africa, and therefore the role of Northeast Africa in globalizing jazz. This paper is interested in how each has borrowed the neologism and its essence to create a musical hybrid of sorts for themselves. In other words, though American swing music and other popular source forms blues, doo-wop, rhythm & blues and soul were imported, broadcast, enjoyed and emulated, each of these sovereign nations lays claim to its own expansive interpretation of the music, namely through the musicianship and initiative of the particular artist under investigation. Dr. Ashenafi Kebede states, “The performers of urban music blend characteristics derived from European-American sources with those that are traditionally African.” He continues, “Today the strongest influence comes from American jazz, Caribbean calypso rhythms, and other types of music such as rock ‘n’ roll” (Kebede, 1982). Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea have, in their own respective ways, brought substantial modern character to the music and spirit of jazz.

Lastly, the third objective of the research is about how jazz and its musical hybrids became both a cultural terrain and ground for political contestation within these nations and a vehicle for cultural diplomacy. The American art form, inscribed with “truth telling” and “revolutionary” essence (Washington, 2019) is exported to the Horn of Africa and repurposed with similar results. Jazz in the Horn functions for the musician as a medium for activism against an adversarial state and, at the same time, for the state as a tool for modernizing and rebranding its international identity. In some cases, the loaded and controversial word *jazz* references the revolutionary artist’s music and resilience, and, in other cases, it plays in the

background as the buttress for new cultural initiatives and re-imaginings. "Jazz finds its way to the edges of the empire, filling the cultural void, flourishing when in contact with other musics, and giving voice even to the subaltern," according to American ethnomusicologist and author Philip Bohlman (Bohlman, 2016:155).

Attempts at analyzing politicized music examples on the one hand, and revealing the East African jazz lineage on the other, will, in some cases, merge and become one case study in this paper. These congruences are not unwelcome; the present writer intends to have this double-sided inquiry serve the research and the field of ethnomusicology by way of connecting music of the Horn with its diasporic relative in African American music (and vice-versa), while also engaging with the contextual implications of surrounding governance, nationalism and identity. The international and cross-disciplinary potential of this work is invigorating and leads us to specific inquiries. How are music and politics entangled in East Africa? To what extent are modern musicians in a dance with government policies, infrastructures, figures and nationalism? What fuels their fears, concerns, frustrations, anger, cynicism, despair, resolve, protests, expatriation, and self-imposed exile? What inspires, emboldens and enlivens them? Inversely, how does the state respond to artists perceived as dissenting or critical of the regime? And how do we write about the influence of politics inherent in the performative cultural realm, such as the revolutionary songs of the griot, for example? Fela Kuti's songs such as "I. T. T." and "Zombie" are expressly written in the mid to late 1970s as a rebuke of the egregious corruption and oppression in his country. These Afrobeat songs featuring the musical synthesis of Pidgin lead vocals over Herculean horn riffs, defiant background vocal shouts, instrumental jazz and funk attributes, indigenous Nigerian percussion elements, and the unshakeable Tony

Allen drum groove were unmistakably Kuti's platform for musical activism and defiance. Kuti ignited a political fire all over Africa and modern musicians were surely aroused by his courage and unapologetic stand for justice. Does music in the Horn of Africa similarly necessitate or pull for this sort of dramatic social commentary and action? These inquiries inspire deep reflection into the politically-conscious praxis of musical artistry.

As such, the impetus for the musician activist in the Horn informs the context for this research. Themes for the musician include but are not limited to personal experiences related to human safety, land distribution, gender equality, food security, equitable distribution of power, refugee repatriation, socio-economic reconstruction and development. In Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea, the power dynamics are real: a complicated weave of narratives that share, at their core struggle, European colonization. "Unlike most other states in Africa, however, the states in the Horn have been dominated by the elite of certain ethnic groups which used state power to secure what in that poverty stricken region is inordinate privilege. To defend this privilege, the ruling classes turned the state into a highly centralized and authoritarian system of oppression," say the editors of *Beyond Conflict in the Horn*, a 1992 volume addressing "the prospects for peace, recovery and development" in the region (Doornbos, Cliffe, Ahmed, Markakis, 1992). Although over 25 years old, the book presents relevant twentieth century perspectives on how the Horn of Africa is an interdependent socio-economic and politico-military ecosystem, not the isolated, unrelated and separatist nation states some scholarship on Africa may lead us to believe.

The *Beyond Conflict* editors continue, "The states in the Horn have a record of spectacular failure in many fields, including economic development. This meant that the

inherited disparity in material and social resources between regions, ethnic groups, and social classes attained further grotesque proportions. More than any other factor, this disparity was responsible for the wave of dissidence and rebellion that mounted steadily since the 1960s" (Doornbos, 1992:4). Accordingly, the local poet, lyricist, songwriter, singer and musician would develop his or her own call for justice unique to the uneven circumstances, the people, the movements, the rhythm and available resources. The post-colonial period, particularly, inspired a precedence of artists that creatively took matters into their own hands, employing their voices, instruments, courage and stature for the benefit of their body politic. This thesis will attempt to delve into the process of giving voice to ones predicament through music, song and, even, liberating *jazz* abstractions and awakenings.

II. JAZZ AND AFRICA OVERVIEW

Jazz music is historically associated with the ingenuity of Black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, a reckoning of the displaced African with his/her North American slave circumstances and Eurocentric musical implements in the Southern United States. Work songs, field hollers, spirituals and down-home blues collided with colonial brass and woodwind instruments in New Orleans to create a ubiquitous artform and living testament to the resilience of the human spirit. "Negroes played jazz as they had sung blues or, even earlier, as they had shouted and hollered in those anonymous fields, because it was one of the few areas of human expression available to them," LeRoi Jones would attest in 1967. First coined by white Americans in the late 1800s as a derivative of *gism*, *jism* or *jasm* meaning energy, spirit or spunk according to the *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, the term evolved in the early 1900s to

denote the new syncopated music in the bars and brothels of Chicago and the North. Jazz slowly came to mean hot, boogie, ragtime, swing, bebob, improvisation, fusion, hybridization, cross-fertilization, interculturality, worldliness, and a plethora of other neologisms. "Often these musics were simply called "jazz," a capacious term that came to encompass all forms of "modern dance" from the foxtrot to the tango" (Denning, 2015). Notwithstanding, this paper is interested in the global connotations and context of the word as it is used to identify musical activity and infuse musicians with an international locale, caché and agenda roughly 8,000 miles east of the continental United States. The ubiquitous approach to jazz music finds its way to the Horn of Africa through a pantheon of arrangers, musicians, band leaders, instructors, creatives, diplomats and motives during a century of great political change, challenge and modernization.

Scholar J. H. Kwabena Nketia reminds us in *The Music of Africa*, "In addition to idiophones and membranophones, many African societies make use of a limited number of aerophones" (Nketia, 1974:92). The use of wind-blown instruments amongst indigenous African cultures is centuries old and beyond the scope of this paper. However, congruences of African musicality and European instrumentation, which support the central arguments in this thesis, are a complex and socially-interwoven phenomenon. The practice of colonialism, despite its horror and tragedy, left military brass band hybridization around the world. The nineteenth century perfection of the trumpet, tuba and saxophone in Europe provides a powerful model of artistic expression for the displaced African both on the continent and in the *New World*. In the case of Blacks in the U.S. and the Caribbean, the appropriation of these brass instruments would fuel the emergence of early jazz (as noted above), New Orleans second line, Afro-Cuban *tresillo* fusion, while also anchoring Civil War military brass units and other New England orchestral music.

Within the Gulf of Mexico, fourteen hour ferry rides between the Crescent City and Havana, Cuba would reinforce, if not introduce, brass instrumentation throughout the Caribbean. In South America, the birth of swinging march-derivative styles would flourish such as Brazilian Samba, Colombian Cumbia, Peruvian fusion sounds and adjacent Trinidadian Calypso and Parang. Similarly, African nations would appropriate these same refined sonic devices during times of European conquest and form reinvigorated versions or secular music. For example, the French, Portuguese and British administrations left a legacy of horn-centric local forms in Mali, South Africa, Angola, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, and Belgium would plunder in the Congo while, at the same time, emboldening musicians to create a ubiquitous African rumba style. Moreover, in East Africa during the early twentieth century, there are important interactions with the West that would transform the sound palette and reify the mutually beneficial exchange of diplomatic and music-related advancements.

Africa at the Turn of the Century

On Saturday, November 15, 1884, Portugal officially convened a meeting between European nations at German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's official residence in Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse district in order to apportion Africa among them peacefully. The radical meeting, held under the pretenses of ending slavery on the continent by both Africans and Arabs, was presided over by representatives from Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Sweden-Norway, Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and the United States. Largely unexplored before the conference, Africa was slowly becoming known for its vast natural and human resources due to the growing and attractive

preponderance of precious Ivory tusk exported from the interior. France, Britain and Spain carried out colonizing operations in the Congo as Germany began extensive exploration and human "civilizing" missions in the 1900s. France, Britain and Germany, not to be outdone by each other, and at the urging of King Léopold II of Belgium, partnered with Portugal to set an international agenda for a diplomatic division of the attractive territory. Helmed by von Bismarck, the Berlin Conference would close more than three months later on February 26, 1885 with a General Act of the 1885 Conference of Berlin that would sanction immediate and aggressive joint European colonization and exploitation of Africa. The resolutions from this conclave would reverberate for more than a century, setting the tone for how local politics and culture-related initiatives in the Horn of Africa would develop throughout the twentieth century.

What is of critical interest here is not just the dynamism and gravitas with which colonialism was initiated in Africa by the Berlin Conference consortium, but rather the embrace of jazz amongst the same state actors in Europe during the decades directly following the late 19th century meeting. As composer George E. Lewis aptly inquires in his forward to the "Jazz Worlds / World Jazz" compilation, "Why do world scenes embrace jazz as their own, and on what terms?" (Lewis, 2016). As the living idiom developed in its own urban centers in America, it was already becoming institutionalized within those very nations engaged in the scramble for Africa. "As early as the 1920s, jazz was well on its way to becoming deeply entrenched in European musical worlds, and it did not simply signify democracy or even Americanness, but rather factored into local discourses and debates concerning modernity, race and the nation" (Jankowsky, 2016). While bandleader James Reese Europe and his 369th Infantry Regiment, cabaret star Josephine Baker and other Harlem Renaissance-era expatriate artists and musicians

populated Parisian nightlife, France produced renown Hot Club founder and violinist Stéphane Grappelli and his confrère *Gypsy Jazz* guitarist Django Reinhardt. Modernist French composers Erik Satie and Darius Milhaud also incorporated jazz elements into their early surrealist sounds and *Les Six* compositions respectively. Similarly, Basquian classical composer Maurice Ravel imported jazz harmonies he heard during a U.S. tour in 1928 into his acclaimed "Piano Concerto in G Major." As well, Germany's own composer Bernhard Sekles launched the world's first jazz curriculum at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt also in 1928, as Nazi propagandists commandeered the swing band Charlie and His Orchestra to its own end. Further, Belgium saw the first jazz record pressing on the Victor label by Remue & His New Stompers in 1927, and the city became the center of jazz in Europe through the Ragtime music of John Philip Sousa in 1903 and the Mitchell's Jazz Kings in 1920 at the Alhambra. Adolphe Sax's new invention was also incorporated into the military brass band as Belgian writer Robert Goffin published one the first scholarly works *Aux Frontières du Jazz* in 1932. Britain, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Greece also internally debated and exploited the socio-political merits of the Black art form (Jankowsky, 2016). Jazz educator and keyboardist Darius Brubeck, the son of the late bandleader and composer Dave, sums up the music's global appeal, "It's really a shared art form. Maybe it's not a universal language, but it is universally accessible" (Layman, 2018). The African American music was universalized to the degree that even Italian dictator Mussolini's son Romano, born in 1928, was a professional jazz drummer despite every nuance of irony in his father's brutal oppression of indigenes of the Horn region.

Country	Capitol	Current Population	Ethnic Groups	Regime Changes During 1900s

Eritrea	Asmara	5 million	13	2
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	105 million	84	5
Somalia	Mogadishu	15 million	5 noble clans w/ subclans	3
Sudan	Khartoum	41 million	300+	5

Figure 2.

The bulk of the present work develops around the Horn region's liberation from European conquest in the mid to late century. However, as indicated in the table above, transference of power would plague the region with or without the involvement of Europe. Sudan, still conjoined with South Sudan at the time of its independence, would unhinge from the short-lived *Mahdist*[2] regime and then Anglo-Egyptian control in 1956; Somalia, likewise, would unite in the North and South and eventually declare its independence from the British administration in 1960; and Eritrea, coming out of a 30-year war with neighboring Ethiopia, would see the EPLF declare victorious sovereignty in 1991. And Ethiopia, although historically known as the only African multi-ethnic nation that retained its independence, had endured mid-century British and Italian occupation in addition to other internal ethnic insurgencies. Complex socio-political developments in each of these countries during this period translate to an opportune palette for the music maker, and, in some cases, the repressive climate serves as essential content or *raison d'être* for the local artist. The journey of the musician in Northeast Africa is arguably emboldened by Cold War-related challenges of political and economic

[2] The Mahdist War was a British colonial war of the late 19th century which was fought between the Mahdist Sudanese of the religious leader Muhammad Ahmad bin Abd Allah, who had proclaimed himself the "Mahdi" of Islam, and the forces of the Khedivate of Egypt, initially, and later the forces of Britain.

instability, explosive urbanization due to industrialization, and a new local quest for post-independence identity.

III. ETHIOPIA

Tsar Nicholas' Brass Gifts

It is widely maintained that the modern Ethiopian era commenced around the famous Battle of Adwa, just before the turn of the twentieth century. Adwa, a flat, arid town that served as seat of the region's governorship, as a marketplace, and a popular corridor for travelers between the Red Sea and the heart of the country, would be the last and decisive contest in the first Italo-Ethiopian war. Under the leadership of the cunning 42-year old Emperor Menelik II, the more than 100,000 soldiers of the Ethiopian Empire defeated the advancing but outnumbered Italian troops in an impressive victory on March 1, 1896. This victory would secure Ethiopia's autonomy as one of only two African countries exempted from the aforementioned hegemonic Berlin Conference land partitioning. The defeat for the Kingdom of Italy would not only temper its emerging interests in the region for a few decades, but would earn Ethiopia respect and praise amongst nations near and far. "The Ethiopian victory—a humiliating setback for the Italians—caused a considerable stir at the time, in Europe and throughout the world. Official delegations and adventurers (English, French, Russian, American) rushed to Addis Ababa ("New Flower") to get a closer look at this out-of-the-ordinary African sovereign—and his recalcitrant nation. There was even a visit from a representative of the early African American intellectuals, and of emerging pan-Africanism in the person of the Haitian Benito Sylvain (1897 and 1903)"

(Falceto, 2001). Accordingly, the newly-wed and coronated Russian Tsar Nicholas II, possibly seeking diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, shipped 40 brass instruments (with accompanying music instructor) to Ethiopia via Menelik's military advisor Captain Nicholas Stepanovitch Leontiev in 1897 as a symbolic gesture of congratulations to the reigning Emperor.

Whether intended or not, the Russian monarch's gift of an assortment of trumpets, trombones, saxophones and baritone horns would have profound and lasting impact on the musical legacy in Ethiopia. Prior to this endowment, the ruling class had rejected encroaching Westernization, including assimilation of European musical instruments into its secular and profanus artforms. "Even Ethiopia, despite its resistance to expansionism, did not escape from this odd blessing." Falceto continues, "Brass instruments had been introduced to ancient Abyssinia much earlier, apparently to no discernable or lasting effect" (Falceto, 2001 19). Traditionally, Ethiopia had nothing similar to the large ceremonial Western orchestra except for a cadre of aerophones used for announcing the convening of dignitaries, namely long trumpets without finger holes called *meleket*, and large, one-note flutes called *embilta*. The timing of Russia's diplomacy proved auspicious as Ethiopians would syncretize its extant ceremonial musical expression with unprecedented brass sounds (Mondon-Vidailhet 1887, 1898). In this way, Francis Falceto suggests, "The Adwa victory was also a kind of starting point for the development of modern music in Ethiopia" (Falceto 2005). The presence of new orchestral horns in Addis Ababa certainly parallels the genesis of a swinging new music in African American communities in the South, and laid the groundwork for local incorporation of soon-to-arrive Western ornamentation into Ethiopia's musical expression.

The Armenian Legacy

Armenia and Ethiopia share much common history that predates the twentieth century. Trade encounters between the Kingdoms of Armenia and Axum are widely documented, and there were mutually beneficial exchanges between Armenians and Ethiopians throughout the centuries leading up to this thesis' focal period (Pankhurst, 1977; Dilanchian, 1993; Bournoutian, 2005; Terzian, 2014). In addition to being the first and second countries to adopt Christianity as a national religion in the 4th century, the ancient liturgical *Ge'ez* language and early Armenian alphabet created by Monk and linguist Mesrop Mashtots exhibit uncanny resemblances. "Around 1339 the Ethiopian monk Ewostateus (Eustace) travelled to Armenia and after his death three of his disciples returned to Ethiopia with an Armenian monk following which they established a monastery and six other religious communities" (Dilanchian, 1993). "In 1915 Ethiopian Armenians contributed volunteers to Egypt to fight Ottoman forces" (Yereven, 1967 as cited by Dilanchia, 1993). Further, it is also rumored that two Armenians, an 18th-century merchant named Yohannes Tovmacean and a 19th century priest named Father Dimotheos, are among the privileged few who have seen the coveted Ark of the Covenant (Munro-Hay, 2005: 141-150 as cited by Tiruneh, 2015). Dr. Costantinos Berhutesfa Costantinos of Addis Ababa University writes:

> Armenians have a much older presence in Ethiopia. Indeed, one of the first recorded diplomatic missions to Europe from Ethiopia was led by Matthew the Armenian who traveled to Portugal and Rome at the request of the Dowager Empress Eleni of Ethiopia to appeal for aid against Islamic incursions into Ethiopia in the 16th Century.

(Costantinos, 2015)

Costantinos also provides details about the well-known Armenian Quarter in Addis Ababa during the early 1900s, and how their community peaked in 1935 with over 2,000 inhabitants. Reference images portray Armenian school children with their instructors in Addis Ababa as early as 1918; in fact, the photography of Bedros Boyadjian, an Armenian from Tigranakert, provides some of our most revealing visual resources depicting modern Ethiopian life. "Initially, he was the photographer of Menelik II, and later became the photographer for Haile Selassie's imperial court" (Costantinos, 2015).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Ethiopia's iconic Emperor Haile Selassie I was the last of a handful of the country's monarchs who inaugurated sweeping cultural initiatives that had resounding impact for his nation and the world at large. Constanitinos discusses a controversial postulation offered by scholar Milkias Paulos in his 2006 book *Haile Selassie, Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia*. Herein, Paulos suggests that Ethiopia, with its autonomous history, was initially averse to doing business in the early twentieth century, especially with outsiders; jaded by a feudal past or simply not accustomed to industrial and technological advances, Ethiopians, instead, deferred civilian services to skilled Greek and Armenian immigrants. Notwithstanding, Armenians were fully integrated as professionals into Ethiopian society serving the monarchy and civilian population as esteemed engineers, city planners, historians, ambassadors, astronomers, medical physicians, dentists, athletic coaches, architects, contractors, men of letters, and renown music instructors.

The Arba Lijotch

The arrival of an orchestra of 40 orphaned Armenian children and their band director in 1924 at the invitation of then Regent Ras Teferi Mekonnen represents an important turning point in the history of modern Ethiopian music and a diplomatic gesture with resounding implications regarding music's ubiquitous impact. Displaced due to events related to the Ottoman genocide, the *arba lijotch* met the future Emperor of Ethiopia during his state visit to Jerusalem and impressed him so much with their musical talent that he invited them to return with him to Addis Ababa and to become his national orchestra. The young refugees, accompanied by their seasoned composer and orchestrator Kevork Nalbandian, would perform state functions and also record the first national anthem "“Teferi Marsh, Ethiopia Hoy" ("Ethiopia, Be Happy")" written by Nalbandian. "The Armenian director quickly took stock of the situation: only six of the forty children knew how to play 'a little'. After a year of frantic rehearsals, the group in effect became the first official band of Ethiopia. They marched before Queen Zewditu in all of her visits, much to the amazement of the capital's inhabitants" (Falceto, 2011 p. 30). By 1930, the newly coronated Negus Haile Selassie I seized the opportunity of the Armenian presence to upgrade the public profile of the monarchy with reinvigorated pomp and circumstance; the Eurocentric fanfare of the anthem and the foreign orchestra modernized the sound of not only the royal court but the country.

The aforementioned band director Kevork Nalbandian was himself an orphan of the Armenian Genocide. Born in the Western Turkey city of Aintap (also known as Gaziantep) and known as a gifted musician, he was invited by the Armenian Church to teach in the city of Kilis before escaping to Syria for refuge from massacres within the populated province. He and a cast

of other accomplished music conductors and arrangers from Europe were invited to Addis Ababa to work with the Emperor's Armenian orchestra. The boys would eventually learn over 50 familiar Ethiopian tunes and royal marches before giving up and dispersing into civilian life in Ethiopia and abroad. "When their contract ended in July 1928, a good third of the 'Arba Lijotch', tired of being so poorly paid, took off for Iraq and Syria." Falceto continues, "But 'European' music was making headway in the Abyssinian homeland. Kevork trained Ethiopian performers at the Teferi Mekonnen, and Menelik schools; Garabed Hakalmazian, another Armenian, took over Addis Ababa's municipal brass band" (Falceto, 2011). Emperor Selassie's gesture of diplomacy and goodwill extended to Armenia was well-received, at least by Nalbandian who, along with his nephew Nerses, would later show abiding loyalty and reciprocate by instructing an emerging generation of Ethiopian musicians about big band jazz in the years following World War II.

Swinging Addis

Swing music landed in Ethiopia well before current academic research would maintain. Whereas most Ethiopianist scholarship and general consensus would indicate that Mulatu Astatke's 1960s Ethio-Jazz innovations were the beginnings of the African American art form's prevalence in Addis Ababa (Shelemay, 2016; Frangou, 2017; Johnson, 2017), this thesis argues that big band jazz was established in the Horn of Africa two decades earlier due to the deliberate reconstruction efforts of Emperor Haile Selassie I after World War II, and the creative whims of his state band director Nerses Nalbandian. "Just like the newly-liberated Europe, post-war Africa latched on to jazz, imitating especially the impeccable brass sections, the swinging,

explosive melodies, the slightly flashy elegance," Falceto claims. "Until the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974, you could feel this influence of the horn section, coming from the jazz band influence from America post the Second World War" (Falceto, 2017). As discussed previously, the language of nascent swing music from America, in this case, speaks on its own behalf to East Africa. However, it could be argued that modern reforms in Selassie's Ethiopia were in a dance with the jazz trajectory.

For instance, the Britain-facilitated return of Emperor Selassie after his 5-year exile from 1936 to 1941, and the 1944 ratification of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement gave momentum to the Ethiopian Empire's modernity and "ethnic-nationalism" (Gudina, 2003; Keller, 2014). In 1950, Ethiopia forces claimed access to the sea through its annexation of Eritrea, and bilateral relations between Ethiopia and the U.S. relaunched with the Lend-Lease program at Kagnew Station and, later, the Peace Corps in 1962 discussed infra. Cultural initiatives from the 1920s and 1930s resumed shortly after the war, boosted by an imperialist monarchy concerned with establishing a "New Ethiopia"; Selassie appointed a cabinet of seven ministers including Ato Lorenzo Taezaz as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ato Makonnen Desta as Minister of Education and Fine Art (Selassie, 1999). Shortly after World War II, the Ethiopian state inaugurated the National Library at Addis Ababa in 1944, Ethiopian Airlines in 1946, and the University College of Addis Ababa in 1951 to build upon the established Tafari Makonnen School in the late 1920s and Emperor Menelik's large institution in his own name in 1908 (Ullendorff, 1960). The National School of Music, "the first higher institution of music in Ethiopia was founded in 1954 by the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts as a full-fledged state-owned learning center for music training in the country" (Admin, 2019). And attracting

tourism as early as the 1950s (Kasahun, 2014; Ali, 2016; Atinkut, 2018), the Ethiopian state had every intention of opening its doors to the West and tuning into popular culture, particularly the mainstream exposure of original "jazz age" brass instrument stylings of King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, James Reese Europe, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie, to name a few (Gioia, 2011; Behrens, 2011).

As American jazz was itself transforming after World War II with the advent of small group Bebop innovations of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk in the 1940s, and Hard Bop, Cool Jazz, Bossa Nova and Free Jazz extensions of Art Blakey, Miles Davis, Stan Getz and Ornette Coleman in the 1950s, the swing era continuum was just beginning to catch hold internationally. The cross-over appeal of early rock and roll, doo wop and *The Weavers*[3] sound was equally matched by that of the white jazz orchestra recordings. The great social dance and Broadway-inspired large ensemble hits from the 1935-1945 golden era of swing in the U.S. featured the likes of Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Benny Goodman, Perry Como, Artie Shaw and The Andrews Sisters. Jazz "Americana" was all the rage. Famous big band leader, clarinetist and singer Woody Herman, for example, released over forty studio albums between 1950 and 1970. Falceto attests,

> Also, we have to keep in mind that after the Second World War, in Ethiopia, like everywhere in the world, the biggest influence was the American big band, Glen Miller and the like. If you consider what happened in Europe, in France, in particular, everybody was listening to "In The Mood," or these kinds of songs. Everywhere, you

[3] The Weavers were an American folk music quartet based in the Greenwich Village area of New York City. They sang traditional folk songs from around the world, as well as blues, gospel music, children's songs, labor songs, and American ballads, and sold millions of records at the height of their popularity.

> could see the development of these big bands, playing more or less American music, or local music with influences of jazz big bands. And because there's this tradition of marching bands with big horn sections, the Ethiopian big bands appeared immediately. You had big civil bands with 10, 15, 20 players, incredible horn sections. (Falceto, 2006).

These conventional artists could now be heard performing in concert halls at home and abroad, on U.S. military bases, or on radio broadcasts all over the world by the 1960s**.** Enter Armenian multi-instrumentalist Nerses Nalbandian whose love for the sounds of the big band era would foster a lasting legacy of jazz pedagogy in Addis Ababa.

The Legacy of Nerses Nalbandian

Violinist, pianist and saxophonist Nerses Nalbandian was selected by Emperor Selassie I to succeed his respected composer and conductor uncle Kevork Nalbandian upon the latter's retirement in 1949. Born in Syria in 1915, the younger Nalbandian was invited to Addis Ababa in 1938 to enjoy the peaceful expatriate conditions that his family and many Armenians experienced in Ethiopia during the aftermath of the Ottoman atrocities. After World War II, Nerses, who had been music teacher and choir master at the Armenian Orthodox Church in Syria, had already begun integrating into the new vibrant music scene and educational reforms in an increasingly urbanized Addis Ababa. His big break came when he inherited the conductor's chair with the Emperor's personal Imperial Bodyguard Orchestra, as well as with other

state-sanctioned music institutions such as the Police Orchestra and the Municipal Orchestra of Addis Ababa (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo, 1999; Teffera, 2018).

The Imperial Bodyguard Orchestra, founded as a novice military brass band in 1917 under the directorship of the Swedish André Nicod, was repurposed under Nerses. The ensemble's musicianship had begun improving during the Italian occupation in the 1940s up to the influx of capable European music instructors through the 1950s, and Nerses started to incorporate the finger-popping American sounds he heard on the Kagnew radio station into its repertoire. "[T]he musical vocabulary of these brass bands gradually expanded by exposure to exotic new styles such as jazz, rhythm-and-blues, and soul, which were broadcast around the country from the American military radio station in Asmara" (Briggs and Blatt, 2009). Further, Nerses was hired in 1956 to conduct the orchestra of the Haile Selassie Theatre under the direction of the Austrian composer and playright Franz Zelwecker who later founded the National Theatre. Serving in the Ethiopian royal court from 1950-1957, Zelwecker, a lover of popular melodies and jazz, was among the cadre of imported virtuosi commissioned by the Ministry, and Nerses honed his modern musicianship and arranging skills during Zelwecker's tenure.

> Little by little, each of the institutional groups (the Imperial Body Guard, Army, Police and Municipal Bands) developed a so-called 'jazz' section, which played a repertoire mixing mambo, boogie-woogie and airy arrangement of Ethiopian tunes. With the best players from the Imperial Body Guard Band, Franz Zelwecker created the first of the great light music ensembles, very simply entitled *YeKeber Zebegna Orchestra yeJazz*

> *Symphony* — more or less 'The Imperial Body Guard Band Jazz Symphony' section… a ten-strong brass section. (Falceto, 2011)

Questions persist, however, about the actual sound of jazz before the 1969 recording industry launched with Amha Records' 45rpm release of Alemayehu Eshete's 'Timarkiyalehs' and B-side 'Ya Tara' that Falceto and others describe. How were Ethiopian musicians interpreting the big band brass and string arrangements of Nerses, Zelwecker, and other European instructors Alexander Kontonrowicz and Richard Moser? What was the audience's impression of and reaction to the large brass orchestra blowing in the Hager Fiker, the upgraded National Theatre, or in any number of plush hotels built after Emperor Selassie returned in 1941 with renewed purpose to modernize Ethiopia? How did they "swing" on the bandstand? What did it sound like? Who and what jazz greats were they imitating? How close or far was the music to what we know as American big band jazz?

The hundreds of images in Francis Falceto's timeless 2011 book *Abyssinie Swing* powerfully paint a world of music that was present in Ethiopia around the mid-twentieth century. Photographs convey the typical big band jazz formation with Franz Zelwecker or Nerses Nalbandian leading a dapper, tuxedoed, all-Ethiopian orchestra comprised of 4 to 5 saxophones, 3 to 4 trumpets, 2 to 3 trombones, pianist, upright bassist and 3-piece percussion section including timpanis. An occasional vocalist can be seen fronting the group in the Haile Selassie Theatre seated behind archaic logo-designed ensemble music stands of yesterday. The art deco set design itself reminds one of Cotton Club images during the dazzling Harlem Renaissance (Goaia, 1997; Boyd, 2003). This period was evidently a richly creative and aestheticized

precursor to the small band, post-coup movement of the 1960s, but unfortunately there is a dearth of aural evidence documenting what is represented on the pictures.

> Sadly, the evocative monochrome photographs collected in Francis Falceto's recently published book *Abyssinie Swing* are practically all that remains of the wild R&B-influenced sounds and hedonistic nightclubs that partied until the early morning during the heady early years of the so-called Golden Age of Ethiopian Music. As a result, those of us who weren't there can only guess what the music of this era sounded like, but mid-1960s photographs of rows of future records stars such as Mahmoud Ahmed and Tlahoun Gessesse harmonising in finger-clicking unison suggest a great dependence on vocal harmonies than is evident on the recorded material that would eventually emerge from 'Swinging Addis.' (Briggs, Blatt, 2018)

Teffera also attests, "The only collections existing from this time were reel-to-reel recordings made by the Armenian merchant Garbis Hayzagian and the Ethiopian Radio" (Teffera, 2008). Despite his institutional support of arts and culture in the years leading up to 1969, Emperor Selassie's near-sighted restrictions on national music recordings and publishing allowed Ethiopia's mid-century modern brass band heritage to vanish with the passing of time.

Lastly, Nerses became the director of the newly renovated 1,260-seat National Theatre in 1956 and, around the same period, was honored with full naturalization as an Ethiopian citizen. This honor was well-deserved. In 1969, he was interviewed by historian Prithivi Nath Kaul

Bamzai for The Ethiopian Herald and the revelations are striking. Reproduced in Francis Falceto's *Abyssinie Swing* picture book in its entirety, the newspaper article entitled "Jazz Music Takes Deeper Roots" credits Nerses with introducing jazz music to Ethiopia in 1947. Bamzai's exaggeration notwithstanding, the story provides important diplomatic context. "The orchestra has now attained an outstanding status and is the premier band of professional jazzmen. It has toured the USSR and China, along with the folkloric ensemble, where it drew applause from packed houses." Bamzai continues, "The Folkloric ensemble and the modern jazz orchestras of the Theatre, according to Mr. Nalbandian, are complementary to each other. Both try in their own way to forward the concept modern Ethiopianism" (Bamzai, 1969 as cited by Falceto, 2011). In conversation with the writer, additionally, Seattle-based music scholar Markos Haptemichael and Yared School of Music professor Birukti Birru both admit that Nerses Nalbandian is beloved. "We love him dearly. He was [a] true Ethiopian! We named lots of things after him… roads, etc," says Haptemichael (Story, 2019). Nerses himself represented the most ideal meeting of music and diplomacy in Ethiopia, and he would remain in Addis Ababa until his death in 1977, three years after the deposition of his royal patron Emperor Selassie I. The director endured monumental socio-political transformation within Ethiopia including an attempted coup by the Imperial Bodyguard in 1960, the 30-year Ethiopia-Eritrean War, and the installation of the Marxist Derg military regime in 1974. The modern jazz heritage of Ethiopia is, nonetheless, indebted to the collaboration between Armenian music giant Nerses Nalbandian and the governing state led by Emperor Haile Selassie I and his ministry.

On The Azmari's Improvisational Talent

The perspective on Ethiopia's *Azmari* tradition further broadens the diplomatic and creative representations of jazz music in the Horn of Africa. For centuries throughout the world, the *griot* has played a vital role within the socio-political structure of rural and cosmopolitan communities. Griots are historically nomadic praise singers, storytellers, poets, historians, French troubadours, English minstrels, Celtic bards, German rhapsodes, Greek minne-singers, and the most accomplished musicians (Powne, 1968); they maintain an important albeit complex oral tradition accompanying their demonstrations with melodic sounds. Scholar and musician Francis Bebey gives some clarity about the role of the griot:

> The *griot* knows everything that is going on and he can recall events that are no longer within living memory. He is a living archive of his people's traditions. But he is above all a musician, without whom no celebration or ritual would be complete. The virtuoso talents of the griot command universal admiration. (Bebey, 1969 and 1975)

In Africa, the griot instruments vary by region and country but can include the plucked *lute*, the long-necked 21-string *kora*, the bowed Hausa fiddle *goje* (or *n'ko* in the Mandinka language), the wooden xylophonic *balafon*, the 5 or 6-string *ngoni* and the *khalam*, a Wolof banjo-precursor. These transient figures are prevalent in Northern West Africa but are present among many other ethnic groups such as the Mande, Fula, Wolof, Hausa, Dagomba, Songhai, Berber, and Arabs in the Maghreb. In his acclaimed book "In Griot Time," for example, American musician and ethnomusicologist Banning Eyre charts the world of Malian music through his encounters with

the *jelimuso*[4] family of his guitar teacher, the virtuosic Djelimady Tounkara. Herein, the *jeli* or *jali* negotiate their social position and public worth with wealthy patrons and elite dignitaries by vocalizing spur-of-the-moment flattery.

Accordingly, the *Azmari* is an acknowledged griot tradition central to Ethiopian society. The word comes from the Amharic verb *zemere* which means 'to praise.' "Azmari's reveal what the people conceal" (Asni, 2019). These solo, and sometimes duet, performing musicians are an integral element in secular contexts, and, although occasionally vilified by an older generation, they have become symbolic of mainstream Ethiopian culture. The Azmari usually plays a bowed one-string chordophone called a *masenqo* (named *rebabas* in Sudan, *wata* in Eritrea and *seese* in Somalia) but is also known to play a *krar*, a five or six-string bowl-shaped lyre popular in Ethiopia and Eritrea (named a *tanbura* in Sudan and *shareero* in Somalia). The men and women Azmaris are known to descend from pastoral cities like Gondar and Gojjam where their initial training in the artform coincides with agricultural responsibilities and social activities, and it is not uncommon to hear of their association with the ruling class. The first documented early twentieth century recording of Ethiopian music, in fact, was of an Azmari named Tessema Eshete in Berlin, Germany who later served as a minister in Emperor Lidj Iyasu's court and whose music was ceremoniously released on Buda Musiques' Ethiopiques No. 27 in 2011. Professor Wolfgang Bender at the Center for World Music remarks, "As is mentioned here elsewhere, the *azmari* have until today an ambivalent status that is iridescent between the despised street singer and the revered poet and soloist. The presence of voice and sound on a sound carrier has meant quite a rise in respectability of the musicians" (Bender, 2011: 18).

[4] Malian griot term

Similar to Tessema Eshete, Azmari's have even been known to serve the monarchy as unofficial diplomats.

What distinct similarities and differences do we encounter between the Azmari and the politically-motivated East African musician? Does the Azmari's lyrics and virtuosic playing embody the same freedoms and agency associated with jazz in the Horn explored herein? Emerging artist, composer, masenqo player and church musician Kibrom Birhane suggests in a recent interview with the author that the elements of jazz improvisation have always existed in the Azmari. He offers, "They are a jazz-like player. They are not rehearsing. Jazz was there. Even in church, we learned to create appropriate liturgy on the spot like the Azmari" (Story, 2019). Kebede's insightful article "The Azmari, Poet-Musician of Ethiopia" speaks directly to Birhane's suggestion that the Orthodox Christian Church provided a context for musical innovation and ornamentation.

> The secular azmari style in particular flourished alongside the complex style of religious music: in many cases, the secular style heavily borrowed melodic ideas and other techniques of verse improvisation from the sacred choral tradition *zema-kine* and, by a process of secularization, transformed and adopted the borrowed material into the stream of azmari art music. (1975, 48)

Political, social, and personal commentary also comprises the griot repertoire as a rule; the Azmari pulls his content from current events and observations, employing song structures familiar to the audience he seeks to entertain or, perhaps, oppose. Kebede further explains:

> In particular those azmariwoch who attended the Church schools but failed in them have always harbored strong anticlerical attitudes. In addition, secular music allowed the azmari to sing social commentary in verse on very sensitive topics (such as the misuse of power among the nobility, village scandals, priestly corruption, etc.) which would not have been otherwise publicly verbalized. (1975: 50)

Regarding improvisational technique observed by the author in Addis Ababa, Gondar and Lalibela in 2015, the Azmari is capable of using intermittent instrumental adlibs to stagger or break up a poetic stream of consciousness. The extent to which Azmari music corresponded with, engaged, and paralleled 'jazz' is a compelling query for this research.

Although beyond the scope of this thesis, advanced masenqo technique allows the Azmari to stall a punch line, delay an internally developing idea or "buy time" for any numbers of reasons. By simply using his or her virtuosity to improvise lines within the structure of a popular song, the Azmari becomes his / her own real-time editor and producer. Berlin-based scholar Dr. Timkehet Teffera describes, "One of the characteristic features of the *Azmari* songs accompanied by the *Masinqo* is that both vocal and instrumental parts mainly comprise analogous melodic and metro-rhythmic structures. All the breaks and/or gaps in the vocal part are filled with appropriate *Masinqo* parts" (Teffera, 1997). Can it be proposed that the Azmari reifies the spirit of jazz in his or her methods of spontaneous creation, and exercises a freedom of expression not unlike twentieth century African American improvisers John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Eric Dolphy, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Yusef Lateef, Randy Weston and Cannonball

Adderley? The idiomatic relationship of the Ethiopian Azmari musician with his instrument resembles historic levels of craftsmanship observed in American jazz's most revered and spirit-led soloists.

Mulatu Astatke's Ethio-Jazz

There is little that has not already been written or said about Dr. Mulatu Astatke and his importance to modern Ethiopian music. The geopolitical reimaginings of jazz outside of the American social context owes a great deal to his ingenuity. Astatke is arguably one of the most influential musicians from the entire Horn of Africa. If anyone can lay claim to inspiring an international movement in modern music, it is this esteemed Ethiopian composer, arranger, band leader and inventor of *Ethio-Jazz*. From a privileged upbringing in the South Western city of Jimma, attending private boarding school as a child, and studying aeronautical engineering and music in London and Boston, to preeminence that nearly rivals that of Nigerian activist musician Fela Kuti, Astatke distilled the remarkable nature of the Azmari and the pentatonic essence of his country's traditional sounds with the harmony, rhythm and swing of emerging 1960s styles in the U.S. Astatke surely witnessed first-hand one of the most convergent moments in the history of music including the inpouring of African, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Brazilian rhythms into the performative lexicon, and their juxtaposition with home-grown spiritual, free, modal and soul jazz experimentations, not to mention Black nationalism in all its nascent glory.

The 76-year old Astatke is celebrated by an older generation of habesha music lovers due to his recordings with renown artists on Amha Eshete's pioneering 1970s Amha Records label in Addis Ababa, and, at the same time, by a later generation of Euro-American fans and creatives

who discovered Astatke due to the 1990s release of Francis Falceto's ubiquitous *Ethiopiques* CD compilation series. Further, the inclusion of Astatke's music in the 2005 Jim Jarmusch-directed film "Broken Flowers," starring a transient Bill Murray character, put the musician on course for superstardom and the sounds of Ethio-Jazz in far-reaching locales (Falceto, 2006 and 2011; Shelemay, 2016; Teffera, 2018; May, 2018).

When asked for a definition of Ethio-Jazz, Astatke gives a range of responses but they all point to his ingenuity in filling in a gap in the lineage of modern Ethiopian music. He frequently talks about his time as a student at Trinity College in the UK when he was hard-pressed to hear sounds from his own country. "I heard other African countries' music so much in England, but I'd always say, 'Where is the Ethiopian music?' So it became my challenge," the musician admitted in 2009. Astatke then attended the famed Berklee College of Music in the late 1950s where he studied vibraphone and jazz arranging before heading to the Big Apple with his Bebop jazz and Latin jazz ensemble called the *Ethiopian Quintet*. Shelemay remarks, "The modal jazz style of Coltrane and other musicians he encountered in New York City during the 1960s must have been intensely stimulating for Mulatu, who already carried with him memories of Ethiopian secular and sacred modes" (Shelemay, 2016). Here, invigorated by the robust musical culture available on the East coast, the renowned musician says he began to prepare the innovations he would take back to Ethiopia.

> So, after I went back home we started this movement called "Ethio-jazz", which I had started in New York. New York in 1966 was very interesting – it was with me and Hugh

> Masekela and Fela [Kuti] from Nigeria. There we were in 1966, struggling and trying to put Africa in the modern concept of jazz music. I had different directions, Hugh had different directions and Fela had different directions to that music. So, it was interesting. (Red Bull, 2007)

As the first African to attend Berklee and the first Ethiopian to immerse himself into the thriving international music community in Manhattan in the 1960s, Astatke uses jazz to not only mold his own identity but to shape modern music in Ethiopia indefinitely.

Ethio-Jazz has been, for the most part, a palatable alternative to vocal-based music; it brought small group instrumentals to East Africa from America where the musicians and the musicianship are the central focus. Astatke's Ethiopian hybrid jazz music replaces the singer with melodic horn, woodwind and vibraphone as demonstrated on his acclaimed 1972 jazz-funk record "Mulatu of Ethiopia." On the song "Kulunmanqueleshi," for example, Astatke has the flute play the normally sung vocal melody. The song title translates to "Who did your eyeliner?" and is a popular traditional wedding song covered by Ethiopian vocal luminaries Tilahun Gessesse, Mahmoud Ahmed and many others.

A Intro: Vibes, Bass & Percussion

B Chorus 1: Muted Tpt & Flute

Figure 3.

In the above example, the B section melody is borrowed by Astatke from a familiar song lyric that most Ethiopians recognize immediately.

Unlike Fela Kuti, Hugh Masekela and possibly other African Jazz luminaries, however, Astatke claims he has never aspired to have his music connect to social movements. This may be attributed to his affluent background, or Ethiopia's relatively stable political and economic climate (save for 14-15 years from 1974 to 1989 when Astatke's music was largely forgotten after the Marxist Derg regime seized control of the government from Emperor Haile Selassie I). Astatke reiterates his position, "I've always said, 'leave the politics to the politicians.' It takes all kinds of professional people to build a country–my role is to develop the culture and introduce the whole world to Ethio-jazz." (Astatke, 2009).

It is the present writer's speculation that the perceived placid and harmless instrumentalism of Ethio-Jazz served both the royal absolutism of an older Emperor Selassie I before his untimely deposition, as well as the subsequent military government that distrusted and condemned critical content in sung songs. Ethiopian poets and singers have historically

employed a covert messaging in their lyrics and performance called *semena werq* (meaning "wax and gold") wherein the "wax" is the obvious meaning, the "gold" is the hidden meaning (Levine, 1965). This device has been both an indelible artistic tradition and a bane of the ruling regime's existence when used to criticize national policy and governance. When asked to comment about the censorship brought upon Ethiopian song lyrics during the Derg, Astatke rebuffs, "I still made music," Astatke says, "but it wasn't like before. You know how the communists are - choirs shouting, flags waving" (Astatke, interviewed by Tassell, 2009). It is fair game to mention that rumors circulate among Ethiopian intellectuals that Astatke enjoyed a diplomatic relationship with Emperor Haile Selassie and the ruling monarchy during the 1970s; This speculation is seldom discussed in interviews nor mentioned in academic writings on the musician. However, Astatke assumes the role of cultural ambassador helping facilitate Duke Ellington's U.S. state department visit and medal award on behalf of the Ethiopian state. Does Dr. Astatke's reluctance to associate himself with the political climate in Ethiopia during the sixties, rather, imply complicity? Does Astatke's important role in the cross-cultural encounters with legendary American artistry conflict with his down-playing the political implications in his music?

There is scant evidence supporting Astatke's association with the state during the early development of Ethio-Jazz. However, Shelemay suggests, "Mulatu's story underscores the little-explored interaction, in its positive and negative aspects, of the late-twentieth-century Ethiopian musical world with the social, political, and economic networks of jazz and other African American musical domains" (Shelemay, 2006). At a time when Ethiopia experienced dramatic cultural developments including the "golden age" of swing, the unprecedented length of the Astatke's residency in America from 1959 to 1966 and his politically-themed material before

and after the deposition of Emperor Selassie I raises interesting speculation considering his statement mentioned above. Astatke's illustrious career points to multiple dynamics at work that are not easily delineated. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note where Astatke was, in fact, using Ethic-Jazz music for social commentary.

For example, Astatke's composition "Yekatit", released as the fifth song on side A of the 1974 Ethio Jazz = የካቲት album on Amha Records, is a complex case study as its title points to one of two possibilities. The first speculation involves the first of three days of murderous terror brought upon tens of thousands of innocent Ethiopians known as Yekatit 12. On the Gregorian calendar, Yekatit 12 corresponds to February 19, 1937, the day that the local paramilitary "Blackshirts" and Fascist civilians led by Mussolini's Vicerory Rodolfo Graziani began a campaign to indiscriminately massacre nobility, intellectuals and any resistance to Italian occupation in Ethiopia during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. The initial motivation behind the *carta bianca* killings was revenge for an assassination attempt on Graziani, but turned into a merciless and methodical pogrom as well as recompense for their humiliating defeat at the Battle of Adwa. Historian Alberto Sbacchi writes, "Its army had conquered an empire, and the defeat of forty years earlier had been revenged" (Sbacchi, 1977:210). Astatke's tribute composition "Yekatit", as if to evoke the atrocities of the Italian occupation and massacre, is written in one of the darker-sounding modes in Ethiopian music. The horn melody of Astatke's tune employs an *anchihoye* pentatonic scale in A major which contains the flat second and flat sixth. The otherwise festive dance groove of "Yekatit" is tempered and offset by Astatke's chordal dissonance Wurlitzer electric piano playing on the popular original recording.

The second hypothesis alludes to the anniversary month of the Dergue revolution in 1974. "Yekatit" (or February) could have been written to commemorate the changing of the ruling authority in Ethiopia. Scholar Haptemichael offers critical speculation into how Astatke was in agreement with most of the Ethiopia nation in wanting economic reforms during the mid-seventies. "[Mulatu Astatke] did it supporting the Dergue because it was everyone's revolution. Even Tilahun had close to 500 songs supporting the Dergue. Everyone thought good times were going to come" (Story, 2019). Communist leader Mengistu Haile Mariam and his military cohorts promised to improve conditions that plagued the staid regime of an ageing monarchy and Haptemichael alleges that Astatke composed the song accordingly. To further support this allegation, Astatke is credited as Musical Advisor for the 1970s Dergue propaganda film on Ethiopian music that celebrates the revolutionary musicians, songs and lyrics created after the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie I. The BBC-sponsored film called "Under African Skies" features a Sergeant Wubeshaw Seleshi singing a patriotic military march in army fatigues with the one-time Imperial Bodyguard Band now known as the 4th Revolutionary Army Ensemble. Either way, Astatke's composition "Yekatit" might possibly contradict his ambivalence regarding politics in Ethiopia, and represent, instead, an example of Ethiopian instrumental jazz making a statement on the country's new political ideology writ large.

IV. SUDAN

Sudanese Jazz: Its Origins and Actors

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sudan was the largest country in Africa bordering Egypt in the North, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Congo, the Central African Republic in the Southwest, Chad in the West, and Libya in the Northwest. Still integrated with South Sudan, the multi-ethnic nation was 75% Muslim and home to Arabic, Nubians, Beha, Nuba, Dinka, Shuluk Zande and many other ethnic, linguistic and religious groups (Nkrumah, 2004; Eyre, 2008). Having once conquered Egypt during the rule of the Kingdom of the Nile in the 7th century BC, Sudan, in a reversal of fortune, became an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the late 1800s. During this period, British military and military band presence was copious enough to change the musical landscape (Sikainga, 2011). Sudan would experience sweeping modernization throughout its main urban centers in the 1940s and 1950s, but this would only occur after a rich legacy of brass instrumentation was established.

There is scant academic research on the origins of *Sudanese Jazz*. Generalizations are made in passing but few scholars approach the subject with keen interest and dedication. The 1960s group *Osman Alamu* is heralded as a pioneering group. Rumours of their lead singer Ibrahim Awad betraying normative "jazz" etiquette by dancing on stage are widely-disseminated but largely unsubstantiated. In the 2018 BBC Radio 4 documentary on the music of Sudan, music documentarian Yousra Elbagir touches on the explosion of music in the pre-censorship period. She states, "The music scene looked outwards and connected with the world. In its heyday between the 1950s and 70s, jazz rang out of music halls and night spots which peppered the streets of Khartoum. Later they throbbed to rock and disco" (Elbagir, 2018). The development of jazz-influenced bands has been loosely attributed to both military infrastructure within the country and neighboring musical influences. The musicianship and scholarship of

musician Juma'a Jabir[5] is commonly referenced.

> Several army and police "jazz-bands" — often a young conscript's only access to instruments — continue to fuse African styles from Kenya and Uganda with spartan funk. This "jazz" is modelled on the Kenyan Shirati Jazz band and the Luo language bands around Lake Victoria: two or three intersecting electric guitars but no horns. What foreigners would recognize as jazz, in the horn-playing sense, is found in the seminal work of Juma'a Jabir, who once taught in the Army Music Section and later became a valued session player. (Broughton, Ellingham, Trillo, 1995: 191; Jackson, 2019)

In a chapter on emancipation and other colonial legacies in his book *Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan*, historian Ahmad Alawad Sikainga gives insightful background on music origins, and he corroborates the slave soldier narrative. Here, Sikainga discusses the ex-slave soldiers whose acquired musicianship on brass band instrumentation at the turn of the century was used to express their local music traditions.

> The first Sudanese military band was created in 1897 when two infantry staff bands were sent from Half and Suakin to Cairo to receive instruction... These boys formed what came to be known as the Sudanese Frontier Band. Sudanese bands continued to receive training in Cairo until 1912 when a school of music was established in Omdurman… The

[5] According to writer Mohamed Abusabib, two of the most important scholarly works on Sudanese music are Jum'a Jabir's 1988 *Al-Musiqa al-Sudaniyya: Tarikh, Turath, Hawiyya, Naqd. Khartoum: Sharikat al-Farabi*, and Al-Fatih Al-Tahir's 1993 *Ana Omdurman: Tarikh al-Musiqa fi al-Sudan. Khartoum: al-Nashir al-Maktabi*. Juma'a Jabir is also a mid-century musician who is credited with co-founding Sudanese Jazz.

contribution of these ex-slave soldiers involved a process of modernization and indigenization. (Sikainga, 2014: 110-112)

Sikainga quotes Jama'a Jabir in his chapter and also notes, "Retired soldiers also taught music classes and formed the backbone of the orchestras that dominated the performing arts in many Sudanese towns after World War II" (Ibid). Additionally, Gerhard Kubik's 2017 *Jazz Transatlantic, Volume II: Jazz Derivatives and Developments in Twentieth-Century Africa* wonderfully explores "recastings" of international jazz history and looks closely at *Zande* musical convergences in Sudan. These resources provide revealing background on the state orchestra and brass band narratives, but the presence and proponents of jazz in Sudan is a topic that deserves more intense scrutiny by ethnographers investigating music in the Horn of Africa.

Further, the bilateral convergences of jazz music and Sudan's national religion of orthodox Islam are pronounced in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. The predominantly Muslim capital city of Cairo, just 1,000 miles north of Khartoum up the Nile, became enamoured with jazz during the Harlem Renaissance via the French-decorated pilot and musician Eugene James Bullard during his early 1920s music sojourn, as well as by other American musician transplants. By the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt under President Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein's progressive cultural mandates would become a mecca for leisure activities in cinema, literature and music. Political scientist Hisham Aidi states, "In 1958, the bassist Jamil Nasir, trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, and pianist Oscar Dennard traveled to Tangier, where a VOA relay station would broadcast Willis Conover's *Jazz Hour* to listeners behind the Iron Curtain, where they recorded an album. They then went on to Cairo." He continues, "The local jazz

scene was feeding off musical trends in the US, as American jazz artists wrote compositions in honor of Africa and Afro-Asian solidarity" (Aidi, 2018:418-419). A 1953 Ebony magazine article would announce the synergies between African American musicians in the U.S. and the strict "Moslem" way of life that many of them saw as an equalizer against racialized and oppressive conditions at home. "The article provides a window into the important connection between jazz and the spread of Islam among Black Americans from the 1940s onward — especially for those who identified with Sunni Muslim communities or the Ahmadiyya movement," a blog on "Muslims and Jazz" attests (Ahmad, 2018). African American musicians like Sahib Shihab, Lynn Hope, Ahmad Jamal, Yusef Lateef, Art Blakey, Idris Muhammad, McCoy Tyner, Ahmed Abdul-Malik, Billy Higgins and even John Coltrane and Miles Davis found solace and discipline in the conversion to Islam or appropriation of Arabic religious traditions.

> Jazz, to paraphrase Abdul Kareem, imagined a space that Islam would come to fill: Muslim prayer and dietary rules provided structure in a world suffused by drugs and alcohol; languages like Arabic and Urdu opened up the texts and cultures of other civilizations and provided a connection to a rising postcolonial world. (Aidi, 2014)

It stands to reason that these notable converts at the vanguard of jazz music and the post-war vibrancy of swing music exposed to Muslim audiences in the Middle East and North Africa created a deeply complex dissemination of American jazz amongst Islamic musicians throughout

the adjacent regions. Neighboring Sudan would not be isolated from these musical affinities nor the opportunities it provided for local innovations and political commentary.

Sharhabeel Ahmed: The King of Sudanese Jazz

Sudan is home to over 600 ethnic groups and, thusly, a multiplicity of indigenous music as well as modern and hybrid styles. The "genre-fication" of Sudanese music is beyond the focus of this thesis but the acclaimed Sudanese multi-hyphenate Sharhabeel Ahmed is widely considered the inventor of Sudanese Jazz as well as a master of *Madeeh*,[6] *Harqiba*.[7] and other vocal-centric methods. Born in Khartoum's sister city Omdurman in 1935 but raised in the capital of Kordofan Province during the Anglo-Egyptian occupation of the disjoined Northern and Southern Sudan, the young Ahmed attended colonial schools including Quranic *kuttab* grade school where he was famously adept at memorizing Islamic praise poetry. He soon exhibited an exceptional gift for creative art and studied painting, illustrating and graphic design at Khartoum's College of Fine Arts, eventually painting materials for the Sudanese Ministry of Education in Khartoum. Ahmed's commitment to music never waned and he took up the oud (a short-necked lute-type pear-shaped instrument) making his first public appearance in the late 1950s at Khartoum South Cinema Theater. Although he frequently performed on violin and other brass instruments, Ahmed chose to make guitar his medium of choice since hearing the

[6] Madeeh is a form of praising the Prophet Mohammed in song.

[7] Haqiba is a predominantly vocal art in which the musicians accompany the lead singer using few instruments. Popular in the urban centres of Sudan, it was the music of weddings, family gatherings and wild impromptu parties, and drew inspiration from indigenous Sudanese and other African musical traditions in which backing singers clapped along rhythmically and the audience joined in both song and dance. According to musician and author Juma'a Jabir, the name haqiba was coined in the 1950s when Ahmed Mohamed Salih designed a special radio program to broadcast songs of this type (Abusabib citing Jabir 1988: 28 – 29).

instrument for the first time performed by a local musician in 1947. Ahmed, who says he is inspired by legendary singers Abdul-Karim Karouma and Omar Al-Banna, has traveled the world performing for audiences in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Tunisia, Chad, Somalia, the Arabian Gulf and before the Emperor Haile Selassie I in Ethiopia. (Eyre, 2008; Nkrumah, 2011; Sikainga, 2011)

The post-World War II era was a time of optimism for Sharhabeel Ahmed. Although Sudan earned its right to self-governance from the Anglo-Egyptian administration, the career of the composer, band leader, singer, and storyteller coincided with the Westernization of Sudanese repertoire via military bands, American pop culture and the introduction of Euro-American instruments during the transitional decades. Africanist Historian Ahmad Sikainga reminds us that, "Sudanese members of military bands can be regarded as the first professional musicians, taking the lead in the process of modernization and indigenization" (Sikainga, 2011). Violin, trumpet, saxophone, trombone, piano, accordion, tabla, bongo, tabla, oud, guitar and qanun were gradually incorporated into Sudanese music from the 1930s through the 1950s. "Introduced genres have had a profound effect on modern Sudanese music, especially British brass military bands, which attracted many young recruits who carried the model to recreational music. The result was a kind of dance music referred to as jazz, though unrelated to the American style of jazz, similar to analogous styles throughout East Africa" (Gamal, 2004; Sudanese Wikipedia, 2019). Sikainga describes the effects of Ahmed's music on the people of Sudan and how *jazz* became synonymous with liberated urban realities:

During this period, the Sudanese public was also exposed to African American jazz and

> rhythm and blues singers such as Ray Charles, Harry Belafonte and James Brown and the reggae star, Jimmy Cliff. Their influences led to the emergence of so-called jazz bands in the Sudan, which relied heavily on electric instruments, particularly the guitar, which came to northern Sudan from Congo, via southern Sudan. Jazz bands introduced a new, important element in Sudanese music, namely stage dancing and the participation of audiences. One of the pioneers of this style was Sharhabil Ahmad, who is considered today as the doyen of 'Sudanese jazz'. His successors included the members of Firqat Jazz al-Dium, which was founded in the Khartoum Deims by Omar Abdu, a Sudanese of West African origin, and his siblings, who sang in both local Sudanese Arabic and Hausa language. (Sikainga, 2011)

Ahmed enlisted Omdurman-based friends Ali Nur Elgalil Farghali, Kamal Hussain, Mahadi Ali, Hassan Sirougy and Ahmed Dawood to create the group *Sharhabeel and His Band*. With modern, rhythm-heavy soul, the group employed electric guitars, double bass, and brass instruments for the first time to much success and admiration. Pan-African journalist Gamal Nkrumah in an online piece on the singer also relates, "Sharhabeel launched a new genre of Sudanese song, melding jazz vocals with a big band sound, and Sharhabeel and his band became Khartoum's most sought after ensemble. It was a popularity that mushroomed" (Nkrumah, 2004). The music of the talented Ahmed may have been called *jazz*, but it sounds similar to hybrid 1960s surf rock & roll sung in Arabic and English, symbolizing a complex appropriation of two encroaching American artforms in Sudan at the time. Further, Yousra Elbagir asserts, "The music scene looked outwards and connected with the world. In its heyday between the 1950s

and the 1970s, jazz rang out of music halls and night spots which peppered the streets of Khartoum. Later they throbbed to rock and disco" (Elbagir, 2018). Nevertheless, Ahmed quickly became known as the Sudanese King of Jazz in Sudan for developing an expansively performative music.

The incorporation of politics into Ahmed's music is not surprising. Here we encounter the gradual melding of a new Sudanese jazz into a socially-conscious artform beyond its standard musical language. Similar to activist jazz musicians Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Max Roach, Charles Mingus and John Coltrane who would concern themselves with the civil rights movement and social justice issues concerning Blacks in America, Ahmed would first bemoan colonization by British-backed forces and, ultimately, the oppressive plight of Sudanese people in the hands of military-based leadership. Post-independence Sudan experienced a round robin of Islamicized regime changes after 1956 that initially afforded freedoms to professional musicians but would eventually forbid general entertainment and public recreation. Label owner and historian Vik Sohonie reports, "Colonial legacies that centred power in Khartoum and an economy tampered with by external powers have condemned Sudan to political dysfunction, with highs and lows that affected the arts" (Sohonie, 2018). Sohonie's informants describe a Sudan where music heard in public was a common occurrence in the 1970s and early 80s. However, starting with the installment of Shari'a law by President Nimayri in 1983, musicians like Ahmed began to tailor their lyrics to address the imposing of restrictions on their creativity and collective freedoms.

Kamal Keila The Ambassador

The “Golden Age” of music in Sudan formed under the national leadership of a spirited military officer of Nubian heritage Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Numayrī. Raised by a postman in the Wad Nubawi district of Omdurman, near Khartoum, the soccer enthusiast and pro-Arab al-Numayrī would develop his early socialist ideology in Koranic, state and war school programs (Eyre, 2008; Nkrumah, 2011; Sikainga, 2011). He graduated from Sudan Military College in 1952 and lead garrisons against rebel insurgencies in South Sudan before attending and receiving a Master of Military Science degree from a U.S. Army Command College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in the mid-sixties. Having received his official military training and, it could be argued, his U.S. credentials, al-Numayrī’s would orchestrate the famous 1969 coup, overthrowing the civilian regime of National Union Party leader and Sudanese prime minister Ismāʿīl al-Azharī. Although accused of gross human rights abuses during his acquired rule, al-Numayrī built his public platform on the promise that "ordinary Sudanese could build their nation anew" and he, in fact, brought temporary peace and morale to the divided nation according to British historian Alex de Waal (de Waal as cited by Joffe, 2009). During this period of relative prosperity, al-Numayrī recognized and exploited the power of the arts, especially the rising popularity of Sudanese jazz, before he fomented renewed conflict between the North and South by installing shari’a law (including a ceremonial emptying of liquor worth $5m into the Nile), ending the heyday of music, dance and nightlife in Sudan in 1983 (Sikainga, 2017).

Musician and attorney Kamal Keila met President Al-Numayrī well after Sudanese Jazz had come to prominence in the Urban centers of Khartoum and Omdurman. Born in Kassala, a town close to the Eritrean border in the East of Sudan, Keila moved to Khartoum in the 1960s to go to college and soak up the cultural vibrancy of post-independence Sudan. There, he became

enthralled by the guitar technique of the elder Sharhabeel Ahmed and the sensational hybrid music sounds played in the Westernized clubs. "It was during this brief period of creative exploration and freedom that Keila started to play music," writer Grenrock reminds us. (Habibi Funk, 2017). After attending law school in Cairo, Egypt, Keila was inspired to form bands in Juba where he employed the virtuosic Congolese guitarist transplants in the South, and he began to make a name for himself throughout the country with dance moves that rivaled the iconic James Brown and political lyrics that addressed Sudanese social justice and national unity. Initially communist-leaning, Al-Numayrī galvanized his early support base through strategic and diplomatic alliances with musicians like Keila who embodied the aspirations enjoyed at the time. "President Gaafar Nimery asked Keila to accompany him to 25 different African countries, where he was a huge hit" (Keila, 2018). Songs like "Muslims and Christians," "African Unity" and "Agricultural Revolution" were written and performed by Keila as a plea to the government to address the disparate needs of his Sudanese people but it did not prevent despots like Al-Numayrī and, later, Omar al-Bashir from leveraging the toleration that state and music collaborations invoke (Habibi Funk, 2017).

Jazz, Jazz, Jazz!

Jannis Stürtz, the Berlin-based music imprint *Habibi Funk*'s co-founder, travels throughout the Middle East and North Africa territories looking for vintage vinyl and cassettes that have a unique trajectory. Launched in 2012, the reissue label has released eight albums to date that feature "Arabic funk, jazz and other organic sounds" and include some of the most extensive liner notes, photos and interviews available to collectors. (Stürtz, 2018). Music

historian Stürtz believes that telling the stories of the musicians “is something that is equally as important to us as the music.” The label has released obscure classics from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanese, mix tapes and compilations, and the 3-color album cover artwork characteristically consists of a black and white photo and Arabic text against a simple white background. Hence, when he noticed in 2014 that an eBay auction for an original copy of the “Jazz, Jazz, Jazz” album by 1970s Sudanese group The Scorpions rose to a $1,000 bid, it peaked his curiosity. After listening to samples of the 1980 album and doing research on the genre-bending group, Stürtz realized that The Scorpions were virtually unknown outside of Sudanese circles and arranged a meeting with one of the founding members named Amir Sax. (Illado, 2018; Sikainga, 2011)

Amir Sax shared stories and photos about the band, the lively nightlife in Khartoum throughout the 1970s, and the demise of the scene due to the imposition of Shari’a law in 1983. Stürtz learned that the death knell for music, however, was the 1989 coup led by Colonel Omar Hassan Al-Bashir aided by the National Islamic Front (NIF) against the government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. General Al Bashir installed himself as President, Prime Minister, Chief of State and Chief of the Armed Forces, and he created the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (RCC) in conjunction with the NIF to govern the Sudanese state. Although the transfer of power was, according to Al-Bashir, with the expressed intention of ending the civil war between the Northern and Southern regions, his upstart military junta eventually purged over seventy thousand high and low ranking members of the army, police and government administration (Nkrumah, 2011). It also outlawed political parties, trade unions, "non-religious" institutions and all forms of artistic performance and social protest. Stürtz states,

"A number of musicians faced prosecution, most of the time for their political views; some left Sudan for good. Music never completely vanished from public life and even the regime kept selected artists close... For a majority of those bands affiliated to the jazz scene life ...making ends became a lot harder" (Stürtz, 2018). It was a difficult period for musicians, especially for those who were unafraid of voicing their opinions about the fraught political climate and against the current regime. Bandcamp reviewer Dean Van Nguyen writes, "Political instability in Sudan hindered The Scorpions throughout the 1980s and they eventually dissolved" (Nguyen, 2018).

Notwithstanding, The Scorpions "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz" album featuring vocalist Seif Abu Bakr is a revelation. As evidenced by the thrice repeated title emphasis alone, the album makes a bold play to evoke the spirited Khartoum scene inaugurated by Sharhabeel Ahmed in the 1950s and 1960s. One could say that The Scorpions stake their claim among the Sudanese Jazz pantheon. However, Van Nguyen points out, "To Western ears, the title *Jazz, Jazz, Jazz* will seem something of a red herring. This is music more pop-structured than typical jazz with the nine blood-raw recordings powered by an engine of funky organ work and upbeat guitar lines" (Van Nguyen, 2018). Musicians of the Horn like The Scorpions obviously saw the invocation of jazz as a blank canvas and apt catch-all for expressing whatever music came natural for them within the context of Sudan's unpredictable political climate.

One listen to the album and the buoyancy of the music that Van Nguyen describes becomes apparent. The songs suggest older Sudanese styles as well as music of neighboring countries and popular African American dance tunes. The first instrumental tracks on the album, "Seira Music" and the 6/4 "Shaikan Music," feature plaintive tenor saxophone over a shuffle backbeat and an almost psychedelic disposition. There are moments when the tunes sound like

The Meters or The MG's raised on home grown Sudanese staples beef *gorassa, ful, kisra* flatbread, and black tea. "Saat Al Farah" has a funky drum groove reminiscent of a faster version of Dennis Edwards' 1984 "Don't Look Any Further" (the unmistakable sample to Eric B. and Rakim's classic hip hop masterpiece "Paid In Full"). One of the highlights of the album, "Saat Al Farah," which translates to "moment of happiness" adds powerful trumpet to the horn melody along with the vocals of Bakr. "Farrah Galbi Aljadeed" is a four-on-the-floor Motown stomp, and "Kaif Halo" (Arabic for "How is he doing?") sounds incredibly similar to an Ethiopian Gurage rhythm popularized by Mahmoud Ahmed with a repetitive horn riff alternating with a stately bridge. The Somalian disco feel of "Forssa Saeeda" is oddly familiar, but "Nile Wave" clearly resembles the O'jays 1975 r&b hit "Got to Give the People What They Want." The song "Azzah Music" is a take on Ethiopian *tizita*[8] popularly sung by vocal titans Tilahun Gessesse and Muluken Melesse. The last two tracks, the Congolese rumba "Bride of Afrika" featuring vocalist Osman Zeeto and the soul ballad "Hilwa Ya Amoora" are pleasant anomalies. Stürtz, who re-issued the record in 2018 as his ninth Habibi Funk release, adds, "With its eclectic influences, it birthed a one-of-a-kind new mixture and serves as a blueprint for what we are looking for when we release music on Habibi Funk" (Stürtz, 2018). Nonetheless, The Scorpions "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz" is widely acknowledged as "one of the key releases from Sudan's jazz scene" (Tambini, 2018). It commemorates the richness of the region's musical hybridization, yet challenges and broadens our perceived notions of jazz.

The Last King of Nubia

[8] Tizita (sometimes spelled tezeta) means nostalgia or longing in Amharic, the state language of Ethiopia.

In the online obituary on the web news magazine *SouthWorld.net*, it states that the beloved vocalist, musician and activist Mohammed Osman Hassan Salih Wardi had extensive training as an educator that would blossom into a life of superstardom as one of the Nilotic ambassadors of music for the Northeast African region and beyond. Born in 1932 under the Anglo-Egyptian administration, Wardi is not only venerated in Sudanese music as a superstar, he is eulogized for his more humanistic and modest contributions. It reads, "After a short stint as music teacher, he decided to dedicate his whole life to music in 1957. He moved to Khartoum and started working at Radio Omdurman. The radio, founded by the British and named after a famous victory of the colonial troops, was changing into a medium for pluralism and independence. Wardi became the voice of the station" (SouthWorld, 2018). This pedagogue-turned-artist fulfilled upon a life-long passion and, as fate would have it, Wardi would record over 300 songs on numerous vinyl 45s and LPs. The inclusion of the legendary Wardi in this thesis underlines the common melding of virtuosic talent with passionate social responsibility and protest exhibited in many of the enclosed case studies.

When speaking of the late twentieth century Sudanese music icon Mohammed Wardi, it is important to acknowledge his full-fledged musicianship. Agreed, he possesses one of the purist, most pleading, and tradition-reminiscent voices in the entire African and Arab world; he makes his vocal tone soar like an eagle over a live band as exceptionally as his contemporaries Sudanese Sayed Khalifa, Syrian Egyptian Farid El Atrash, Ethiopian Tilahun Gessesse, and Lebanese Wadih El Safi. But Wardi was beyond competent as an instrumentalist; he exhibited transcendent mastery (*ostād*) on anything he touched. Wardi was a virtuosic musician—as distinct from Gilbert Rouget's definitions of musicant or musicated—and should be branded an

accomplished player as he is a chanteur. A musicant is a term coined by the late French ethnomusicologist Rouget, in his seminal 1985 book *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, as an episodic music-maker or "adept." The *musicated* are, on the other hand, at the effect of the music or in a "trance" state (Rouget, 1985: 103, 106). Related to the book's theme that explores agency in the "possession" phenomenon, Wardi is an adept and his audiences were often entranced by him. The response to his concerts bordered on exultation. Further, he was a skilled oud technician. His childhood was filled with intimate observances of and moments with the short-necked middle-eastern lyre, and the *tambur*, and Wardi played many solo performances during his early years accompanying himself beautifully.

According to the Los Angeles-based musician Mekail Bakhit, interviewed by the author of this thesis for a 2018 paper entitled "Ecstasy in Addis" (which describes the trance-like atmosphere of one of his 1994 Addis Ababa stadium concerts), the rousing event featuring his former employer and friend came during a prolific time for the singer. The outspoken Wardi, musician Bakhit and a number of the singer's close circle were recording songs while exiled in Egypt at the time of the booking. The Sudanese superstar's disapproval of the government was not a secret during this time and Wardi was no stranger to political controversy. He embraced an unorthodox view that the Sudanese nation state was a maternal construct he simply called a "woman," and he was outwardly critical of his country's extensive state repression and censorship against "her." Bakhit squarely says that Wardi was "anti-government" and "jailed for a long time" for his musical and vocal protests against the state (Bakhit, interviewed by Story, 2018). "The Sudanese singer was jailed for 18 months over hailing the revolution carried out by

the communist officer Hashem Atta in 1971 and was crushed after 72 hours by president Jaafar al [Nimeiry] who put the artists supporting his foes in prison" (Wardi, 2002). Wardi's activism enlarged his public persona and, thus, created urgent excitement around his appearances and recordings. For example, Wardi's most popular songs were critical of his country's political stance on a number of policies and his first musical success came with a single deploring CIA complicity in the assassination of Congolese politician Patrice Lumumba in 1960. Author Peter Verney writes, "His only protection is the tremendous respect his is accorded by the Sudanese people. Less famous musicians do not enjoy the same level of protection" (Verney, 1998).

The political views of some of the band members, including Muslim musician Bakhit, were also not well-received by the Nimiery, Dhahab, Al-Mahdi nor Al-Bashir governments. "The singers [like Wardi, Sayed Khalifa, Mostafa Sayed Ahmed and Sharhabeel] had proven that they could perform under difficult circumstances and dictatorships. But after Islamists seized power in the third coup d'etat in Sudan's history in 1989, attacks on music concerts and secular cultural life reached their climax" (Osman, 2012). For Wardi, Egypt was homebase for decades, but in the early 2000s, he made a celebrated return to Sudan and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Khartoum before succumbing to renal failure in 2012. Musician Bakhit spoke as if the recounting of Wardi memories was therapeutic and stated that "I remember Wardi and the many concerts we performed as if it was yesterday" (Story, 2018).

V. SOMALIA

Modern Somalia's rich history of modern music, folkloric songs, pentatonic modes and

poetry is juxtaposed with national conflict narratives leading into the 1900s. From 1899 to 1920, Sufi religious leader, poet and icon of Pan-Somalism Mohamed Abdullah Hassan (also known as Sayyid Mohamed) led the *Somali Dervish Movement*, a heavily armed, inter-clan resistance that confronted colonization by the British administration (aided by Menelik II's Ethiopian Empire). Dressed in white Turbans and traveling on horseback, Hassan with his military forces sought to create a multi-clan nationalist liberation movement with the help of an elder council of Islamic and clan leaders called *Khususi*. Eventually suffering devastating defeats in the hands of the shrewd and mighty British military in 1904 and 1920, Hassan and the Dervish soldiers would find consolation in the morale-boosting Somali music and folklore dance called *dhaanto*.

Dhaanto could be considered the first major form of modern Somali music with its resurgence in the mid-1930s when Somaliland was under the British Somaliland administration. The founding of the Haji Bal Bal Dance Troupe during this period led to renewed interest in the artform. Somali-British musician and singer-songwriter Aar Maanta says, "It has been noted that in early 1930′s there was a Dance Troupe called Haji Bal Bal, which shuttled between Erigabo and Jijiga, performing Xeer-Dhaanto. This was the earliest form of performing arts which apparently helped transform rural folklore dance and song into modern urban Somali music and performing arts" (Maanta, 2016). Mainly used for weddings and family gatherings, dhaanto was gradually obscured in the 1940s by a new style created by singer and songwriter Abdi Sinimo.

Balwo or Belwo, a style of poetry and music that deals with calamity, contributed to Sinimo's rise to fame at a time when *Radio Kudu* the first Somalian radio station to air popular Somali music, started broadcasting in English, Somali and Arabic in 1943. The Hargeisa-based Radio Kudu changed its name to *Radio Somali* and supported Balwo while ushering in a string of

new styles. Balwo led to the more controversial *Heelo* style of Somali music, and Heelo led to the *kaban*-driven *Qaraami* style.[9] These music innovations occurred during a prolonged period of political tug-o-war with Britain and Ethiopia that threatened Somalia's sovereignty under liberation of the Somali state. Horn of Africa scholar Ioan Lewis maintains, "Modern Somali nationalism really got going immediately after the second World War when the whole horn of Africa virtually was under British military administration." He continues, "[The] two [nationalist] movements, the one in the North and the one in the South associated with the Somali youth league got together and sought to form a unitary state at independence in 1960, which is what happened" (Lewis, 2008).

After a coup d'etat by Mohamed Sida Barre and his Supreme Revolutionary Council in 1969, music fell under state control and only a small amount of music was approved for broadcast. The police, the army and other government institutions oversaw the production of modern music during this period and musicians began to take flight by 1991 for refuge in more promising and conducive environments. Nevertheless, leading into the 1991 Civil War that ravaged the country, the guitar, sax, keyboard and drums replaced traditional instruments such as *nasaro* (high ritual drum), *madhuube* (thumb piano), *fuugwo* (trumpet) *shareero* (lute), *muufe* (horn), and *seese* (one-chord violin). The transformation of traditional music during the 50-year period of development in Somalia witnessed the integration of diverse styles such as *maqam* (Arabic), *taarab* (East African), funk, afrobeat, reggae and jazz.

Maryan Mursal: The Resilient Voice of Somali Jazz

[9] Kaban is the Somalian name for oud. Notable 1950s kaban players include Abdullahi Qarshe, Ali Feiruz and Mohamed Nahari.

Pioneering Somalian vocalist and composer Maryan Mursal was born in 1950 and grew up in the capital city of Mogadishu during Britain's new protectorate occupation after World War II. Raised in a traditional Muslim family as one of four daughters, Mursal was forbidden to sing as she witnessed European settler occupation, political restructuring and rapid urbanization in her country. In 1960, The Republic of Somalia celebrated its independence and Mursal yearned to perform and express the rare moments of liberation afforded Somali citizens. When asked about her burning desire to go against the Islamic code of ethics in a 2015 interview, she said, "Music is good. It is not good that some people try to stop the music. Most Somalis like enjoying themselves, dancing and singing" (Music in Africa, 2015). Shortly thereafter in 1969, Ethiopian-born Major General Jaalle Mohamed Siad Barre took control of the government after a successful *coup d'etat* against the Somali Republic, ousting then interim President Sheikh Mukhtar Mohamed Hussein. Mursal, determined to share her talents, began performing in nightclubs to mixed reviews and establishing herself as a teenaged musical force to be reckoned with. While Barre began nationalizing banks, insurance companies, oil companies and farm industries in what he would call "scientific socialism," Mursal became known for breaking the gender barrier with her huge voice, maverick spirit and fearlessness on stage. "I was always the first woman. I was the first woman singing Somali jazz, I was the first star, and I was the first to drive a taxi! I was the first to drive a lorry, and now I'm the first woman from Somalia to have an international record" (de Blank, 2005). Here, as discussed in other examples, Mursal self-identifies with the term *jazz* in reference to her aspirational and nonconformist pursuits which address issues of gender suppression and inequality. "I want to show Somalis that women can be anything they want, even taxi drivers," she concludes.

In the 1980s, Real World recording artist Maryan Mursal combined African, Arab and Western musical elements together, forming a politicized iteration now known as *Somali Jazz*. Today, Mursal still uses her music as a platform for her defiance against tyranny in Somalia. "We as artists are responsible if something wrong is taking place in our society. It's very important for us to speak up, even though we may have to do it with a double tongue. We have to speak out for our people." However, she was an extension of a growing music scene and musical lineage in Mogadishu that incorporated foreign styles and instruments with Somali tradition. Supergroup Waabeeri was Mursal's first training ground. Bands such as Waabeeri, Shareero Band, Bakaka, Gor-Gor Band, Somaali Jazz, Horseed, and others were with her at the vanguard of the new musical innovations in the capital city, however, decades of political challenges at the beginning of the twentieth century laid the foundation for their creativity.

The National Theatre, Swinging Mogadishu and The Golden Age of Somali Music

The nomadic and clan-based Somali society is largely centered around the singular act of poetry set to music either as chant (melodic but not rhythmic) or as song (melodic and rhythmic). With 30 known genres, this oral tradition conveys heartfelt sentiment, ideas and social discourse among the pastoral Somalian people. "Among its other functions, it is employed as a running commentary on the latest news, a lobbying pressure device for social and political debates, a record of historical events, a revered form of aesthetic enjoyment, and an expression of deep feelings about love" (Johnson, 1996). The poet in Somali tradition is a publicly venerated "griot" figure with popularity correlate to his skill level. He is entrusted with engaging the aspirations and basic moral needs of the people at large. Afrax noted that "Poets and playwrights

were instrumental in mobilizing the Somali nation with lines such as these by Yuusuf Xaaji Aadan: "Hadhuub nin sitoo hashiisa irmaan 'Ha maalin,' la leeyahaan ahay." (Translation: "I am like a man who, carrying a pail, is told not to milk his own milch camel" (Afrax as cited in Kapteijns, 1995:37). Although song forms existed, Somali was deeply loyal and reverent to its "nation of poets;" that is, until the 1960s when musical theater culture took flight, and *muusiko* replaced poetry as the new popular expression.

After the coup d'etat in 1969 that unseated Prime Minister Abdirashid Ali Sharmake and the civilian government, theatrical arts became upstart President Siad Barre's means of engendering a new modern and Socialist vision of Somalia that renounced clan divisions. As a gift from Chairman Mao Zedung of the Communist Party of China, the National Theatre in Mogadishu opened in 1967 and the ambitious Somali leader sanctioned theatre companies, known as "bands" to perform in the space. "We should note that from the mid-1960s to the end of the eighties, the theatre or full-length plays… with music accompaniment [were] a major component… [and] had taken precedence as the leading form of cultural expression in modern Somali society, a role previously played by the poetry in Somali traditional society" (Afrax, 2017). Music-centric productions soon gained popularity and replaced poetry by addressing contemporary social and political issues and stoking the excitement and anticipation of national independence. Playwrights constructed drama to voice their concerns with the rapid cosmopolitanism, dysfunctional governance and shameful rural progress over exciting modern Somali sounds by working groups such as Ali Feiruz, Abdullahi Qarshe, Magool, Maryam Mursal, Hassan Sheikh Mumin, Halgan, Abdi Ali (Bacalwaan), Horseed, Onkod, Iftin, Somaali Jazz and Waabeeri. The National Theater would be destroyed at the beginning of the Civil War

in 1991, but not before becoming a home to a golden age of propulsive and vibrant music that was played throughout the city known as the "white pearl of the Indian Ocean." Exiled Somalian polyglot scholar and novelist Maxamed Daahir Afrax affirms, "If the decade of 1960s is referred to as swinging sixties in London and Britain, due to the youth-led cultural revolution, an interesting parallel may be found in the Mogadishu of the seventies, a period in which the Somali capital can safely be described as *swinging* Mogadishu (author's italics); not only because of the unparalleled music boom of the time, but also for the uniquely spirited cultural life in the fast urbanizing capital city" (Afrax, 2017).

The Autonomous Dur-Dur Band

Three recent vinyl releases have celebrated the music and history of Somalia's 1980s funky disco ensemble, Dur Dur Band. First, cassette collector Brian Shimkovitz's Awesome Tapes From Africa imprint pressed up the 10-song 2013 *Dur-Dur Band Volume 5* album reissue which put Somali popular music back on the radar of Western dance DJs and audiences all over the world. Second, the *Sweet As Broken Dates: Lost Somali Tapes From The Horn of Africa* compilation retrospective released in 2017 on historian Vik Sohonie's Ostinato record label contains two classic Dur-Dur cuts among its Grammy Award-nominated, 15-track double vinyl format and extensive liner notes. And in 2018, Berlin-based Analog Africa record label founder and DJ Sami Ben Rajeb's licensed and distributed an 18-song, triple LP reissue titled *Dur Dur of Somalia - Volume 1, Volume 2 & Previously Unreleased Tracks*, a third cassette classic that was almost destroyed by neglect. Each of the Dur-Dur releases showcases the band's tight and syncopated sound while giving historical sonic perspective of pre-civil war Mogadishu, a time of migration of Somalian citizens from rural to urban centers in search of employment, modern

amenities, literacy and leisure. What sets the band apart is not the one-keyboard electronic style popularized by artists throughout the Maghreb and sub-Saharan; at the time, Dur Dur's self-sufficient musical abilities reached far beyond traditional music and local style limitations, as they performed their live instruments to ecstatic crowds in the National Theatre, on the famously repurposed *Timo-Cadde* basketball court, and at several dance clubs in Mogadishu.

> The idea was to globalize our cultural music. We were just trying to reach a wide audience. We were trying to address the music we were listening to — that the rest of the world was listening to — Michael Jackson, Lionel Ritchie. Those were the ones that captured our attention," says founder Abdinur Dadjir. (2017)

The 7 to 8-piece band, consisting of trumpet, saxophone, keyboards, guitar, bass guitar, drum set, and percussion, would back well-loved vocalists and capture their soulful live performances and studio sessions on cassette as proof of their timeless and groundbreaking moment in Somalian modern history.

Dur-Dur achieved fame during the decade immediately before the full-blown civil war in Somalia. Their heyday came dangerously close to 1988 "when Somalia's military dictator Siad Barre responded with air strikes to the Somaliland region... and targeted Radio Hargeisa in Somaliland's capital city to prevent any kind of central communication system that could organise a resistance" (Bhatch, 2018). In a vibrant music scene that ran parallel to a steadily disintegrating social climate, increasing government surveillance, dangerous military maneuvers, the young Dur Dur band enjoyed hard-won artistic freedoms. Veteran musicians including

Balwo inventor Cabdi Sinimo, the Father of Somali music Abdullahi Qarshe, Hargeisa-based *kaban* master Ali Feiruz, and the first lady of Somali jazz Maryan Mursal had already blazed a trail for upstart bands like Dur Dur. However, Dur-Dur would develop a distinct style due to their resilience in an alternating and competitive Mogadishu hotel and club scene among iconic bands Shareero, Iftin and Somaali Jaaz. Keyboardist Mohamed Maalow Nuur shares:

> Somali Jaaz (the band of Maryan Mursal, also attached to Waaberi/Government) played in Jubba Hotel on Friday nights and Al-Uruba Hotel. When Somali Jaaz stopped playing at Jubba, Dur Dur would replace them. On Saturday, Iftin would play at Jubba and Lido nightclub. Sharero played at Jazira hotel. (Nuur interviewed by Sheikholeslami, 2016, in liner notes, 2017)

He continues, "At the end of the eighties it was Iftin, Dur Dur and a band called Tandar, also known as 'Funkey Somalia' ...in the nightclub of Hotel Talaxa" (Nuur as interviewed by Sheikholeslami, 2016, in liner notes, 2017). Dur Dur Band thrived in a politically challenging yet musically-satiated period in Somalian modern history.

This present research's inclusion of Dur Dur Band stems from their seasoned approach to the congruence of diverse styles apparent in the available recordings; the group's original music transcends clichéd disco part-writing and arrives at a uniquely expressive whole. "Dur-Dur Band were one of the leaders of Mogadishu's musical community, fusing elements of traditional Somali music with Western jazz and pop vibes and adding in a dash of Middle Eastern flava" (Louche, 2012). Whereas *Somaali Jaaz* might cover Bill Withers' 1971 hit "Ain't No Sunshine"

adding catchy Somali melodic embellishments, or the funky *Iftin Band* might perform extended "vamps" featuring an occasional screaming reed organ solo, Dur-Dur dazzles with intricate original compositions and polished vocal arrangements. The jazzy "Garsore Waah Ilaah" featuring well-placed horn stabs and enticing lead vocals by Sahra Dahwo, and the rhythmic 6/4 gallop of "Fagfagley" featuring background call-and-response chants, put Dur Dur in a league of their own according to this writer. And there is simply no denying "Dholey" with its loping, reggae-inspired pulse punctuated by plaintive lead vocal and an alternating infectious unison horn and keyboard line.

Further, Dur Dur Band is a unique case study due to their brave insistence on remaining apolitical amongst other state-sanctioned bands. General Siad Barre did everything in his power to nationalize Somalia's music industry including prohibiting record companies to release product to the pubic and propagandizing the music of Shareero, Iftin, and Waaberi Bands for his clan-averse policies (Sohonie, 2017).

> Dur-Dur Band, a so-called "private band" not beholden to government pressure to sing about political topics and disinterested in producing subversive messages, practiced a love- and culture-oriented lyricism.
> Government-sponsored bands like those of the military and the police forces, as well as many of the well-known folk musicians, made songs chiefly political and patriotic in nature. (Anon, 2013)

The National Theater and its rotation of music groups may have been commandeered by Barre's military, but Dur Dur founder Adbinur Daljir and his cohorts extended the "swinging sixties" into the "disco eighties" while remaining loyal to their own autonomous development and discipline as a band. Sadly, in the turbulent early 1990s, members of Dur-Dur Band would disband and disperse seeking asylum in a host of foreign countries.

VI. ERITREA

Eritrea is a unique case study in the twentieth century. Tracing the development of modern Eritrean music exposes complex political narratives and, frequently, parallel musician and music-related influences with Ethiopia, its adjoined and oppressive neighbor in the South. The name of the country, which comes from the Greek word *erythros* or *Erythræan Sea* for "Red Sea," is a contrivance credited to Italy when it seized the coastal region after the death of Emperor Yohannes IV in 1889 brought temporary disorder to the ruling modern state of Ethiopia. Horn of Africa specialist Dr. Tekeste Negash writes, "Eritrea enjoyed a special status as Italy's first African colony" (Negash, 2004). After the allies defeated Italy in World War II and following a temporary British administration, Ethiopia would re-annex the region and assert heavy-handed political, social and cultural demands upon the country. Accordingly, scholar Jordon Gebre-Mehdin states, "Emperor Haile Selassie and [the] dictatorial regime of Mengistu also took 'strategic resources' as one factor in their determined policy to hold on to Eritrea" (Doornbos, Cliffe, Ahmed, Markakis, 1992). Eritrea's push against Ethiopian control, however, would define its trajectory as a nation state. Africanist Dr. Dirar summarizes, "The root causes of the conflict include contested identity, history, processes of state formation, the claims and

counterclaims within various mythologies and master narratives and their construction and deconstruction” (Dirar as cited in Mengisteab and Yohannes, 2005; Bereketeab, 2007; Iyob, 1995; Gebre-Medhin, 1989).

Eritrea defeated Ethiopian armed forces in 1991 with the help of the *TPLF* but its *de facto* liberation, however, came in 1993 under the control of the *Eritrean People's Liberation Front*, described as a secessionist political movement that successfully fought a 30-year war for the establishment of an independent Eritrea.[10] Led by President Isaias Afwerki, the patriarchal one-party government, whose “ideology fuses Eritrean nationalism with populist Marxism” (Shinn, 2013), presides over a multi-ethnic state of roughly nine groups that share much in common, if not overlap, with the Ethiopian music universe. Correspondingly, an online music review asserts that, “In the 1970s, Eritrean popular music grew more similar to Ethiopian music, in its Jazz-based style” (Wolel, 2008). The political struggles and encounters with Ethiopia have helped shape the values, resolve and creative output of the Eritrean musician, lyricist and songwriter.

Ateweberhan Segid and Songs of Resistance

World War II ended in 1941 and the Axis' Fascist-occupied territories were quickly confiscated by the Allies. Britain assumed Italy's former colonies in Africa and this certainly included the coastal nation of Eritrea. With the U.S. aggressively interested in the communications potential of this territory, London consulted the United Nations who, in turn,

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[10] Established on 18 February 1975, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is considered the most powerful of the armed liberation movements in Ethiopia and came to power in 1991 through the founding of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front after a 16-year struggle against the Marxist Derg regime.

dispatched a commission in 1950 to find out first-hand what Eritreans wanted to do. U.N. Commissioner to Eritrea, Eduardo Anze Matienzo of Bolivia, went to Asmara and received an "earful"; He discovered that the Eritrean people, by and large, wanted secession, and were no happier under a well-meaning British administration than they were with hegemonic Italian occupation since the 1880s, nor ever would be under portending Ethiopian annexation. However, despite the consensus of discontent, it was determined by the U.N. in October 1951 that the country preferred Ethiopian incorporation, and a March 1962 vote by an Assembly of 68 Muslim and Christian representatives confirmed likewise. This U.N.-backed resolution couldn't have been farther from the realities on the ground and the official 1952 constitutional amendment stoked a resistance movement in Eritrea that would last into the 1990s.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, even musicians joined the ranks of the liberation movement. They galvanized behind cultural associations like the *Mahbèr Theatre Asmara (MaTA)*[11] to denounce incorporation with Ethiopia under any circumstances. "Behind its unassuming name, MaTA managed to inject an unprecedented vitality into the musical scene, furthering at the same time Eritrean artistic identity, cultural and political resistance to the influence of Addis Ababa (and of the Sudan), and subtly reinforcing the pro-independence message" (Falceto, 2011). Emperor Haile Selassie heavy-handedly attempted to rope Eritrea into his federal jurisdiction with militaristic might and sweeping referendums. He installed Amharic

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[11] "The Mahber Teatre Asmara (MaTA), a cultural association, was established in 1961, by singers, composers, poets, and university students returning from the Haile Selassie I University in Addis Abeba. MaTA served as a recruitment center and fund-raise. It is also provided an outlet for the frustrated population. Dismayed at the poor performance of its "formally elected" representatives, Eritreans flocked to the MaTA's bi-monthly cultural shows. Plays, singers, and stand-up comics satirized the federal scheme and warned against"alien" cultures. Although the shows were censored by authorities [to] camouflage the political messages in the intricacies of traditional ballads. In the cultural arena both the news and traditional nationalists were united in their desire to combat Ethiopia hegemony" See Resoum Kidane 8-31-18. http://www.ehrea.org/prof1950.php.

as the official language, banned the Eritrean flag, moved businesses out of Asmara, imposed nationwide censorships that created civil pandemonium in the form of rebellions, retaliations, internal conflicts, rivalries, and massive casualties involving rebel groups and the Ethiopian garrisons. The resistance eventually gained momentum with trade unions and student coalitions who would mount nationwide protests and demonstrations such that, in 1962, Eritrean withdrawal from the federation by the 68-member Assembly was imminent. Rebellion and internal war ensued throughout the 1970s leading to the founding of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1973 as an offshoot rival to the less effective Eritrea Liberation Front.

> ELF and EPLF fighters managed to penetrate Asmara in early 1975, leading to heavy fighting in the city. On 13 September 1975 ELF fighters raided the American listening station at Kagnew, seizing Thomas Bowidowicz, from New Jersey and David Strickland, from Florida. (Qienit, 2014)

The freeing of the Kagnew hostages the next year would be the death knell for the ELF as they were marginalized and defeated by the rival EPLF and driven into neighboring Sudan. Though the situation looked grim during the eighties, the EPLF led by future President Isaias Afwerki ultimately prevailed in 1988 at the Battle of Afabet and drove Ethiopian military forces back and out of Eritrea.

Eritrea's artist community responded to the 30-year liberation struggle that would cause undue suffering to the civilian populace and tired resistance forces. Krar player extraordinaire

Ato Ateweberhan Segid contributed to the decades long Eritrean liberation movement through lyrical resistance. Born in 1917 during the reign of Menelik II's daughter Empress Zewditu, Segid is highly-regarded in Eritrea for being the first to electrify the 6-string Tigrinyan krar, but, most significantly, for using his songs to educate his people and to voice sharp dissent against Emperor Haile Selassie I and the merging of Eritrea into the Ethiopia realm.

Accordingly, Segid was an activist musician in the truest sense of the words composing personal anthems dedicated to the undying struggle for freedom, and performing them indiscriminately. Known as one of the preeminent nationalist musicians of the 1970s Eritrean jazz scene (Tewelde, 2016), he is most famous for being attacked and losing an eye while singing at the National Theatre of Addis Ababa in the late 1960s.

> Loyalists to Emperor Haile Selassie I and Unionist party members became enraged upon hearing Segid's live rendition of "Adeye Adey Jeganu, Beal Men Iyom Zetelemu" [which translates to] "O My Country, My country of Hero's, tell me who are the Traitors." (Qienit, 2014)

The song had become popular among Eritreans in 1958 due to its explicit disdain toward Emperor Selassie I's imperialist mandates, the complicit Unionist party in Eritrea, the expansion of the Euro-American industrial military complex, and the U.N. for forcing incorporation with Ethiopia. The song reveals the main collaborators and sends a strong message of resistance. Segid's activist repertoire includes other poignant lyrics.

> Atewebrhan Segid's song "Aslamai Kistanay" can be remembered as exemplary. In this revealing song from the 1950's, Ateweberhan Segid conveys a highly strong and clear message to the Eritrean people advising them rhythmically to beware of the foreigner's dangerous weapon: divide and conquer. "Aslamay, Kristanay, Wedi Kolla Dega, Ne Mihri Wetsa'i ayte habo Waga. Ayte habo waga, keyt'e khun idaga!" (Translation: Muslims, Christians, high & low land citizens, don't give value to the teachings of the foreigners or you'll be up for sale).” (Qienit, 2014)

Eritrea and its people owe much to Ato Ateweberhan Segid who helped usher in modern music with advanced facility on the traditional krar instrument while courageously addressing the political needs of the country. The Qienit blog summarizes beautifully:

> In short, Eritrean music has served as evidence that, a nation is not defined solely based on its boundaries since Eritrean music served to unite Eritreans and, expressed their national ideals no matter where Eritreans lived and what the status of the nation was for decades! It allowed Eritreans to unite in purpose – It allowed them to express their love for Eritrea. It motivated them. (Qienit, 2014)

The flames of Eritrean nationalist pride were, and still are, stoked by Segid’s revolutionary songs and courageous nationalism. His music helped to relieve collective tensions within Eritrea, perhaps, by giving an expressive outlet to the struggle for peace and reconciliation.

Revolutionary Guitarist Tewolde Redda

Tewolde (or Tewelde) Redda is a strikingly virtuosic Eritrean guitarist, vocalist, composer, arranger and entrepreneur. This pioneering figure was born in Asmara in 1941, the same year that both Eritrea and Ethiopia ended Mussolini's Italian occupation within their respective countries. Redda entered a talent contest with trepidation at a young age with conked Elvis-styled hair, won first prize to his surprise and has never looked back. "With his talent show victory and the gift of an electric guitar, by the age of 20, Tewolde was completely immersed in the musical and cultural life of Asmara. In 1961, he and his best friend, Tikabo Nemariam, aka 'Mario Lanza', founded MaTA, *Mahaber Tiyater Asmara* (The Theater Association of Asmara), the first ever Eritrean-run theater" (Hareide, 2017). In search of more regular work in 1969, he and a few friends relocated from Asmara to Addis Ababa and Redda's timing could not have been better.

In addition to becoming house guitarist at Axum Adarash, a thriving night club and doing odd jobs as Mulatu Astatke's roadie, he soon documented five songs for Dutch imprint Philips Records and met the upstart producer Amha Eshete who fell in love with his voice. Amha Eshete would record four Redda songs for his fledgeling Ethiopian record label Amha Records which went against the then current Emperor Selassie's edict disallowing recordings by anyone other than the state. "It was into this world—freshly post-colonial but with a re-emerging national identity being fought for, with foreign sounds of r&b and jazz and eventually rock 'n' roll in the air—that Tewolde's music emerged," according to writer Ben Richmond. (Richmond, 2017). These 45 rpm vinyl recordings would demonstrate a breakout vocalist and nimble guitarist with beautiful lyrics.

For Philips Records: “Gamey” (meaning Shaven and Braided Hairstyle for Countryside Eritrean Girls - 1972), “Kirar Mistequane” (meaning Tuning My Krar - 1970), “Hidri” (Advice - 1972), “Telsemki” (meaning Traditional Jewelry - 1972), and “Wuba” (1972)

For Amha Records: “Ab Teqai Kerebi” (meaning Come Close To Me - 1971), “Milenu” (indicating a female maiden name - 1972), “Momona” (meaning Peppermint - 1972), and “Nehadar Zeitkewun” (1971)

The guitarist’s jazz arranging chops were in full display on songs “Gamey” and “Hidri,” two of the first Eritrean songs to feature a horn section.

Moreover, Redda would cut his stay in Addis Ababa short and return to Asmara in 1972 to fulfill a lifelong dream; the guitarist opened a vinyl shop and record label named *Yared Music* (named after the 6th century debtara musician) where his storefront business would release 45 rpm singles on himself titled “Kab Nab” (1972) and “Enokis Entaido Belaki” (1973), but primarily focus on releasing other local artists. After the communist Derg military overthrew Emperor Selassie I and his royal cohorts in 1974, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front slowly gained power as the main left-wing rebel group seeking independence from Ethiopia. This turn of events caused the ELF sympathizer Redda to flee Eritrea in 1979 for the Netherlands where he lives to this day.

Tewolde Redda has never been heralded as an Eritrean jazz musician nor has he self-identified with the jazz movement in the Horn of Africa. He says he is one of a large

community of Eritrean musicians and bands that was never given the opportunity to record and achieve the exposure he received; in addition to being mentored by two important countryman, the blind Barbon Umberto and aforementioned Ateweberhan Segid, Redda cites a long list of MaTA performers and non-theater bands that deserves wider and more equitable recognition. However, Redda's impeccable facility on the electric guitar is without equal borrowing from a long tradition of krar playing in the region while blazing a clear trail of Western-influenced musicality during the 1960s. On the liner notes to the 2017 retrospective of his work, Vemund Brune Hareide writes, "This new compilation by Domino Sound is a revelation. It's the first true compilation of his recordings and is crucial for lovers of African music and Ethiopian jazz and soul" (Angy Mom, 2017). His songs from 1970 to 1972 frequently preface with a *taqsim* or improvised riff that exhibits a mastery beyond the common instrumental accompaniment and folkloric *krar* tradition. Reviewing the 2017 Redda release, the credible London-based Soul Jazz Records, which seeks to draw "cross cultural connections between various music genres" aptly wrote, "[The record is] drawn from his six monumental singles for the Philips, Amha and Yared labels between 1970-73, revolutionizing traditional Eritrean music via the innovations of amplified *kirar*, electric guitar and horns" (SOTU, 2017). What sets Redda apart and makes him an ideal inclusion in this present research are, however, two important attributes: His guitar playing is evidently advanced enough to be considered at the level of jazz improvisation; and Redda confesses that his songs are politically-charged if not downright renegade.

Redda's activism is powerful and poignant; he reifies the merging of music and politics investigated throughout this thesis. Not only is he one of the most revered musicians in Eritrea and Ethiopia, this unsung hero of the electric guitar is, before all else, a self-proclaimed Eritrean

Liberation Front supporter and freedom fighter during the mid-1970s civil war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In a meeting with Hareide, he professed, “I was a revolutionary singer, singing for the love of my people and country. People know me as a person who was into politics, and that was my main motivation as a singer. [The song] “Shigey Habuni” which was never recorded in a studio, is a document of my engagement in politics and love for my country” (2017). Redda’s testimony is further clarified in University of Missouri Professor of Political Science Ruth Iyob’s “The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-93.

> In the cultural arena both the new and traditional nationalists were united in their desire to combat Ethiopian hegemony. *Shigey Habuni*, a popular song of the mid-1960s, is an example of the creative nationalism resonating within the population.
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Shigey Habuni | (Give my my torch |
> | Ay’te’tal’luni | How long can you deceive me |
> | Intay Gher’e Iye? | What have I done? |
> | Shigey Zei’tbuni? | That you deny me my torch?) |
>
> (Iyob, 1995:103)

Consulting anonymous online comments by Eritreans, the following also adds interesting perspective to the Redda’s testimony:

> “Tewolde Reda, Virtuoso Guitarist - the Eritrean BB King, sings a melanchonic 'blues'

for the suffering of the people. In Eritrean he is known for his song 'Shigey Habuni' Literally translated - give me my Torch. It was a song opposing the Eritrean forced Federation with Ethiopia. in the early 1960. Shigey habuni, aytetaliluni = Give me my torch of [Freedom], do not trick me. In this song, he sadly sings, ["]It was okay, I fought gave my life and fought for freedom, but ended up being a refuge, it is my luck I accept it; but how can I accept the same thing for my children["]. Truely, revolutionary Spirit. His other famous songs are, *Auroplaney*, *Seb MKuaney*, *Milenu*, *Selam Fqrey ab zelato, Edey Hamu Kushti* ... and many more" (Youtube).

"Shigey Habuni" and other fiery compositions by Tewolde Redda are evidence of this legendary musician's coming to grips with his true purpose as a proud citizen of Eritrea. His passionate resistance against oppressive political and social establishments in his homeland.

Musician Soldier Bereket Mengisteab (በረኸት መንግስተአብ)

A 2009 *Voice of America* post by blogger Matthew Lavoie provides an intimate portrayal of Bereket Mengisteab, the legendary Eritrean krar player-turned-soldier. Mengistaeb was born in a rural farming community in 1937 where his mastery of the 5-string lute as a young child foretold his public acclaim in later years as a prolific composer and recording artist. He released nine Philips and three independent singles between 1972 and 1975, yet his heroic story is one of music, migration and patriotism where allegiance to serving ones country takes precedence over *joie de vivre*. At the peak of his career in 1974, having relocated to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa where his musicianship was in high demand, a 37-year old Mengisteab dropped

everything to go home and join the independence movement in the highlands with the Eritrean Liberation Front nationalist rebel group. Lavoie says,

> As did all members of the ELF, Bereket underwent military training, and participated in the Eritrean liberation struggle both on the battlefield with his rifle, and in the military camps with his revolutionary songs; music played a crucial role in maintaining the morale and determination of those fighting for Eritrean independence. (Lavoie, 2009)

The musician's journey is a testament to the complexities of life and liberty in the volatile Horn region during the late twentieth century as Mengisteab would take up arms for and donate his professional musician talents to the front lines of the Eritrean revolution while working diligently under "enemy" circumstances. This fact has led to some ambiguity surrounding Mengisteab's legacy. Ethnomusicologist Nick Wall ponders, "Is this the history of a cynical opportunist as his critic's claim? Or a man whose only desire is continue playing the music that he loves?" (Wall, 2018). Nonetheless, after Eritrean independence in 1993 allowed him to move back to Addis Ababa where his krar and entrepreneurial skills were once fully-realized, a war between Eritrea and Ethiopia would erupt in 1998 due to a territory dispute over the town of Badme. The Tigray region conflict would claim tens of thousands of casualties on both sides prompting Mengisteab to permanently settle in his home country of Eritrea until the present.

Eritrean national hero Bereket Mengisteab has spent a lifetime performing music for international audiences. In addition to a 10-year tenure with the Haile Selassie Theater Orchestra during the 1960s whereby travel throughout East and West Africa were commonplace, he also

founded his own group ‘Megealeh Guayla,’ and opened a record shop in Addis Ababa with his wife. Mengisteab is frequently called Eritrea’s king of *guayla*[12]for his consistent ability to move Eritrean audiences to get up and sway with his heartfelt vocals and impeccable Tigrinya strumming. His biggest claim to fame is bestowing the battlefield and his country with a repertoire of hundreds of inspirational songs. Listening to the musician sing and accompany himself on krar, it becomes evident that his genius is a combination of effortlessly fast-picking, flawless melodic reprise with the vocal line, and generous musical activism.

In his 1997 book *Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution*, journalist Dan Connell emically substantiates,

> The next day, under cloudy skies on a muggy July morning, we rolled out of the clinic in a bright red captured Fiat truck. Twenty-eight people were crammed into the uncovered trailer—three (truly) wounded guerrillas, several healthy ELF fighters, a dozen or so refugees and half the official ELF band. Among the musicians were popular singers Imbaye Habtemikail and Bereket Mengisteab, whose melancholy love songs could still be heard over Radio Ethiopia. The two had joined the ELF in 1975 and would leave to pursue their careers in 1977, but for the time being they were traveling from village to village, performing nationalist anthems, with an occasional ballad thrown in for crowds of adoring fans. (Connell, 1997)

[12] Each of the nine Eritrean ethnic groups has distinct dance characteristics—Afar, Bilen, Hedareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre, Tigrinya. Guayla can be organized into three categories: dance, rhythm and speed. Dance sections into two categories: normal majority individualized or kuda areza elegant circular group form; Rhythm (or drum beat) is divided into two categories: *Kebessa* normal and *Shimejana* revised (from Senafe region); Speed is divided into three categories: *Hazen* slow, medium and *Fechew* fast. Some call the first part of the beat the *kudda* stage and the second part of the beat the *sbra*.

And it is the softer, more lyrical tune, such as “Tselelay” that displays Mengisteab’s nuanced skill with the krar, equally, the oud. Here, the lilting quality of the musician’s playing resembles classic *tezeta* melodies from neighboring Ethiopia and beckons similar feelings of melancholy. Mengisteab also did a short stint as both director and deputy of the Eritrean National Theatre and Music Revival Troupe in the mid to late 1970s (Duggan, 2016). It is difficult to separate the abiding Eritrean patriotism of musicians like Segid, Redda and Mengisteab from their prevailing national identities as musicians.

VII. AMERICAN MUSIC ENCOUNTERS IN THE HORN

Kagnew Station

In an effort to defeat Hitler’s Germany and its aggressive Afrika Korps expeditionary alliance with Japan (under a constitutional monarchy) and Italy (under dictator Mussolini), U.S. President Roosevelt proposed and secured passing of the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 which authorized him to transfer war-related good of various sorts to foreign allies of choice without need for compensation. Although the British administration benefited greatly from the almost unlimited supply of defense materials, the program focused on Eritrea and its strategically-located communications base on the Red Sea called *Radio Marina*. The former Italian colony was administered by Britain after Italy surrendered it in 1941, and the U.S. was granted access in 1942 under the terms of the act, adding new equipment in 1943 that broadcast one of the most powerful radio signals in its day. Passed off as a docile telephone operating base

and space monitoring system, Kagnew Station was "hidden in plain view," and became a U.S. military location in 1952 after Ethiopian and Eritrea signed an official agreement of occupation.

Armed Forces Radio and Television (AFRT) at Kagnew Station began in a trailer in 1948 thanks to the efforts of broadcaster Colonel Robert Spencer Lane. It soon moved to a new facility in 1951 where a number of radio programs were created to entertain the 6,000 troops stationed in Asmara. In addition to a well-equipped television studio managed by the Army, disc jockeys made full use of the radio station during the 1950s and featured popular music programming of rockabilly, doo wop, blues, rhythm and blues, country, and swing hits from back home in America. One of the more popular programs was a late night 'jazz hour' broadcast hosted by a soldier named Joe Hix.

Formal 24-hour scheduling of all radio and TV programs started in 1953 and the lively American music broadcasts continued until the last show in April 1974, not long before the Marxist-Leninist military junta assumed control of the Ethiopian government. "Kagnew would come to be known as a significant influence in shaping the musical tastes of locals at the time. This influence even affected Addis Ababa, as the broadcast signals were strong enough to reach the Ethiopian capital" (Hareide, 2017). Furthermore, Dr. Kebede relates the pervasive effects of the U.S. military base as unavoidable: "Since there are only two radio broadcasting stations in the whole country—stations that broadcast mostly non-Ethiopian music—the audience has no choice except to saturate itself with foreign music, which fosters the hybridization or acculturation of diverse style" (Kebede, 1975: 57). Notably, disc jockey Kelley Neff compiled the Top 1000 Hits from 1955-1970 and posted them on a personal website. This list reveals a multi-genre hodge-podge of American radio activity that would enthrall any East African listener

within earshot. Additional testimonies by Amha Eshete, founder of Ethiopia's famed Amha Records label, shows that Kagnew Station indeed prevailed as the source of American music broadcasts in the Horn. Eshete testifies, "I used to spend hours lost in the rhythms booming from the radio. It was the best it could be; the DJs were so sharp. It was a far cry from the music played on the radio in Addis Ababa. In terms of American music's availability, Eritrea's capital city Asmara was far ahead of Addis Ababa" (Fantahun, 2016).

The Peace Corps

Music traverses the planet in meaningful and unpredictable ways. Ethnomusicologist Shelemay opens her 2016 article on accordingly, "The global circulation of jazz is one of the most striking musical processes of the twentieth century" (Shelemay, 2016). The cultural mobility she attributes to Dr. Mulatu Astatke's career and music, might be an example of what transpired with the inauguration of the Peace Corps by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, and continued well into the 1970s and 1990s. Issued as Executive Order 10924 shortly after his successful bid for the presidency, the Peace Corps was Kennedy's plan to provide social and economic assistance and promote mutual understanding between Americans and underdeveloped nations. The government agency would eventually populate over 140 countries and relocate more than 220,000 civilians. The initial influx was 300 collegiate Americans arriving and volunteering in Addis Ababa in September 1962. Whether the program achieved its objective or not, one general assumption can be made about the substantial presence of young volunteers in Africa: they would bring their diverse stateside behaviors, backgrounds, education, privileges,

perspectives, aspirations, literature, fashion and huge music appetites.

> There were several thousand who [come] in Ethiopia, from the beginning of the 60s. Those youngsters brought with them their records, their guitars, their long hair, their bell-bottom trousers, many things like this. The fight between the generations was also through things like that—external to the music itself. But it was an ensemble of new ideas that was shaking the old society. (Falceto, 2006)

And fortunately for the eager transplants to the Horn of Africa[13], Emperor Haile Selassie I had provided military troops to the U.S. in 1951 in support of its conflict with the allied Korea, thereby, influencing peaceful diplomatic agreements between the two nations.

Peace Corps presence in the Horn of Africa speaks to a larger narrative of modernization and globalization. The post-World War II evolution of the Euro-American industrial complex brought entertainment, media, style and culture to the people of nations connected via military alliance. As the people and information of the dominant culture arrived via goodwill exchange programs, so did their culture. A new temporal precedent for worldwide consumption was introduced. Timkehet Teffera writes, "The arrival of several thousand Peace Corps Volunteers to Ethiopia along with American GIs enabled access to new music and up-to-date foreign music every day. In this military base in Asmara (today's Eritrean capital) the GIs were provided with entertainment facilities such as clubs, bars, TV and radio broadcasting stations. So, not only new music was introduced to Ethiopia through the military radio, but through presence of these

[13] The dates of the programs are as follows: Ethiopia (1962–1977, 1995–1999, since 2007); Sudan (1984–1986); Somalia (1962–1970); Eritrea (1995–1998)

foreigners' new modes of dressing and hairstyles became trend[s] as well" (Teffera, 2008). The diplomatic initiatives of President Kennedy should not be underestimated as a broad dissemination of popular American culture. Thousands of young Peace Corps volunteers along with stationed U.S. military personnel would integrate with the Horn inhabitants, and help urbanize local tastes and entertainment during a period of accelerated African modernity.

The Emperor Meets the Duke

> "Mother dear…, your son is going to be one of the great musicians in the world... Someday, I'm gonna be bowin' before the kings and queens."
>
> Young Edward "Duke" Ellington (Cohen, 2010)

In his article on the acculturation and propagandizing of jazz music by the United States government titled "The Medium is the Message? Jazz Diplomacy and the Democratic Imagination", Tufts University Associate Professor Richard C. Jankowsky writes about the African American musicians charged with representing Cold War ideology for their country by their participation in state department tours a decade after World War II. "The State Department began organizing high-profile jazz tours to alter impressions. The tours were the brainchild of the Democratic congressman from Harlem Adam Clayton Powell, who conceived of jazz as a Cold War weapon after attending the Afro-Asian Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia" (Aidi, 2014). President Eisenhower and then secretary of state John Foster Dulles saw the dissemination of jazz as a means of countering the fraught racial stereotypes about America that tainted its public image and national credibility, hence, its ideological

dominance worldwide. Jankowsky asserts, “Interpreting the reception of jazz abroad mainly in terms of political emancipation symbolized through musical performance, the United States would soon deploy jazz bands across the globe to show the nations of the nonaligned world that they had a simple choice to make: a free and democratic future with—indeed, symbolized by—jazz, or the tyranny of a jazzless totalitarianism” (Jankowsky, 2016). The complexity of the assignments abroad were salient given the Black human rights struggles in America, and the fact that the overseas jazz gigs were a financial placebo for those same marginalized musicians. In 1956, the same year that the White Citizens Council of the South attacked the NAACP attempting to disrupt efforts to end segregation for African Americas, the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band would launch the program in the Middle East, Yugoslavia and Greece. Gillespie in his memoires wrote, “I sort’ve liked the idea of representing America, but I wasn’t going over to apologize for the racist policies of America” (Gillespie, 1982). Notwithstanding, the *Jazz Ambassadors* program of international tours would feature and integrate the best Black and white musicians that American jazz had to offer including Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Quincy Jones, Benny Goodman, Woody Herman and Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington.

After almost two decades of tours, one of the program’s benchmark diplomatic exchanges involving East Africa and jazz music artistry would occur when an ailing Duke Ellington with his orchestra arrived on November 20, 1973 to perform five concerts in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. On the final leg of a State Department Tour of Eastern Europe and Africa, the legendary pianist, composer and bandleader was in advanced stages of lung cancer but insisted on traveling and performing for enthusiastic audiences abroad. A few days later, he would fly to Lusaka, Zambia to perform three concerts including a State House encore for President Kenneth

Kaunda (Bradbury, 2005; Meridian, 2008). In Ethiopia, there was one concert on the night of their arrival from Paris on November 20, two on November 21, and two on November 22 (in addition to five more on another leg in one other African country.[14]) (Palmquist, 2004). The travel and tour schedule was physically demanding for the 74-year old but he had experienced much worse ten years prior when he famously journeyed to the Middle East and South Asia for 14 weeks. The twenty-two person band performed at the 1,260-seat National Theater where Emperor Haile Selassie I would present Ellington the *Medal of Honor* from the Ethiopian government. Dr. Astatke describes the circumstances surrounding his involvement:

> I was assigned by the Embassy to be Ellington's escort while he was in Addis. We both stayed at the Hilton in Addis and, whatever he needs or wants to know about Ethiopia, I was his guide. I had always admired him as an arranger, composer and bandleader. During my music studies, I had analyzed his work in detail. During his visit, I showed him some of the cultural musical instruments, which he found really interesting. Some of our cultural musical players jammed with Ellington's guys - we went to the U.S. Information Centre in Addis and played together. I then took him to the King's palace and he was given a medal by Emperor Haile Selassie. It was a big ceremony.
>
> We were due to play an evening concert so I discussed with him if he would consider playing one of my arrangements. I wrote an arrangement of 'Dewel' for his band, a

[14] There is debate surrounding the location of the concerts after Ethiopia. Numerous sources and Wikileaks cable emails detailing the official itinerary indicate that Ellington performed 5 concerts in Nairobi, Kenya while Blake details the orchestra's travel to Lusaka, Zambia in South Africa. However, Blake incorrectly cites the date of the Ethiopian arrival as November 23, 1973.

> different version which included some beautiful voicings on the horns. He found the structures so interesting and I remember him saying, 'This is good. I never expected this from an African'. He made my day. His visit to Ethiopia remains one of the greatest moments in my life. (Astatke, in conversation with Weiss, 2009)

Dr. Astatke would room next door to Ellington at the plush Addis Ababa Hilton and invite the entire modern music scene in Addis Ababa to the concerts. The two would become friends and the jam session that took place on the last night featured the traditional ensemble *Orchestra Ethiopia* and a few of Ellington's band members. Founded by renowned Egyptian composer and ethnomusicology Halim El-Dabh, Orchestra Ethiopia specialized in the indigenous instruments of the country so the live fusion with modern jazz instrumentation was historic.

That one of the most influential and best known figures in jazz, if not in all American music, would perform one of his last concerts in the Horn of Africa is not without broad meaning. Ellington, himself considered American royalty, was no stranger to foreign nobility. Having written a dedicated three-movement body of work in 1959 for the English matriarch Queen Elizabeth titled "The Queen's Suite" after meeting her in Yorkshire the previous year, he had courted and won the hearts of monarchs around the globe (Whitehead, 2013). Ellington's face-to-face encounter with Emperor Haile Selassie was something he had prepared for all of his life as evidenced by the section's foretelling epigraph, and this trip was a *fait accompli* as well for his U.S. government sponsors. It is no surprise, therefore, that feedback was tremendous. "At a critical moment in United State-Ethiopia relations, the State Department considered it not only an artistic success but also a great cooperative venture between U.S. officials and

Ethiopians 'from all professions and all walks of life.'" (Blake, 2007). Further, the convergences of refined jazz musicianship from America with Ethio-Jazz mavericks inspired musicians and music enthusiasts throughout the region while also gratifying the diplomatic aspirations of both participating nations. The entourage returned to New York on November 26 and, fortunately, the unknown photographer captured a poignant moment in intercultural relations in the Horn of Africa. Ellington would succumb to cancer and pneumonia less than six months later, and regent Selassie would be unceremoniously deposed and assassinated by the Communist Derg regime in 1974 and 1975.

VIII. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This thesis is a step toward understanding the profound social significance of music against the background of East African political structures and personages. The twentieth century gave us a robust sampling of authoritative and often oppressive regimes from the West and within the continent that, in turn, inspired a panoply of artistry, musicality, virtuosity, songs, protest, and other musical activity. It is this writer's intention that the compiled research has shown how music is deeply embedded in society and culture, and how the music-maker lives in direct interaction with his or her dynamic and, often, fraught environment.

Additionally, American jazz, with its spontaneously expressive freedom in group context, has been framed herein as the liberating catalyst for musicians and diplomats in the Horn of Africa. Similar to theatre, dance, film, art and other media, the "jazz" genre, whether directly evoked by the performing artist or not, provides an outlet, a platform for expressing the highest human potential and, at the same time, the most heartening social and political malaise. The

democratic norms of this globalized African American innovation become aspirational in a unique way for the musician, the composer, the lyricist, the state official in Ethiopian, Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. Those figures spotlighted in this thesis operated with lofty jazz ideals as if "representing the very ideals of American democratic society," and "reflecting the essence of the newly independent nation-state." (Jankowsky, 2016; Davis, 2004 as cited by Jankowsky, 2016). The sophistication, cosmopolitanism and revolutionary freedom that jazz music symbolized during the twentieth century was ideal for modern cultural aspirations in an African region navigating post-independence and dramatic political transformation.

These case studies are not, in the least, the end of the discussion as we collectively move into the future and an evolving human awareness. Eloi Ficquet and Dereje Feyissa state: "Ethiopians at the beginning of the twenty-first century have new needs, desires, opportunities and obstacles, which have affected their sense of their local and national identities" (Ficquet, 2013:16). This holds true for not only Ethiopia, but as well for Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Africa, and nations far and wide, large and small. What occurs for citizens abroad in this age of information and imagination, also occurs for us locally. As many Ethiopians rally around a new progressive Prime Minister and long-overdue political reforms, we, too, rally. As Sudanese activists gather in peaceful protest against rampant inflation and injustices of their current autocratic government, we also stand with them. As Eritreans voice their displeasure against indefinite national military service for young Eritreans amidst an ageing dictatorship, our voices rises with theirs. And as Somalians decry boundary disputes and mourn the loss of life due to continuing terrorist insurgencies, we lament their concerns for national stability and public safety as well. All in all, this paper aspires to offer narratives that instead evoke our commonalities,

inspiring toleration for the music of the other, and humane collaborations. Jankowsky state, "Perhaps rather than asserting interpretive primacy over jazz, we should emphasize those ideals—espoused even in the platitudes of the jazzocrats—of the importance of listening to others and engaging in constructive and creative dialogue." He continues, "One could imagine, rather than simply exporting jazz as a self-congratulatory and exclusionary symbol of America, that we at least recognize other jazz worlds that may signify as powerfully, but in different way, for others" (Jankowsky, 2016). To this end, the thesis is a scratch at the surface of bringing the Horn of Africa together under one banner that celebrates the power music wields as an agent of change and an opportunity for compassion for our diverse neighbors.

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