

# EMERGING TRENDS FROM INDIGENOUS MUSIC AND DANCE PRACTICES: A GLIMPSE INTO CONTEMPORARY MALENDE AND TSHIGOMBELA

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## ABSTRACT

Past research into the history, state, function and performance contexts of indigenous African musical practices yielded a number of disturbing observations: there was no hope that the practitioners of this genre would ever begin deriving a living out of their art; there was the fear that some indigenous musical practices were nearing extinction because the few indigenous music practitioners still alive were on the brink of death, and there was therefore a need to capture the heritage before it was irretrievably lost. Lately the world of indigenous African music has undergone an evolution. South Africa's rapidly changing postcolonial terrain has recently witnessed an upsurge of new stylistic trajectories in indigenous musical practices – nowadays it is arranged and performed by modern musical ensembles. Popular music which incorporates traditional genres has begun functioning within the socio-cultural and religious

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lives of Africans today, and it is no longer regarded as 'foreign' or alien to concert halls. It is now also frequently encountered in music stores, both in rural and urban areas. The current article traces this new, exciting and rewarding trajectory.

## INTRODUCTION

Until quite recently, indigenous African music and dance practices were largely viewed by ethnographers as heritage which should be gathered and its samples confined to archives and museums. For some time, African traditional musical genres essentially existed as, and were preserved as, oral systems. These genres are uniquely differentiated from art music genres, for example Western art (classical) which is notated and operates within defined musicological and theoretical frameworks (Agawu 2011). It is common knowledge that African indigenous musical arts have performed poorly through the years, partly due to African nations' political, economic and social histories which impinged on the training of musicians in the African idiom. All these factors have primarily contributed to the demise of indigenous African music and dance practices.

The world of African music has, notwithstanding, witnessed an evolution of late. South Africa's rapidly changing postcolonial terrain has begun to witness an upsurge in new stylistic trajectories in indigenous musical practices. African indigenous music has moved away from its predominantly traditional rural enclave, where it was primarily known as music that had no performer–audience scenario; ideally the traditional setting expected everybody to participate in music making. Nowadays it is arranged and performed by modern musical ensembles for non-participating audiences. It is now also frequently encountered in music stores in both rural and urban areas.

Whereas indigenous African music used to be mainly associated with ceremonies, rituals, socialisation and entertainment, amongst others, some of these traditional musical practices have now developed and are manifesting new identities. Contemporary musicians, albeit without formal training, have attempted to promote and preserve their indigenous cultural heritage by trying to simulate the original musical creations of their forebears. Archive or museum-bound original African music collections are being rejuvenated by paper-based creations (arrangements/re-compositions) and performed by modern pop bands, string quartets, and other suitable instrumental and/or vocal ensembles. Tshikona, the Soweto String Quartet (a classical instrumental ensemble) and Malende and Tshigombela (indigenous music and dance ensembles) are some examples. Of late, scholars such as Akin Euba (1970) and Kofi Agawu (2011) have been advocating what is termed 'creative ethnomusicology', perhaps more correctly termed creative African musicology. With this movement, contemporary scholars are encouraging or 'seeking a creative rather than documentary engagement with African sources' (Agawu 2011).

This article will demonstrate the creativity that can come out of indigenous African music to make it relevant to modern art music, and how African traditional musical genres have begun to serve as creative resources for both popular and art music practitioners. The core issues to be discussed include, amongst many others, the following: separatist ideologies versus multiculturalism (a long overdue phenomenon in folkloric discourse); a recognition, investigation and interrogation of the commonalities between nationalities as regards folktales and the resultant folk songs; the evolution from traditional music to commercialisation; the gender issues as portrayed in *ngano* (folk tales); protest singing; multicultural and social cohesion; and transformation from ethnic stereotypes and tendencies.

The article aims to analyse and understand this remarkable metamorphosis which has resulted in a 'new genre-identity', which blends traditional rhythms, melodies, musical texts (lyrics) with modern instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba and other percussion instruments. These genres, which have emerged out of pre-existing musical formations, form the theoretical basis of this study.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a Muvenda child, I was born into an environment rich in music. There was music for all the different stages of life and occasions; rituals, religious ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, recreation and work. There was music for every occasion, mood and environment. As postulated by Merriam (1982), African music is functional in almost all aspects of life. Almost all children grow up singing songs that regulate their behaviour and social relations (ibid, 123). I was born and bred surrounded by musical practices such as Tshigombela, Tshikona and Malende. Authentic Venda indigenous music is easily identifiable, particularly to a Venda researcher, through its structure, rhythms, melodies of the instrumental accompaniments and the vocal nuances employed in the singing. The music is characterised by call-and-response singing, drumming, dancing and hand-clapping. The soloist is usually the lead singer (caller) and dancer, whilst the majority of the musicians offer a response by singing and clapping, with a few on the drums (Mugovhani 2007, 184).

The SABC's (South African Broadcasting Corporation) Venda radio station, Phalaphala FM, has special slots in their daily programmes, wherein they broadcast songs that project this new reality. This sparked my interest to the extent where I decided to buy the recordings from music stores, in order to utilise for this study. Since most of these contemporary musicians predominantly utilised Tshigombela and Malende in their respective arrangements, my study focused on those.

In this study, purposive sampling was employed. The selection of the songs and dances was based on the thematic content and the messages they carry, together with the rhythms and melodies that are reminiscent of the original, authentic, indigenous musical practices from which they are derived. The sample of four songs was arrived

at after identifying them as aptly displaying the elements mentioned above in terms of identity and authenticity. It is significant to note that the recordings lean more towards Tshigombela and Malende.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with several elders from Venda communities, including Vho Mmboneni Matamela Sarah Tshivhase and one of the artists, Vho Mulingoni Marcus Mundalamo. At the time of writing, I had not managed to reach Vho Tshimangadzo Nemutamba-Sinyegwe or any member of the NNAE<sup>1</sup> traditional music group. I continuously listened to the selected recordings over a period of 12 months, wrote down the text during those repeated listening sessions, whilst analysing the music.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A number of scholars in various literary sources have written about the contemporaneity of traditional music. Two pertinent questions that have been at the centre of the debate are: Does African art music exist as a distinct genre? Can African composers create musical works that are idiomatically and aesthetically valid and recognisably African?

Abiola Irele (1993) contends that it is not possible for African musicians to produce works with distinguishable stylistic conventions, and that at best they hover between Western and African traditions without achieving a satisfactory integration of the two. This is supported by Akin Euba (1970), who posits that even when African composers utilise elements of African music in their compositions their works generally conform to Eurocentric ideals, to such an extent that the African elements are overshadowed by European ideals.

Perhaps that is true in as far as their experience of their respective countries' music in West Africa is concerned. These are composers who have attempted to create works in the West African idiom, but, contrary to their postulations, contemporary Venda musicians have demonstrated that it is possible to utilise indigenous compositional frameworks in order to maintain authentic indigenous structural forms, whilst the language remains unadulterated. The current article argues that this is evident when one listens to recordings of contemporary Venda musical arrangements of indigenous African compositions. Indeed, African traditional music has begun to manifest great potential to evolve, crossing the boundary of orality to the domain of notated art, based on its peculiarity as an oral-based genre. This practice manifests in contemporary Tshigombela and Malende band-genres.

Below are examples of artists who have created contemporary arrangements on indigenous dance and music compositions.

## Composition/Arrangement: *Ha Nyamazane*

**Artist:** Tshimangadzo Nemitamba-Sinyegwe

### TEXT

### TRANSLATION

*Ha Nyamazane phukha khulwane ndi ndou*

‘At Nyamazane the elephant is the principal animal

*Ha Nyamazane murathu wa hone ndi ndau*

At Nyamazane the lion is the younger brother

*Vha ri khaladzi ya hone mbidi*

They say the zebra is the sister

*Vha ri makhadzi wa hone ndi mvuvhu*

They say the hippopotamus is the aunt

*Vha ri malume wa hone ndi nari*

They say the buffalo is the uncle

*Vha ri vhazwala vha hone ndi tshugulu*

They say the rhinoceros are the cousins

*Tshugulu dzi khou fhela wee!*

My God the rhinos are nearing extinction!

*Dzi fela mananga adzo wee!*

Dying because of their horns

*Phukha khulwane ndi ndou*

The elephant is the principal animal

*I la miri yothe ya shango*

It feeds on all types of trees

*I tshi la i khetha matari*

But it feeds on selected leaves

*Ngauri matari a a fhambana wee!*

For there are various types of leaves

*Nde ri matari a a vhulaha wee!*

Some leaves are fatally poisonous

*I do gwadama nga magona*

Lest it collapse down on its knees

*Nga u la miri yothe-yothe wee!*

Should it choose to devour everything

*Nne ri vhuya hone wee, lo tsha ndi a tuwa*

We have seen it all, it is time to go

*Vhasadzi vha re na vhanna koto*

Women who have their own men please

*Ni farese vhana vhanu koto*

Hold onto your men please

*Ngauri munna ndi gumbu la mbeu koto*

‘Cause a man is a seed container

*Mathina la kwashea dzi a fhalala koto*

Should it break everything is lost

*Nne ri vhuya hone wee, lo tsha ndi a tuwa*

We have seen it all, it is time to go

*Hu di nga vhana vha re na vhasadzi koto*

Same goes to men who have their women

*Ni farese vhasadzi vhanu koto*

Hold onto your women please

*Vhasadzi vha nnda a vha tsha tamisa koto*

Women out of wedlock are no longer good

*Vha naka nga nnda nga ngomu vho fhela koto*

Attractive from outside but finished inside

*Vhufarekano ndi ha kale wee*

The days of concubines are over

*Nne ri vhuya hone wee, lo tsha ndi a tuwa*

We have seen it all, it is time to go

*Nne ri vhuya hone wee, lo tsha ndi a tuwa*

We have seen it all, it is time to go’

## Commentary on text and musical arrangement

The compositional arrangement above is derived from an ensemble called Tshigombela. Like many other indigenous cultural performances, Tshigombela has always been multifunctional. It was conceptualised and performed for a number of objectives, and according to a variety of functions. Amongst others, Tshigombela served to entertain guests at the royal court or to create a serene ambiance indicative of the prestige of the environment. The splendour of Tshigombela served to enhance the image of the ruler as the patron and sole custodian of the tradition. Parties of musicians would sometimes be sent by one ruler to another's territory to entertain and to be entertained for a few days. According to Kruger (2002), Tshigombela fulfils an ambassadorial function, for it serves to strengthen the solidarity of ruling families. *Bepha* (an expedition) could be sent by one ruler to another to express sympathy (*u imela*) for the death of a member of the ruler's lineage. According to Vho Tshivhase (2008), a ruler could also organise Tshigombela expeditions to the other rulers under him, around his/her territory, with the music and dance ensembles therefore serving to maintain ties between different communities. In some instances, an expedition could be sent out to a commoner who had trespassed. The commoner would be obliged to slaughter a beast in order to feed the performers and also to produce *musumo* (reparation, usually in the form of parts of the slaughtered cow) to give back to the ruler as a form of an apology (ibid.).

Normally, the performers were adolescent girls (Blacking 1967, 21–23), and this cultural practice assisted in introducing them gradually to patterns of maturity, responsibility and political authority. The performances were also possibly used to keep girl-children out of mischief.

The content in Vho Nemutamba-Sinyegwe's arrangement carries messages of advice and reprimand to people of all age groups. It touches on issues of authority, morality, respect and responsibility. According to the message in the text, even animals observe and respect issues of authority, morality and responsibility. There is no *laissez faire* in the jungle, as people are falsely led to believe. There are lines of authority and clearly delineated social relationships. Even the largest animal, the elephant, does not just indiscriminately devour every leaf. It makes a selection, for some of them may be fatally poisonous. Similarly, one must choose well and stay faithful to one's choices, lest one dies. This song is centred on the Venda proverb *Munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi* (a man is an elephant and does not feed on one tree only). This comes from an age-old cultural cliché or dictum amongst Vhavenda which promotes polygamy by postulating: *Muthu wa munna ha fushei nga musadzi muthihi* (a Venda man is never satisfied with one wife).

Proverbs display the beauty of the Tshivenda language, which is the most important component of a culture that is transmitted orally. Language serves as a tool to understand the deeper meaning of a culture.

Through their use of proverbs, Vhavenda are able to sum up occurrences and observations into pieces of perceptions that offer handy explanations of personal relationships and social affairs from known expressions that contain wisdom, truth, morals, values, and traditional views in metaphorical, fixed and memorisable forms, which are handed down from generation to generation. (Mieder 2008, 9)

Vhavenda are able to choose a particular situation to explain another situation by creating topical proverbs. In the process of creating proverbs, people sometimes employ jungle-oriented scenarios to express the reality of the human social condition. Commenting on this practice, Mieder (ibid, 10) states that ‘when the proper proverb is chosen for a particular situation, it is bound to fit perfectly, becoming an effective formulaic strategy of communication’. Whereas the song is centred on jungle life – *Ha Nyamazane* is derived from an isiZulu word meaning animal – the elephant (man) and the trees (woman) are the main characters.

This is the essence of Vho Tshimangadzo Nemitamba-Sinyegwe’s message to both the youth and the aged. In almost all Venda musical practices, music and dance are regarded as one, primarily in large ensembles such as Tshikona, Tshigombela and Malende. The original indigenous composition comprised call-and-response singing, drumming, dancing and hand-clapping. The soloist was usually the lead singer (caller) and dancer, whilst the majority of the musicians offered a response by singing and clapping, with a few playing the drums (Mugovhani 2007, 184). The new arrangement involves Vho Tshimangadzo Nemitamba-Sinyegwe as the lead singer (soloist), with seven backing vocalists, and employs modern instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba, drums and other percussion instruments. The new band-genre was recorded at WinMan Studio under Hanedzani Mutele and Lufuno Tambani, and is released and marketed by Hinote Music.

## Composition/Arrangement: *Nguvho i na buli*

**Artist:** Tshimangadzo Nemitamba-Sinyegwe

### TEXT

*Nguvho i na buli Vho Alilali Vho Nyamutandanyi*

*Alilali*

*Mukegulu wa vhuambamba*

*Mukegulu wa ndutanyavhathu*

*Mukegulu wa vhuvhumbavhumba*

*Zwa mutani wawe zwi pfala shangoni*

*Zwa mudini wawe zwi dihwa nga vhana*

### TRANSLATION

‘Your blanket has a hole

Nyamutandanyi

A talkative old woman

One who creates conflicts

One who fabricates things

Her household matters are spread all over

Her household matters are known  
by children

*Vho Nyamutandanyi nguvho i na buli* Nyamutandanyi, your blanket has a hole  
*Nga vha i runge* (repeat) Repair it (repeat)

*Nguvho i na buli Vho Alilali Vho Nyamutandanyi* Your blanket has a hole Alilali  
 Nyamutandanyi  
*Mukegulu wa ndutanyavhathu* One who creates conflicts  
*Mukegulu wa vhusolasola* One who thrives on gossip  
*U sola na mazwale wawe* She even gossips about her daughter-in-law  
*Vho Nyamutandanyi nguvho i na buli* Nyamutandanyi, your blanket has a hole  
*Hai! Nga vha i runge* Please! Repair it (repeat)

*Nguvho i na buli Vho Alilali Vho Nyamutandanyi* Your blanket has a hole Alilali  
 Nyamutandanyi  
*Mukegulu wa vivho vhukuma* A very jealous old woman  
*U vshivha na mazwale wawe* Even jealous of her daughter-in-law  
*Mazwale wawe musadzi wa nwana* Daughter-in-law wife to her own son  
*Nndu ya nwana vha nga i vula na?* Can she enter her own son's bedroom?  
*No kondelele vhasidzana* Young women you need to persevere  
*Vhukadzi vha kanda timbilu* Marriage requires stoicism  
*Vhuhadzi a vhu na mutlhari* Marriage does not have an expert  
*Nga vha i runge* Repair it (repeat)

*Ni kondelele vhasidzana* Young women you need to persevere  
*A ni vhoni nne ndo kegula* Look at me I've survived in my marriage  
*Ndo tou thuswa nga Vho Masindi* Masindi assisted me during my problems  
*Ndo thuswa na nga u rabela* I also survived through praying  
*Tshi vheaho mudi ndi khana* The secret is in your heart  
*Zwi tshi konda nda tou gwadama* In difficulties you kneel down and pray  
*Nda humbela Vhoramakole* You talk to the heavenly father  
*Nda thuswa nga Ramakole* I found help from God  
*Mudzimu a hu na vha sa tshi koni* With God nothing is impossible  
*Nga vha i runge* Repair it' (repeat)

## Commentary on text and musical arrangement

This is a contemporary arrangement on an indigenous music and dance performance practice known as Malende. Malende is performed at *davha* (communal work-parties) and *murula* (guest parties). Similar to Tshigombela, Malende comprises call-and-response singing, drumming, dancing and hand-clapping. The soloist is



usually the lead singer (caller) and dancer, whilst the majority of the musicians offer a response by singing and clapping, with a playing the drums.

In Venda culture and tradition, several occasions warrant the performance of Malende. One such occasion is when Vhavenda are proud of family or communal accomplishments. For instance, the communal work party (*davha*) occurs when an owner of a piece of land requests members of the immediate community to help in the fields (either hoeing or weeding). Once the communal work has been completed, the work-party is provided with refreshments at the home of the sponsor. The music and dance that is performed at *davha* is called Malende. Also, in a typical traditional Venda politico-cultural setting, it is normal practice for the followers of the *khosi* (ruler) of a particular place to perform all the necessary agrarian duties in his/her communal fields on his/her behalf (Gottschling 1905, 365–386). Malende are songs that lighten the labour of communal work-parties (Blacking 1964, 23). Such performances play an important part in family life amongst Vhavenda: for example, at occasions such as discussions about marriage arrangements, when celebrating the birth of a child or a child's graduation from initiation school, this 'generally give[s] rise to singing and dancing' (ibid, 22). Malende even serve to maintain ties between different communities. Jaco Kruger (1993) writes: 'Family festivities accompanying a birth, wedding or graduation usually involve eating, drinking and the performance of Malende.' He adds that the musical practice is important for strengthening bonds of friendship and neighbourliness; and that the performance requires good cooperation between the musicians.

The content in Vho Sinyegwe's text in this arrangement is a portrayal of a person (a woman, in this case) who exhibits unpalatable/undesirable behaviour: gossiping, rumour-mongering, slandering, being jealous and washing dirty linen in public. Such a person has, according to Vho Sinyegwe, 'a hole in her blanket', for it fails to keep its contents intact, continuously spilling everything in public and unable to keep family secrets. Vho Alilali Vhonyamutandanyi is such a character, to the detriment of her own family members. Such actions compromise social responsibility and family cohesion – a view which has been held by African societies through the ages.

The original version, like in many other indigenous music and dance performance practices, comprises call-and-response singing, drumming, dancing and hand-clapping. The soloist is again the lead singer (caller) and dancer, whilst the majority of the musicians offer a response by singing and clapping, and/or drumming. In this contemporary arrangement the traditional pre-existing music-dance compound is blended with modern instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba and other percussion instruments. Another example in this category (Malende) is the composition below.

## Composition/Arrangement: *Ndala ya Mashona*

**Artist:** Mulingoni Marcus Mundalamo

### TEXT

*Vhakale vho vha vho dzula  
Vho dinwa nga yone ndala  
Nga ndala ya Mashona  
Hei wowo hei hei he hehe*

*Zwliwa zwo vha mikumba  
Mikumba yo vha zwiliwa  
Ho tshilwa nga mikumba  
Hei wowo hei hei he hehe*

*Ndala a i vhulahi  
Ndala a i vhulahi (repeat)  
Ho liwa mikumba  
Ho liwa mikumba ye ye ye  
Nga ndala ya Mashona, hei hei he he  
Ho tshilwa nga mikumba, hei hei he he*

*Iwe Nwali wangu Iwe Nwali  
Ino thambadzivha vhukata i todani afha*

*Wo ralo u mpenyu u amba kudzimu*

*Vhazukuru vhenyu vhare kutambura  
Vha no tshengetwa ne madzikira  
Zwitshetshe a zwi lali zwi twa zwi tshi zhamba*

*Ni zwi totekanyelani na? vhannani-wele*

*Ndala a i vhulahi  
Ndala a i vhulahi (repeat)  
Ho liwa mikumba  
Ho liwa mikumba ye ye ye  
Nga ndala ya Mashona, hei hei he hehe  
Ho tshilwa nga mikumba, hei hei he hehe*

### TRANSLATION

‘Our ancestors had been well settled  
Until drought and famine came  
‘Cause of Mashona famine  
Hei wowo hei hei he hehe

People lived on animal hides  
Animal hide was the only food.  
People survived through animal hides  
Hei wowo hei hei he hehe

Hunger does not kill  
It does not kill  
Animal hides were eaten  
Animal hides were eaten, ye ye ye  
‘Cause of Mashona Famine  
People survived through animal hides

You my God Nwali  
Divination bones show thambadzivha  
and vhukata why?

You wonderful being please listen to our  
ancestors

The grandchildren are suffering  
Nightmares are frustrating them  
New-borns are crying all night  
without sleep

Why are you really torturing them? poor  
souls!

Hunger does not kill  
It does not kill  
Animal hides were eaten  
Animal hides were eaten, ye ye ye  
‘Cause of Mashona Famine  
People survived through animal hides’

## Commentary on text and musical arrangement

This is another example of Malende, whose music was originally conceived and performed at a *davha*.

The arrangement is based on a spontaneous song that developed out of people reminiscing about a tragic episode in the lives of African people. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was serious famine in most parts of Africa, particularly in Kenya. The famine spread to Zimbabwe and then eventually to South Africa. According to Mulingoni Marcus Mundalamo (2015) this was primarily caused by large swarms of locusts which devoured all the crops in the fields. Many people migrated to Venda, but unfortunately the Venda territory was also eventually hard hit and multitudes died as a result. There was nothing to eat, and people even resorted to eating the hide of any animal they came across. Those who survived the depression lived to tell this story, and the song originated from the story. Literally translated, *Ndala a i vhulahi* means 'Hunger does not kill'. People resorted to all forms of supplications, but primarily they performed rituals to make offerings to Nwali (God) and the ancestors. History has it that the Vhavenda's culture distinguished them clearly from other African language groups in South Africa. They were more closely linked with the culture of the Vhakalanga ethnic group in Zimbabwe, in terms of legends, customs, language and musical traditions (Gottschling 1905), hence when they perform their rituals they speak in the Kalanga language. When the indigenous traditional healer threw the divination bones to find out the causes of the problems the people were encountering, *thambadzivha* and *vhukata* were pronounced, the meaning of which spelled disaster. The poetry in stanza four describes the ritual and the people talking to Nwali through their ancestors, pleading with them to reverse the *thambadzivha* and *vhukata* pronouncements for the sake of the suffering adults and children.

According to legend, and confirmed by Vho Mundalamo (2015), eventually rain fell and the drought and resultant famine came to an end. People resumed ploughing their fields and planting seeds. It was during this period that the composition originated spontaneously. It was performed during breaks at *madavha* (communal work-parties) to commemorate the experience and the resilience of those who survived. *Ndala a i vhulahi* ('Hunger does not kill') indicates that people can survive in the face of famine.

The original version, as in many other indigenous music and dance performance practices, comprise call-and-response singing, drumming, dancing and hand-clapping. The soloist is again the lead singer (caller) and dancer, other musicians respond by singing, clapping and drumming. In this contemporary arrangement the traditional pre-existing music-dance compound is blended with modern instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba and other percussion instruments. The new arrangement involves Mulingoni Marcus Mundalamo as soloist. The new band-genre was recorded at Rwista PAC Recording Studio and co-produced by Mulingoni Marcus Mundalamo and Itani Sihadi. The song was written by Vho Mundalamo

(2015) who has recently added an acoustic guitar to a new recorded version, causing sales to rocket and sales of the recording to reach new heights around the country.

## Composition/Arrangement: *Mbilu yanga nga*

**Artist:** NNAE Traditional Music Group

### TEXT

*Mbilu yanga i vhavha hani Masindi hae*

*'Do pfa mafhungo a vhavhaho*

*Nne ndi do pfa mafhungo a vhavhaho*

*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha, heleli wee!*

*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha (repeat)*

### TRANSLATION

'My heart is bleeding dear Masindi

I might receive heartbreaking news

I will receive heartbreaking news

My heart is bleeding indeed

My heart is bleeding

*Musi ndi tshi vhona zwi re shangoni zwi ndisa mbilu...*

My heart bleeds at the sight of the deeds in the world

*Vhavhone minwaha mingafhangafha ya fumi na miraru ya lutshetshe..*

See what has happened to 13 year old

*Nwana mungafhangafha o no wana nwana naa Vho-Masindi.....*

A very young girl already has a baby

*Mara nwana wa zwini o no takula nwana iwe vhathu.....*

Indeed a young girl is carrying her baby

*Nwana mungafhangafha u ya vhuhadzi naa Vho-Masindi...*

Can such a child be ready for matrimony Masindi?

*Musi zwi tshi konda hu lila nwana ha lila na mme.....*

During trying times the child and her baby will cry

*Nne ndi do fa nga mbilu zwithu hezwi.....*

I will die of heartache

*Vha vhone mashango a zwino vhone ha fani na a kale a a shavhisa..*

Today's world is different from yesteryear

*Zwothe zwi vho tou sumba vhufhelo ha shango zwi a vhavha..*

This spells the painful end of the world

*Vha vhone mikosi i no pfala i tshi bva Natala.....* Listen to shrieking cries from Natal

*Vhathu vha tshi tou fa sa mashonzha naa vhannani wee*

People are dying like worms

*Shango li nukha malofha vhana vha a fhedzana...*

The country smells of blood from dying men

*Vhanna vha shisha biko mikosi yo lila vha a shavha....*

Men sweating and running away during death cries

*Ndi shango-de li sa dziki sa manwe mashango iwe vhathu....*

Why is our country not at peace like others?

*Havha vhana vhashu vha zwino vhone a vha na vhutshilo ha u fhata..*

Today's youth does not have the will to build

*U vuwa nga matsheleloni ndi u ya zwipotoni vha a divha....*

Waking up every morning they are at the beerhalls

*Vhana vhatukutuku magaratani.....*

Small kids indulging in gambling with cards

*Vhana vhatukutuku vho dzhenwa ngani?.....* What has become of these young kids?

*Madekwe a tho ngo lala ndo vuwa nda dzula zwi a dovha.....*

Last night I could not sleep and just stayed up

*Ndi tshi vhona zwi re shangoni zwi nndisa mbilu vha a divha....*

Seeing what is happening my heart bleeds

*Ndi vhana-de vha sa fhati/pfi na vhabebi vhavho/.....*

What kind of youth that disobey their parents?

*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha heleli wee!.....*

My heart is bleeding

*Naa vhumatshelo ha avha vhana vho fara ifhio iyo ndila?....*

What future is there for the path they have taken?

*Vhana vha zwino vhone a vha na thonifho kha vhabebi..*

Children who do not show respect to their elders

*Vha ima na dzibadani vha tshi khavarana.....*

Standing along the roads busy cuddling each other

*Wa shona na u vha sedza wa dovha wa shona na u tshimbila...*

Adults can neither look nor proceed to walk

*Vhana vhatututuku vha si na thonifho ya vhabebi.....*

Small children with no respect for adults

*Ndi vhana-de vha sa vhalihio na iyo mirero ya milayo....*

Children with disregard for biblical proverbs

*Thonifha mme- au i t shi ri hulisa khotsi-au.....*

Respect for your mother and honour your father

*Mbilu yanga i a vhavha heleli wee!.....*

My heart really bleeds!

## Commentary on text and musical arrangement

*Mbilu yanga nga* is an indigenous music and dance arrangement on the topic of social and moral decay in contemporary African society. The content in this arrangement carries messages of advice and reprimand to the youth, both married and unmarried. It decries the social ills and immoral behaviour of today's youth, and the indiscriminate killing of innocent people. Today's youth have lost any sense of respect for their elders, whilst society in general has degenerated, disintegrated, and is almost moribund. The group sings about the youth indulging in adult activities (such as premarital sexual relations) which result in young girls at falling pregnant at

a tender age and having babies. This causes all sorts of problems for both young and old. The poetry is lucid and self-explanatory.

It is another Malende musical performance, with the structure, texture and musical elements of the original version similar to what was discussed in the preceding arrangements in this genre. In this contemporary arrangement, the traditional pre-existing music-dance compound substitutes the traditional indigenous instruments with modern instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba and other percussion instruments to accompany a vocal soloist in a band-genre format.

## CONCLUSION

Indigenous African traditional musical genres have served as a creative resource for both popular and art music practitioners. According to Agawu (2011, 51),

its potentialities are best revealed ... by probing the music compositionally, engaging it through creative violation. It is impossible to overestimate the quality and quantity of the kinds of knowledge that are produced from self-conscious manipulation of traditional music's materials and procedures.

Furthermore, African indigenous music, permeating the whole gamut of African life (socio-cultural, socio-religious, political, etc.) and predating colonial days, defines and identifies Africans. In the hands of popular music practitioners, African traditional music has found immense use while its relevance to African people continues to be preserved as the continent witnesses the engagement (and even metamorphosis) of some traditional genres in the popular music industry.

Indigenous Venda traditional music has been modernised from the popular music of ensembles such as Tshigombela and Malende, and this has given rise to a new phenomenon: an indigenous dance and music band-genre. Despite the use of non-African instruments such as lead guitar, bass guitar, marimba and other percussion instruments, popular musicians have managed to use new source materials while sustaining the defining stylistic traits of the original indigenous music and dance compositions.

Unlike in the previous practice in which performances could only reach a particular localised environment, the new music can reach a wider audience through enhanced amplification, and the 'modernised' African art brings with it better projection and improved audibility as regards the voices and newly-utilised instruments. Through innovation, cultural practice which was previously confined to archives and museums is now commercialised. Finally, contemporary Venda music and dance artists are now able to promote and sell their arrangements of indigenous compositions and have thus become businesspeople in their own right.

Previously marginalised and disadvantaged music and dance artists have been enabled to introduce new innovations which allow contemporary artists to blossom from being financially deprived *zwilombe* (mere entertainers) to entrepreneurs.

Moreover, Venda indigenous music and dance practices can now be displayed on concert platforms and in concert halls, allowing practitioners to reap financial rewards and gain wider public awareness and acknowledgement. By integrating traditional resources in their works, contemporary indigenous African music and dance artists are beginning to enjoy the kind of success which popular musicians have long since achieved.

It is significant to note that African vocal art music composers have tried in many ways to integrate their Africanness into their creative oeuvre. For instance, South African choral music composers (from the generation of Soga, Bokwe and Sontonga through that of Mohapeloa, Caluza, Motuba, Moerane and Mzilikazi Khumalo to the current generation of Chonco, Negobe and Mnomiya) have found ways to incorporate indigenous resources in their choral compositions (Mugovhani 2008). Likewise Amu, Kemolia, Turkson, Nketia (among others) have evolved a Ghanaian choral tradition based on the use of resources that characterise Ghanaian traditional music.

Indeed, African indigenous music and dance have great potential to evolve, crossing the boundary from their peculiarity as oral-based genres to the domain of the notated or non-notated art-based band-genre. It is thus possible that the use of tonal texts (with their inherent rhythmic, melodic musicality), previously conveyed orally to performers, can serve as the basis of art music composition, similar to the way it exists in the traditions already germane to other, more artistically developed African societies.

## NOTE

1. The music group belongs to Nthangeni (wife) Na (and) Edzisani (husband) Mulaudzi. NNAE is an acronym derived out of the first letters of each word of how the group would be represented in Tshivenda respectively, i.e. N from Nthangeni, second N from Na (meaning 'and'), then E from Edzisani (husband). Band members comprised Edzisani Mulaudzi on guitar, Nthangeni Mulaudzi on lead vocals, Simba Mapfumo on guitar, Edward Nephawe as backing vocal and Thina Mulaudzi as vocal improviser.

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