The Sound of Metal:
Amateur Brass Bands in Southern Benin

Lyndsey Marie Hoh



A thesis submitted for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis contributes an empirically informed understanding of postcolonial experience and musical expression in West Africa through an ethnographic study of amateur brass bands (*fanfares*) in the Republic of Benin. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Western hegemonic cultural tradition of the brass band was exported across the globe through imperialist institutions such as the military and the church. Music in colonial Dahomey was an integral part of the French civilizing mission, and the brass band took center stage. Brass bands remain pervasive in present-day Benin and perform in a multitude of political, social, and religious contexts. Previous scholarship subsumes postcolonial musical performance into social scripts of resistance, framing brass bands in particular within cultural modes of mimesis, indigenization, or appropriation. Pushing against these canonical narratives, this thesis illustrates apolitical, affective, and embodied modes of experiencing colonialism's material and musical debris.

Broadly, the ethnography presented here speaks to four themes. The first of these is material. Evident in musicians' accounts are materials' sonic inclinations: how instrument design and disrepair constrain musical ideals, and how different metals encourage particular pitches and timbres. Present, too, is the social and affective capacity of material: how ideas about brass instruments shape histories, erect styles, construct tastes, move bodies, induce anxieties, and proffer futures. The second theme is precarity. Fanfare musicians "get by" in an exploitative (musical) economy, are made anxious by ambiguous understandings of brass instruments, and manage an undercurrent of uncertainty in a social milieu rife with rumor and distrust. A third theme arising is that of the body, broadly conceived. This thesis illustrates the corporeal demands of fanfare performance, the embodied experience of blowing brass instruments, and the social value of bodily strength and exertion. The fourth theme is entanglement. Beninese musicians' experience of fanfare is entangled within (at times contradictory) ideas of the past, imaginings of the outside, emotions in the present, and expectations for the future. Entanglement likewise extends to musical instruments: the multiple valences of materials collide in brass instruments, as do histories, traditions, and feelings.

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NOTE TO THE READER

Some of the names I use in this thesis are pseudonyms. If I give both a first and last name, however, I am identifying a person with their actual name. All italicized words are in French unless noted otherwise. For Fongbé and Yorùbá terms, I follow my interlocutors' orthographic conventions. In the case of recurring foreign language terms (e.g., *fanfare*), I italicize them in the first instance and thereafter do not.

I conducted and transcribed all of the interviews featured in this thesis. All translations are by me unless noted otherwise. Likewise, all photographs are by me unless noted otherwise. Accompanying audio-visual material is available on my personal YouTube account: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNcl8ho778FusFsPA5VMW0w. I provide the links for specific videos in the text.

Parts of this thesis have been, or will be, published elsewhere. An article version of Chapter Three is in press with *Ethnomusicology Forum* and an article version of Chapter Five is in press with *Africa.* A portion of Chapter Four was printed in *SEM Student News* (Fall/Winter issue 2017) as "Hotness Revisited: Temperature in African Music," with Ian Copeland.

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PRELUDE

On the last weekend of January 2016, the members of Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome traveled to Lokossa to perform for a funeral.[1] The fanfare was accustomed to playing in their village outside of Bohicon but on this occasion made an exception. The deceased was a family friend of one of the fanfare's members, and so we were obliged to accept the contract and make the long journey to Benin's western border.

Our performance began early on Friday morning at the city morgue, where the deceased's family had asked us to meet them to help welcome the corpse. Per custom, we were supposed to stand outside the morgue and play Christian hymns as the pallbearers emerged with the coffin. From there we were to join in a funeral caravan traveling from the morgue to the family homestead where ceremonies would be held late into the evening. As requested, we arrived in uniform and with instruments in tow, and stood solemnly by the mortuary gate. And we waited. And we waited some more. After an hour passed, Basile, the *chef du fanfare*, called Monsieur Assogba, the *chef du famille*. Basile held his phone away from his ear as Monsieur Assogba shouted: *Vous êtes où ? Vous êtes en retard ! On a déjà parti ! Venez ! Maintenant !* There had been a miscommunication and the caravan had already begun. Monsieur Assogba said they were approaching the main primary school. *Venez vite ! Sinon je…* And the line cut off.

We scrambled to the side of the road and flailed our arms. We did not have our own vehicle and needed to hail motorcycle taxis to take us to the city center. The chauffeurs pulled up and Basile hastily negotiated a price. Low on cash, Basile implored the chauffeurs to carry more than one person, which is both dangerous and illegal. Marcel

[1] A video of this performance is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qq86oHSe3w.

mounted the first motorcycle and Basile took the backseat, slinging his bass drum over his shoulder. Étienne and Didier, with their trumpet, *gbon*, and cymbals, took the second. Maxime and I, along with our trombone and baritone, took another. Alphonse, Dénis, and André squeezed onto the last, their bodies compressed behind the chauffeur, and held tightly to their trombone, snare drum, and trumpet. Étienne laughed at the sight of us: *Nous sommes vraiment un spectacle !*

After a bumpy, perilous ride, we pulled up to the primary school to find the white hearse—lights flashing and siren blaring—and a line of automobiles, motorcycles, and pedestrians behind it. Étienne pointed his trumpet into the air and intoned a Protestant hymn. The other musicians joined in and we took our place behind the hearse. The deceased's family members surrounded us, wearing cloth corresponding to their lineage, and began to dance. This was a somber moment but also a celebration of life. When the hearse began to move, the dancers and musicians fell into step. We played loudly and stayed as close as possible to the coffin.



Figure 0.1: Fanfare de Sodohome performs in procession behind the hearse.
Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

The caravan route was circuitous. We paraded down Lokossa's paved thoroughfares, announcing the presence of the funeral and amassing passersby along the way. The hearse's path took us past the central mosque and the towering statue of King Behanzin; as we marched we carefully maneuvered around potholes and dodged the paths of speeding motorcycles. When we reached Lokossa's main roundabout, its center marked with a car tire, we circled it nine times, the fanfare leading the participants in a call and response chant. With the city center behind us, the paved road turned to dirt and we began stirring dust clouds with our footsteps. We walked by a maternal health clinic and the defunct Museum of Gnonnas Pedro, inspiring Alphonse to play one of Pedro's famous songs. As we weaved along village roads, playing music and honking car horns, onlookers stepped onto the street to discover the source of the commotion.

The fanfare played without pause, one song starting up as another trailed away. Basile, Dénis, and Didier kept a constant rhythm over which the brass players improvised a medley of popular songs: Sagbohan Danialou's "Gbèto vivi," whose lyrics narrate a Fon folktale about a mouse, a serpent, and a man; a religious chant of Yorùbá origin for the deity Olorun; a cover of Gangbé Brass Band's "Noubioto"; a pentatonic melody of Benin's National Army that honors the fallen; and a standard hymn of the Celestial Church of Christ. Those in the procession ululated and sang along to the fanfare's melodies, and our sounds melded with those of the hearse's siren and motorcycles' engines. Women danced exuberantly, wielding framed photos of the deceased high above their heads.



Figure 0.2: Caravan participants dance alongside the fanfare. One woman carries a framed photo of the deceased. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

After two hours of walking and playing and dancing we still had miles to go. Before arriving at the main reception we would stop at the homes of extended family. At each, the pallbearers carried the coffin into a central courtyard and family members held a lively ceremony set to the sound of fanfare. Mourners poured libations on the coffin, offered prayers, and danced in the soaring afternoon heat. At one point the fanfare's eldest member André, known as "the surveyor" for his imposing stature, complained of being hot. He tucked his trumpet underneath his arm, put his mouthpiece in his pocket, and sat down for a break while the rest of us played on. Tips from the procession participants, often a primary means of profit, were, on this particular day, few and far between.

The caravan resumed, this time en route to our ultimate destination: the home of the deceased. We retraced our steps back through the city center, slightly slower with the caravan now doubled in size. The reception was easy to spot; spilling out onto the street were several colorful marquees shading plastic tables filled with food and alcohol, and chairs occupied by elaborately dressed attendees. The reception bordered the family compound, the outer walls of which were decorated with large laminated photographs of the deceased. The fanfare escorted the pallbearers across the threshold and into the central courtyard. There, the coffin was laid in an air-conditioned glass room erected for the occasion. We formed a semi-circle in front of the coffin and played hymns and traditional songs over the rumble of the generator. Reception attendees came to pay their respects to the deceased and lingered near the fanfare, engaging the musicians in dance. Didier set his cymbals on the ground, summoning people to put money on them.



Figure 0.3: Family members and fanfare musicians dance before the coffin during a stop at a family home. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.



Figure 0.4: The fanfare performs by the entrance to the glass house while funeral attendees pay their respects to the deceased. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

Having seen the coffin to its destination, the fanfare was now free to roam. This was the moment the musicians had been waiting for: the reception offered a populous, captive audience from whom we could extract money. We ambled across the courtyard and approached a row of seated elderly men nursing plastic cups of imported liquor. Étienne played Sagbohan Danialou's song "Djidjoho," whose lyrics extol good health. A white-haired man reached into his pocket and handed Basile a banknote. Next we encountered an elderly woman; she shooed us away but soon yielded to the rhythm of Basile's bass drum and offered him a coin. Basile smiled in thanks and then turned back to the musicians. *Allons-y ! Attaque !* he shouted and steered us deeper into the reception.

Basile scanned the audience and veered toward a table of affluent big men. It was important that we profit from them before they left. Basile and Alphonse gestured for us to circle around the table; our objective was to surround the men both physically and acoustically, effectively trapping them until they gave us money. Alphonse, suspecting that one of the men was an initiate of Orò, offered an Orò melody but the men did not react. Then Basile spotted a man with scarifications from Grand Popo and switched to *gbété*, a rhythm from that region. The man smiled in recognition, stood up to dance, and furnished a banknote, which Basile took with his teeth. We turned next to a table of matriarchs and Alphonse played a popular song that praises females with large buttocks. The women smirked but did not dance, so Alphonse moved closer and played louder. Annoyed, a woman set down her plate of rice and reached into her purse.



Figure 0.5: Musicians solicit money from reception attendees. A big man dances in his seat and waves a handful of money above his head. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

We continued in this fashion for hours, weaving between tables and accosting people with songs while they chatted and ate. Our energy eventually began to lag—we had not paused for food or drink since congregating at the morgue—and the air was oppressively thick in the crowd underneath the marquee. At one point, Maxime put down his trombone and protested, *Oh c'est trop ! J'ai trop soif !* A woman sitting nearby turned to offer a beer but Maxime refused—he was a devout member of the Celestial Church and did not drink alcohol. The other musicians commiserated but we agreed to push through; to stop performing would be to stop making money.

When the reception ended we retreated to the main compound, where children were milling about and women were preparing food for the following day. We wandered around the interior clay buildings, sometimes entering darkened rooms to play somber songs for guests in mourning, at times lingering in open-air spaces to rouse a dance circle among more jubilant attendees. Along the way we happened upon a passageway filled with young women. Basile began to play the popular Congolese genre *bachengue* and an animated dance circle ensued. Basile moved to the middle of the crowd and sounded the tones of a Fongbé slogan on his bass drum: *Ado tchokoto din à?* The women around him threw their heads back in laughter at his allusion to their underwear and one began to gyrate her backside against his bass drum.

Étienne was next to recruit the attention of a female. He sidled up to a young woman leaning against a wall, directed his gbon toward her face, and sounded the tones of another Fongbé slogan whose lyrics celebrate a pretty girl with fair skin. *Vóvó no ba kin*, he said with his drum, intimating that her good looks must solicit attention from men and cause trouble for her husband. Upon recognizing the slogan the woman blushed and, after shyly dancing, placed a banknote onto Étienne's sweaty forehead. Étienne passed the note back to Marcel, who was collecting our tips in a bag tied around his waist.

Incited by the sexual tension, Maxime pointed his trombone bell into the air and started a song by the Beninese artist Le Roi Gbèzé. Once the song was in full swing, Maxime held his trombone at his side in order to engage a proximate girl in a suggestive dance. Spectators erupted in laughter and ululations. Didier shouted *Aké! Aké! Aké!* and an elderly woman, who had been dancing more vigorously than anyone, procured a coin

wrapped in the cloth around her waist and gave it to Maxime. The dance party continued until we exhausted our patrons and Basile motioned that it was time to move on.



Figure 0.6: A woman dances with Basile and his bass drum in an interior courtyard. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

We performed into the late hours of the night, when fatigue finally took its hold. Having retired to an empty corner of the compound, the wife of Monsieur Assogba brought us a crate of sodas and plates of steaming rice with sauce. We ate in silence, too tired to talk. When Madame Assogba returned to collect our plates, Étienne asked where we would sleep. His question was met with a blank stare. Those in the compound would be awake all night conducting various ceremonies for the evening vigil and our hosts had neglected to arrange for us to sleep elsewhere. After a frustrating conversation with

members of the Assogba family, a man offered to take us to his office building. The building was derelict and had neither water nor electricity, he cautioned, but we could sleep in its driveway. We packed up our instruments and piled into his car, squeezing five people in the backseat, three in the front, and one in the trunk.

As we lay on the bare ground outside of the office building, the musicians made light of our situation. Didier joked that policemen would mistake us for thieves, while Alphonse likened it to camping. There was talk of sending someone to search for water but our exhaustion overwhelmed lingering hunger and dehydration. Our conversation lulled and we fell asleep. We would wake at daybreak and return to the family compound; Saturday was the day of the burial and the procession to the cemetery and subsequent festivities promised much remuneration.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis contributes an empirically informed understanding of musical practice and postcolonial experience in West Africa through an ethnographic study of amateur brass bands (*les fanfares*) in the Republic of Benin. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Western hegemonic cultural tradition of the brass band was exported across the globe through imperialist institutions such as the military and the church. Music in colonial West Africa was an integral part of the European civilizing mission, and the brass band took center stage (see Flaes 2000; Collins 1977). The brass band and its instruments have been present in Benin since the 1880s, when French colonizers introduced them to what was then the Kingdom of Dahomey. Around the 1940s, Dahomean members of the colonial armed forces introduced brass instruments into Protestant and African Initiated Churches, spurring the development of a local, amateur genre called *fanfare*. Fanfares are pervasive throughout Benin today and perform for communal events such as funerals, church services, and political rallies. They are most prevalent in southern Benin, especially in the densely populated urban region in and around the cities Cotonou, Porto Novo, and Ouidah.

In the pages that follow I explore the performance and experience of fanfare in contemporary Benin. Drawing on thirteen months of participant observation, which included performing as a member of fanfares, I present a portrait of a particular community of amateur musicians, and offer glimpses of the everyday dimensions and intimacies of their lives. My central aim is to convey the complexity of musical experience and the crucial role that material plays in this postcolonial place. In pursuit of this goal, I attend closely to my interlocutors' attentions, engagements, aspirations,

feelings, and concerns. Put another way, I implement an ethnographic tenet and take seriously what they say. Moreover, I pay special attention to the materialities of music making. I demonstrate that material conditions and environments impose constraints on musical choice and sonic production, but also show how musicians creatively and skillfully navigate them. And I examine the entangled meanings of material objects, and the histories, imaginations, and emotions that they evoke.

With its focus on the experiential and material dimensions of fanfare performance, my ethnography departs from a familiar postcolonial script. One analytic tendency has been to subsume brass band performance in postcolonial places within cultural modes of mimesis, indigenization, and appropriation. In this mode of thinking, brass bands and their instruments are tokens of European colonialism and their performance outside of Europe is an inevitably political act. In contrast, I argue for apolitical, affective, and embodied modes of experiencing colonialism's material and musical debris. As we will see, colonialism does not loom large in my interlocutors' lives. Political agendas or nationalist movements do not underlie their musical practice and theirs is not a story of resistance. Rather, they participate in fanfares to make money, earn social capital, gain bodily strength, better their future, and have fun. By mirroring my interlocutors' de-emphasis on politics, I offer an alternative understanding of what it means to play brass instruments in the postcolony.

Crucially, this thesis is not a comprehensive study of Beninese fanfare. Rather, what follows are extracts of my experience hanging out with particular musicians. My ethnography is necessarily partial and impressionistic; it is not meant to serve as an encyclopedic treatment of this genre. I neither explain everything nor historicize

everything. In my analytical interventions, I aim to be guided by my interlocutors' concepts and perspectives as opposed to prepackaged theory. Above all, I am invested in portraying people's real lives with fidelity, as their stories make the most sense when understood on their own terms.

The remainder of this Introduction provides the following: (1) a discussion of relevant literature; (2) a historical and demographic sketch of Benin; (3) a definition of Beninese fanfare; (4) a description of my fieldwork experience; (5) an introduction to key ensembles and musicians; and (6) a chapter outline.

Literature and contributions

My ethnography makes several contributions to existing literatures, among them brass band studies, Dahomean music studies, and studies of popular music in postcolonial Africa. I discuss each of these briefly below. These comments are not intended to be a thorough literature review but more so guiding statements on how I conceive of my study in relation to preexisting scholarship. I will engage with these and other literatures in more depth in subsequent chapters.

This thesis builds on existing studies of colonial era and post-independence brass band cultures around the world. Scholarship on brass instruments describes their historical and organological roots in Europe (e.g., Herbert and Wallace 2011; Baines 1976), chronicles performance practices (e.g., Crawford 2015; Guion 1996) and traces their development by way of colonial military and missionary bands (e.g., Flaes 2000; Ranger 1975), and illustrates contemporary band cultures (e.g., Reily and Brucher 2013; Sakakeeny 2013; Booth 2005). On the whole, this work tends to frame brass bands in the

postcolony within socio-political histories of European colonialism and military bands—what Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher dub the "military band model" (2013: 4). Within this frame, the existing literature favors a diachronic historical progression that overemphasizes colonial legacies and histories of militarism, and underemphasizes the multitude of other histories, political or otherwise, that have influenced the development of brass band cultures—an argument I forward in Chapter One. African brass bands, in particular, are interpreted within familiar narratives of (post)colonial experience that foreground mimesis, indigenization, and appropriation (e.g., Garbin 2012; Zemp 2006; Flaes 2000; Collins 1989, 1977; Ranger 1975).

Indebted to these socio-historical studies, my study of Beninese fanfares departs from them in three ways. First, the ethnographic portrait offered is present-oriented—a decision reflecting my interlocutors' indifference toward fanfare's colonial origins (see Chapter One). Second, my investigation of sonic phenomena in Beninese fanfare performance (Chapter Three) embraces music analysis as a core methodology, an analytical move that recenters sound within this literature. Third, I present a fine-grained, materialist perspective that is attuned to tangible and experiential aspects of performance; that is, what playing brass instruments in this particular place looks, sounds, and feels like. Such an approach is less concerned with large historical sweeps (e.g., Flaes 2000), the formation of syncretic traditions (e.g., Booth 2005), and the transformation of genres (e.g., Ranger 1975), and more with material practices around musical instruments (Chapter Two), corporeal aspects of performance (Chapter Four), and affective experiences of musical practice (Chapter Five). In these ways, I differentiate my

ethnography from former studies on brass band cultures and adopt analytical approaches that might be applied elsewhere.

By situating my inquiry in Benin, an oft-overlooked Francophone country, my research expands the geographic perspective of Anglophone scholarship on music in West Africa. In doing so, I also necessarily engage with a small literature one might call Dahomean music studies. This literature accounts for (largely traditional) musical practices spanning from precolonial Dahomey to present-day Benin. Paramount is the work of French ethnomusicologist Gilbert Rouget (2014, 2001, 1996, 1985). His prolific documentation of musical practices in Abomey, Porto Novo, and Ouidah based on fieldwork during the mid-twentieth century—and most notably his study of royal court music in Porto Novo (1996) and his audio-visual recordings of Vodun ceremonies in Abomey (2001)[1]—placed Dahomey-Benin on the musicological map and laid the foundation for subsequent research.

Like Rouget, other scholars of Dahomean-cum-Beninese music concentrate on musical performance in traditional contexts. These include ceremonial performances in the royal courts of Porto Novo (Rouget 1996) and Abomey (Akoha and Medagbe 2011; Nketia 1971; da Cruz 1954), and sacred performances in Vodun convents (Leclair 2004; Rouget 2001; Tall 1995a, 1995b). Madeleine Leclair (2009, 2004, 2000) has published both writing and audio recordings from her research with a women's Vodun cult among the Itcha, a subset of Benin's Yorùbá population. Also notable is a CD set that Leclair co-produced with Gilbert Rouget featuring photographs and recordings of the sacred chants of the cult of Nana Burukuu (Leclair and Rouget 2011); the collection intersperses

[1] Vodun is an indigenous spiritual practice that centers on deified ancestral spirits and natural forces. Forms of worship are multiple and include various languages, songs, practices, and rituals.

recordings made by Rouget in 1958 and 1969, and those by Leclair made with the same community over sixty years later. Beninese scholars have also documented their country's musical traditions; for example, the anthropologist Albert Akoha (2011) transcribes and analyzes the royal court songs of Dahomean king Behanzin, and the musicologist Bienvenu Koudjo (1988) has published on Fon and Gun popular song.

More recent scholarship on Benin's music and culture heralds a shift from the local, bounded, and traditional to the global, dispersed, and popular. For example, Sarah Politz (2018, 2017) studies the place of Vodun music in Benin's contemporary jazz and brass bands, and well as global circulations of Beninese popular and sacred musics via the world music market. João de Athayde (2017) researches *bourian* music and masquerade—a performance tradition practiced among Benin's population of Brazilian returnees, called the Agudas—and conducts multi-sited fieldwork to account for the trans-Atlantic exchange of *bourian* between Benin, Portugal, and Brazil. Yet these studies still hold tight to the topic of tradition.

As a whole, scholarship on music and culture in Dahomey-Benin tends to take a historical tack and focuses on precolonial traditions, particularly those around Vodun. This documentary-like attention to traditional practices and forms extends to studies of Dahomean cultural life within the disciplines of anthropology (Noret 2010; Herskovits 1938), art history (Bay 2008; Adande 2007; Blier 1995), and religious studies (Rush 2013; Ogouby 2008; Tall 1995b; Sastre 1970; Herskovits 1964). This thesis, in contrast, offers a present-oriented portrait of an urban popular musical practice that exceeds the purview of tradition. Although Dahomean music scholarship is important background to my project, it does not play a leading role in my analysis.

While this thesis portrays brass band performance in Benin, it is not really *about* brass brands or *about* Benin. As made clear above, the ethnography presented here is not a conventional socio-historical documentation of a non-Western brass band culture. I do not historicize the practice within a linear trajectory nor do I offer explanations for stylistic transformations or generic divergences between Beninese brass band practice and Western ones. When topics like fanfare's history or European colonialism do surface, it is through my interlocutors' own telling. This thesis is also not about Dahomean music in the traditional sense, and by that I mean it is not a piece of scholarship about traditional music. My ethnography is indeed about musicians in Benin who sometimes play traditional styles, but notions of the nation, tradition, and authenticity do not emerge as vividly as conceptions of metal, diaphragms, sweat, and pleasure. My interlocutors did not make a fuss about tradition and thus neither do I. My ethnography, at least as I interpret it here, rubs shoulders with these two topics and their literatures but at heart is not about either one.

Rather, this thesis is about particular individuals and their experiences. It is about their imaginations, ideas, and feelings. It is about their behaviors, movements, and exertions. It is about their encounters with material, sound, and dirt, and their conceptions of history, breath, and the outside. And it is about the uncertainty, anxiety, and pleasure that those experiences render. More than documenting the doing of musical practice, I am committed to representing my interlocutors' experiences thereof, however complicated and messy.[2] If there is one area of scholarship in which my ethnography sits most comfortably, it is perhaps the study of music in postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa. Below I

[2] To this point, see John Law's (2004) *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. Law argues that methodologies should be able to deal with a world that is complex and messy.

elaborate on three topical areas—the popular, the material, and the postcolonial—where I see my ethnography intervening in this scholarship.

The popular

My focus on the amateur performance of a popular genre intervenes in research on popular music in and out of Africa. Since the 1990s, the study of popular music has filled an important breach in music studies, correcting for historical musicology's emphasis on works of (European) art music and ethnomusicology's longstanding focus on "traditional" musical practices. The dual rise of electoral democracy and neoliberal economic policy in African contexts has propelled scholarship on popular music in Africanist ethnomusicology in particular.[3] Some of these studies illustrate popular musical practices in quickly urbanizing contexts in which musical labor is reconfigured in new economic arrangements (e.g., Plageman 2013; Coplan 2008; Perullo 2008; Erlmann 1996; Mukuna 1992). Some attend to the cultural politics of music making in the midst of nationalist movements (Skinner 2012; Askew 2002; Turino 2000). Some studies focus explicitly on the rise of new musical economies, and processes of commodification and marketization (e.g., Skinner 2015; Perullo 2011; Kapchan 2007; Meintjes 2003; Erlmann 1999). Others have emphasized the emergence and consolidation of popular genres (e.g., Steingo 2016a; Shipley 2013; Charry 2012; White 2008; Meintjes 2003; Waterman 1990a; Kubik 1981), and the renovation or reification of musics valorized as "traditional" (e.g., Ogude 2012; Tang 2007; Askew 2002; Charry 2000; Waterman 1990b). Others have zoomed in on the producers of popular music themselves and, in particular, youth

[3] For a comprehensive overview of scholarship on African popular music see Eisenberg et al. (2017).

(e.g., Shipley 2013; Charry 2012; Weiss 2009; Perullo 2005). Speaking in broad strokes, studies of African popular music in the post-independence era emphasize the urban, professional, political, and economic.

I am indebted to this existing literature for the ways it has demonstrated the porous and shifting nature of musical boundaries once thought impregnable (e.g., traditional/modern, religious/secular, rural/urban, folk/popular, and so on). I also appreciate that these scholars give careful attention to the monetization, marketization, and commodification of musical activity—an analytical move that attends to musical circulation and consumption, and destabilizes the notion of music as an autonomous art form beyond the reach of capital. With these scholars, I turn my attention to an emergent popular music that collapses genre boundaries. And I demonstrate how musical practice becomes entangled in transnational flows and imaginaries exemplary of a neoliberal global order. Moreover, my ethnography echoes this scholarship's overriding demographic focus on youth in urban contexts.

My case study of Beninese fanfare also suggests new directions (or, at least, emphases) for the study of African popular music, two of which I highlight here. First, I shift attention from the professional to the amateur. Much scholarship on African popular music presumes the specter of professionalism—either through an emphasis on full-time, professional musicians (e.g., Kyker 2016; Eyre 2015; Feld 2012; Muller and Benjamin 2011; Keïta 2009; Veal 2000) or younger musicians for whom professionalization forms a central component of their musical practice (e.g., Skinner 2015; Shipley 2013; Charry 2012; Weiss 2009). In contrast, my ethnography portrays amateur musicians who play a popular genre. My interlocutors are working-class, part-time musicians whose musical

labor is unevenly compensated. While some may entertain professional aspirations, the stardom and (relative) financial security of a professional career is out of reach. As we will see, my interlocutors are avowedly amateur performers of popular music who are not hyper-attuned to the professionalization process. In emphasizing my interlocutors' interstitial position as amateurs who perform, I disrupt the dichotomy inherent in some scholarship that non-professionals are consumers, rather than producers, of popular music.

Second and relatedly, I emphasize live (i.e., acoustic) performances of popular music. The growing omnipresence of technology and its aesthetic, economic, and intrapersonal ramifications have encouraged Africanist scholars to focus on popular music as a studio-mediated or otherwise recorded practice (e.g., Steingo 2016a; Eisenberg 2012; Skinner 2010; Meintjes 2003). Recent studies of African popular music have also documented the rise of mediated practices like playback technology and lip-syncing, pointing to a co-dependence between recorded and "live" instantiations of popular tracks (e.g., Grant 2017; Brennan 2012). This is not to say that acoustic performance and the multisensory experience of popular music have not featured in recent scholarship, but rather that increased attention to recording technologies alongside that on popular music perpetuates the idea that popular genres are those that are recorded. By comparison, I give attention to a genre of popular music that is experienced in acoustic performance. Save for rare exceptions, Beninese fanfare music lacks a recorded or studio-produced analog and is not disseminated via electronic files or CDs. It remains the case that a defining feature of fanfare is its liveness.

The material

A thematic through line in this thesis is material. By material, I mean things and objects (e.g., brass instruments), but also the physical stuff that things are made of (e.g., brass) and their qualities (e.g., brassiness). For example, I give critical attention to musical instruments as material objects: the means of instrument maintenance and manufacturing (Chapter Two), and the sonic constraints of instrument design (Chapter Four). I also consider musicians' conceptions and experiences of materials: the anxiety induced by blowing into brass instruments (Chapter Five), and the meanings ceded to metal and its sound (Chapter Two). Moreover I expand a discussion of materials *per se* to address the material dimensions of musical performance more broadly: the materiality of musical pitch and timbre (Chapter Three), and the material-cum-corporeal manifestations of heat (Chapter Four) and air (Chapter Five). My analytical focus on materials grows out of my ethnography and my observations of the crucial role that material plays in my interlocutors' musical lives. As we will see, theirs is a musical practice predicated on the prestige of certain materials (e.g., brass and brass instruments) and the desire for material wealth, but at the same time constrained by the availability of material resources (e.g., access to instruments and their accessories), and the variegated limitations that instruments, bodies, and atmospheres impose.

In adopting a materialist perspective on Beninese fanfare, I engage with multiple strains of literature. For one, I contribute to scholarship on the world's brass band cultures. In contrast to the wide-frame of socio-historical studies (e.g., Booth 2005; Flaes 2000), a focus on materials lends a close-up analysis of what brass instruments feel and sound like. I also join a materialist trend in ethnomusicology that attends to the

materiality of musical sound (e.g., Sterne 2012; Demers 2010; Born 2005) and the social life of musical instruments (e.g., Roda 2014; Bates 2012). Moreover, a materialist approach builds on an extensive scholarship in anthropology and material culture studies that addresses human relationships to material objects and things (e.g., Miller 2005; Latour 1996; Appadurai 1986).[4] And it extends the second wave of anthropology's "material turn," which shifted attention from materiality to material itself (e.g., Ingold 2012, 2007b; Bennett 2010).

Crucially, I embrace a materialist perspective because it closely attends to the material conditions and contingency of musical practice. The discipline of ethnomusicology has been bedeviled by a will to impose categorical difference, a critique taken up most prominently by Kofi Agawu (2003). As a corrective, Agawu advocates for an ethnographic approach that presumes sameness and thereafter focuses on contingent, and notably material, factors that produce difference:

> There is no method for attending to sameness, only a presence of mind, an attitude, a way of seeing the world. For fieldworkers who presume sameness rather than difference, the challenge of constructing an ethnographic report would be construed as developing a theory of translation that aims to show *how the materiality of culture constrains musical practice in specific ways*. The idea would be to unearth the impulses that motivate acts of performance and to seek to interpret them in terms of broader, perhaps even generic cultural impulses. Such a project would ultimately look beyond the immediate material level, not by denying that Africans blow on elephant horns, cover drums with animal skin, or make flutes out of bamboo, but by emphasizing *the contingency of their investment in certain material objects and practices*. Objects function as a means to an end, and it is the complex of actions elicited by such objects that betrays the translatable impulses behind performance. Focusing on such impulses promotes a cross-cultural vision without denying the arbitrary specificity of a local (African) practice. (Agawu 2003: 169, my emphasis)[5]

[4] The edited collections by Beaudry and Hicks (2010) and Myers (2001) are helpful introductions to material culture studies.

[5] Agawu's work has been polemical in the field of ethnomusicology. For critical reviews of Agawu (2003) see Meintjes (2006) and, particularly with respect to Agawu's postulation of sameness and difference, Erlmann (2004).

Two ideas here are pertinent to the arguments I forward in this thesis. The first is that the materiality of culture, objects, and environments "constrains musical practice in specific ways." In the following pages, I show how pragmatic constraints such as lack of access to instruments or appropriate materials for instrument maintenance affect musicians' ability to play (Chapter Two); how atmospheric conditions like heat and humidity exhaust musicians' bodies, and crowded performance venues obstruct their movements (Chapter Four); how deteriorating and malfunctioning instruments affect musical pitch (Chapter Three); and how the material-cum-corporeal manifestations of air affect how musicians feel about their musical practice (Chapter Five). My ethnography is one of musicians who are frustrated by material inequality and whose performances are shaped by material limitations. I emphasize these points not to deny that my interlocutors are creative agents but rather to demonstrate that their musical choices and practices are limited by real constraints.

The second is that musicians "invest" in certain musical objects and practices for certain reasons. As we will see, my interlocutors hold complex but definite ideas about the history of fanfare (Chapter One) and the identity of brass instruments (Chapter Two). For example, some musicians claim that brass instruments are imported objects that index wealth and exteriority. Others entertain the idea that brass instruments are local objects because their performance sits squarely within preexisting musical practices around metal instruments, and because indigenous material culture equates brass and brassiness with wealth and prestige. Depending on the individual, one or both of these understandings of brass instruments serve(s) to motivate participation in fanfare. By illustrating my interlocutors' relationships to their material worlds, I seek to show that their musical

practice is contingent upon material circumstance and, following Agawu, "put the accent on the material conditions that produce surface differences" (2003: xx).

The postcolonial

Beninese fanfare is a postcolonial phenomenon. Brass instruments were first brought to Dahomey by the French colonial regime for the purposes of military parading. The Christian churches where many Beninese brass musicians train are, too, the ultimate result of colonial presence (as is the case, excepting Ethiopia, throughout Africa). The linguistic medium through which my interlocutors talk to one another (and to me) is French, and most of the international tourists, researchers, and development workers who travel to Benin are French citizens. One need not look far to find the vestiges of colonial rule. Given Benin's status as a postcolonial place and fanfare's as a postcolonial practice, I necessarily contend with the specter of postcolonial theorizing.[6] Below I briefly consider how other Africanist ethnomusicologists have contended with the legacy of colonialism and present the place of the postcolonial in my analysis.

According to Olivia Bloechl (2016), postcolonial music scholarship "has taken two broad forms: critically engaged documentation of musical life in colonial or postcolonial societies, and critique of colonialism's effects on musical life past and present." Most scholarship within Africanist ethnomusicology has taken the first, documentary form. These have included reflections on changes to musical practice over

[6] Here I discuss postcolonial literature within music studies and ethnomusicology specifically. In doing so I eschew a wider discussion of postcolonial theory. For the record, postcolonial music scholarship is indebted to early writers, activists, and revolutionaries (e.g., Fanon 2008 [1952], 2004 [1961]; Memmi 1965); theorists-turned-politicians (e.g., Kenyatta 1953 [1938]; Senghor 1967); heavyweights from the golden era of post-modernism/structuralism (e.g., Mitchell 1991; Spivak 1988; Said 1978); and those who utilized the affordances of postcolonial theory to deconstruct Europe itself (e.g., Chakrabarty 2000; Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 1993).

the course of political transformation (e.g., Gilman 2009; White 2008; Turino 2000; Erlmann 1999), musical life amidst the spatial and ecological ramifications of colonialism (e.g., Kisliuk 1998), and the influence of economic neoliberalism on musical production and commodification (e.g., Skinner 2015; Shipley 2013; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Meintjes 2003). More in line with Bloechl's second form are calls for a postcolonial ethnomusicology that critically considers the role of ethnomusicological research and ethnomusicologists themselves in perpetuating exoticism, essentialism, and difference (e.g., Agawu 2003; Waterman 1991; with Muller 1999 being an exemplar of such a work). This latter Africanist scholarship both attends to colonialism as a fact and attempts to undo the epistemic framework of colonial thinking.

My study of Beninese fanfare upholds this analytical tradition by giving attention to those living and laboring in a postcolonial place, and reworking some of the received logics of the colonial era. To the extent that it does this, it constitutes a work of postcolonial scholarship, however qualified. But even while my study is one of a postcolonial place, I am wary of the limitations of an overly determinative postcolonial analytical posture. Historically speaking, yes, Beninese fanfare would not be what it is today without colonialism. But to speak and write of fanfare as a (post)colonial practice flattens the many ways my interlocutors conceptualize its provenance and identity (see Chapter One). The close relationship between Beninese fanfare and Christianity, too, would likely not exist without colonialism. But to emphasize the role of Catholic missionaries in bringing brass instruments, diatonicism, sol-fa notation, four-part harmony, and the like to Benin would be to obscure the fact that the majority of my interlocutors learn to play brass instruments in African Initiated Churches, from players

of traditional flutes, and by watching YouTube videos. As we will see, my ethnography resists an easy postcolonial narrative. Classifying Beninese fanfare as first and foremost postcolonial may win me points for criticality but misses the multiplicity of historical and cultural identities of this genre, and loses some analytical messiness.

Thus, in my analyses to follow, the postcolonial as an explanatory frame takes a back seat. Where Benin's status as a postcolonial place lends relevance to the discussion at hand, I take note. Yet I resist the urge to find everywhere and in everything traces of colonialism, or to offer a prepackaged postcolonial explanation for each phenomenon that I encounter. As Agawu (2003) and others have impressed, we as music scholars must acknowledge how colonialism has held back African musicians, yet we cannot allow colonialism's ills or postcolonialism's excesses to erect a hermeneutic straightjacket for how we see the world. Not everything in Africa is ineluctably a product of colonialism.[7] Most importantly of all, I deemphasize postcolonial analysis because my interlocutors do. Their daily lives, motivations, preoccupations, anxieties, aspirations, and experiences are entangled within a complex of historical, social, cultural, and other factors in which colonialism and its legacies play a supporting, rather than leading, role. By mirroring my interlocutors' lack of emphasis on colonialism, I paradoxically further the central aim of postcolonial scholarship: that of centering of the lives, stories, and narratives of those subjugated by the colonial endeavor.

[7] Other scholars, too, have moved away from the postcolonial periodization. Charles Piot (2010), for one, adopts the post-Cold War as a temporal frame, suggesting that, for Togolese today, the colonial rupture is less important than phenomena like structural adjustment programs. The disagreement between J. F. Bayart and Achille Mbembe on the credibility and utility of postcolonial studies, presented in a special issue of *Public Culture* (Bayart 2011; Mbembe 2011), demonstrates that the postcolonial is, and has long been, controversial and up for debate.

A brief historical and demographic note

The Republic of Benin has a complex and multi-layered history. What is now southern Benin was once the Kingdom of Dahomey (Danxome in Fongbé), a powerful empire centered on its capital, Abomey, which reigned from the early seventeenth century until the end of the nineteenth century. The Dahomean kingdom and its people, the Fon, have been the subject of much scholarship, as has its involvement in the internal and trans-Atlantic slave trades (Bay 1998; Law 1991; Manning 1982; Ronen 1975; Akinjogbin 1967; Argyle 1966; Polanyi 1966; Cornevin 1962; Herskovits 1938; Le Herissé 1911). Neighboring empires centered around the present-day cities of Allada, Ouidah (Hweda), and Porto Novo (Xogbonu) have received relatively less attention (though see Law 2004; Rouget 1996; Tardits 1958). These kingdoms share common ancestral lineages; the Fon of Abomey, Gun of Porto Novo, and Hweda of Ouidah all claim to be descendants of Adja settlers who arrived in the region around the year 1300, themselves possibly of Yorùbá descent.[8]

These kingdoms actively participated in trade with Europe, and in particular with the Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, and Spanish. These foreign powers exerted strong economic and political influence on the Dahomean kingdom until 1894, when the French conquered the kingdom by force. French Dahomey (1894-1960) saw all of the accoutrements of colonialism, including the imposition of missionary education, the domination of traditional rulers, the extraction of local resources, and the purge of local religions, languages, and customs (see Ronen 1975). An anti-colonial nationalist movement began in the 1920s and intensified until decolonization began in 1958 and

[8] I draw this concise account from Sarah Politz (2017: 28-66), who takes a deep dive into Danxome's history. See also Law (1991).

ended with an autonomous Republic of Dahomey in 1960 (Anignikin 2014, 1986). The post-independence years were politically volatile. Hubert Maga won the first presidential election in 1960 but his administration was soon overthrown; the next twelve years saw several regime changes as different ethnic groups vied for political power (Ronen 1975).

In 1972, Mathieu Kérékou, who had served as a general under President Maga, took power in a military coup. Kérékou began his administration with a nationalist agenda that disavowed foreign political ideology but then, in 1975, declared a Marxist-Leninist orientation and renamed the Republic of Dahomey the People's Republic of Benin. Kérékou borrowed the name "Benin" from the Benin Kingdom that ruled in present-day Nigeria, an empire that predated the Kingdom of Dahomey by two centuries. Sarah Politz explains, "This was Kérékou's way of wiping the national slate clean, as if Danxome and the Adja-Fon hegemony of the south had never existed. Revolution meant a total break with the past, a complete cultural transformation of the country" (2017: 105). During the Marxist era, Kérékou maintained oppressive cultural, religious, and economic policies, and outlawed Vodun and certain traditional practices (see Strandsbjerg 2015, 2000; Ogouby 2008; Claffey 2007b; Tall 1995a). Given the strong ties between Vodun and traditional music, Kérékou's administration gave little support to musicians and obstructed the local performance scene with imposed curfews (Politz 2017: 117)—a stark contrast from the nationalization and promotion of traditional culture taking place elsewhere in West Africa during the 1960s through 1980s (see Castaldi 2006). The Marxist regime lost favor in the eighties as Benin's economic situation worsened, and in 1989, amidst popular unrest and growing public support for democracy, Kérékou willingly relinquished power.

In 1990, Benin peacefully transitioned to a multi-party democracy and approved a new constitution. And in 1991, Nicéphore Soglo, an economist who worked at the IMF and World Bank, beat Kérékou in the Republic of Benin's first presidential election (Decalo 1997). Kérékou would reappear a few years later, this time as a born-again Christian and advocate of democracy, and be elected President in 1996. During the 1990s, the newly democratic Benin underwent a cultural renaissance. Economic liberalization coupled with the government's investment in national culture created opportunities for musicians and artists, and traditional arts and practices associated with Vodun entered the public sphere. Cultural production in this era of neoliberalism was not just a nationalist project but also an individualist, economic one. The concurrent boom of the world music market in Europe and North America spurred Benin's own popular music industry and a wave of entrepreneurial musicians seeking to participate in the global musical economy (see Politz 2017, see also Feld 2000; Erlmann 1999; Taylor 1997).

Today, Benin remains troubled by slow economic growth, high unemployment, poor living standards and public services, restricted freedom of the press, and political corruption. Benin's economy relies largely on agriculture and illicit transit trade with Nigeria (World Bank 2018). As of 2015, over forty percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (ibid.). Many hoped that the election of Patrice Talon, a wealthy cotton industry tycoon, to the presidency in 2016 would bring change and increased economic opportunities. In his presidential campaign, Talon had promised to reform the constitution, limit presidents to a single five-year term, combat corruption, and lower unemployment. Yet public opinion of Talon is currently low. My interlocutors say that,

like presidents before him, Talon has shown more concern with furthering his own political and financial interests than those of his constituents. Indeed, his recent proposal to change the country's constitution to extend presidential term limits to seven instead of five years has spurred disapproval.

Southern Benin is characterized by ethnic and religious pluralism. International trade and a bustling port and export industry have encouraged the coastline to quickly urbanize. The last twenty years in particular have seen a growth in rural to urban migration as people congregate in Cotonou and its environs for economic opportunities and access to education. As such, Cotonou has become a cultural melting pot and residents today claim that "everything is mixed." Whereas Benin's numerous ethnic groups and subgroups are historically tied to particular locales, in Cotonou there is an (notably peaceful) intermingling of Fon, Gun, Adja, Yorùbá, Mina, Bariba, and other peoples. While Fongbé and Gungbé are the dominant languages in southern Benin (the former tied to the Fon of Abomey and the latter to the Gun of Porto Novo), most people in Cotonou are multilingual and French is the city's working language.

The central place of spirituality in social and political life in Benin has been well documented (Amouzouvi 2014; Rush 2013; Ogouby 2008; Claffey 2007a; Sastre 1970; Herskovits 1964). There is, roughly, a three-way split between Christianity, Islam, and Vodun, each of which is recognized as an official religion in Benin's constitution. Christianity is more prominent in the urban south where Catholic missionaries first arrived (see Alladaye 2003; Bonfils 1999; Balard 1998; Burton 1864) and Islam in the north where Hausa traders and other migrants introduced it in the sixteenth century (see Brégand 2006; Marty 1926). Vodun proliferates and crosscuts Christian and Muslim

communities. During the 1990s moment of cultural revitalization, the then-president Nicéphore Soglo claimed Vodun as something of a national emblem (see Tall 1995b) and, with support from UNESCO, implemented a national Vodun Festival held annually in Ouidah. Vodun remains a source of national pride and a venerated spiritual practice. More than that, Vodun permeates Beninese culture, music, art, comedy, sociality, and so on. Although forms of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity are rapidly gaining hold in the urban south, many people continue to identify, publicly or not, with Vodun.

Within southern Benin's fanfare community, Christianity looms large. Fanfare musicians' predominant religious affiliation is with the Celestial Church of Christ (*L'Église du Christianisme Céleste*), an African Initiated Church founded in Porto Novo in 1947 (see Claffey 2007a; Noret 2003; de Surgy 2001; Adogame 1999; Tall 1995b). Akin to the Aladura Pentecostal churches described by J.D.Y. Peel (1968), the Celestial Church grafts Christian beliefs onto indigenous practices, and its doctrine has been described as syncretic (Adogame 1999). Of relevance here is the central place of musical performance in Celestial Church worship. Most services are structured around the choral performance of Protestant hymns whose lyrics are in local languages and diatonic melodies overlay Vodun rhythms played on indigenous drums. Whereas combining "God's music" and the "Devil's music" would be heretical in a mission church (see Baker 2012), in the Celestial Church these would-be contradictions are embraced. The Celestial Church has become the informal home of musical education in southern Benin, and many of Benin's celebrity musicians have risen from the ranks of Celestial Church choirs. The Celestial Church is also known for supporting instrumental music and brass instrument pedagogy, which I expand on below.

Defining *la fanfare*

A more thorough description of Beninese fanfare is in order. A fanfare is an amateur brass and percussion ensemble that includes Western-designed brass and military percussion instruments. "Fanfare" is the French term for "brass band," and elsewhere in Francophone West Africa similar brass and percussion ensembles are called *les fanfares*.[9] Fanfares in Benin primarily perform in procession for communal events like funerals, church services, and political rallies. Their live performances are outdoor and acoustic, and rarely recorded. Fanfares are present throughout Benin though are especially prevalent in the densely populated, Christian south. Fanfares in southern Benin perform a wide repertoire of popular songs and Protestant hymns; while repertory can reflect regional variations, it frequently will cross religious and ethnic divides. Fanfare musicians are amateurs, a local category denoting musicians with little to average musical knowledge who perform part-time for money or recreation. Most are waged laborers who migrated to Benin's urban centers in search of work, and performing in fanfares constitutes one of many ways they earn income (see Chapter Four). While the origin of Beninese fanfare can be traced to the European military brass band tradition, not all musicians associate the history of this genre or its instruments with colonialism (see Chapters One and Two). The performance of Benin's "traditional" musics on "modern" (read imported) instruments lends fanfare a complex identity.

Notably, musicians in Benin differentiate between "fanfare" and "brass band."[10] A brass band is a professional ensemble that performs on stage and in recording studios and whose members play music full-time (see Politz forthcoming). Its instrumentation

[9] Again, for recurring foreign terminology I use regular typeface.
[10] Notably, Beninese musicians use the English phrase "brass band," indexing the world music industry to which this genre is thought to belong.

includes instruments of both Western and indigenous design, its repertoire focuses on original compositions in the *tradi-moderne* style, and its performances are often staged and amplified. An exemplar of Benin's brass band tradition is Gangbé Brass Band; they rose to national fame in the 1990s, have five studio albums, and continue to receive international acclaim on the world music market (see Politz 2017). Benin's professional brass bands were born of its amateur fanfare tradition, and the international success of groups like Gangbé Brass Band have spurred an upsurge in aspiring, amateur fanfares across southern Benin. Fanfares are now ubiquitous in everyday life, especially in peri-urban regions.

Below I give more detail to four features of fanfares: their membership, instrumentation, repertoire, and performance contexts. I elucidate aspects of fanfare's history and performance, and in particular the role of fanfares in funeral ceremonies, in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Membership

Fanfares typically have a shifting membership composed of individuals from different ethnic and language groups, and with diverse religious affiliations. Such heterogeneity is illustrative of southern Benin's urban region. While some fanfares are formed of musicians with shared interests—for example, they may belong to the same church, university, or neighborhood—most include musicians with various backgrounds and identities. Most fanfares have a core membership of approximately four to five musicians and a long roster of affiliated musicians who perform only occasionally. While a shifting membership can be advantageous—for example, it means that a fanfare can adjust

personnel and instrumentation according to the specifics of a gig—it is largely detrimental. One *chef du fanfare* (fanfare leader or boss), David Akande, explained that a constantly fluctuating membership means that musicians do not feel dedicated to the ensemble and thus do not work as hard. "There is too much disorder," he complained, "[The musicians] are not serious. Sometimes they come, sometimes they don't. They are crazy!" Musicians drop in and out depending on schedules, health, and financial need, and on the day of performances David is often left guessing as to who will show up.

What many fanfare musicians have in common is their gender, socio-economic status, and musical ability. The musicians featured in this thesis are predominantly working-class, minimally educated males who play music part-time to supplement their income. Some are old but most are young. The so-called youth (*les jeunes*) are typically between twenty and forty years old, live in shared accommodation or with family members, and do not yet have partners or children. Those who have relatively more financial independence and familial responsibility, or who are of advanced age are considered elders (*les vieux* or *les anciens*). The generational gap between fanfare members can be a source of tension. Elder musicians tend to assume authority and claim more financial profit while younger musicians, who may boast more musical skill, take umbrage. During my fieldwork, I met only one female fanfare musician. Social decorum dissuades Beninese women from performing music in public and especially not in fanfares, which involve evening gigs and overnight trips. Approximately eighty percent of the musicians I worked with identify as Christian, and the vast majority of those are members of the Celestial Church of Christ. Other Christians belonged to Pentecostal-

charismatic or Catholic churches. Approximately twenty percent of fanfare musicians I met identify as *vodunsi* (initiates of Vodun, literally "wives of Vodun").

Crucially, fanfare musicians are amateurs: they play music part-time and with average ability, and they distinguish themselves from *les professionnels* (the professionals). One trombonist, Maxime, defined "amateur" as "a beginner, or one who is beginning to know something in the domain of music," whereas a professional is "an expert in the domain." Another trombonist, Pedro, characterized professionals as "the big musicians" who record albums for commercial production and for whom musical performance is a career. And another trombonist, Celestin, said that fanfare musicians are amateurs because they have little musical knowledge and make money through live performances: "They are not really developed in music. They will take an instrument and blow one, two, maybe three notes, and then they descend upon the ground. With only a few [musical tones]! They do not care about the sound. They just want to make money." In this commonplace understanding, an amateur musician is someone with middling musical knowledge who performs as a part-time job. Indeed, most amateur musicians living and working in southern Benin's urban region migrated there from rural areas to seek education and/or waged labor. Their participation in fanfare is but one way of making money and "getting by" (*se débrouiller*) in Benin's gig economy (see Chapter Four).

Instrumentation

Fanfares in southern Benin are typically composed of Western-designed brass instruments (e.g., trumpet, trombone, and saxophone) and Western-designed military

percussion instruments (e.g., marching snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals). Musicians maintain that every fanfare should have, at minimum, a bass drum, cymbals, and one brass instrument, but instrumentation is otherwise flexible. The most common brass instruments are B flat (hereafter Bb) trumpets, Bb trombones, and Bb baritones. While tubas and sousaphones are desired, they are prohibitively expensive and difficult to acquire. Occasionally, a fanfare will include tenor or alto saxophones, which are considered "brass" instruments along with trumpets and trombones because of their metal material and their method of playing. These instruments are interchangeably called "brass instruments" (*les instruments de cuivre* or *les cuivres*), "wind instruments" (*les instruments à vent*), "horns" (*les cors* in French, *ván* in Fongbé), and "bells" (*les pavions* in French, *foulin* in Fongbé). Brass instruments (again, this includes saxophones) and their accessories are largely imported to Benin yet they are not necessarily considered "foreign" instruments. Rather, brass instruments have complex identities stemming from multiple historical, religious, and material associations (see Chapter Two).

Brass instruments serve primarily melodic and harmonic roles. The most skilled trumpet player usually takes the lead melodic role, performing a given song's melody in a high register and the call in each call and response pattern. It is also common for the leader of a fanfare to be a trumpet player. Trombone and baritone players typically play supportive roles, improvising harmonies in intervals of fourths and fifths.[11] One of the trombone or baritone players will assume the designated role of "bass" and improvise bass lines for the duration of a performance. In many fanfares, however, the leading melodic role is passed between instrumentalists. As we will see, fanfare's performance

[11] A.M. Jones theorized thirds, fourths, and fifths regions of the African continent to categorize harmonic inclinations of indigenous group singing (1959: 231 [within Volume 1]).

contexts present constantly changing demands and musicians are always at the ready to start, stop, and switch songs. In such a dynamic performance environment, each fanfare musician can and must be able to "chant a song" (*entonner une chanson*) when necessary.

Fanfare's percussion section includes the bass drum, snare drum, and cymbals. The bass drum is the principle drum of fanfare. It is commonly called *fánfán hoún* ("the fanfare drum" in Fongbé, *fánfán* being a phonetic spelling in Fongbé of the French *fanfare*, and *hoún* the generic Fongbé word for drum), though is also called *la grosse caisse* ("bass drum" in French). The bass drum has a central rhythmic and melodic role. The bass drum player performs challenging rhythmic articulations and, especially when replicating a traditional style, complex polyrhythmic patterns typically played on multiple membranophones. The bass drum player can also alter the pitch of the instrument. In contrast to Western military band styles and performance technique, in Beninese fanfare a bass drum player carries the drum with the drumhead parallel to the ground and uses only one mallet. They then use their second hand to strike the drumhead or side of the drum, and to apply pressure to the drumhead, thereby changing its tension and pitch (Figure 0.7).[12] Bass drum players produce around three different pitches (low, middle, and high pitches), plus ascending and descending pitch bends. The bass drum player deploys these pitches to emulate tones of speech, sounding out slogans listeners will recognize.[13] They also perform complex melo-rhythmic patterns to mark the beginning and ending of songs.[14] In this way, the role of the bass drum player in fanfare is comparable to that of a lead drummer in percussion ensembles elsewhere in West

[12] For an audio-visual example, see the bass drummer Alexandre Ahononhoué's demonstration of various local rhythms: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uitQsRpqkNs.
[13] For more on drumming and speech surrogacy see Rouget (1964) and Stern (1957).
[14] See Meki Nzewi's (1974) writing on melo-rhythm.

Africa.[15] Additionally, the bass drum player takes a leadership role during performances, and directs the fanfare where to go and what songs to play. Bass drum players tend to be skilled soloists and are frequently featured in dance breaks.[16] Musicians maintain that the bass drum is the most challenging fanfare instrument to play, and the bass drum player is often the most highly paid.



Figure 0.7: A bass drummer performs with one mallet. Cadjehoun, 8 November 2015.

The snare drum and cymbals serve a similar timekeeping function comparable to that of the *gan* (iron bell) in Beninese and other West African musics. Together they

[15] There exists a significant scholarly literature on African drumming: Wilson (1992), Nketia (1963), Cudjoe (1953), Wachsmann (1953), Gadzekpo (1952), Gbeho (1951), Carrington (1949), Herzog (1945), Chottin (1939), and Jones (1934), among others.
[16] The central role of the bass drum player is evident in the performance of Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome, which was narrated in this thesis' Prelude.

sound a constant, periodic timeline, affording a rhythmic and textural background against which the bass drum and brass instruments perform more melodic and soloistic roles. During performances, the snare drum player and cymbals player stick close together so that they can communicate verbally, transition between different timelines, and remain in sync. Because the snare drum and cymbals serve complimentary roles the former is sometimes omitted, yet fanfares typically include both. The rolls of the snare drum, in particular, offer a thick texture and sense of fullness to the sound of the fanfare. While musicians generally prefer the bright timbre of the military band clash cymbals, on occasion a gan is substituted for the cymbals. The fanfare's standard tripartite percussion section is sometimes expanded to four to include an indigenous percussion instrument. The most common addition is the *gbon,* a talking drum or pressure drum native to Benin and of Yorùbá origin. It is made of wood, animal skin, and plant fibers, and is the primary instrument for the music of the Egungun.[17] In fanfare performance, the gbon player performs speech tones and slogans, and emphasizes the contours of the brass instruments' melodies.

Repertoire

Fanfares' musical repertoire spans the popular, traditional, and religious. Popular genres represented include Ghanaian hiplife, Congolese soukous, Ivorian coupé décalé, Nigerian afrobeat and afrobeats, jazz, gospel, and hip-hop. Such "popular music" (called interchangeably *la musique moderne* or *la musique populaire* or *la musique profane* by

[17] For example, the gbon is the primary instrument for the music of the Egungun. Egungun are ancestral spirits, also called *les revenants* ("ghosts" in French) and *kuvito* ("the children of death" in Fongbé), that appear in colorful and ornately decorated full-body mask. They came to Benin via the Yorùbá in Nigeria.

my interlocutors) is made for a commercial market and aired on local radio, and is usually apolitical, secular, and widely known. While popular genres are mostly "imported" (*importé*), the songs trending on local radio during my fieldwork were by Beninese popular artists like Johnny Sourou, Ricos Campos, Zeynab, Méchac Adjaho, Sagbohan Danialou, Angelique Kidjo, David Saxo, Anna Téko, and Gangbé Brass Band. Fanfare musicians prefer to play "known songs" (*les chansons bien connues*) by Beninese artists because they are familiar to local audiences. I also observed that fanfare musicians select popular songs based on their musical features; musicians prefer songs with a pentatonic melody whose register is within the comfortable range of a brass instrument. For example, one song trending among fanfares during my fieldwork was "Fayvi, faire ton choix" by the Beninese artist Johnny Sourou. Its catchy pentatonic melody in stepwise motion is easy for the beginner instrumentalist to play, and its humorous lyrics about a young woman deciding between two male suitors are appealing to audiences.[18] During fanfare performances of this song, audience members would often sing along to the melody.

Another popular genre is the so-called "slogan," a lyrical rhyme or phrase that is vocalized or played on a drum that emulates speech tones.[19] Slogans are in local languages,[20] often contain puns and jokes, are typically one or two phrases in length, and sometimes have a call and response pattern that invites audience participation. Fanfares

[18] Fanfare St. Joseph performed the song "Fayvi, faire ton choix" for a promotional YouTube video. See the 5'30" mark in their online video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA5Nlp0dUyE&t=81s.
[19] Beninese musicologist Bienvenu Koudjo (1988) develops a tripartite taxonomy of the voice in Fon musical performance. He delineates a spoken voice, playful voice (half-spoken, half-sung), and sung voice. What my interlocutors call "slogans" might fit within Koudjo's second category.
[20] Benin's indigenous languages, such as Fongbé and Gungbé, are tonal. In the performance of slogans, the tones of speech are often emphasized and serve to shape spoken melodies.

borrow slogans from popular repertories and, more rarely, compose their own. A standard slogan during my fieldwork was one that praises a "big man" and playfully asks him to share his wealth.[21] I offer the Fongbé lyrics with English translation:[22]

Baba nu wé	You are the powerful one
kpo gan kpo djè[23]	With all of the precious things

In fanfare performance, slogans are frequently performed on the bass drum or gbon, both of which are "talking drums" in this context. When a drummer begins a slogan other musicians join in with vocal recitation. An example of this phenomenon is Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome's performance in Lokossa, which was narrated in this thesis' Prelude. Brass instrumentalists sometimes emulate the speech tones of a slogan on their instruments, though this is less common.[24]

Fanfares also perform traditional melodies and rhythms. Benin's traditional music (called *la musique traditionelle* or *la musique folklorique*) is primarily understood as the melodies and rhythms that "exited" from Vodun convents and Dahomean royal courts, and whose origins are "ancient" and authorship unknown. As mentioned, many traditional genres previously reserved for sacred and ceremonial contexts are increasingly prevalent in profane contexts. Fanfare musicians, like other popular musicians, perform a

[21] Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome performed this slogan during their performance in Lokossa. See the 11'45" mark in the online video of their performance (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qq86oHSe3w).
[22] The transcription and translation of this slogan are by Maxime Agbahoungba.
[23] *Baba* means "father" or "king" in Fongbé, Gungbé, and Yorùbá. But in this context, *baba* is an abbreviation of *babariba*, a slang term used by Fon youth to refer to a rich, powerful, or big man. *Gan* means "iron," and in this context denotes precious worldly objects such as gold, money, clothes, and so on.
[24] Joseph Kaminski (2008) notes that the "flexibility of vibrating lips" allows a player to easily emulate the glide tone of speech. This "surrogate speech" in instrumental performance is said to reflect linguistic and verbal expressions in local languages, such as the addition of extended vowel sounds, often "oooo" and "eeee" at the ends of phrases. One can hear similar surrogate speech in the signals and phrase endings of brass players in Beninese fanfare.

large selection of Benin's traditional genres—among them *ahwangbahoun*, *agbadja*, *djegbe, zenli*, *tchinkoume*, *massé gohoun*, *agbéhoun*, *kàkà*, *abgotchébou*, *bourian*, and *zankpanou*[25]—yet in these cases fanfare musicians disrupt the enduring practice of particular genres on particular indigenous drums by transposing all rhythms to military percussion instruments. Fanfares have also adapted (and renamed) rhythms from the surrounding region, such as "highlife fast" and "highlife slow" modeled on the timeline from Ghanaian highlife and "go-go" from Nigerian afrobeat. While most fanfares perform a variety of traditional genres, some advertise expertise in one rhythm, mirroring the specialist practice of Dahomean ceremonial percussion ensembles (see da Cruz 1954).[26] Notably, some musicians conceive fanfare as a traditional rhythm-cum-genre in its own right, maintaining that fanfare developed within Benin and is thus an indigenous genre. I will discuss musicians' perspectives on the history of fanfare in Chapter One.

Fanfares' religious selections include Protestant hymnody and sacred music from Vodun convents. Most fanfare musicians in southern Benin are members of the Celestial Church of Christ and have memorized a remarkable number of Protestant hymns.[27] Hymns orchestrated for a four-part choir are arranged (often in-the-moment of performance) for brass instruments, with trumpets usually playing the soprano and alto parts, and trombones and baritones the tenor and bass parts. Fanfare percussionists play

[25] I give detail to many of these rhythms later in the thesis. See Politz (forthcoming) on *tchinkoume* and *zenli*, de Athayde (2017) on *bourian*, and da Cruz (1954) for an overview of prominent ceremonial genres in Dahomey.
[26] For example, Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome, an amateur fanfare active in Bohicon and Abomey, frequently performs *zenli*, the ceremonial funerary genre from Abomean royal courts. A video of Fanfare de Sodohome performing *zenli* on fanfare instrumentation is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_UCBMYFKc8.
[27] The Celestial Church of Christ's hymnbook, *Receuil [sic] de Chansons en Usage dans L'Église du Christianisme Céleste* (L'Église du Christianisme Céleste, n.d.), includes titles and lyrics for 336 hymns. No melodies, harmonies, or rhythms are notated; rather, these are retained in collective memory and entrained in practice.

hymns at a low volume, providing steady accompaniment and accenting cadences with small flourishes.[28] Hymns are sometimes set to local rhythms. The most popular rhythm of the Celestial Church of Christ is *ahwangbahoun*, which the Church's prophet is said to have invented (see Chapter One), and fanfares perform it often. In my observations, fanfares rarely rehearse Protestant hymnody as it is assumed that musicians are already familiar. During fanfare performances, a musician will propose to play a certain hymn by calling its number in the Celestial hymnbook or by singing an identifying melodic phrase in sol-fa.[29] The rest of the musicians will quickly recognize it and join in. Christian musicians are also well versed in the sacred songs of prominent Vodun (e.g., Sakpata, Legba, or Tron) and ceremonial practices (e.g., the Egungun masquerade). Some Christian musicians I met were former *vodunsi* and trained in its music; others were familiar only with the public side of Vodun culture. I also met several avowed "Vodun fanfares" that perform for Vodun ceremonies. Yet, just as Christian fanfares play Vodun music, fanfares composed of *vodunsi* also play Christian hymnody. This confluence of Christian and Vodun repertory reflects Benin's religious pluralism, however, I have never met a fanfare musician who identified as Muslim nor have I observed fanfare performances in Islamic contexts.[30]

[28] An example of a Protestant hymn orchestrated for fanfare is Fanfare St. Joseph's arrangement of "Lead Me Savior," which they performed for a promotional YouTube video. This video is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2bIoFgSyUk&t=66s.
[29] I speak about Celestial Church music pedagogy and the use of sol-fa notation in Chapter Three.
[30] Given Benin's significant Muslim population, this is surprising. My interlocutors explained the lack of Muslims in Beninese fanfare by pointing to Islamic scripture, which forbids musical performance in religious practice. For this reason, they said, Muslims do not have the opportunity to learn brass instruments. This explanation reflects the experience of many Beninese brass musicians of learning brass instruments in Christian churches. For a historicization of brass instruments in early Muslim societies see Polk (2011).

The vast majority of fanfares do not perform original compositions. Rather, as outlined above, they perform covers and arrangements of popular, traditional, and religious songs and slogans. That fanfare does not have an original repertoire is significant. For one, it underscores that the musical labor of fanfare is primarily undergone in live performance, a point I make explicitly in Chapter Four. Additionally, it is another reason why fanfare musicians identify as "amateur" and distinguish themselves from "the professionals" and "artists" (*les artistes*), who compose original songs for commercial production. This is not to say that fanfare musicians are not creative. To the contrary, fanfare performances demand a host of original and improvisatory musical acts—from selecting songs to please a particular audience, to improvising harmonies and bass lines and solos, to shortening or elongating a standard song structure, to arranging a hymn for different instrumentation, to dancing and ambulating and gesturing. For the working musician whose financial remuneration depends on audience satisfaction, it is essential to have at the ready a familiar repertoire of popular, traditional, and religious songs, and to be able to improvise within a dynamic and oft-changing performance context.

Performance contexts

Fanfares perform for communal events like funerals, church events, birthdays, weddings, baptisms, and political rallies.[31] They typically perform outdoors, in procession, and without amplification. Brass and percussion instruments, being both acoustic and mobile,

[31] Funerals and church events are by far the most prevalent performance contexts. During my fieldwork, I also observed numerous fanfare performances at political rallies, as Benin held a presidential election in March 2016. Yet political rallies are less common in non-election years.

are especially conducive to public parades in which participants are on the move.[32] Moreover, the sonic volume of a fanfare makes noise and grabs attention.[33] Beninese fanfares generally perform on the weekends in their home community but will travel long distances if the price is right. Performances are arranged via verbal contract and range from one hour to multiple days in duration. Fanfares are typically paid a flat fee for a performance along with a symbolic gift of a bottle of liquor or crate of sodas.[34] During their performance, musicians will solicit monetary donations from audience members. While musicians' primary performance objective is to make money, financial remuneration for fanfare performances is negligible and musicians express additional motivations for their participation (see Chapter Four). Fanfare musicians typically wear matching shirts or uniforms made of wax cloth (*pagne*).

The primary performance contexts for fanfares are funerals.[35] Fanfares are hired to perform for funeral and burial ceremonies of various kinds, including those of all Christian denominations, those of Vodun, those specific to ethnic groups, those emerging from royal courts, and those that combine traditions. I did not observe a fanfare perform for Muslim funerary rituals. For fanfares in southern Benin, the most common funerals are those that include elements of Christianity and traditional customs. Fanfares have become ubiquitous in funerary ceremonies in southern Benin, their popularity driven by

[32] Matt Sakakeeny likewise suggests that the mobility of the brass instrument is integral to mobilizing people, glossing the New Orleans brass band as "an assemblage of human beings who hold instruments in their hands and use them like tools to get people moving" (2013: xi).
[33] There is a wide range of ethnographies that detail the sonic utility of brass bands in public spaces (e.g., Bruinders 2013; Sakakeeny 2013; Feld 2012; Garbin 2012; Booth 2005).
[34] Clement da Cruz (1954) describes that musical ensembles in the Republic of Dahomey were likewise remunerated with a flat fee and a bottle of liquor. This tradition continues in the domain of fanfare performance although in Christian contexts a crate of sodas is often substituted for the bottle of liquor.
[35] Funeral traditions in southern Benin are well documented in anthropological literature. See Noret (2010, 2004), Noret and Jindra (2011), Rouget (1994), Herskovits (1938), and Kiti (1937).

their affordability and their adeptness at performing in procession, as well as other factors. While I do not posit a normative model for fanfare's funerary performances—every funeral is different, as every family has unique wishes—it is worth outlining a few commonplace features.

Fanfares are typically asked to perform during multiple stages of a given funeral ceremony, which can stretch over several days if not weeks. During the pre-burial stage, fanfares are often asked to "welcome" the corpse from the morgue and accompany the funeral caravan as it circulates among the deceased's family's homes (Figure 0.8). When in procession, the fanfare follows behind a car carrying the corpse, escorting the deceased with mood appropriate and often spiritual songs while caravan participants dance around them. When inside the family homes, the fanfare performs both sacred and popular songs, and solicits donations from funeral attendees. This procession—from the morgue to the family homes—can last an entire day and even stretch over multiple days. And, in cases where the deceased had ties to multiple locales, the procession can involve moving between and performing in different cities, towns, and villages. During Christian ceremonies, the fanfare will accompany the procession to a church and perform both outside and inside the sanctuary. Fanfares typically do not perform during the burial yet, in some cases, will escort the caravan to the cemetery.[36]

[36] It remains a common practice in southern Benin to bury deceased persons within family compounds.



Figure 0.8: The members of Voix des Anges Brass play a hymn as they welcome a corpse at the morgue. Cotonou, 9 August 2016.

Perhaps the principle task of the fanfare during funeral ceremonies is to "animate" (*animer*) the post-burial reception. Fanfares do so through the skillful performance of songs, dances, slogans, and gestures that create a joyful ambiance (see Chapter Four). It is during the funeral reception(s) that fanfares engage directly with funeral attendees-cum-audience members, perform the most diverse repertoire, and earn the most in monetary tips. In addition to the fanfare, funeral receptions often feature musical performances by traditional voice and percussion ensembles composed of members of the deceased's family, as well as amplified recorded music played by DJs. Sometimes there is more than one fanfare at a reception; such double-booking is normally caused by

internal family disputes and indecision over which ensemble to hire, though occasionally a fanfare will appear uninvited and attempt to "steal the ground" from another fanfare.[37]

To further illustrate the role of a fanfare in contemporary funerary ceremonies, I offer the program for the funeral of Cosme Comlanvi, the father of my friend Celestin Comlanvi (Figure 0.9). The funeral's numerous ceremonies took place between 14 March and 28 April 2018, and included Christian services as well as traditional burial rites and wakes. There were numerous musical performances by Celestial and Evangelical church choirs, a fanfare, and voice and percussion ensembles. The children of the deceased hired a fanfare to perform for the pre-burial processions and post-burial receptions, as well as to animate the family home at various points. While I was unable to attend the funeral, Celestin kindly shared with me the program.

[37] Fanfare musicians refer despairingly to this practice as "stealing the ground" (*voleur le terrain*) or "taking advantage of the opportunity" (*faire le djèmè,* where *djèmè* means "to jump at the chance" in Fongbé).





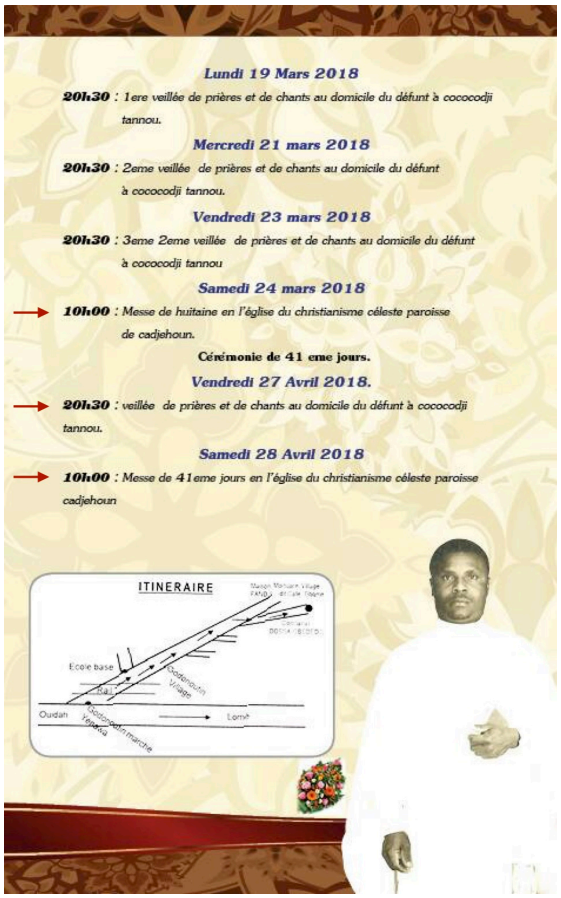


Figure 0.9: Program for the funeral of Cosme Comlanvi. The stages of the funeral ceremony during which a fanfare performed are marked with red arrows.
Used with permission.

The Celestial Church of Christ is a major institution for musical education in southern Benin and the principle venue for brass instrument pedagogy. Benin has no formal music conservatories and only a handful of arts-centered primary schools, each of which is non-governmental and fee-paying. The average Beninese person does not have access to formal music education and instead acquires musical knowledge through everyday practices in social and religious contexts. The Celestial Church of Christ looms large as a place for free musical education, and the musicians I know refer to it as "the music university of Benin." Musical performance is central to Celestial Church worship and services typically feature lengthy performances by the church choir and orchestra. As noted above, the Celestial Church is often characterized as syncretic; this hybridity extends to Celestial musical practices, which mix Protestant hymns with local rhythms, and imported with indigenous musical instruments. The Celestial Church's prophet, Samuel Oschoffa, was a skilled musician who played both the saxophone and the trumpet, and the church has embraced brass instruments as something of a musical emblem.[38] Most Celestial parishes own a selection of brass instruments, among others, and loan them to church members. Moreover, parishes host weekly music lessons for children and adult learners, and Celestial musicians actively share knowledge.

The Celestial Church also offers performance opportunities for fanfares. An exemplar is the Celestial Church's harvest festival (*la fête de la moisson*), which is celebrated annually by each parish on a different weekend. There are countless Celestial parishes along Benin's southern coast, and Celestial fanfares can count on performance contracts at harvest festivals nearly every weekend during the high season. While

[38] It is notable that, in Benin, Western-designed brass instruments are associated more with African Initiated Churches like the Celestial Church of Christ and less with colonial mission churches. Compare against Bruinders (2013) and Ranger (1975).

Celestial fanfares usually perform at church events unwaged, they receive monetary donations from churchgoers. A typical harvest festival spans across a weekend and includes several staged performances by church choirs and orchestras, ambulatory performances by fanfares, religious services, a fundraising auction, and a reception. A fanfare is present on each day of the festival. In the morning, the fanfare will "welcome" churchgoers as they arrive and move around the church grounds playing hymns and slogans.[39] The fanfare will later lead the congregation in procession into the sanctuary and perform at various points during the service (Figure 0.10). After the service, the fanfare leads the congregation outside the sanctuary and animates the reception. In these contexts, fanfare musicians wear the Celestial Church's ceremonial white cassock (*la soutane blanche*) in lieu of their regular uniforms. It is normal and acceptable for non-Celestial musicians to perform for Celestial Church ceremonies, yet they are asked to wear the white cassock.

[39] See, for example, a video of a fanfare performing outside of the Celestial Church Akossombo parish in Cotonou for their annual harvest festival. This video is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1mgvM9G2qc&t=37s.



Figure 0.10: A fanfare performs in procession in the sanctuary of the Celestial Church of Christ Akpapa Centre. Akpapa, 7 February 2016.

Methods and fieldwork

My research methodologies were multiple. I draw from participant observation, formal and informal interviews, life histories, audio-visual elicitation, archival research, and conversations mediated via online platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Further methods included musicological techniques such as transcription, tonal and rhythmic analysis, and evaluations of pitch and timbre. Participant observation as a performing member of fanfares provided the majority of my data. My experience performing in fanfares afforded a vantage point into the micro and sensorial dimensions of music making, and heightened my sensitivity to my interlocutors' experiences. My long-term engagement with Beninese musicians, furthermore, fostered close relationships and

intimate friendships, and gave detail to my understanding of my friends' everyday concerns and desires. I describe my fieldwork experience below.

Timeline and activities

My fieldwork totaled thirteen months between 2013 and 2016, and included participant observation in Benin, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. I first traveled to Benin in September 2013 to conduct fieldwork for my master's thesis. At the time, I was interested in Benin's professional brass band scene and had been in touch with several members of Gangbé Brass Band to discuss a possible research project. The band was familiar with foreign journalists, researchers, and even ethnomusicologists (Sarah Politz had worked with Gangbé in the years prior), and they warmly welcomed my interest in their music and invited me to spend the summer with them in Cotonou. I arrived at the Cotonou airport anxious and wide-eyed—it was my first visit to sub-Saharan Africa—and was met by Gangbé's sousaphone player, James Vodounnon, who would act as my host.

During my month there, I stayed with James' cousin, Ismael El Zola, in his large marbled house in Hlakome, a neighborhood to the east of the Cotonou Lagoon (this area is generally known as Akpapa). Every day, James would drive to Akpapa on his motorcycle from his home in Ekpe and pick me up, and we would go about his daily program, be it a trip to Dantokpa market, a visit to a low tier politician to ask for sponsorship, Gangbé Brass Band's afternoon rehearsal, a soccer game in James' home village, a Celestial Church service, or an evening concert at the Centre de Promotion de l'Artisanat (Center for the Promotion of Crafts). Upon returning to the U.K., I wrote my master's thesis about themes of entrepreneurship and self-commodification, with a focus

on how Gangbé Brass Band musicians perceived brass instruments as being a kind of material portal to Western audiences and the world music market. Although my research interests eventually moved on to other topics and other musicians, this first fieldwork experience laid the logistical and interpersonal foundations for my future work.

I kept up contact with several members of Gangbé Brass Band after that initial trip in 2013. In July and August 2014, I accompanied Gangbé Brass Band on tour as they performed in a music festival circuit on the west coast of France. And in May and June 2016, I spent six weeks in Belgium and one week in the Netherlands with Eric Yovogan, a now former member of Gangbé Brass Band. At that time, I thought that my dissertation research about Beninese amateur fanfares might include a diasporic perspective, and Eric's story—from a village in southern Benin to the unassuming city of Boom, Belgium via Celestial Church choirs and amateur fanfares and Gangbé Brass Band—seemed a good one to feature. While this ethnographic material did not make it into this iteration of the thesis, the time I spent with Eric and the conversations we had about Beninese music certainly influenced it. Perhaps Eric will feature in a future project.

My extended fieldwork in Benin took place between August 2015 and September 2016. I was based in Cotonou, a sprawling urban center and Benin's largest city (Figure 0.11). Over the course of the year, I moved between different neighborhoods to expand my familiarity with Cotonou's *quartiers* (neighborhoods) and facilitate access to certain fanfares and their rehearsal venues. For the first three months, I rented an apartment behind a guesthouse in Sikécodji, a neighborhood located west of the lagoon between Place de l'Étoile Rouge and Église Saint Michel. Thereafter, I lived in shared accommodation in compounds with Beninese families and, for some of the time, other

researchers; first in Northern Cadjehoun, near Collège Catholique Père Aupiais (a missionary school) and Camp Guezo (the central military camp), and then in Sainte Rita, behind the Catholic Church and next to the Sainte Rita market. I lived in houses typical for a lower- to middle-class Beninese person: one-story concrete structures with no air conditioning and no generator. When the power went out in the neighborhood, my power went out, too. I chose to live in lower class residential and commercial neighborhoods in order to facilitate relationships with my interlocutors who, as mentioned, were mostly lower class, waged laborers.

I moved around within Cotonou by motorcycle taxi, colloquially called *zemidjan* ("get me there fast" in Fongbé). Motorcycles are the primary mode of transport in Benin and automobile taxis are not allowed in Cotonou's urban center. Motorcycle transport is quick and inexpensive but also dangerous; I witnessed numerous accidents and was involved in multiple ones myself. I also traveled frequently outside of Cotonou—nearly every weekend—to perform with fanfares in surrounding cities, towns, and villages. Cotonou is well connected via shared taxi (colloquially called *sept-place*, meaning "seven place," to denote the seven passengers who are squeezed into the vehicle's five seats) to the other major cities in Benin's southern region, such as Porto Novo, Ouidah, Allada, Abomey, and Bohicon (Figure 0.12).



Figure 0.11: Map of Cotonou with relevant neighborhoods and landmarks identified.

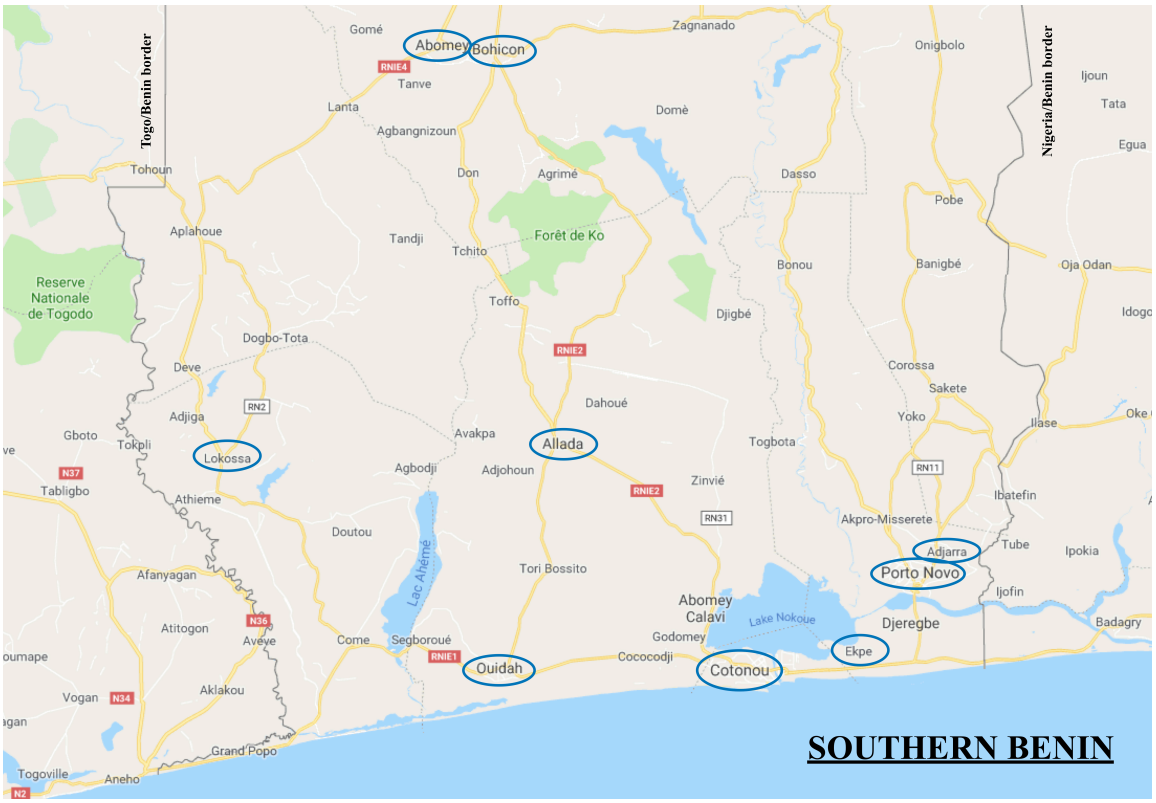


Figure 0.12: Map of southern Benin with relevant cities and towns identified.

I arrived in Cotonou in August 2015 with a handful of phone numbers belonging to musicians I had met in 2013. Fortunately, these musicians still had the same number and they were generous to introduce me to other (and even rival) musicians and ensembles. The fanfare community in southern Benin is tightly knit—particularly within the Celestial Church network—and my contacts snowballed rapidly. In the beginning, my approach was to meet anyone and everyone. I spent two months or so attending rehearsals and performances of numerous ensembles, and collecting names and phone numbers of musicians. After I had a sense of the scene, I chose three representative ensembles to focus on: Fanfare St. Joseph in Cotonou, Voix des Anges Brass in Cotonou, and Fanfare de Sodohome in Bohicon (each of which I introduce in more detail below). I became a regular member of the former two, an irregular member of the latter, and continued to visit and play with other fanfares and amateur ensembles. In all, I interacted with more than twenty distinct fanfare ensembles and upwards of two hundred musicians.

I quickly gained credibility in the fanfare community through my skills as a brass instrumentalist. I am a classically trained tuba player and have a bachelor's degree in tuba performance. I also play other brass instruments, including the baritone, trombone, and bass trombone, and have performance experience in a variety of musical genres. My identity as a brass player, and the baritone that I brought with me to Benin, helped facilitate my access to fanfare musicians and my entrance into fanfares. Playing a brass instrument alongside my interlocutors also enabled me to build friendships and develop intimacies. Eliot Bates (2012) likewise acknowledges the centrality of instruments in

ethnomusicological methods and in helping ethnomusicologists form personal relationships with their interlocutors:[40]

> [O]ne of the aspects that makes ethnomusicology distinct from other humanistic social sciences is the unique powers and roles of instruments within the lives and studies of both the ethnomusicologists and their interlocutors. For many ethnomusicologists (myself included), instruments alone enable long-term participant observation of a sort and intensity that would be inconceivable in any other social milieu. What might begin as a topical curiosity quickly becomes a vital research implement that (often inadvertently or subconsciously) structures the entire research methodology many of us adopt while in the field. (Bates 2012: 388)

As Bates intimates, my own familiarity with and passion for brass instruments encouraged an instrument-focused methodology and analysis (see Chapters Two and Five). It also enabled a particular fieldwork experience: one in which my interlocutors and I built friendships around our shared experiences of musical instruments, and engaged in reciprocal knowledge exchange.

As a fanfare participant, I attended regular rehearsals and performances, and was closely involved in the social lives of ensemble members. My day-to-day schedule loosely mirrored that of my interlocutors: during the daytime, I worked at my non-performance job, and at nighttime, I played music. My daytime schedule, for the most part, was improvised. I attempted to "make a program," as the Beninese say, but my meetings were frequently canceled, lunch dates postponed, and interviewees running late. Eventually I abandoned attempts to schedule meetings in advance and began doing what my interlocutors did: cold-call someone, immediately ask, "Where are you?" and then

[40] Ted Solis' collection *Performing Ethnomusicology* (2004) also speaks to the practice of playing musical instruments in the field, and how this practice can lead to cultural understanding. Mentions of musical instruments as methodological tools and the playing ethnographer can be found throughout Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley's (2008 [1997]) collection *Shadows in the Field.* Other ethnomusicologists have written about their experience of learning an instrument during fieldwork (e.g., Rice 1994; Berliner 1978).

invite myself over. This was surprisingly successful. When not at school or work, musicians were always willing to sit in a shaded courtyard to chat, or meet at a local outdoor bar for a soda or a roadside restaurant for a spaghetti omelet (a self-explanatory Beninese invention). My evening schedule was relatively fixed. Most ensembles rehearse after sunset, when people are home from day jobs and when it is cooler outside, and every evening I juggled a roster of rehearsals. I was often out past midnight.

Most musicians I worked with were native speakers of Fongbé, Gungbé, Yorùbá, Adja, Bariba, Ewe, and other local languages. The majority of my interlocutors also spoke French, Benin's official language, yet to varying degrees of ability. Typically, those who completed primary and secondary education in Benin's public school system spoke French fluently, while those who did not receive formal education have a basic knowledge of conversational French. French is often the working language of fanfares whose members do not all speak or understand Fongbé (the dominant language in Benin's southern region). Most of my interviews and conversations were conducted in French and I formed my strongest relationships with musicians who spoke French with above-average fluency. Rarely did I meet a musician who spoke English and only on occasion did I use a translator. For Fongbé and Gungbé translations, I hired Adé Falade, a freelance journalist and translator; for Yorùbá translations, I hired Didax Barnabas, a gospel singer and trombone player. I did not employ a research assistant.

My access to fanfares and interlocutors was uninhibited. Fanfare musicians were overwhelmingly accepting of me and encouraged my presence at their rehearsals, performances, churches, and homes. My positionality as a white Westerner was a token of value, and thus my affiliation with a given ensemble brought validation and social

capital. Moreover, my presence and interest in Beninese fanfare confirmed musicians' belief that the performance of brass instruments was an avenue for coming into contact with Europe and the West (see Chapter One). A few musicians expressed apprehension about my intentions; for individuals who were unfamiliar with higher education, and for whom music was a thing to be performed and not studied, my doctorate degree in ethnomusicology seemed far-fetched. Such disbelief inspired rumors about me. On one occasion, a musician held that I was a European music manager masquerading as a U.S. American student so that I could meet all of the fanfares in Benin, choose my favorite, and then take them to Europe. Another person assumed that I was simply a tourist searching for a Beninese husband. While confusion about my identity and project was quickly cleared up, I note that even these initial rumors about me were ostensibly positive; I was seen as someone in a position of power who had something to offer.

Although I was warmly welcomed into the fanfare community, I was sometimes excluded from spaces and conversations. For example, I was often barred from attending a given fanfare's administrative meetings. Along with the other young and new(er) members, I was not privy to the elders' negotiations over the fanfare's activities and finances. I was also excluded from musicians' conversations about myself. Yet for the most part I was included. As I discuss below, I was allowed into habitually male spaces and male conversations. Musicians also included me in everyday conversations, including arguments and internal disputes, and shared with me personal information and secrets.

Some issues arose around honesty and intimacy. Several of my interlocutors withheld information, told partial truths, or deceived me; and, I submit, I did the same. Musicians misled me about their identity and marital status; male musicians wanted me

to think that they were single, gainfully employed, and socially important. After time and triangulating conversations, however, many of these fictions dissolved. Some musicians blamed their untruth on my misunderstanding while others laughed it off as *la beninoiserie,* a local term for trickery of the kind that only a Beninese person would do. Indeed, dishonesty and distrust proliferate among Beninese musicians and in society more generally (see Ngokwey 1994), and people misrepresent themselves to get ahead. In a similar fashion, and only when I felt it was necessary, I omitted or bent the truth to foster my own well-being.

Throughout my fieldwork, I sustained two fictions. The first was that I was married. When asked whether I had a romantic partner, I would respond affirmatively, using the local term (*mon mari*) for an official or unofficial partner. While in Benin this term can denote a series of domestic arrangements, my interlocutors likely assumed that my answer signified that I was part of a legally recognized marriage in my home country. This was untrue, although for some of my fieldwork I had a long-distance boyfriend. Yet I perpetuated this loss-in-translation in order to dissuade unwanted romantic advances and to make possible platonic but still intimate relationships with men. Given social expectations and propriety, it would have seemed strange for me, a young single woman, to spend so much private time with single men. The story that I had a husband who worked abroad, and who had given me permission to be there, assuaged some people's concerns.

The second deceit was that I was Christian. As noted, the Beninese fanfare community is largely Christian and Beninese society is highly religious. While religious tolerance is widespread, there is little tolerance for atheism. Thus I refrained from sharing

my atheist views save for with a few friends. When asked whether I was Christian, I would respond, "I was raised Christian" or "My family is Baptist," both of which are true. Posturing as a Christian got my foot in the door though, luckily for me, there was little expectation that I participate in pious observances or public declarations of faith. Many of my interlocutors maintain loose affiliations with one or more religions; their theological belief is wide though not particularly deep.

During my fieldwork I also navigated, more or less successfully, social expectations around money and gift giving. The relationship of my interlocutors' socio-economic circumstance compared to my own was one of palpable inequality. Many of my interlocutors assumed that I was a person of great wealth; after all, I am white, had traveled to Benin by airplane, and was always offering to buy people lunch. On several occasions, musicians asked me directly for money. I soon learned that the expectation is that when a friend or acquaintance asks you for money, you give something. So, when people asked, I gave something. Yet I was advised to neither give money unasked-for nor offer payment for formal interviews. One musician implied that giving money unsolicited was degrading—particularly when the exchange is from a woman to a man—and giving money in public was a bit rude.[41] Rather, musicians suggested that I invite someone for a meal or for a visit and offer to reimburse their transport expense. Then, after the interview, I could "make a gesture" of 1-2,000 West African CFA franc (hereafter CFA), or approximately 1.5-3 United States dollars (hereafter USD). Most of my formal interviews were conducted with musicians whom I had already befriended. These

[41] Indeed, there is a local practice of discretion when money exchanges hands; one wads up a banknote in the palm of one's hand and then passes it inconspicuously to someone else.

individuals usually refused to accept money from me other than, perhaps, to cover the cost of their transport.

While social decorum dissuaded me from paying people forthright for spending time with me, I soon realized that non-monetary gifts were much appreciated. Thus I expressed gratitude to individuals and ensembles with imported commodities such as brass instrument valve and slide oils, music pedagogy books, European clothing and accessories, printed photographs (which are quite expensive in southern Benin), CDs, and the like. I also purchased gifts locally. When visiting homes in southern Benin, it is customary to bring a gift of sweet bread or a bottle of liquor. There is also an active gift exchange network of buying mobile phone credit for others, in which I participated.[42] I also sponsored the purchase of new outfits for two ensembles of which I was a member. And, upon leaving Benin, I gifted my primary interlocutor and close friend my baritone horn.

Gender in the field

Beninese fanfare is a man's world. Fanfare performances are often out of town and at night, and community members say that a woman's participation would be inappropriate. Processions are physically demanding and exhausting, and musicians maintain that women do not have the requisite strength (see Chapter Four). And brass instruments themselves are gendered; they are male instruments with masculine associations (see Chapter Five).[43] As a female ethnographer and brass player, I assumed these norms would hinder my fieldwork. Perhaps fanfares would deny me membership or refuse my

[42] As there is elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. See, for example, Archambault (2017).
[43] Brass instrument practice is considered a male activity the world over. See Doubleday (2008) on the gendering of musical instruments.

presence at their performances, or perhaps musicians would deride my own musical practice. But I was wrong. To the contrary, my male interlocutors welcomed me into their fanfares and were pleased (if surprised) by my ability to play brass instruments with the rest of them. Though I was still perceived as female, I was treated like one of the guys. I traveled with the men and ate with the men and slept in the same room as the men. I was outfitted with male uniforms and invited to drink and smoke. And I was included in conversations about women and sex, and told secrets about extramarital affairs. I was female but I was "other," thus I was allowed into spaces where Beninese women were not.[44] My brass instrument became my honorary phallus and I an honorary male.[45]

Scholars have suggested that female researchers are more androgynous and flexible than male ethnographers in gendered environments, making it easier for them to conduct cross-gender research.[46] My own experience affirms this, as does that of male ethnographers working in Benin. Douglas Falen (2011, 2008), for example, has described his experience of being excluded from female spaces in his research on Fon gender relations, and his reliance on a female research assistant to conduct interviews on his behalf. The female spaces to which Falen sought access were already fragile in a steadily patriarchal society, and his presence would have compromised them further. In contrast, Benin's fanfare community is a macho environment in which males are often antagonistic with one another. In this context, my female identity was an advantage; I was non-

[44] For example, the Celestial Church of Christ forbids women from stepping onto church grounds or attending services while they are menstruating. I was never asked whether or not I was menstruating but rather allowed to attend Celestial Church services at all times.
[45] Describing her own experience as a "marginal male," Kay Shelemay (1991: 43) dubs her field recorder her "male apparatus."
[46] See, for example, Appert (2017), Falen (2008), Falen and Berliner (2008), Brandes (1987), Abu-Lughod (1986), Gregory (1984), and Nader (1970).

threatening and uncompetitive. Whereas Falen was excluded on the basis of his gender, my gender was an entry card.

My positionality as female *and* white was also advantageous. For one, my femaleness and whiteness were a spectacle in performance contexts. Benin does not attract many Western tourists and a white woman playing a brass instrument is a sight to behold, particularly in remote villages. Thus I drew attention to otherwise ordinary fanfares. In performances, my colleagues would push me to the front of the group so that the seated audience could see me better, and I was often asked to play a solo to prove that I could indeed play a brass instrument. When I did, audience members would shower me (and thus the fanfare) with monetary donations. Fanfares undoubtedly earned more money when I played with them, which meant I was all the more welcome. Other female ethnographers have recounted comparable experiences of being fetishized and made a spectacle of on stage (e.g., Tang 2005).

Moreover, my interlocutors seemed to value my femaleness and whiteness for the social capital it brought, or could bring, to them. White persons and things Western are fetishized in Benin as symbols of wealth, and aspiring male musicians yearn for "white wives" (*les femmes blanche*) that can help them emigrate. Many of my interlocutors perceived me as a potential wife and I received frequent marriage requests (and this despite the pretense that I was already married). Male musicians made lewd comments about my physical appearance, the sexual prowess of Beninese men, the beauty of mixed-race children, and their uncanny ability to impregnate women with twins. Several of my relationships with musicians dissolved after it became clear that I was not willing to marry or have sexual intercourse with them. The most disruptive of these dissolutions

occurred on my first trip to Benin in 2013. After spending several weeks with Gangbé Brass Band, my host, James Vodounnon, professed to have fallen in love with me. When I did not reciprocate his sentiments, he reacted with anger. He insisted that I must love him—I had accepted his invitation to come to Benin and we had spent so much time together—and that I must marry him and take him to the United States. From his perspective, I owed him something. I apologized for having unwittingly misled him and clarified my intentions. James rejected my apology and insisted that I return his love. When I declined again, James became violent. Two days later, I left Benin.

My fieldwork included encounters with misogyny, sexual harassment, and physical assault. These experiences affected my ability to do my work. They also, consciously and not, influenced how I behaved around and perceived other people. I am still thinking through this difficult and personal topic, and do not discuss it further in this thesis, but I want to stress two points. First, critical discussions of gendered ethnography, gender-based inequality, and the vulnerability of all persons involved in research are imperative for an ethnomusicology attendant to issues of power and difference.[47] And second, academic institutions must offer fieldwork training and methods courses that recognize the threat of power-based personal violence, provide students with advice on prevention plans and safety precautions, and prepare faculty to discuss the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment with their students.

Key players

My ethnography spotlights numerous ensembles and musicians that I came to know during my fieldwork. While in the introductory mode, I want to present three particular

[47] Recent timely scholarship on this issue includes Appert (2017) and Clark and Grant (2015).

ensembles and four musicians that feature prominently in this thesis. These brief profiles afford a better sense of the kinds of brass and percussion ensembles that populate Benin's amateur scene, and the demographic of individuals with whom I worked.

Ensembles



Figure 0.13: Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome. Clockwise from top left: Didier Adanmekou, Basile Lekpe, Étienne Woinsou, Dénis Sounou, Maxime Agbahoungba, André Videkon (known as "The Surveyor"), Marcel Affoutou, and Alphonse Abeti. Not pictured: Germain Kanlinsou. Lokossa, 29 January 2016.

Fanfare La Voix des Anges de Sodohome (Fanfare Voice of Angels from Sodohome, hereafter Fanfare de Sodohome) is based in Sodohome, a village outside of Bohicon. The group began in 2000 as an offshoot of a Celestial Church choir. Musicians borrowed brass and percussion instruments from their Celestial Church parish to perform for church events, and donated all proceeds from their performances to the church choir. After a year

or so, the fanfare musicians became disillusioned when they discovered that their donations were not going to the choir but rather the choirmaster's pocket and they disassociated themselves with the Celestial Church. As an independent fanfare, the musicians expanded their repertory and client base, and they enjoyed an active performance schedule in Bohicon where fanfares (and thus competition) were few. Yet, no longer able to borrow instruments from their church, the musicians spent much of their earnings on instrument rental fees (which topped 5,000 CFA per performance). During the 2000s, disputes over money caused the group to splinter numerous times. The current membership was established in 2012. After several years of accumulating savings, the fanfare purchased their own brass and percussion instruments, which belong to the group rather than individuals. Today Fanfare de Sodohome is conducted in a democratic fashion and Basile Lekpe, the bass drum player and one of three founding members, is the president. In addition to setting aside money for instrument repairs, the fanfare deposits a percentage of their earnings into a collective chest that functions as a health insurance fund for its members. Of Fanfare de Sodohome's nine members, four are university students, three are taxi drivers, one is a schoolteacher, and one is a farmer.



Figure 0.14: Fanfare St. Joseph. Clockwise from top left: Celestin Comlanvi, Isaak Fantodji, Benoit, Roger Tchegnon, Mathias Adjaï, Agbaza, Isaac Zohoun, Philippe, Severin, David Akande, Maxime Agbahoungba, Jeremi Zinsalo, Jonas Setondji, Robert, Saturnin, David Akplogan, Julien Aïdasso, and Bruno. Cotonou, 11 November 2015.

Fanfare Saint Joseph de Cotonou (Fanfare Saint Joseph from Cotonou, hereafter Fanfare St. Joseph) was among the first three Christian fanfares in Cotonou. Joseph Akande, then the choir director of the Celestial Church parish in St. Rita, Cotonou, founded the fanfare as Fanfare Sainte Rita in 1984. In 1987, Joseph passed away and the group was renamed Fanfare St. Joseph in his honor. Fanfare St. Joseph was very active in the late 80s and early 90s, and some of Benin's most celebrated brass instrumentalists passed through the fanfare, including three current members of Gangbé Brass Band. In 1996, President Kérékou (then serving his first term in a democratic Benin, and as a born-again Christian) invited Fanfare St. Joseph along with other Christian ensembles to perform for a state-sponsored event in Niger. That was the first and last time that Fanfare St. Joseph would perform abroad, and the only time that many of its members would

travel by airplane. Cotonou's fanfare scene expanded in the late 90s and early 2000s, which presented Fanfare St. Joseph with competition, yet they held tight to their Celestial client base. During my tenure with them during 2015 and 2016, Fanfare St. Joseph rehearsed regularly on Sunday afternoons on the public grounds surrounding Cotonou's sports stadium, *Stade de l'Amitié* (Friendship Stadium), and performed semi-regularly for funerals and Celestial Church events. In 2017, Fanfare St. Joseph discontinued their longstanding weekly rehearsal following an unresolvable conflict between members. The fanfare has since disbanded.[48]



Figure 0.15: Voix des Anges Brass. Clockwise from top left: Donné Ganagba, Abraham Oke, Joël Kounoudji, Constant Tolofon, Paul Deton, Steven Hounsou, Beatrice Todedji, Ernest Dansou, Jude Soussou, Euzèbe Hounsou, Émile Djoï, Geoffroy Whékpé, and Abel Hounyemin. Yenawa, 5 August 2016.

[48] During my fieldwork, the members of Fanfare St. Joseph requested that I record two of their performances for publicity purposes. These videos are available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA5Nlp0dUyE and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2bIoFgSyUk.

Voix des Anges Brass de Cotonou (Voix of Angels Brass from Cotonou, hereafter Voix des Anges Brass) formed in March 2014. The group's nine musicians are former or current students at IRGIB University Africa, members of the Celestial Church of Christ, and all under the age of thirty. The musicians rehearse weekly on Monday evenings in the parking lot of the Maison du Peuple in Akpapa and socialize actively outside of the group. Voix des Anges Brass performs alternately as a fanfare and a brass band. When performing as a fanfare, they play popular songs befitting the performance context. The group's director, Euzèbe Hounsou, explained that Voix des Anges Brass "[offers] the public the satisfaction of tailored musical performances adapted to their needs, ethical principles, and rules (during the funerals)." When on stage, Voix des Anges Brass uses indigenous percussion instruments and performs original compositions that draw from pentatonicism and local rhythms, as well as jazz, Protestant hymnody, and African popular genres. Speaking about the group's compositions, Euzèbe said, "We bring joy to everyone through the experience of fanfare accompanied by traditional percussion . . . We derive our strength from traditional music. We carry with us the historical weight of African fanfare." Voix des Anges Brass has competed twice in the *Festival des Meilleurs Instrumentistes d'Afrique* (Festival of the Best Instrumentalists in Africa) held in Cotonou, and won second place in 2017. In 2018, the group changed their name to Ifê Brass. The musicians reasoned that "*voix des anges*" was too difficult for non-French speaking persons to pronounce, whereas the Yorùbá word *ifẹ̀* (also *ifẹ*, meaning "love") is widely understood. I will continue to use the name Voix des Anges Brass throughout this thesis.[49]

[49] Similarly, the members of Voix des Anges Brass (now Ifê Brass) requested that I record their performances for publicity purposes. Two of their videos are available online at

Musicians

Maxime Agbahoungba is a trombonist in Fanfare de Sodohome. He was born in 1993 in Têwidji, a village in the east of Benin to Fon parents. His family then moved to Ayogbé, a village in the west of Benin approximately twenty miles north of Bohicon, where his parents continue to live and work as farmers. At the age of seven, Maxime moved from Ayogbé to Bohicon to attend a public primary and secondary school. During his schooling, he lived in his uncle's living room and went home to Ayogbé on the weekends. While in Bohicon, Maxime joined the Celestial Church of Christ. At age sixteen, he learned to play the trumpet in his church chorale and later switched to the trombone, which remains his primary instrument. In 2014, Maxime moved to Cotonou to begin a bachelor's degree in Linguistics with a specialization in English at the University of Abomey-Calavi. He is the first in his family to attend university. Maxime is a full-time student, although ongoing strikes at the University have slowed his progress to degree. In addition to his studies, he performs actively with fanfares in Cotonou, Ouidah, and Bohicon, including Fanfare de Sodohome and Fanfare St. Joseph. He recently joined a new *tradi-moderne* orchestra in Ouidah called Emeraude Band. Maxime and I developed a close friendship during my fieldwork and had weekly visits that were in turn interviews and English lessons. When Maxime finishes his bachelor's degree, he hopes to attend graduate school and secure a job as a translator.

David Akande is a trumpeter and the director of Fanfare St. Joseph. He was born in Cotonou in 1979 to Yorùbá parents. His father, Joseph Akande, was an accomplished musician, a choir director within the Celestial Church of Christ, and founder of Fanfare St.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIcjKMWxWQw and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPvuUyj2ppU.

Joseph (then Fanfare St. Rita). David and his five siblings learned to play local percussion instruments like the gan and shaker as participants in their father's Celestial choir. When David was seven years old, Joseph taught him how to play the trumpet. Joseph passed away a year later. After completing primary school, David left his studies to work alongside his mother at a local market and to pursue a career as a musician. David continues to work as both a salesman and musician today. He is an informal musical instrument distributor and travels to and from Lagos on a near weekly basis to bring Nigerian-brand brass instruments into Benin. David also sells brass instrument accessories, such as homemade valve oils and cleaning solutions, to local musicians. He supplements this income by performing as a freelance trumpeter in local fanfares, *tradi-moderne* ensembles, and gospel choirs.

David is a permanent member of two ensembles: Fanfare St. Joseph and La Groupe Gankéké. The latter is a *tradi-moderne* orchestra composed of six percussionists, one trumpeter (David), and one saxophonist. La Groupe Gankéké received a small grant from the Ministry of Culture in 2016 to sponsor their production of a CD and DVD. They remain hopeful that these recordings will earn them an international reputation and invitations to European music festivals. David has auditioned for the National Police orchestra several times, and even paid large sums in bribes to the orchestra director, but was unsuccessful. In recent years, David converted to the Evangelical Church of the Assemblies of God of Benin (*L'Église Evangélique des Assemblées de Dieu du Bénin*) citing the reason that evangelists pay musicians to perform for their church services. He nonetheless maintains his family's relationship with the Celestial Church St. Rita parish and continues to perform for Celestial events for free.

Euzèbe Hounsou is a percussionist and trombonist, and the director of Voix des Anges Brass. He was born in 1989 in Cotonou to Luc Hounsou, a tailor, and Noëllie Gogan, a vender of *tisane* (a local medicine made of plant bark). He attended a public primary school in the neighborhood Yenawa, and a public secondary school in the neighborhood Suru-Lere. After second school, he received a teaching certificate (*un certificat d'aptitude pédagogique*) from a local trade school. Euzèbe currently works as a French language instructor at the African International School of Benin, located in Quartier Jacques. He is married and has two sons, Chalom and Excellent Hounsou. In addition to leading Voix des Anges Brass, Euzèbe performs as a freelance musician in local fanfares and gospel orchestras. He is a member of the Union of Fanfares in Akpapa, an unofficial labor collective, and two associations recognized by Benin's Ministry of Culture: the Association of Artists of Traditional Music and the Association of Singers of Traditional Gospel of Benin. Euzèbe hopes to become a full-time professional musician.

Celestin Comlanvi is a trombonist in Fanfare St. Joseph. He was born in 1981 in Cotonou to Fon parents. His father was an entrepreneur in the construction and public works industry and their family moved frequently. Celestin completed primary school in the village Azovè and began his secondary schooling in Dassa, in central Benin. He finished his secondary school in Ouidah. In the late 90s, his father left Vodun and joined the Celestial Church of Christ, taking his wives and children with him. Celestin participated as a percussionist in the Celestial Church Lèbou parish and then, in 2002, learned to play the trombone from an elder musician in the church. In 2004, Celestin left his family home in Ouidah and set out for Cotonou in search of job opportunities. He was unable to find full-time employment and moved between part-time jobs in various

industries, including a bottling factory, a printing press, and a tailoring shop. But, in Cotonou, his musical engagements grew steadily; he joined Fanfare St. Joseph, the choir of the Celestial Church parish Cadjehoun, the gospel band La Voix d'Éden (The Voice of Eden), the brass band Écho d'Afrique (Echo of Africa), and the *tradi-moderne* orchestra Adeniké. He also joined the Union of Celestial Fanfares in Cotonou, an unofficial labor union for Celestial Church fanfare musicians, of which he remains a member. In 2012, Celestin found a steady job working the nightshift at a printing factory in central Cotonou. There was no opportunity for promotion, however, so he began making plans to start his own business. In 2016, Celestin opened a printing press called Céleste Graphique. When Celestin and I spoke a few weeks ago, in May 2018, he said he was fully devoted to business management and had left his musical commitments "since music in Benin does not guarantee us a future."

Chapter outline

Each of the ensuing chapters posits a self-contained argument yet themes and issues overlap, cross over, and move between them. The chapters also connect over their shared ethnography, and certain individuals and events reappear across them. I conceive of the thesis in two halves. In the first half I illustrate the historical and material context for contemporary Beninese fanfares. The second half of the thesis is comprised of three thematic studies on pitch, labor, and breath. In addition to summarizing the larger work, the Conclusion offers an essay on pleasure.

I begin in Chapter One with a retelling of fanfare's history from the perspective of my interlocutors. Their historical narratives posit fanfare's origin in the military, the

church, the funeral, the outside, and the unknown. In their telling, the history of the genre is heterogeneous and multiple: temporalities overlap, geographies shift, identities of persons and institutions entwine, and pasts entangle. This multiplicity of histories complicates the standard narrative of postcolonial brass bands as told in previous scholarship. Moreover, my interlocutors' entangled histories of this musical genre suggest that they have an ambivalent and shifting relationship to the past. This idea of entanglement—of histories, objects, and ideas—will return throughout the thesis.

Chapter Two illustrates my interlocutors' ideas about the origins of brass instruments, their place in Beninese musical traditions, and the varied meanings of metal and metal objects. I present my instrument-focused ethnography in two parts. In Part I, I elucidate my interlocutors' conception of brass instruments as foreign instruments, and suggest that my interlocutors value brass instruments because they index material wealth and the fetishized *l'extérieur* (exterior or outside). In Part II, I demonstrate that brass instruments can also be conceived as indigenous objects, and show how brass instruments are embedded in precolonial culture and ideas around metalworking, sounding metals, and the contemporary plastic arts. Reflecting on the varied historical, social, and religious meanings brass instruments have for my interlocutors, I argue that the identities of these instruments are entangled in their material properties. In other words, the physical stuff of brass instruments—their brassiness or metalness—proffers multiple valences.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the sonic register and analyze pitch and its manipulation in fanfare performance. I compare pitches produced by individual players across pieces in different keys and pitches sounded in both Beninese pentatonic melodies and diatonic Protestant hymns. I then observe tuning practices of individuals and

ensembles, and relay practitioners' perspectives on the varied factors that influence pitch. In analysis, I show how brass instruments' physical designs motivate Western tonality yet how material conditions—such as instrument disrepair, makeshift valve oils, and climate—limit and constrain it. I argue that perceived inconsistencies in the pitch of brass instruments do not suggest an indigenous tonality or conceptual root to tuning and pitch adjustment that resists Western tonal rule, but rather are technical, performative, and sometimes involuntary. In conclusion, I suggest that a nuanced assessment of pitch expression in contemporary Benin should account for the interplay between musicians' intentionality and instruments' materiality.

Chapter Four illustrates how Beninese musicians engage with fanfare performance as a form of musical labor. This chapter also unfolds in two parts. In Part I, I showcase some of the affective and physical efforts required in fanfare performance. I discuss the labor of performing *l'ambiance* and the toll it takes on musicians' bodies, and then draw attention to two corporeal experiences—fatigue and hotness—which musicians interpret as indices of physical strength and health. In Part II, I examine my interlocutors' assessments of fanfare performance as hard work and the forms of value it affords. I show that musicians understand fanfare as a form of informal waged labor in which they partake, above all, to earn money. They simultaneously conceive the hard work of performance as an extension of everyday practices of bodily discipline and modes of personal development. Overall, I illustrate how fanfare musicians make meaningful a musical labor that is difficult, exhausting, undervalued, and underpaid. I argue that interconnecting work ethics encourage Beninese musicians to understand their work as

more than economic labor; it is also a narrative of personal development, and an investment in the future.

Chapter Five examines the affective and anxious experience of breathing in the context of playing brass instruments. These anxieties center on a perduring rumor in amateur musical circles: one is told that if a male blows too hard into a brass instrument his testicles might swell up, fall off, or even run away. People tell stories of inguinal hernias and infertility, and many maintain that male brass players must take preventative measures and secure their testicles with string. Accompanying this unease about blowing out is a complement concern for breathing in, and the possible inhalation of microorganisms or poison through the mouth. Engaging with this anxiety of blowing, this chapter takes seriously my interlocutors' concern with the consequence of playing brass instruments on their bodies. My main argument is that musicians' understandings of the precarious nature of breath are a function and agent of their anxiety.

The ethnography presented in the preceding chapters portrays amateur fanfare performance as exhausting, frustrating, precarious, and even potentially dangerous. Yet at the same time that Beninese fanfare is a story of hardship and struggle, it is also one of pleasure and joy. Thus, the thesis' Conclusion considers the role of pleasure in my interlocutors' everyday lives. I offer portraits of two musicians I came to know well during my time in southern Benin. After telling their stories, I reflect on their experience of pleasure in the present and suggest that it is tied to temporal imaginings of the future and past. I then propose an "ordinary pleasure" that permeates their everyday experiences of pain, frustration, and uncertainty. Following this discussion of pleasure, I offer a summative conclusion of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Narrative Entanglements: Retelling the History of Fanfare in Benin

In July 2015, one month before I began my long-term fieldwork in Benin, I traveled to Paris to attend an ethnomusicology conference hosted at the Musée du Quai Branly and co-organized by the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and the *Société Française d'Ethnomusicologie*. The opening night of the conference featured the premiere screening of *Simha*, a documentary film that narrates the life and career of the ethnomusicologist Simha Arom, followed by a Q&A with Arom himself. After the event, I joined fellow conference goers lingering in the hallway outside of the auditorium, all of us waiting to speak with Arom. When my turn came, Arom and I shared a hurried introduction and he asked me to explain my doctoral project. I had just articulated "brass bands in Benin" when he interrupted with a sharp question: "But why would you want to study imported instruments?" Taken by surprise, I sputtered something about my interest in the performance of brass instruments in African Initiated Churches and funerary rituals. Arom studied me with narrowed eyes and, after a pause, responded, "Yes, that's it. How these foreign instruments work with traditional instruments. See, that's interesting. You should have started with that." Arom then turned away from me and called out to his colleague, whom I surmised he was joining for dinner.

If I had been able to respond to Simha Arom in that hallway of the Quai Branly, I would have challenged the premise of his question. In Benin, brass instruments are not necessarily considered "imported," "foreign," Western, or European. Beninese musicians have a wide range of views about the historical origins and identities of brass instruments. Depending on a practitioner's viewpoint, brass instruments can index

colonial military history, precolonial funerary rites, postcolonial world music industries, local patrilineal musical families, the birth of African Initiated Churches, or an abstract outside. These intersecting historical and geographic vectors lend these musical objects varied and complex identities. Brass instruments are at times considered foreign and European, at times traditional and Beninese; and their encompassing genre, fanfare, is likewise held to be both foreign and traditional.

Arom's commentary proffers an example *par excellence* of the contradiction between scholars' conceptual categories and the complexity and nuance of lived experience. Whereas Arom seemed to forward a narrow notion of brass instruments as European objects, my Beninese interlocutors' conceptions are more diffuse. Whereas Arom was quick to delineate categorical binaries like the traditional/foreign and the indigenous/imported, my interlocutors' perspectives complicate those categories. Arom's perplexity at my choice to study imported instruments, moreover, reveals his interpretation of brass instruments as uninteresting and invasive objects within a purportedly "traditional" Beninese musical culture—a view that seems to suggest that if one can call a musical phenomenon European then it is unworthy of attention.[1] While Arom's glossing of brass instruments as foreign is not incorrect—I do not deny that brass instruments first arrived in Benin as part of France's colonial project—this analytical posture does little to illuminate the lived experience of Beninese practitioners.

This chapter illustrates how Beninese musicians understand fanfare in relation to history. What stories do musicians tell about the history of fanfare? How have fanfare musicians learned and interacted with events like colonization, and military and

[1] Arom's scholarship evinces his own commitment to studying musical phenomena that is purportedly unique to non-European musics, e.g., his *African Polyrhythm and Polyphony* (1991 [1985]).

missionary brass bands? What are the stories that have come to be told about those events? What other events, individuals, institutions, and memories emerge in their histories of fanfare? I address these questions by adopting a phenomenological approach that foregrounds my interlocutors' articulations of their relationship to history and takes seriously what they say. My objective is twofold: to relay differing, intersecting, and conflicting histories of Beninese fanfare as known and experienced by practitioners; and, in doing so, dislodge the taken for granted interpretation of brass instruments as indices of colonial history and European military bands.

Ultimately I will argue that, for my interlocutors, fanfare's history is one of entanglement. As we will see, the history of the genre, in their telling, is heterogeneous and multiple: temporalities overlap, geographies shift, identities of persons and institutions entwine, and pasts entangle. The multiplicity of histories complicates the standard narrative of postcolonial brass bands as told in previous scholarship. Moreover, the multiple and entangled stories told about fanfare reflect musicians' partial and fragmented knowledge about the past—an experience not unique to this particular postcolony. This idea of entanglement—of histories, objects, and ideas—will return throughout the thesis.

The chapter unfolds in three sections. In the first, "History told," I assess how previous scholarship has historically framed postcolonial brass instrument practice and then introduce an alternative approach that draws from the phenomenological concept of historicity and the ethnographic mode of storytelling. In the second, "History (re)told," I present my interlocutors' historical narratives—narratives that posit fanfare's origin in the military, the church, the funeral, the outside, and the unknown. In the third, "History

entangled," I posit my interlocutors' historical narratives as exemplary of the experiential entanglements said to characterize the African postcolony. By opening with a discussion of history, I join the tradition in ethnographic writing of ordering monographs in a linear, future-facing chronology. My telling of history disembarks from the monographic norm, however, in that it is my aim to represent people's experiences of history rather than historical fact *per se*. In other words, I do not so much tell but retell history.

History told

How has the history of postcolonial brass bands been told in musicological scholarship? What temporal and conceptual frameworks have scholars used? To illustrate, I offer a survey of musicological literature on African brass bands. I highlight the dominant temporal framework—a diachronic history that demarcates epochs of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial—and key concepts such as mimesis, indigenization, and syncretism.

Mimesis, indigenization, resistance

Early musicological scholarship on African band cultures is often couched within a historical trajectory of European colonial military and mission bands. Within this framing, scholars' analyses emphasize the relationship of African to European band styles and, often, interpret African brass bands as cultural scripts of colonial experience. Gerhard Kubik (1964a), for example, argues that beni ngoma, a popular dance practice in East Africa between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is an appropriation

and imitation of the European brass band.[2] Kubik suggests that both beni ngoma and its local derivatives, such as kazoo and drum bands, "attempt to imitate the sound of European military music" (1964a: 80). A.M. Jones' interpretation of East African kazoo band music also features cultural processes of mimesis and indigenization. Jones says that kazoo bands are revealing of "what the African will do when he takes over something he has seen and makes it really his own," and that "this wonderfully clever imitation is achieved by reproducing a European sounding rhythm by the employment of African technique" (1945, quoted in Ranger 1975: 7). Jones' patronizing tone aside, his description hints at creative forms of indigenization of kazoo band musicians, which belies a simplistic interpretation of musical imitation.

John Collins (2013, 1989, 1977) likewise points to mimesis and indigenization in his studies of Ghanaian bands and highlife. Collins (2013) says the Adaha military brass bands, founded in the 1880s, went through processes of "indigenization" and "a series of increasing Africanizations" throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Local derivations of the Adaha military bands appeared in the 1930s in the south—in the style of konkoma—and then in the 1950s in the eastern Volta region and Nigeria—in the style of borborbor. Collins' description of a migrating and transforming Adaha brass band style echoes Kubik and Jones' account of the migrating and transforming beni ngoma and the derivative kazoo band style.

Perhaps most exemplary of this strain of literature is Terence O. Ranger's (1975) *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa.* This seminal study of African popular culture traces the development of beni ngoma in a diachronic historical progression: the dance was introduced and popularized during the colonial era, and its decline coincided with the end

[2] See also Martin (1991) on beni ngoma in East Africa.

of formal colonialism in Eastern Africa (1975: 5). In line with Kubik and Jones' conclusions about East African beni ngoma and kazoo bands, Ranger claims that beni ngoma along the Kenyan coast can be seen as "an attempt to reproduce the effect of a military brass-band" (1975: 5). Ranger notes that many of beni ngoma's elements—marching dance motions, military costumes, brass instruments, and competitive performance contexts—hark back to forms of British and German regimental music. Yet he also reinterprets certain elements of the beni ngoma as fitting within precolonial forms of East African performance culture. While military clothing, brass band instruments, dance drills and mimic combat are "apparent exoticisms" imposed from Europe, he says, many such elements of the performance tradition are "in fact derived from the long-standing competitive dance traditions of the Swahili coasts" (1975: 164). Ranger further suggests that formal elements of the beni ngoma were borrowed from Arab traditions rather than European brass band ones, pointing to similarities between the beni dance mode and Arab dance modes found within the Mombasa dance tradition (1975: 25).

In contrast to Kubik and Jones, Ranger sees beni ngoma as not simply mimesis or adoption but rather creative and syncretic adaptation, and even a mode of resistance (1975: 141). While beni is an exemplar of many other twentieth century cultural forms that are "normally explained in terms of Europeanization," he reasons, in actuality, have historical roots in local cultural practices (1975: 164).[3] Ranger concludes that while "nothing could seem more European than beni . . . [i]t appears quite clearly as a creative African response, though in some ways a constrained one, rather than as an imposed European idiom" (ibid.). Ranger's interpretation of East African beni ngoma as

[3] For a parallel example, see Clyde Mitchell's (1956) *The Kalela Dance*, in which he argues the kalela dance, despite being performed in European clothing and in the colonized West African Copperbelt, is a "tribal" dance.

encompassing European, Arab, and East African cultural elements foreshadows analytical trends toward syncretism that appear in later literature on brass band cultures. His interest in precolonial cultural forms is precedent for my own consideration of indigenous cultures of metal in Chapter Two.

Syncretism, circulation, globalization

More recent scholarship also stresses the colonial origins of African brass bands, yet it puts more emphasis on the influence of multiple historical trajectories and intersecting global musical flows on their development (Feld 2012; Collins 2013; Fryer 2000; Flaes 2000; see also Booth 2005). Key analytical concepts that emerge in this later literature include cultural modes of syncretism, circulation, and borrowing. For example, Peter Fryer's (2000) study of the triangular relation between Brazilian, Angolan, and Portuguese music cultures points to circulations and exchanges of music styles and instruments that occurred throughout the era of Atlantic trade and continue today. Fryer says dance bands in Lagos, Nigeria after World War I were "syncretizations," or the combination of different and discrete traditions, of Brazilian and European dance styles and Nigerian drumming styles (2000: 171-2). Similarly, Collins' (2013) study of Ghanaian band bands illuminates a Pan-African musical dialogue in the era of mass produced recording technology. Brass bands in Ghanaian and African diasporic cultures developed in dialogue with recordings of American jazz and popular Caribbean styles; one can hear the latter styles of instrumental playing in African band music.

Another example from Ghana is the La Drivers Union Por Por Group of Accra: a musical ensemble composed of recycled brass car horns from old lorries whose story

Steven Feld (2012) narrates in *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra*. Feld connects the Por Por band style to the European brass tradition: "[T]here is also a clear articulation with later brass band music, indigenized from colonial origins to become central to the sound of highlife and combo jazz in the last sixty years. Horn to horn to horn" (2012: 43). Yet, like Collins and Fryer, Feld also points to centuries of musical circulations inflecting the music of Por Por honk horn bands, claiming that in the sound of Por Por we hear "a multilayered story of regional history, colonialism, diaspora, and globalization" (ibid.). Feld (2012: 47) emphasizes that Por Por bands are more than colonial echoes of brass bands; their performance also speak to aspects of African urban experience in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as industrialization, motor vehicles, the union movement, and new genres of global popular music—in particular, jazz.

Feld, Collins, and Fryer all attest to the complexity of "multilayered" band music, inflected by ongoing geographical circulations of instruments, recordings, and musical styles. This wave of brass band studies offers an important counterpoint to the preceding literature in that it accounts for multiple historical and cultural trajectories, only one of which is colonialism. As we will see, my interlocutors likewise tell a multilayered story about the history of fanfare in Benin.

Problematizing the canonical narrative

On the whole, the existing literature on African brass band cultures favors a diachronic historical progression. The studies by Kubik, Jones, Collins, Ranger, Feld, and Fryer all follow this pattern; they chronicle a history that begins with the introduction of military bands to East, Central, or West African colonies and ends with the transformation of the

colonizer's band style into indigenized, local forms.[4] I find this canonical narrative about the history of African brass bands to be problematic for three reasons.

First, the narrative overemphasizes colonial legacies and histories of militarism, and underemphasizes the multitude of other histories, political or otherwise, that have influenced the development of brass band cultures.[5] This point is brought home, albeit inadvertently, in Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher's (2013) edited volume, *Brass Bands Around the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making*. In their introduction, Reily and Brucher acknowledge that "the canonical narrative of the history of military bands emphasizes an evolutionary development" of the musical practice (2013: 5). Nonetheless, their introduction to the volume reifies this analytical frame: they "discuss the dissemination of the military band model across the globe, viewing it in relation to the European colonial enterprise" (2013: 4). The volume's case studies belie this introduction, however, with ethnographies from Mexico, Brazil, Japan, South African, New Orleans, and elsewhere all attesting to how contemporary band cultures operate outside of colonial military band logics and inside local cultural ones. For these reasons, an introduction that expounds a "military band model," not to mention the "militarism" and "colonial legacies" spotlighted in the volume's subtitle, is perplexing.

Second, it implicitly reifies brass instruments as European objects and fixed symbols of Western hegemony. The objectification of brass instruments as European is

[4] Gregory Booth's (2005) ethnography of Indian brass bands and Boonzajer Flaes' (2000) comparative study of postcolonial brass band cultures, though geographically centered outside of Africa, follow a similar analytical model.

[5] Matt Sakakeeny (2013) also makes this point in his monograph on New Orleans brass bands. He suggests it is an analytical "mistake" to conflate New Orleans bands with military history, as it undermines the contemporary social and political resonances of the phenomenon. "Despite the familiarity of the instruments," he claims, "there is much happening here that signals a new order" (2013: 12).

analytically problematic because it reifies Western organological classifications and motivates analytical binaries. I suggested as much in my opening vignette about Simha Arom: the unquestioned association of brass instruments with Europe hints at a partisan, Western understanding of brass instruments that finds a paradox or contradiction in their use in African contexts. I forward this critique more thoroughly in the instrument-focused Chapter Two.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the framing of contemporary African brass bands within a colonial history does not accurately represent the historical experience and perceptions held by contemporary practitioners. This will become clear in my interlocutors' narratives below. As additional illustration, I refer here to Hugo Zemp's (2006) documentary film, *An African Brass Band*. The film narrates the dissemination of Western military bands to West Africa and features as its case study the Jacqueville Brass Band from the Ivory Coast. One scene in particular highlights the dissonance between Zemp's take on history and that of the Jacqueville band members. The scene shows ethnomusicologist Paul Dagri, the film's co-producer, in conversation with the members of the Jacqueville band. We watch as Dagri tells the Ivoirian musicians about the history of colonial brass band music in Ivory Coast: that European colonizers were often entertained by Ivorian-staffed brass bands, that Catholic priests forbade musicians to perform African instruments and instead taught them to play brass instruments, and so on. The Jacqueville band members respond to Dagri's tale with blank stares, confused gazes, and even verbal rebuttals. As the Jacqueville musicians shift uneasily in their chairs, it becomes clear that Dagri's historical narrative of Ivorian brass bands sits rather uncomfortably next to their own. Finally, one of the musicians replies to Dagri in a

pacifying tone, saying, "That's good to know that, I did not know that. It's the first time I heard that… I thought the first brass band dated from 1974, but in fact there was one in 1927. That's interesting."

In sum, the standard scholarly narrative about African brass bands reifies a diachronic history with an evolutionist progression. While there are exceptions, such as Feld's "multilayered story" (2012: 43), the tendency is to begin the history of brass bands in postcolonial Africa with European colonization. As we will see, this is not how my interlocutors begin their stories. What, then, are alternative ways to write about history that do not produce narratives of "evolutionary development"? And which of those alternatives best represents my interlocutors' experiences of the history of fanfare?

Historicity and telling stories

The alternative I take here is to foreground my interlocutors' narratives about the past, and the particular historical events and figures they conceive and articulate. Such an approach builds on work in historical anthropology that pays attention to how people recognize, organize, and experience historical events (e.g., Sahlins 2004, 1985, 1981). It also connects to phenomenological approaches in anthropology and history, as exemplified by the analytic term historicity. Anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney defines historicity as "the culturally patterned way or ways of experiencing and understanding history" (1990: 4, quoted in Stewart 2016: 82). Similarly, the historian François Hartog posits that historicity tries to understand individuals' "awareness of history and the uses they put to it" (2015: 35). This approach does not, however, meet the recent definition of the anthropology *of* history: "The anthropology of history inquires

foremost into the very idea of history—the assumptions, principles, and practices that inform the acquisition of knowledge about the past, and its social presentation" (Palmié and Stewart 2016: 207). My objective is not to examine methods of history making, or modes of historical representation, or forms of historiography, or historical memory. Rather, and more simply, I want to highlight the historical events that are talked about and considered meaningful by my interlocutors.

To do so, I will listen to stories. Storytelling is a longstanding practice in anthropology (e.g., Jackson 2013, 2004, 1995; Stewart 2007, 1996; Stoller 2009). It also reminds of narrative techniques common to both anthropology and musical ethnography, such as intervocality, or the inclusion of multiple voices in a narrative (e.g., Feld 2012; Fox 2004), as well as the dialogic or biographical form (e.g., Kyker 2016; Guilbault 2014). Steven Feld's (2012) monograph on music and cosmopolitanism in Accra is a model of storytelling as an ethnographic form. "I'm here to tell stories," Feld begins, and then explains why. For one, the storytelling mode invites a reflexive ethnography that conveys "musical intimacy" and "the complexity of knowing African musicians with complicated lives" (2012: 6). While Feld features mostly "encounter stories"—and, he submits, his book bleeds into a memoir of encounter—he also listens to other people's stories. "To listen carefully to stories is to take local subjectivity seriously," he says, and to "reimagine" experiences from the standpoint of those "from below" (2012: 7-8). By shifting the narrative voice from the ethnographer to the interlocutor, the storytelling mode invites intervocality and "intersubjective vocal copresence" (ibid.). In sum, Feld claims his attention to subjectivity and voice is a means by which to represent the complicated and uneven experience of cosmopolitanism in Accra: it is "a matter of

ethnographic commitment to revealing how histories of global entanglement are shaping contemporary African musical life-worlds" (ibid.). Following Feld, in what follows I listen carefully to stories—stories that reveal unique perspectives on fanfare, and stories that expose entangled histories.

History (re)told

In this section I present some of my interlocutors' stories about the history of fanfare and brass instruments in Benin. These stories show that brass instruments are neither always associated with colonization nor is their performance framed as an act of postcolonial resistance. Rather than trace the epochal chronology familiar to scholars, musicians point to diverse cultural trajectories and historical starting points, only one of which is the dissemination of brass instruments by colonial military bands.

The military

When I asked musicians to tell me about the history of brass instruments in Benin, I was surprised to find that few mentioned colonization or colonial military and mission bands. Nearly all of my interlocutors were aware of French colonization and major political periods in the history of the Republic of Benin, yet only a handful began their narrative history of Benin's fanfare tradition with the arrival of French colonial forces. Those who did identify French colonists as the progenitor of brass instruments in Benin were typically elder musicians who were alive during the colonial, transitional, and independence periods, and some of whom even served in the French colonial forces. Younger and middle aged musicians, perhaps unsurprisingly, were less likely to know

details of Benin's colonial history or the specific role that the French played in bringing instruments of European design to French Dahomey. They, too, often mentioned the military fanfare (*la fanfare du gendarmerie*) as the prototype for contemporary civilian and amateur fanfares. Yet the military fanfare was not the usual suspect of the colonial era (i.e., the Dahomean-staffed military fanfare of French Dahomey) but rather that of the independent Republic of Benin.

The septuagenarian brass instrument repairman Segboton Cledjo is a narrator of the former category. Segboton joined the army of the Republic of Benin in 1968 and the military and military fanfare in 1972. Segboton recalled that the French introduced fanfare instruments to Benin (specifically brass and wind instruments) and the practice of fanfare in militaristic contexts. Yet he noted that a Beninese man, and not a French one, directed Benin's premiere military fanfare:

> Here in Benin [before the French came] there was music but it was not complete. There were some horns, the drum, maybe a trumpet. But there was no trombone, no saxophones. There were no instruments of harmony. . . . The fanfare, in general, is composed of [those harmony instruments]. And the first military fanfare was composed by an old man, he is dead now. He didn't understand French; he was a Beninese. Keouda. It was Keouda who directed the military fanfare.

At the same time as he credited the French for introducing "harmony instruments" to the then French Dahomey, Segboton praised Dahomean military men for the success of contemporary Benin's fanfare. Segboton said three military men in particular—George Gnansounou, Pascal Boucou, and Director Keouda—were responsible for training brass musicians in the military and for disseminating musical knowledge through their own family lines as well as in Christian churches. While Segboton served in the military of an independent Republic of Dahomey, the practice of Dahomean-led military fanfares

actually predated independence. In French Dahomey (1904-58), French colonists typically staffed their own armed forces and military bands. Dahomeans conscripted into the French Army served in separate regiments—what the French called *l'armée noire*—and were permitted to form their own military bands and dance bands provided they had sponsorship from the French or another political or religious institution (see Politz 2017). Indeed, Segboton's own training at a brass instrument factory in France was made possible by French sponsorship. Segboton is unique among brass musicians in Benin today in that he was alive during French occupation, served in Dahomey's military fanfare, and worked in an instrument manufacturing company; he has firsthand experience of France's political and material influence on Benin's military fanfares.

The trumpet players Ange Soussou (who is twenty-two years old) and William Codjo (around fifty years old), in contrast, did not explicitly mention the French when relaying their version of fanfare's history. Rather, they both recognized the Republic of Dahomey's military and the local musicians therein as the originators of contemporary fanfare practice. Ange told me he did not know the history of brass instruments exactly but that fanfare originated in the Dahomean military. After reflecting for a moment, he identified three military men responsible for disseminating fanfare into civilian culture:

> Well, in fact… according to… the information that I have…the colonial fanfare was started by a certain person, Papa Hountondji of Abomey. He was a military man, in the military of Abomey. It was him who formed (taught music to) his children. Apart from him, there are the Ahouandjinous of Porto Novo and then George Gnansounou, now deceased, who was part of the military fanfare. This was during the 1960s. It was Hountondji's children of Abomey who taught our teacher Benjamin. So it is like that they left the fanfare to us. The first fanfare of Benin is the fanfare of the military, and it is that fanfare which permits us to know how to blow.

It is notable that Ange credits the founding of the "colonial fanfare" (likely the Dahomean staffed French military fanfare) to a Dahomean-turned-Beninese man. Nester Hountondji (1939-2014) was a member of the Orchestre National du Jazz, the first band of the Republic of Dahomey's national military, which formed in 1962 (Politz 2017: 103). Hountondji went on to have a successful career as a vocalist under the pseudonym Babaake (Politz 2017: 104). Yet, while Ange offered George Gnansounou as another example of a Dahomean military bandsman, I later learned that Gnansounou is originally from the Ivory Coast. He relocated to Porto Novo to lead the military fanfare in the Republic's capital city. While there, he was a prominent musical leader in the Celestial Church of Christ's "mother parish" in Porto Novo and composed many of the melodies in the Celestial Church hymnbook.

When I asked William to tell me the history of fanfare in Benin he also made vague mention of the colonial military, saying, "the fanfare instruments are European" and "it was the military men who formed the fanfare. They made the march." (Here "military men" alludes to French colonists.) Yet William pushed aside the role of Europeans, indeed dismissing that history as "not important," and went on to name a member of the independent Republic of Benin's military as the "real creator" of Benin's fanfare tradition:

> The greats of Beninese fanfare are the Ahouandjinou brothers. Oh! They are big. The Ahouandjinou brothers are really important because of their father, Papa Ahouandjinou. He was a military man and a trombonist. He also played the flute. He played with the military fanfare. He was the real creator. He was the creator of the group Fanfare Volcans in the military. Henri Ahouandjinou, the papa, taught brass to each of his children. He formed his own wind section [with his children]! The Ahouandjinou house is the house of brass in Benin. It is a house of music. No one can play like them… They are technicians! Actually, they are brass magicians.

The Ahouandjinous are an illustrious musical family in southern Benin. The patriarch, Henri Ahouandjinou (1943-2005), was the first director of the Orchestre National du Gendarmerie (The National Military Orchestra), which began in 1972 (Politz 2017: 104-7). The Orchestre National was the military's premiere dance band and recorded three albums as Les Volcans de la Capitale (ibid.). According to William, Henri was responsible for the creation of both Benin's military and civilian fanfares. Henri fathered twelve children, nine males and three females. Each of his sons is a professional musician and together they are colloquially called *les frères Ahouandjinou* (the Ahouandjinou brothers).

The Ahouandjinou brothers lead Benin's most prominent *tradi-moderne* (traditional-modern) ensembles: Gangbé Brass Band, Eyo'nlé Brass Band, Viviola, and Fanfare Onola. These brass and percussion ensembles are known across Benin and adored by members of the amateur brass community. Gangbé Brass Band, in particular, stands out for their success in the world music market and, we can recall from the Introduction, the inspiring role they play for young musicians. In her study of Gangbé Brass Band and Eyo'nlé Brass Band, Sarah Politz frames their careers within a period of political and economic transition; namely, "the cultural renaissance in Benin in the 1990s following democratization and the liberalization of the economy" (2017: 174). Following the end of Mathieu Kérékou's Marxist-Leninist leadership in 1990, Benin re-entered the global economy, which was an emphatically capitalist one. "Throughout the 1990s and 2000s," Politz explains, "Benin's brass bands participated in the national and international project of reconfiguring and revalorizing their country's traditions in order to establish a place for themselves, and a place for Benin, within a changed global world

order" (ibid.). Gangbé's primary means of participation was via the world music industry. Over the course of their career, Gangbé has cultivated numerous connections with music industry professionals the Global North and a foothold in the world music festival circuit. They continue to tour abroad annually, and have produced five albums to date: *Gangbé* (1998), *Togbé* (2001), *Whendo* (2004), *Assiko* (2008), and *Go Slow to Lagos* (2015).[6]

Ange and William's mention of the Ahouandjinou family invokes both the history of Dahomean independence and its accompanying military orchestra and band (indexed by Henri Ahouandjinou), as well as the history of the still-growing music industry in a democratic Benin (indexed by the Ahouandjinou brothers). These two histories also entwine in that both national orchestras and *tradi-moderne* ensembles are government-funded. Beginning in the 1960s, the Republic of Benin, alongside other newly independent West African nations, asserted cultural autonomy from France through the promotion of national ballets, orchestras, theatres and other groups that showcased traditional heritage (see Castaldi 2006; Senghor 1964). Such efforts continue today through government sponsorship for Benin's national ballet and military bands, among others, and the Ministry of Culture's explicit favoring of traditional and *tradi-moderne* music and dance ensembles in their annual allocation of funds. *Tradi-moderne* ensembles are most likely to receive Ministry bursaries because they both "valorize" Benin's traditional culture and "modernize" it for international audiences.[7] Corporate sponsors,

[6] See Politz (2017: 132-75) for an in depth analysis of Gangbé's albums and compositions.
[7] These two verbs—to valorize and to modernize—are key terms in local discourse about Benin's music. Musicians say adamantly, "we should valorize our culture" (*on doit valoriser notre culture*) to lament the loss of traditional music to waves of imported popular musics, and support their choice to use Vodun rhythms and local instruments in their compositions. At the same time, my interlocutors emphasize, "one must modernize" (*il faut moderniser*). To modernize in the context of amateur music making usually means to use modern (read Western) instruments like brass instruments and electric guitars, to mix traditional rhythms and melodies with imported

such as the phone companies MTN and Mov, also prefer to back professional *tradi-moderne* ensembles with international reputations. Groups like Gangbé, Eyo'nlé, and Viviola usually fit the bill.[8]

It is no coincidence then that Benin's most celebrated brass musicians come from a patrilineage of military bandsmen. Yet it is perhaps a coincidence that when young musicians applaud a Beninese bandsman as the founder of fanfare they implicitly allude to a colonial history of European military bands. Notably, the French colonial military was explicitly present in Segboton's narrative but only vaguely so in those of Ange and William. The latter two narratives are representative of most of my interlocutors: the military is often named as the catalyst for Benin's civilian fanfare tradition but, importantly, the operative military fanfare in practitioners' stories is not that of French Dahomey but rather of the Republic of Dahomey. As I mentioned above, one reason that local conscripts are present in military histories is that the French colonial military staffed their regiments with Dahomean and other West African men. A second reason for this narrative de-emphasis on French colonists might be the varying levels of awareness about colonial history of younger musicians, particularly those born post-independence and those who did not receive formal education. A third is that the emphasis on Dahomean bandsmen is a narrative choice. The connection of fanfare to an autonomous military

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ones, and to alter or "develop" traditional musics so that they have purchase for future audiences, both imagined and real. Sarah Politz also highlights the import of these two terms in her study of Benin's brass bands and *tradi-moderne* ensembles (2017: 99-100, 136).

[8] Politz says of Gangbé and Eyo'nlé: "In the 1990s and the decades that followed, Benin's international brass bands deployed a multitude of strategies and tactics based in their growing understanding of consumption practices in the West. With continued exposure to Western audiences and music business practices, they were able to use this production knowledge to 'valorize' and market their country's distinctive music history and culture as a strategic commodity" (2017: 173).

evokes the history of independence and a sense of national pride—phenomena that individuals would, understandably, want to remember.

My interlocutors' choice to spotlight Dahomean and Beninese bandsmen also reflects common social practices in southern Benin, including praise songs, respect for elders, and the patrilineal inheritance of knowledge and skill.[9] The musicians I know often identify with either a family lineage of musicians (e.g., the Ahouandjinous or Aïdassos) or a patrilineage of teachers (e.g., Ange was taught by Benjamin, who was taught by Hountondji). When I first met the trombonist Beatrice Todedji she was quick to tell me that Aaron Ahouandjinou was her teacher; he once gave a series of lessons to the instrumentalists at her Celestial Church parish in Porto Novo. Though she had not seen him in years, this connection to the esteemed family afforded her a sense of pride. In Benin, it is also common to praise the musicians one admires in one's songs, as it is elsewhere in West and Central Africa (e.g., Durán 2015; White 2008; Charry 2000; Veal 2000).

Altogether, the above stories framed the contemporary practice of fanfare within a patrilineage of Beninese military men and musical families. These stories echo the canonical history of African brass bands (or, here, fanfares) but with an important twist: French colonizers are replaced with Beninese bandsmen. As we will see below, some of my interlocutors ignore the military and its colonial accoutrements altogether, and instead embrace (indigenous) religious and cultural phenomena in their histories of Beninese fanfare.

[9] These phenomena have been observed across the African continent. Studies of Malian griot families proffer relevant ethnographic examples from elsewhere in Francophone West Africa (e.g., Durán 2015, 2013; Skinner 2015; Charry 2000).

The church

Some of my interlocutors framed Beninese fanfare within a local history of Christian churches. The trumpet player David Akande told me that Benin's first fanfares emerged in Christian churches during the 1980s. The original three fanfares in Cotonou, David detailed, were Fanfare Bethany of the Protestant Church, Fanfare Imole Christi of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, and Fanfare St. Joseph (then Fanfare St. Rita) of the Celestial Church of Christ. This trio of Christian churches and their accompanying fanfares were named by many of my interviewees, though sometimes in different chronological ordering. These three churches are also said to have formed the first civilian fanfares in Porto Novo. The Porto Novian iteration includes the Protestant Church's Atinkame parish, the Celestial Church of Christ's "mother parish," and again the Cherubim and Seraphim's Imole Christi (Politz 2017: 107).

David affirmed that Christian fanfares were progenitors of Benin's secular fanfare tradition, stating, "Fanfare started in the church and then exited to become brass bands."[10] While David credited Benin's local churches, he admitted that church fanfares were dependent upon military fanfares for personnel and musical instruments. For example, David's father, Joseph Akande, founded Fanfare St. Rita in 1983. At the time, his parish could not afford to purchase instruments, and Henri Ahouandjinou loaned Joseph brass instruments from the military fanfare until Fanfare St. Rita could afford to buy their own.[11] David went on to boast that many of the members of Gangbé Brass Band, such as the trumpeter Athanase Dehopumon and James Vodounnon, began their careers in

[10] By "brass band," David refers to the more professional world music ensembles that feature or incorporate brass instruments. I explained the distinction that my interlocutors make between "fanfare" and "brass band" in the Introduction.

[11] Flemming Harrev (1992) describes that Dahomean musical groups were similarly dependent on the sponsorship of religious and political institutions to purchase instruments.

Celestial Church fanfares. Many of them also played in Fanfare St. Rita, he said, and were "formed" by his father Joseph.[12] It is worth noting that David's personal relationship to the military and police fanfares and the Ahouandjinou family is vexed. David auditioned multiples times to join the military fanfare, and paid hundreds of thousands of CFA in bribes, yet was repeatedly rejected. David likewise feels slighted by the Ahouandjinou brothers; he told me that Gangbé passed him up on several occasions when they were in need of a new trumpeter. In light of this, David's emphasis on the Celestial Church can be understood as an allegiance to an institution that has always accepted him.

Others dated the origin of fanfare to the founding of Benin's most prominent indigenous church, the Celestial Church of Christ. The Celestial Church is an African Initiated Church that was founded in Porto Novo in 1947 (see de Surgy 2001; Adogame 1999). Especially popular in the south of the country, it is a prominent site of music education and is affectionately called "the music university of Benin." Benin's public schools offer little by way of arts and music education, and today the most rigorous musical training is offered in state and religious institutions, such as the Beninese armed forces or Protestant churches. The Celestial Church, in particular, is known for its strong emphasis on music education and high quality of musicians. Nearly all of the fanfare musicians I met during my fieldwork learned to play their instruments within the Celestial Church. Indeed, fanfare has become something of a Celestial mascot. Ange Soussou confirmed, "Fanfare is the main tool of the Celestial church. If you are member

[12] Politz, however, documents that Gangbé Brass Band members James Vodounnon, Lucien Gbaguidi, and Sam Gnonlonfoun were trained in Fanfare Imole Christi (2017: 108).

of the chorale it is necessary that you blow." The Celestial Church, along with other African Initiated and Prophetic-Charismatic churches such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, and Protestant denominations such as *L'Église Protestante Méthodiste du Benin* (The Protestant Methodist Church of Benin), also provide part-time paid performance opportunities for amateur musicians.

The association between brass instruments and the Celestial Church provides fodder for the idea that fanfare was born within the church. Some musicians also think that God brought brass instruments to Benin. Euzèbe Hounsou, a multi-instrumentalist and leader of Voix des Anges Brass (The Voice of Angels Brass), believes that white people brought brass instruments to Benin during the colonial period, but he acknowledged that many people do not. The reason, he suggests, is twofold:

> In my opinion, in our day, many young people do not know that white men brought wind instruments. It is not a common belief. You see? Because, for example, Gangbé Brass Band, they play our traditional songs, and they transform traditional songs on brass instruments. People also think that God brought instruments to Africa, not the white people.

First, Euzèbe suggests that professional groups like Gangbé Brass Band have normalized brass instruments for the Beninese public. If a young person encounters brass instruments for the first time by listening to an album by Gangbé Brass Band, or by hearing a fanfare at a funeral, their assumption will be that brass instruments are Beninese. Second, he suggests that the young brass player who is a member of a Christian church is likely to attribute the invention of these instruments, and thus the tradition of Beninese fanfare, to God's divine grace. This latter belief is encouraged by the fact that the members of Gangbé Brass Band—not to mention those of numerous other amateur fanfares—were trained within the Celestial Church.

Musicians' opinions on the origin of brass instruments within the Celestial Church reveal divergent perspectives on the historical relationship between Benin's military and religious fanfares. For example, David's description of a Christian fanfare dependent upon the resources of a military fanfare corroborates the narratives in the section above, which tell of military men who disseminated brass instrument practice into religious and civilian spheres. In contrast, other Celestial musicians suggested the inverse chronology: from their perspective, religious fanfares predated military and civilian fanfares (more on this below). Their view is supported by the prevalence of Celestial-trained musicians in other religious and secular fanfares. For example, it is common for Celestial musicians to play in Evangelical and other Protestant churches for extra money, and more skilled instrumentalists like David Akande and William Codjo are commonly called upon for performance engagements with Benin's police fanfare. Even the instrument repairman Segboton Cledjo acknowledged that the contemporary military and police fanfares recruit their members from the more prominent Celestial Church parishes in southern Benin. In my experience working with Celestial musicians, many of those who are musically and theologically trained within the Celestial Church readily assume (if not explicitly learn) that fanfare performance originated therein.

Musicians' overwhelming mention of the Celestial Church—regardless of their own religious affiliation—speaks to the Celestial Church's formative influence on the development and popularity of Beninese fanfare, as well as its contemporary standing as a cultural institution and center of local music education. The prominence of the Celestial Church in these musical histories also reflects the significance of prophetic movements throughout West Africa in the twentieth century. J.D.Y. Peel (2000, 1968), Paul Gifford

(2015, 2004), Ruth Marshall (2009), and Birgit Meyer (2004), among others, have written on the history of African Initiated Churches and subsequent explosion of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in West Africa. An exemplar is Peel's (1968) study of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and Christ Apostolic Church, two "Aladura" or prayer churches founded in Nigeria in the 1920s. Peel frames the foundation of the Aladura movement within disaffection for mission churches. In contrast to missionary and derivative African churches, Aladura churches were led by prophetic leaders and adopted a syncretic doctrine that permitted worship of both God and spirits (*orisha*), and promoted the power of prayer and ritual as a means to control "this-worldly" events (Peel 1968).

The birth of the Celestial Church in Benin is an analogous event in what might be called West Africa's African Initiated Church moment of the early to mid-twentieth century. Following the Aladura movement in Nigeria, there was an explosion of conversions to the Celestial Church in the 1950s and 60s (see Adogame 1999). Afe Adogame (1999) claims that the rapid expansion of the Celestial prophetic movement was in opposition to mainline Christian churches. Whereas Catholic churches rejected all forms of traditional belief and practice and demonized Vodun deities (see Baker 2012; Alladaye 2003)—indeed, in many churches in Benin, the Vodun Legba stands in for the devil—the Celestial Church embraced traditional music and Vodun rhythms, among other cultural elements. Not coincidentally, the Celestial Church's boom in popularity occurred alongside Nigeria and Benin's independence movements and a broader celebration and (re)claiming of cultural heritage. Adogame thus also explains the growth of the Celestial Church as a response to a complicated period of political and cultural

transition where, in the face of pan-ethnic nation state building, "identity politics" and religious belonging became all the more important.

In sum, the indigenous Celestial Church of Christ emerges in my interlocutors' narratives as an important player in the history of Benin's fanfare. The asserted provenance of fanfare in an African Initiated Church weighs against the aforesaid dominance of colonial and postcolonial military fanfares, as well as historiography that foregrounds colonial religious institutions and Catholic missionary activity. Notably, those musicians who told me that Benin's fanfare has a Christian beginning made no mention of missionary activity during or after the colonial period. I suggest that my interlocutors' historicizing of the Celestial Church is a continuation of the cultural politics Adogame describes: it is a marker of belonging and a means of identification with one's "Brothers in Christ."

The prophet

Celestial Church musicians often identify Samuel Bilehou Oschoffa (1909-85), the prophetic leader and founder of the Celestial Church, as the "creator" or "prophet" of Beninese fanfare. Oschoffa was the son of a Nigerian Methodist minister and was raised as a Methodist before moving to African Initiated Churches and then founding the Celestial Church after a divine revelation (Ogouby 2008; Adogame 1999). Prophet Oschoffa is widely celebrated among Celestial musicians as both a religious leader and skilled saxophone and trumpet player. Celestial musicians sometimes disagree, however, on Oschoffa's biographical details. The trombone player Apollinaire Akpali told me that Oschoffa learned to play wind and brass instruments when he served in the military.

Apollinaire explained that Oschoffa also played music in the Methodist Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim churches before the spirit came to him and he founded the Celestial Church. Rock Ahouandjinou, one of the famed Ahouandjinou brothers and sousaphonist in Eyo'nlé Brass Band, told me that Oschoffa was close friends with his father, Henri Ahouandjinou. They were together in the Methodist Church, Rock said, and Henri Ahouandjinou taught Oschoffa how to play the trumpet. In contrast, Roger, a trombonist in Fanfare St. Joseph, told me that Oschoffa's musical ability was a gift from God and came to him in a dream. Oschoffa then went to the military and taught bandsmen like Henri Ahouandjinou how to play. Another trumpet player, Steven, told me that Oschoffa learned to play the saxophone from Fela Kuti in Nigeria.

While people have different ideas about Oschoffa's musical training, all who spoke of Oschoffa praised him for his role in developing Benin's fanfare and musical culture generally. For example, Isaak Fantodji, a young trumpet player also in Fanfare St. Joseph, told me that Prophet Oschoffa introduced brass instruments to Benin: "Papa Oschoffa brought the brass instruments here from Nigeria. It is because of Oschoffa and the force of the Celestials that fanfare is so popular today." Rock, who is not a member of the Celestial Church, likewise credited Oschoffa and the Celestial Church for the high caliber of brass instrument performance in Benin:

> It's because of Oschoffa and also because of the culture of music in the [Celestial] church. When someone creates a new Celestial church in Benin, the first thing they purchase is a drum (*tam tam*) and at least two trumpets. It's necessary.

Rock's praise of Oschoffa is notable because he speaks from outside of the Celestial Church, and reinforces the prominent role that Oschoffa plays in brass musicians' experiences. David Akande expressed a similar perspective: "The Celestial Church was

born with a trumpet and the Prophet Oschoffa. Papa Oschoffa himself played the trumpet! Thus, if you are Celestial, you are obliged to play the trumpet." The trombonist Geoffroy Whékpé affirmed, "People love brass instruments because of Oschoffa. The instruments are in his image. They don't associate them with colonizers."

Oschoffa was also named as a source for divine knowledge about music. The snare drum player in Fanfare St. Joseph, Severin, was baptized in the Celestial Church as a young child and considers his musical skill a "gift from God." Severin told me that the Prophet Oschoffa came to him in a dream: "he appeared in a white robe and said 'my son, you should play music, and don't ever leave.'" Similarly, Geoffroy told me that God often comes to him in his sleep and teaches him melodies, saying, "It is because of the grace of God and our Prophet Oschoffa that I play the trombone." The trombone player Celestin Comlanvi also thanked "divine grace" and "the light of Prophet Oschoffa" for showing him "how to blow" and permitting him to play music. These musicians attribute their musical ability and creative skills to divine inspiration.[13] In the context of the Celestial Church, such inspiration often comes from Prophet Oschoffa, the first Celestial musician. In addition to his prophecy that spurred the founding of the Celestial Church, Oschoffa is said to have experienced musical revelations. The most notable of these is the *ahwangbahoun* ("war rhythm"), which is the favored rhythm of the Celestial Church. It is said that Oschoffa discovered ahwangbahoun by divine revelation, however, several musicians told me that the rhythm predated its use in the Celestial Church. Regardless, *ahwangbahoun* has become the Celestial Church's musical motif, mirroring the

[13] Divine intervention is a prominent feature of African Initiated and African Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (Meyer 2004).

longstanding practice in Vodun of pairing particular rhythms with particular deities and convents.

As I see it, the praise of Prophet Oschoffa reinforces the version of history that fanfare began in the Celestial Church. Just as George Gnansounou indexes the Dahomean military and Gangbé Brass Band the world music industry, the prophetic leader becomes a synecdoche for the church movement. The idolization of Oschoffa, a Beninese religious prophet, also reminds of the admiration of Beninese military men. In the same way that Segboton redirected his praise from French to Beninese military men, Geoffroy and others chose to credit Oschoffa and not colonial missionaries.

The funeral

Musicians also claimed that Beninese fanfare emerged from a local tradition of playing music at funerals.[14] As noted in the Introduction, funerals and burial ceremonies are the primary performance setting for amateur fanfares. Fanfares are increasingly popular in both religious and non-religious funerals for the reasons that they are affordable (at least relative to larger orchestras), practical (in that they are mobile and do not require amplification), and joyful (in that their repertoire normally comprises positive and/or popular songs). Fanfare performance has become especially common in funeral and burial ceremonies in Benin's southern, peri-urban area. Euzèbe attested to its popularity: "In the south, if there is a burial you must have the ambiance of a fanfare, generally speaking. Especially if [the deceased] was of advanced age. It is necessary." David Akande stated the same:

[14] Joël Noret has done extensive ethnographic work on funerals in Abomey and central Benin. His monograph (2010) gives brief mention of fanfare performances, though his discussion of music focuses mostly on *zenli.*

> In Benin here, there is a death in a house. Certainly they will have the wives (*yao* in Fongbé) come to play. And they will have a fanfare, too. Having a fanfare at your funeral is forced. Forced! . . . The fanfare has a unique vision for funerals. What vision? To make the family forget their grief. We turn grief into joy.

Ange Soussou likewise characterized fanfare as an essential feature of Benin's funerary customs:

> It's our culture, our custom. It's Beninese custom. One always welcomes the body form the morgue to the family home. One needs a fanfare to bring joy and happiness. . . . But fanfare, this is mostly in the south, and also the center [of the country]. There are not many fanfares in the north.

Euzèbe, David, and Ange accentuate the affective work that fanfares do to create feelings like joy and pleasure, a topic that I expound further in Chapter Four. I include these quotes here to accent two points: that brass instrumentalists believe their musical practice brings something "unique" to funerary ceremonies (i.e., a joyful ambiance or atmosphere); and that, from the perspective of practitioners, fanfare is an essential component of funerary rituals in contemporary Benin. Below, I relay individuals' remarks on the connection between contemporary fanfare and longstanding funerary musical practices, including those within the military, royal courts, Vodun convents, and Christian churches.

Ange, for one, pinpointed Benin's military bandsmen as the progenitors of civilian funeral ceremonies. Specifically, he credited Hountondji (the military man who taught Ange's teacher, Benjamin) as the first to introduce fanfare into civilian funerals:

> I don't know the history exactly. But, originally, when a military man passed away, the fanfare of the military would welcome the body and play for the funeral. We don't really know when fanfares began welcoming bodies, but it is the military that began that, and we began to imitate that. I suppose it was from this tradition that Hountondji got the idea. Just like Hountondji played in the military, he formed the first civilian fanfare and they began to perform at civilian funerals. So this practice began to spread out.

Ange's account of the development of funerary fanfare performances reminds of cultural processes like dispersion, adaption, and imitation, all central to early scholarship on African brass bands. Moreover, Ange's perspective that funerary performances originated in the military buttresses the "military band model" discussed above (Reily and Brucher 2013: 4). His report that funerary bands began in the military and were transported to the civilian sphere recalls a similar process of transmission told in Feld's (2012) story about the La Drivers Union Por Por Group in Accra . Composed of members of Accra's union of lorry drivers who play instruments fashioned from recycled squeeze-bulb car horns, the Por Por Group performs for the funerals of deceased union members. They claim to have gleaned the idea of funeral performances from the practices of Ghanaian military brass bands. The example of Ange shows that some young musicians today do relate their practice to military bands. Though, as I suggested above, these are not necessarily the bands of colonial militaries.

Other fanfare practitioners related the practice of performing in funerals to indigenous funerary customs, such as those of the Dahomean royal courts or Vodun convents. Ebenezer Akloe, a saxophonist and the youngest member of Gangbé Brass Band, also said that brass instruments were "transported" to the civil sphere by military musicians, yet the tradition of Beninese fanfare developed in local funeral ceremonies:

> For me, the fanfare was born in the funerary ceremonies. It's like this how the fanfare was born because there was plenty of brass before that one would learn and would play with traditional percussion, with the percussion from Benin. And that is how things untangled. Voilà!
>
> Now, there are lots of fanfares. For example, there are funerals, birthdays, and we do the caravans, all of that. [People who play fanfare] imagine that with these instruments, one can do something. We already have the metal and we have the traditional songs. If we add the European drums and all that, that can give something. It is from there that we invented fanfare… Well, not really invented,

> but we just created the harmony… the harmony between the brass, the wind, and the percussion. That is how [fanfare] came.

I asked Ebenezer to say more about the brass and metal instruments in traditional songs and he elaborated that in royal ceremonies there are often instruments of metal. For example, in the royal palaces of Porto Novo they play *adjògàn,* a rhythm traditionally played by the wives of kings. The principle instrument of *adjògàn* is the *alunlun*, a long copper-covered iron rod clad with metal rings that jingle when stamped to the ground, and which musicians slide up and down (Figure 1.1).[15] Ebenezer also drew a comparison between fanfare and *zenli*, the funerary rhythm and musical genre traditionally performed for royal funerary ceremonies in the Dahomean capital of Abomey (see Noret 2010). In *zenli*, musicians play the *kpézin* drum and metal bells, and, sometimes, attach metal pieces to a drum or a dancer's ankle.[16] In civilian funerals, too, there are many percussion groups that play metal instruments. Ebenezer offered as example the *kpanouhoun* rhythm played by the exogamous wives (*yao* in Fongbé) in a given family. The rhythm *kpanouhoun* is played primarily with *kpanou*, plastic plates pierced with metal rings, and is accompanied by iron bells, small drums, and vocalizations (Figure 1.2).[17] Like *zenli* and fanfare, *kpanouhoun* is a funerary genre said to bring joy and pleasure to those in mourning, though unlike those genres *kpanouhoun* is exclusively for women. After

[15] At the top of the *alunlun* is a handle in the shape of a bird. The *alunlun* is said to resemble the staff of King Te-Agdanlin and is the principle instrument of the rhythm *adjògàn*. The *alunlun* has been played by the wives of kings in the royal courts of Porto Novo since the seventeenth century (then the Kingdom of Hogbonou), and played in Catholic churches since Father Francis Aupiais adopted the instrument for Catholic processions in the 1930s (Rouget 1996: 122-7 and 131-6). Jean Rouch and Gilbert Rouget (1969) also produced a documentary film featuring the *adjògàn* dance of the wives of Porto Novo's royal court.

[16] The funerary genre *zenli* is well documented in studies of Fon funeral traditions by anthropologists Melville Herskovits (1938: 356-64) and Joël Noret (2010).

[17] *Kpanou* is the Fongbé word for plate and *houn* the word for drum, thus the name *kpanouhoun* translates roughly to "plate drum." It is said that the kpanou was originally made of metal before instrument makers transitioned to using inexpensive plastic plates (see Chapter Two).

surveying these traditional rhythms, Ebenezer once again compared fanfare to *zenli*, saying that *zenli* is to royal funerals as fanfare is to civilian ones. Whereas people used to play bells and metal percussion in their funerals, now they sometimes play trumpets. "See?" Ebenezer concluded, "There is a line."



Figure 1.1: A female ensemble plays *adjògàn* at a civilian funeral reception. The musician in the foreground holds the *alunlun*. Porto Novo, 6 February 2016.



Figure 1.2: A female group plays *kpanouhoun* at a funeral reception. The kpanou is seen on the right. The image of the deceased is printed on umbrellas, a reference to the parasols held over the heads of kings during royal ceremonies. Porto Novo, 6 February 2016.

Euzèbe likewise correlated fanfare with local customs of playing metal instruments in funerary settings. He first recounted similarities between contemporary fanfare performances and ancestral burial ceremonies: brass instruments are played in Benin today, he said, because, "in the ancient time, our ancestors played metal instruments like bells and rattles when they buried their dead." Euzèbe then connected the performance of fanfare in Christian funerals to the performance of metal percussion in Vodun burial rituals and ceremonies. Euzèbe explained that both Christian and Vodun practitioners prefer to play metal instruments at burials because they think that metal speaks to God:

Me: Why do people play brass instruments at traditional funerals?
Euzèbe: Back in the beginning [*À l'époque*], when ancestors wanted to communicate with their Gods, those who make the fetish, they would pour palm oil on pieces of metal, on iron, which is like a God. Same thing with brass instruments. For the burial of dead people, when you play a trumpet, it is God with whom you are talking. It's in the domain of Gu.

Gu, or Ogun in Yorùbá, is the Vodun deity of war and metal, specifically iron. Euzèbe clarified that he does not worship Gu, but rather plays brass instruments to worship his own God in the Celestial Church. Like Ebenezer, Euzèbe's suggests that playing brass instruments for Christian burials is an analog of a preexisting funerary tradition of playing metal instruments for Gu. Just as adepts of Gu use metal to speak to Gu, at Celestial funerals, he said, people play fanfare in order to sing to God and angels. (I discuss Gu and sounding metals in more detail in Chapter Two.)

Euzèbe then related fanfare performance to the spectacle of public announcements in Dahomean royal courts, during which traditional clarions (single-note blown horns made of metal, usually iron or brass) are blown to announce the arrival of a king. Clarions are played to this day for royal ceremonies, announcements, and funerals, particularly in the north of Benin.[18] Relatedly, Euzèbe said that people hire fanfares to make noise at funerals. At funerals, he explained, the noise of a fanfare helps to announce the death to the community: "The children of the deceased want to show off. They want to say that someone has died and that person is important. But they also want to show that they can afford to have a fanfare come and perform at the funeral." The anthropologist Melville Herskovits (1938) makes comparable observations about the performance of

[18] See, for example, the recent article in the Benin Times (Tchogbo 2017) about the use of clarions in the Gaani festival held in the northern city Nikki. See Rouget (1996) on music in the royal court of Porto Novo. Many Fongbé and Gungbé speakers refer to clarions, brass instruments, vuvuzelas, and other blown horns with the same Fongbé term, *ván*.

music and spectacle of noise in Fon funerals. The final three chapters of his canonical study of Dahomean social life recount a typical Fon funeral, for which music plays a central role. Herskovits describes ritual wailing by women (1938: 356), songs intoned by the gravedigger (1938: 359), songs sung by body bearers (1938: 374), burial songs (1938: 380), and, most importantly, *zenli* drumming ensembles (1938: 356-401).[19] *Zenli* drummers play day and night throughout the funerary period and the family members of the deceased make donations to the musicians. Following days of rituals, family visits, and musical performances, Herskovits describes, the deceased is at last buried. On this day, the numerous *zenli* ensembles that had thus far performed individually gather to play together for the first time. Herskovits remarks on the sound: "The result is, of course, a deafening volume of sound, which is desired, since the greater the volume, the higher the standing of the deceased in the next world, and, incidentally, the more the satisfaction felt by the family" (1938: 364).

The parallel between *zenli* and fanfare is clear: both are male groups that perform (almost) exclusively for funerals. Like *zenli* ensembles, fanfares often have a familial or social connection to the deceased and come from the same village or city quarter. Additionally, both *zenli* ensembles and fanfares are linked to specific descendants of the deceased. As noted in the Introduction, fanfares are typically hired by one of the children of the deceased and, thus, represent that person's contribution to their parent's funeral. This often leads to the presence of multiple fanfares at a given funeral, especially when there is tension between siblings. In this sense, fanfares seem a direct extension of *zenli*

[19] In addition to a communal *dókpwè* (drumming group) composed of the men from the village where the deceased lived, every son-in-law of the deceased leads his own *zenli* ensemble (1938: 363). *Zenli* ensembles comprise the traditional *kpézin* drum, *gan* (iron bells), and *assan* (also *asán*, rattles made of woven bamboo).

ensembles, which, as Herskovits described, are associated with the male children and sons-in-law of the deceased.

The correlations that Ebenezer and Euzèbe make between brass instruments and other instruments made of metal—and, by extension, the association of fanfare with Dahomean funerary genres like *zenli*—are commonly held associations.[20] These "instrumental" connections serve as the premise for many people's claims that the culture of fanfare performance is part and parcel of longstanding funerary practices in Benin and Dahomey. These claims, in turn, support the idea that fanfare is an expressly Beninese practice: one born and developed in Benin. It is notable that, in stories such as those told by Ebenezer and Euzèbe, as well as those told about the foundation of fanfare within the Celestial Church, European militaries and missionaries are absent.

The outside

While some musicians say that fanfare is a traditional practice—one born out of the military, church, or funeral—others claim that fanfare is an international import. Musicians glossed fanfare as an "imported genre," "modern music," and "a thing from the outside." Some musicians said that fanfare originates in a specific place. The trombonist Abraham Oke told me that fanfare is from the United States, explaining that he saw a video online of a brass band in New Orleans. The trumpeter Steven claimed that fanfare is from Ghana, although his brother Euzèbe insisted fanfare is from France. Others referred to more ambiguous international locales. The trombonist Geoffroy said he was not sure of its exact provenance but fanfare is "an international genre" that "comes

[20] I explore the meanings of metal in religious and secular musical practices in the subsequent chapter in more detail.

from the exterior." The trumpeter Abel Hounyemin told me that fanfare "was invented by the whites." "You should know," he quipped, "it comes from *chez toi*." And the saxophonist Ebenezer said firmly, "The origin is from the outside."

In such invocations, "the outside" often refers to an indistinct geographical locale outside of Benin's national borders. Sometimes the outside is a coded signifier of European or Western countries—the French word *l'extérieur* is a common translation of the Fongbé word *yovotome* ("the land of the white people"). In this sense, the word denotes nations of wealth and prosperity, and almost always carries a positive connotation. Sometimes the outside is more loosely deployed to denote any country that is not Benin. The saxophonist Blaise Loukou, for example, told me that fanfare and its instruments "come from over there" (*Ils viennent de là-bas*). *Là-bas*, in the Beninese context, operates as a catchall category for things foreign—anything that originates from outside of Benin.

Amateur musicians' perception of fanfare as an international genre is buttressed by their exposure to professionals who perform in the Global North. Gangbé Brass Band, in particular, looms large in the imaginations of brass musicians. My interlocutors actively follow Gangbé's tours abroad: people gossip about their departure and arrival dates, what airline they might fly with, and what exotic destinations they might visit. For young, poor, amateur musicians who have never traveled abroad, Gangbé's annual pilgrimage to Europe or elsewhere is a conspicuous and enviable indication of their commercial success. They infer from Gangbé's popularity on the world music scene that fanfare is not only "world music," much like jazz and gospel, but also music beloved by

white people. A conversation I had with Euzèbe, the leader of Voix des Anges Brass, illustrates:

> Euzèbe: White people love brass instruments! Isn't it true?
> Me: [Laughs] I don't know. I think white people enjoy brass instruments as much as other people.
> Euzèbe: Yes, but white people love brass instruments too, too much. They love Gangbé Brass Band. Gangbé plays for the whites every summer. Do you see? That is why Gangbé is so strong.
> Me: Yes, I see.
> Euzèbe: But Benin is full of fanfares! Gangbé is not the only one. It is not fair that they take all of the attention. It's as if the others don't exist. But now there are more and more white people coming to Benin. When they come they will see the other fanfares, too. There are plenty of fanfares! Gangbé can't eat all of the opportunities (*Ils ne peuvent pas buffet tous les opportunités*). Why not share them with the youth?

Whereas before Euzèbe illuminated fanfare's connections to indigenous traditions, here he utilizes what he considers fanfare's international origins to create a space for subsequent claims. If fanfare is a historically Western genre—Euzèbe said that white people brought brass instruments to Africa, after all—it follows that its contemporary manifestation (in Benin or elsewhere) ought to come replete with adoring white fans and the prestige they represent. By historicizing fanfare as international, my interlocutors keep alive the possibility that they can be international themselves.

The outside appears elsewhere in writing on African musics. For instance, the ethnomusicologist Gavin Steingo (2016a) conceives of the outside as an experiential aesthetic in his monograph on the South African popular music genre *kwaito*. Steingo explains that kwaito gained popularity in 1980s Johannesburg "because it was experienced *as* an international genre," as a sound set apart from the racial violence of apartheid: "To experience kwaito, in its earliest form, was therefore to experience the far-off, the distant, the outside" (2016a: 27, his emphasis). In Steingo's (2016a: 56)

rendering, kwaito proffers something of an experiential escape—the outside aesthetic embedded within the musical experience of kwaito marks a symbolic separation from less than ideal social conditions. "By establishing a relationship with the outside," Steingo elaborates, "early mediators of house music did not bring foreign music close. Instead, the allure of international music in the 1980s lay precisely in the fact that it remained international, foreign, and far-off" (2016a: 55). For brass players in Benin, the outside seems to have a similar magnetism. Yet the appeal of the outside is not that it remains far away but that it is potentially proximate. By performing a genre originating in the outside, musicians like Euzèbe feel they have a claim to share in its wealth—if only Gangbé were to operate more equitably. And though the outside may be inaccessible to Euzèbe presently, it may only be so temporarily, especially if there are "more and more white people coming" to experience Benin's insider account of an outsider genre.

My interlocutors' orientation to the outside suggests it is more than a spatial category. This multi-modal outside also coincides with Steingo's ethnography: "This outside can be temporal (the past, or history), spatial (another place), or cosmological (encountered through dreams or the occult)—most often, it is a combination of all three" (2016a: 133). These three categories of outsides also emerge in my interlocutors' stories: fanfare is from "a long time ago" (the temporal), fanfare is from "over there" (the spatial), fanfare is "a gift from God" (the cosmological). Fanfare summons various outsides of which geography, though central, is but one. Perhaps it is the allure of exteriority that makes fanfare a fascination for my interlocutors. Perhaps, like kwaito's performers and listeners, Beninese musicians enjoy fanfare simply for its experiential escape. Yet fanfare's temporal, geographic, and cosmological distance also suggests

spaces in which to make claims. For those of my interlocutors who conceive fanfare's origins in the Kingdom of Dahomey, it is a marker of tradition; when it originates in the Celestial Church, it reifies religious hierarchies; when it comes from Europe, it empowers young musicians to pursue economic opportunity. In other words, fanfare's outsideness proffers interpretive pliancy that, in turn, invites a multiplicity of stories. The telling of history, then, becomes part of larger strategy of claim making.

Steingo's idea of the temporal outside is of particular relevance to my interlocutors' narratives about the history of fanfare. He suggests that the (musical) past is a "vibrant and perduring" subject with which kwaito musicians interact: "Rather than viewing the past as something that can be infinitely manipulated, [my interlocutors] tend to engage history as a constellation of active and agential forms, bodies, and figures" (2016a: 135). In this rendering, history is a limited, formed, and known subject that animates the present. Much like *l'extérieur* or *là-bas*, the past is an outside that is strategically accessed—indeed, Steingo postulates "history *as an* outside" (2016a: 134, my emphasis). This idea—of a preformed and distant, but ultimately accessible and malleable past—helps to understand how musicians simultaneously engage disparate temporal outsides (e.g., of funeral rituals in precolonial Dahomey and of the world music industry in the age of capitalism). Yet the idea that the past is accessible occludes the experience of other musicians for whom history feels out of reach. I expand on this perspective next.

The unknown

My conversations with musicians about the history of fanfare were sometimes stopped short when they said, "I don't know." A trombonist named Philippe responded, "I don't know the history. That doesn't concern me." Another trombonist, Pedro, answered, "In fact, I have not mastered [the history] well. You should go ask an elder" (*J'ai pas bien maîtrisé. Tu dois chercher chez les anciens*). Maxime affirmed that many musicians do not know the history of fanfare, or they have heard multiple histories and do not know which one is true. Ambiguity about the origin of fanfare encourages some practitioners to resign to not knowing, and others still to claim agnosticism on historical matters generally. Celestin said as much in his critique of other musicians: "History is not important. It doesn't matter to them (*Ils s'en foutent de ça*). In Benin, here, they care only about money. They play [fanfare] just to search for money."

Such testimony to not knowing recalls scholarship in Africanist anthropology on people's relationships to knowledge in situations of uncertainty. In her monograph on responses to misfortunate and illness in Uganda, for example, Susan Reynolds Whyte (1997) illustrates reasons why people choose to not know and even "maintain uncertainty" about their misfortune. Murray Last (1981) also postulates the advantages of not knowing in his article, "The Importance of Knowing about Not Knowing." In a Hausa town in Nigeria where Western and traditional medicine are at odds, Last observes that people take the position of "not-knowing" and "not-caring-to-know" about medical knowledge. Not knowing, in turn, strengthens social practices of secrecy and skepticism: "a secrecy which tries to conceal the lack of knowledge and certainty" and "a skepticism in which people suspect that no one really 'knows'" (1981: 391). Thus not knowing is

something of a defense mechanism: rather than admit that they do not know, people "simply switch off" (ibid.). Some of my interlocutors also displayed disinterest in knowledge and even a deliberate not knowing. As Maxime intimated, when the presence of multiple histories proves disorienting, some people resign to not caring to know. Celestin, too, suggested that people choose to not know out of apathy. Both of these perspectives suggest that not knowing is preferable to knowing a history that is ambiguous or conflicting. As Whyte and Last make clear, uncertainty can be unpleasant, and not knowing can be a pragmatic choice.[21]

It is possible that my interlocutors said they did not know the history of fanfare because they did not want to remember colonial history. Geoffroy told me that Beninese do not like to talk about colonialism and histories of occupation: "People forget colonization because they want to progress." And Maxime confirmed, "The history of colonization is forgotten" and that "the youth, they do not know." These comments expose the role of remembering and forgetting in history making. Memory, in particular, is a central issue for scholarship on postcolonial Africa.[22] This literature shows that memory plays a formative role in history making. As Nicholas Argenti and Katherina Schramm put it, historical memory "is a selective re-creation that is dependent for its meaning on the remembering individual or community's contemporary social context,

[21] Likewise, I will argue in Chapter Five that ambiguous knowledge about brass instruments encourages social and corporeal anxieties.

[22] There is a rich literature on memory and remembering in postcolonial Africa. Africanist anthropologists have shown that memory is selective (Argenti and Schramm 2012: 4), risky (Werbner 1998: 8), and difficult to trace (see De Boeck and Hutchinson's contributions to Werbner 1998). This scholarship also draws attention to how memory (and, relatedly, history) is not necessarily discursive. Rather, memory can be embedded in embodied practices and ritual divination (Shaw 2002), mimetic postures and gestures (Stoller 1995), narrative images and iconography (Schoffeleers 1992), theatrical performance (Shaw 2007), everyday choices and social practices (Tonkin 1992), and everyday habits (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

beliefs and aspirations" (2012: 2). In this view, the act of remembering can be a choice. Geoffroy's comments support this perspective. According to him, some people choose to forget colonialism because they think that history hinders their progress; they prefer to think about the future.

Work on the phenomenology of history has also portrayed remembering and its counterpart, forgetting, as active faculties. In particular, I am thinking of Paul Ricoeur's (2004) *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Ricoeur suggests that history "overly remembers" some events at the expense of others, and that this approach to remembering is not necessarily self-deception but rather a reorientation to history. My interlocutors' emphasis on Beninese bandsmen and religious leaders over French ones seems exemplary of the act of remembering what one wishes to remember. Still, history is made of forgetting as much as remembering. Ricoeur portrays forgetting as an active capacity: "Too little memory . . . can be classified as passive forgetting, inasmuch as it can appear as a deficit in the work of memory. But, as a strategy of avoidance, of evasion, of flight, it is an ambiguous form of forgetting, active as much as passive" (2004: 449). He then speculates whether, in parallel to a "happy memory," there is such a thing as "happy forgetting" (2004: 285). Proffering the example of forgiveness, he suggests that to forget harm done is "a concerned disposition" that parallels the power or remembering (2004: 505). I suggest that when my interlocutors omit certain historical events from their stories about fanfare they are "forgetting" in the Ricoeurian sense. Colonialism is not really forgotten—this is not false consciousness—but rather is pushed to the side. Their omission of colonial military bands or French missionaries was not accidental, but rather a deliberate absence indicative of the will to forget. My interlocutors told a history, a

story, that they wanted to remember and wanted me, the ethnomusicologist, to know. Their forgetting was, perhaps, a narrative choice.[23]

Not knowing, however, is not always a choice. Ebenezer Akloe claimed that young people in Benin do not know "the real history" of fanfare for two reasons: first, because it is a history from the outside and, second, because those with historical knowledge fail to share it. Thus, lack of knowledge is not for lack of interest but rather of access:

> Me: What is the origin of fanfare?
> Ebenezer: The real origin is not really… The fanfare has come. It is not for us. In reality, the fanfare is not for us.
> Me: I noticed that musicians know the history of traditional rhythms like *zenli*, but they do not know the history of fanfare. Why?
> Ebenezer: It's because, you see, don't you? The fanfare did not originate here (*chez nous*). The fanfare did not leave from here, thus they could not know [the history].
> Me: But they could know the history if they did the research.
> Ebenezer: Yes! But the people who normally must know the origin are the prominent people who play. They must explain: "this is how it came." But they do not explain; they have left it. And us, we enter inside, and we think the fanfare is good, but we do not know the real history. Maybe it is not necessary. The fanfare was not invented here.

Ebenezer's logical consequence ("The fanfare did not leave from here, thus they could not know") connects the accessibility—even possibility—of knowledge about a historical event to its temporal and spatial proximity. He suggests that because fanfare is from the outside and "did not originate here" its history is unknowable and maybe even unnecessary. Yet Ebenezer's invocation of the other side of the inside/outside binary also suggests spatial proximity: despite the fanfare being from the outside, practitioners "enter inside" of it, know it, and value it. What emerges is an ambiguous relationship to fanfare:

[23] An analog is found in Rosalind Shaw's (2007) "Displacing Violence." Shaw observes that Sierra Leonean youth "forget" realist accounts of their nation's civil war and renarrate that history in fictional plays in Pentecostal churches. Shaw suggests, "their displacement of violent memory is enabling rather than restraining" (2007: 89).

one is simultaneously outside and inside the tradition, and one both knows and does not know it.

This epistemological straddling recalls what Michel de Certeau calls "two positions of the real" (1988: 35). Speaking about the ways that historiographers make history, de Certeau delineates two kinds of real: "The real insofar as it is the *known* . . . and the real insofar as it is entangled within the scientific operations," the latter denoting a reality that is still a postulate (ibid., his emphasis). "There are in effect two types of history," de Certeau explains, a history that is known and one that is unknown, and the historiographer must choose "one of these positions of the real . . . as the center of attention" (ibid.). I refer to de Certeau to suggest that Ebenezer plays the part of the historiographer: in choosing between two histories of fanfare—fanfare from the outside as against the inside—Ebenezer defines "the real." What also emerges in Ebenezer's commentary is apathy and agnosticism: if the "real history" cannot be fully known, "maybe it is not necessary." After all, "the fanfare was not invented here." The implication is that one is responsible for knowing only that which originates here, at home (*chez nous*), in the inside. Harking back to Steingo's "history as an outside," we might add to the experience of the outside a sense of the unknowable.

History entangled

My interlocutors' stories about fanfare point to multiple and intersecting histories. The political history of the French colonial military blends with the social history of Beninese bandsmen; the religious history of Vodun interweaves with that of the Celestial Church of Christ; the cultural history of traditional burials merges with the material practice of

metal instruments. These stories, I propose, can be conceived as entangled. I take my lead from Achille Mbembe, who utilizes the concept of entanglement in his characterization of the postcolony.[24] I quote him at length:

> I define the postcolony as a timespace characterized by proliferation and multiplicity. As a temporal formation, the postcolony is definitely an era of dispersed entanglements, the unity of which is produced out of differences. From a spatial point of view, it is an overlapping of different, intersected and entwined threads in tension with one another. Here, the task of the analyst is to tease out those threads, to locate those intersections and entwinements. This can only be done if, from the start, we take seriously the very compositeness of the postcolony. (Hoeller and Mbembe 2007)

Following Mbembe, I want to identify the historical threads that weave through my interlocutors' stories. Yet I hesitate to "tease out those threads," as Mbembe suggests, largely because I do not want to assume the responsibility of re-threading. It would feel disingenuous to unweave histories—to pull at their threads, to compromise their shape—when my objective, as voiced at the outset, was to let other people weave them. Besides, I think that some stories are meant to be tangled. What I do find worthwhile, however, is the task of locating the intersections of narrative threads: where stories converge, diverge, and become entangled. Identifying those intersections shows where my interlocutors are in agreement and in tension, and helps better understand the social and political stakes of fanfare in Benin today.

My interlocutors' stories diverge, or are most at odds, in their depiction of how fanfare developed as a local genre. As we saw, some claimed that fanfare developed within the military, others the church, and others the funeral. While the influence of these phenomena on fanfare is not mutually exclusive, I observed that musicians tended to side with one or another depending on their own social and religious orientations. David, for

[24] The theme of entanglement appears in recent scholarship on postcolonial Africa. See, for example, Larkin (2016) on "entangled religions" in West Africa.

example, chose to emphasize the Celestial Church of Christ and his parish St. Rita. In doing so, he undermined the influence of the Beninese military that rejected him as well as rival churches. Meanwhile, Segboton, Ange, and William all stressed that fanfare originated in the military, yet Segboton credited the work of Gnansounou, Ange credited that of Hountondji, and William that of Ahouandjinou. Each musician attributed the prestige of creating fanfare to his own patrilineage. While most musicians claimed that fanfare came into its own in the independent Republic of Dahomey (and later Republic of Benin), they disagreed on the specifics of how. Ironically, stories become entangled over how things untangled.

Musicians' stories also converge and reinforce one another in important ways. First, most stories were framed within a future-facing chronology whose events took place in the post-independence period. Nearly everyone began their story with an event from the mid- to late-twentieth century: Prophet Oschoffa founded the Celestial Church in 1947, the Republic of Dahomey's autonomous military took shape with independence in 1960, African Initiated Churches normalized fanfare in civilian culture in the 1980s, and so on. Only Segboton Cledjo, the septuagenarian repairman, mentioned French Dahomey (1904-58). In all, there was a paucity of colonial history—an omission I intimated was deliberate forgetting. Yet timelines also moved around. Euzèbe's complex explanation of why fanfare developed as a funerary genre is an exemplar. He interwove cultural histories of traditional burials, Vodun worship, Celestial funerals, and Dahomean royal funerals—phenomena that are temporally dispersed across centuries. These intermeshing and at times incomplete chronologies portray a past that is as dense as it is fragmented. Or, as performance studies scholar Diana Taylor puts it, "The past might be

conceived not only as a timeline—accessed as a leap backwards, and forward to the present again—but also as a multilayered sedimentation, a form of vertical density rather than a horizontal sweep—not an either/or but a both/and" (2006: 83).

Second, fanfare musicians all articulated a relationship to tradition. Fanfare was said to be a continuation of Dahomean royal court styles, a throwback to Vodun rituals for Gu, a revelation of Prophet Oschoffa, and a progeny of national military orchestras. In all iterations save for, perhaps, Ebenezer's renouncement of fanfare's history, tradition was omnipresent. I suggested that such over remembering of events from precolonial and independent Dahomey was strategic. Additionally, I propose that my interlocutors' historicizing of fanfare within Dahomean-Beninese tradition is part of an ongoing project of claiming and valorizing traditional culture. This project, as said above, began as a national mandate during the 1990s cultural revitalization. Its present day manifestation retains the impulse to elide if not erase ethnic divisions so as to collect all indigenous musics under the pan-ethnic "traditional" umbrella, as well as to secularize Vodun culture for its use by the masses.[25] I suggest that similar processes of claiming and valorizing are being applied to fanfare. Fanfare is claimed as Beninese and valorized as an extension of traditional rituals, musical practices, and indigenous religions. Fanfare is also secularized in the sense that some said it began in the Celestial Church but then moved to the civilian sphere. Much like Vodun rhythms are said to "exit" from the convent, fanfare "exited" from the church. Fanfare was also traditionalized in that some said it began in the "outside" but then moved to the "inside." In this sense, fanfare "exited" from the outside

[25] Speaking about the history of African Christianity, Birgit Meyer affirms that colonialists, missionaries, and "cultural agents who refer to tradition as a desirable point of reference and basis of cultural pride are often involved in a project of secularizing traditional rituals, thereby turning them into 'harmless culture' (Peel 1994: 163)" (Meyer 2004: 456). One could say that independent African governments did the same.

and "entered" into tradition. Altogether, fanfare was conceived not as a colonial import but a traditional development—a historical perspective that I see as politically motivated. It is a collective claiming of fanfare for Benin.

Crucially, these stories illuminated the fragmented, partial, and shifting nature of historical knowledge in postcolonial Benin. This was perhaps most vivid in the accounts of musicians who said they did not know, or did not care to know, the history of fanfare. Some suggest that Benin's history is particularly partial and fluid for its youth. During my time in Cotonou, I had the opportunity to meet Elisée Soumonni, a retired historian and professor now living in Calavi. Over lunch one day in August 2016, Soumonni shared his reflections on Benin's youth and their relation to history:

> Kids today do not go to school. They do not learn about their history. . . . The Republic of Dahomey only became the Benin Republic in the 70s. And yet today young people shout the name Benin as if it means something. They promote ancient traditions—saying "*à l'époque*," this imagined space of beginning and origin that no one can really place, temporally or geographically—as being *Beninois*. Yet really they do not know these histories, nor care to understand them, and the traditions are dying.

Soumonni's observation evokes an array of ideas from postcolonial literature: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's (1983) theory of invented tradition; Arjun Appadurai's (1981) oft-cited "The Past as a Scarce Resource"; Albert Memmi's (1965: 106) claim that colonized children were not taught their own history and are "divorced from reality"; Frantz Fanon's (2004 [1961]) notion of the paradox of national culture in a newly independent nation-state; and Achille Mbembe's (2002: 242) views on modes of self-making in the African postcolony, among others. Like these scholars, Soumonni distills the postcolonial experience of history to one fundamentally about knowledge—or its lack. In his portrayal, Beninese youth are searching for tradition, grasping for origins, yet,

at the same time, not really caring if they find them. This paradox of desire and uncertainty—of the will to know and will to not know—permeates scholarly representations of postcolonial experiences. The desire for certainty, in particular, features in Mbembe's writing on the postcolonial condition:

> [W]e find many people yearning for—I wouldn't say the past, or a return to "the tradition" as such although this is part of it—something they can recognize as stable, as common sense, since common sense is to a certain extent predicated on the belief in the stability of reality, or at least some stability in the real. . . . They are yearning for some sense of originary simplicity, something unmixed, somehow pure. (Mbembe in Shipley et al. 2010: 674)

Both Soumonni and Mbembe's characterization of postcolonial experience centers on a sense of absence—of knowledge, history, or identity—and a sense of desire—for a beginning, an origin, or "some stability in the real."[26] As we saw, my interlocutors channeled these same sentiments. Musicians reached back to "the beginning," to Dahomey, to tradition; and musicians claimed fanfare as Beninese, cementing it in the real, in the inside. At the same time, their reckoning with the unknown and, especially, their search for an elusive "real history" drives home the fractured nature of knowledge about the past. In all, their telling of fanfare's history was one of multiplicity and entanglement.

Conclusion

This chapter retold the history of Beninese fanfare from the perspective of contemporary practitioners. My objective was to push against the standard historical narrative of postcolonial brass bands and make room for thinking about the multiplicity of histories

[26] Although (future-oriented) desire and yearning feature in discourse about African popular music (e.g., Steingo 2016a), absence and abjection are under-theorized. One exception is Marceline Saibou (2016), who uses concepts of absence and disjuncture to understand popular music and political identities in Togo.

and meanings this musical practice has in present day Benin. I first synopsized prior scholarship on postcolonial brass bands and argued that the canonical narrative reifies the so-called military band model. This analytical disposition toward European colonial history and Western musical categories fails to appreciate alternative ways of knowing and experiencing brass instrument practice in postcolonial places. In its stead, I proposed a mode of analysis that listens to stories from below.

By retelling histories from my interlocutors' point of view, I showed that their historical relationships take many forms. Some historical rhetoric was quite explicit and codified. Segboton Cledjo celebrated the success of Dahomean military men and, by extension, Dahomean autonomy; David Akande claimed fanfare as a product of the Celestial Church and, in doing so, undermined the importance of rival churches and the national military. Other musicians perhaps saw fanfare's history as just that, rhetoric, and did not engage with it as directly. We can think of Blaise who referred abstractly to the outside; we can also think of Philippe and Pablo and those who were content to not know the history. But, on the whole, we saw that musicians had distinct ideas about fanfare's history. Moreover, musicians usually articulated that history in terms of Beninese traditions, not colonial heritage.

In the final section, I envisioned the history of fanfare in Benin as entangled. Rather than streamline musicians' stories of fanfare into an *ur* narrative, I showcased their multiplicity and complexity, correspondences and divergences. By triangulating these stories, I emphasized overlaying temporalities and multiple locations, as well as gaps in people's historical registers. I also identified thematic convergences—particularly around tradition and the post-independence period—which imply that musicians'

envisioning of history is part of a broader (and initially political) project of valorizing traditional culture. I then suggested musicians' relationship to history is indicative of the epistemological uncertainty said to characterize postcolonial experience, particularly amongst youth. The multiple and entangled identities of fanfare reflect musicians' subjectivities, as well as their partial and fragmented knowledge about the past. The historicizing of fanfare as traditional and Beninese, in turn, marks their desire for certainty, for a handhold for their experience of the real.

The following chapter flows directly from this one. Building on this discussion of how fanfare is conceived in relation to history, I will question how ideas about brass instruments relate to histories and practices of material culture. My larger aim—in both this chapter and the next—is to dislodge the taken for granted interpretation of brass instruments within the military band paradigm or vis-à-vis Western logics and further a perspective that reclaims a sense of how Beninese persons experience this musical practice.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sound of Metal: A Materialist Perspective on Musical Instruments

Gangbé Brass Band begins their music video for "Sofada" (*Assiko* 2008) with a close-up shot of Gangbé's lead trumpet player.[1] The camera then pans to the other musicians, spotlighting their instruments: a brass-plated trumpet, a fiberglass sousaphone, a tenor saxophone. At the start of the first verse, the camera zooms out and we see that the musicians are precariously perched atop pieces of tin roofing; their stage is a metal scrapyard (Figure 2.1). As the song continues and brass riffs sound out, the camera cuts from the scrapyard to the streets of the surrounding village. We see young men coiling metal wire and bending sheet metal, and children hammering aluminum cans and playing with handmade metal toys (Figure 2.2). These village scenes are interspersed with shots of Gangbé playing and dancing in a dirt courtyard as their brass instruments flash in the sunlight. Present throughout this four-minute montage are images, and sounds, of metal. The video ends with a scene of Gangbé again standing on piles of rusted scrap metal, this time joined by a dancing audience.

[1] Gangbé Brass Band's music video "Sofada" is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NNTSpyaVdk.



Figure 2.1: Gangbé Brass Band performs in a metal scrapyard as they film their music video for the song “Sofada.” Photograph by Michel de Bock.



Figure 2.2: Children work with aluminum cans in Gangbé Brass Band’s music video for the song “Sofada.” Screenshot of YouTube video.

Gangbé's music video for "Ema dja" (*Togbé* 2001) is similarly replete with metal.[2] The video begins with footage of two fanfares, Fanfare St. Joseph and Fanfare Grace, performing outdoors for a participating audience (Figure 2.3). The film is artificially aged with sepia-tone and crackling black spots—an effect that marks these fanfares as old and their members as elders. The film then transitions to full color, catapulting us forward in time. The sound of the old fanfares fades out and Gangbé's song fades in. We see Gangbé playing in an open-air market, dancing playfully with the female vendors. As Gangbé finishes the chorus, the color switches back to sepia, returning us to an older era of fanfares. We see abstract images of brass instruments—the valves of a trumpet, the keys of a saxophone, the slide of a trombone—and dramatic portraits of musicians, shirtless and sweating (Figure 2.4). As Gangbé's tenor saxophone player, Lucien, improvises a solo, the older fanfares reappear. Sprinkled between these gold-toned images are flashes of traditional ritual: a Gelede mask, a man possessed, an Egungun.[3] Near the end of the solo section, the video cuts to color, propelling us yet again to the future. We see Gangbé playing brass instruments next to boys soldering iron bells over open fires—the visual semiotics riffing, once again, on tropes of metal. As the repeating chorus line fades out, band members dance with women wearing wax cloth, gold jewelry, and buckled high-heeled shoes.

[2] Gangbé Brass Band's music video "Ema dja" is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtoUFpboDms.

[3] Gelede (also Guelede and Guèlèdè) is a masked performance tradition of the Yorùbá people that celebrates elder women. Egungun are ancestral spirits, also called *les revenants* ("ghosts" in French) and *kuvito* ("the children of death" in Fongbé), that appear in colorful and ornately decorated full-body mask. The Egungun came to Benin via the Yorùbá in Nigeria (also called Nago in Benin). In Benin, Egungun dance to the rhythm of the gbon drum, which is featured in both "Sofada" and "Ema dja."



Figure 2.3: Fanfare St. Joseph and Fanfare Grace perform in Gangbé Brass Band's music video for the song "Ema dja." Screenshot of YouTube video.



Figure 2.4: A trumpeter shown in sepia-tone in Gangbé Brass Band's music video for the song "Ema dja." Screenshot of YouTube video.

Why does Gangbé stage their music videos in landscapes of metal? The juxtaposition of images and sounds of metal recalls the band's name—the Fongbé word *gangbé* translates as the "language of metal" or "the sound of metal."[4] It also recalls promotional statements from the band's website (gangbebrassband.com): "Gangbé is the sound of metal, the ritual bell struck, the strength of forged iron" (*Gangbé c'est le son du metal, la cloche rituelle frappée, la force du fer forgé*) and "Welcome to the metal peace and share it with an iron will." This metal-toned marketing is both punning and strategic. Gangbé's success in the world music festival scene was built on their reputation as a uniquely "African" brass band. Their play on words, together with their visual play on the word *gangbé*, are part and parcel of the commodification of self that they enact in order to attract audiences (see Politz 2017). Gangbé's music videos for "Sofada" and "Ema dja" are exemplars of this entrepreneurial mode. Seen alongside Gangbé's commercial discourse, their localizing and historicizing images can be interpreted as an authenticating strategy: they promote a "sense of place" (Feld and Basso 1996) that is *Beninois* to a world music market that demands essentialist images.

But Gangbé's imagery is not superficial; both music videos portray scenes of social and material significance for Beninese musicians and non-musicians alike. First, the sepia-toned opening scene of "Ema dja" invokes the band's beginning in local fanfares and respect for their elders. We are reminded of the origin stories told in Chapter One, in which Beninese musicians narrated the transformation of fanfares into brass bands, and members of Fanfare St. Joseph claimed to have "formed" the musicians in

[4] Sarah Politz elaborates: "'Gangbe' means 'the sound/voice/call [gbe] of iron [gan].' Gan (also gankeke, gankogui) is the iron bell that keeps time in Fon-Adja-Ewe musics. In explaining the meaning of their name, Gangbé frequently cites the proverb which says 'Gan jayí mo nɔ gbɛ gbè,' meaning 'The sound/voice (gbe) of the gan cannot stay silent,' referring to the gan's obligation, once struck, to resound, to produce gbe – voice or resonance" (2017: 147).

Gangbé. In this music video, Gangbé acknowledges that same history. Second, the everyday scenes in both videos portray socio-economic realities that a Beninese audience would immediately recognize: the gendering of certain labor tasks (e.g., women in the market, men in the metalworking shop), the service of school-aged children in informal labor, the dirt roads, the lack of material wealth, and so on. Thirdly, the videos showcase local material culture around metal. Metalworking is a prominent livelihood in Benin, and Gangbé's staged visit to metalworkers in the video for "Sofada" accurately depicts local methods and tools of the craft (e.g., hand-pumped bellows and underground furnaces). Moreover, the leitmotif of metal—from tin roofs, to aluminum cans, to brass trumpets, to iron bells, to gold jewelry—hints at the social value and use of metallic things. As we will see, in Benin, metal and metal objects have purchase across social, religious, and aesthetic registers. It is no coincidence that Gangbé showcases their sound—or sound of metal—in such a material environment.

Extending this metalcentrism, this chapter analytically frames brass instruments within a material landscape. Specifically, I question how my interlocutors conceive and categorize brass instruments as objects of material culture. In what ways are brass instruments thought to be foreign objects? Conversely, in what ways are they thought to be indigenous? How are brass instruments integrated into local systems of meaning and material culture practices? Does material—what Tim Ingold calls "the stuff that things are made of" (2007b: 1)—influence how my interlocutors think about, and engage with, their instruments? I answer these questions in part by relaying my interlocutors' opinions on the identities of their instruments as discrete objects: most musicians say that brass instruments are foreign and "from the outside," yet others point to their associations with

Beninese culture. I also describe material practices around musical instruments: how instruments are made, worked, repaired, handled, decorated, and sounded. And I compare such practices against local patterns of material engagement with indigenous instruments, metal objects, and plastic art. My primary aim is to demonstrate that contemporary conceptions and valuations of putatively foreign musical instruments in Benin are informed by material culture dating from the precolonial, colonial, and post-independence eras. A second and related aim is to reflect on the place of brass instruments in indigenous categories of materials, music, and art.

My examination of brass instruments as objects of material culture engages with a rich literature on materiality and things.[5] Indebted to this scholarship, in this chapter I move beyond the focus on the materiality of objects—or how objects manifest in social and cultural systems—to the material itself. In other words, in addition to appreciating the dispersed social, cultural, and historical meanings of brass instruments, I ask what the brass of brass instruments has to do with it. My materialist perspective is inspired by Tim Ingold's call for analytical attention to materials over materiality: in our focus on the materiality of objects, he claims, we lose sight of "the materials of which they are made" (2007b: 9). Indeed, materials and their properties are foundational components of objects; materials' properties are "processual and relational," have "transformations and affordances," and are "practically experienced" (2007b: 14, 3). My approach similarly responds to Kofi Agawu's appeal to appreciate the material domains of musical practice, given how material constraints have a profound influence on musical expression (2016a: 207; 2003). This materialist approach lays the conceptual foundation for material-focused

[5] Seminal work includes Arjun Appadurai's (1986) volume on things and Daniel Miller's (2005, 1998) volumes on materiality and material culture. I also find interesting Christopher Tilley's (2004) study of the materiality of stone.

topics in subsequent chapters—among them the materiality of musical pitch and timbre (Chapter Three), and the bodily and affective experience of brass instruments (Chapter Five).

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I build on the thematic of entanglement as developed in the preceding chapter and frame brass instruments as "entangled instruments." I then present my ethnography in two parts. In Part I, "Instruments from the outside," I elucidate my interlocutors' conception of brass instruments as foreign instruments. I describe how the idea that brass instruments are foreign arises from their geographical trajectories and associations, as well as their accessibility and means of repair. I suggest that my interlocutors value brass instruments because they index material wealth and the fetishized *l'extérieur* (exterior or outside). I complement this perspective in Part II, "Instruments from the inside," by demonstrating that brass instruments can also be conceived as indigenous objects. I illustrate the (material) associations my interlocutors make between playing brass instruments and phenomena like metalworking, the performance of indigenous metal instruments, and the worship of Gu (the Vodun deity of iron and warfare). Relatedly, I show how brass instruments are embedded in precolonial culture and ideas around sounding metals and the contemporary plastic arts. The concluding section, "Le materiél mélangé," brings together these ethnographic examples to propose that the identities of musical instruments are entangled in their material properties.

Entangled instruments

My conception of brass instruments as entangled instruments draws from two bodies of literature: ethnomusicological thinking on musical instruments and postcolonial theory on entanglement. First, I draw from ethnomusicological work that expands music studies' conventional focus on aesthetic and sonic phenomena by centering musical instruments as research subjects. Two examples from Africanist ethnomusicology, one more recent and one less so, are Paul Berliner's (1978) *Soul of Mbira* and Jacqueline DjeDje's (2008) *Fiddling in West Africa*. Berliner's (1978) study of the mbira in Zimbabwe uses the instrument as a window into social meanings and structures in Shona society. In a similar analytical style, DjeDje (2008) traces the geographical distribution of the fiddle across the West African region, using this particular instrument as a lens through which to understand movement, migration, and inter-ethnic relations. These ethnographically engaged organological studies are important precedents for my own study of brass instruments and instrumentalists.

More recently, ethnomusicologists have moved beyond thinking about musical instruments as analytical objects to advancing them as methodological precepts (e.g., Roda 2014; Bates 2012). Eliot Bates' (2012) article "The Social Life of Musical Instruments" is an exemplar. Bates argues for a renewed consideration of musical instruments "that is attentive not just to the vibrancy of living musical styles and musicians, but also to the vibrant life of the material world" (2012: 387). Recasting the musical object as subject, he forwards an instrument-centered methodology:

> I argue for taking objects, and particularly musical instruments, seriously. . . . Much of the power, mystique, and allure of musical instruments, I argue, is inextricable from the myriad situations where instruments are entangled in webs of complex relationships—between humans and objects, between humans and

> humans, and between objects and other objects. Even the same instrument, in different sociohistorical contexts, may be implicated in categorically different kinds of relations. (Bates 2012: 364)

Bates' methodology of "thinking through instruments" affords agency and social valences to instruments that are constitutive of, and not incidental to, human relations (2012: 372). Such an object-orientation fits within the larger paradigm of Actor-Network-Theory (see Latour 1996), whose principles of extended agency and the interrelation of animate and inanimate things are echoed elsewhere in music studies.[6]

My consideration of brass instruments as objects—objects whose material animates and affects—follows directly from this work. With Bates, I appreciate that a brass instrument is a musical object. It has a concrete beginning, a birth, and a lifetime of circulation. It has material properties—density, weight, volume—and is tangibly perceived. It is held, utilized, and conceptualized by musicians. It is a tool with which music is made (see Ingold 2013). It is, as Theodor Adorno puts it, "what artists work with" (1997: 147). Yet I build on Bates' argument by conceiving brass instruments as primarily sounding objects. While Bates helpfully foregrounds the tangible ways that a musical instrument can become entangled in social networks—by passing between persons, down lineages, across countries, and so on—the sound of instruments is largely absent in his article. In addition to considering the social life of brass instruments, then, I focus on their sound.

Second, I extend the concept of entanglement, as forwarded in postcolonial scholarship (see Mbembe 2007; see also Chapter One), to characterize not only social experience in postcolonial places but also objects therein. I borrow the phrase "entangled

[6] See, for example, Tia DeNora (2000) on the interrelation of music and social life, and Georgina Born (1995) on music as an assemblage of mediations.

objects" from anthropologist Nicholas Thomas (1991). In his study of material culture in the postcolonial Pacific, Thomas notes that colonial objects remaining in the postcolonial environment, such as axes, fishhooks, and guns, do not have stable identities but rather their meaning is reshaped through recontextualization and renaming. Colonial artifacts, according to Thomas, are entangled objects in that they have potential for symbolic multiplicity, and he posits "a limitless succession of cultural reconstructions of the identity of things" (1991: 187). Similarly, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler (2013, 2008) conceives colonial things that remain behind in a postcolonial setting as "imperial debris." For Stoler, "imperial debris" is the "material refuse of imperial projects" (2008: 193). It is the abandoned technologies, the railroads and buildings, the relics and monuments, the trash and "leftovers" (ibid.). Quite literally, imperial debris is "what people are left with" (2008: 211). Whereas Mbembe (2007) posits the "dispersed entanglements" of lived experience for people in the postcolony, Thomas and Stoler theorize entanglement for postcolonial things.[7] By juxtaposing Thomas' idea of entangled objects with the temporal and spatial entanglements Mbembe mentioned, I hint at a consolidation of their theories on interconnection. That is to say, to understand the fullness of the postcolony's dispersed entanglements one must also attend to the entangled nature of things.

Following Thomas, I appreciate that brass instruments are objects with multiple meanings and identities. They are not static or two-dimensional but dynamic objects whose entangled meanings proliferate in their material.[8] Yet I substitute "entangled

[7] Examples of other work on African encounters with colonial objects include Brian Larkin's (2008) study of film and media technologies in Nigeria and William Storey's (2008) on guns in colonial South Africa.

[8] It is worth noting that ethnomusicologists, too, have embraced entanglement to describe musical instruments and styles (see Dawe 2013; Bates 2012; Guilbault 2005), though they have not explicitly theorized musical objects *as* entangled.

instrument" for "entangled object" to emphasize brass instruments' sonic register. Although all objects have a sonic capacity for interaction, there is something that can be said about a trombone that cannot be said about a toaster. A trombone's primary identity as a musical object—its sounding instrumentness—is fundamental to how my interlocutors conceptualize it.

In what follows, I think through brass instruments as entangled instruments: as sounding objects entangled in historical, cultural, and religious trajectories. I will argue that brass instruments' material and sonic properties—namely, their sounding metal—allow for a proliferation of meaning, a contention underscored by my interlocutors' conception of brass instruments as both imported and indigenous.

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Part I

Instruments from the outside

In Chapter One, we saw that some Beninese musicians historicize fanfare as a musical genre "from the outside." Similarly, many of my interlocutors claim that brass instruments originate from the outside—a claim based not only on ideas about fanfare's history as a genre but also in presentist interactions with instruments. The baritone player Judes Soussou told me that brass instruments are from outside of Benin: "They come from the exterior" (*Ils viennent de l'extérieur*). The saxophonist Ebenezer, who earlier claimed that fanfare originated in local funerary ceremonies, nonetheless held that "the origin [of brass instruments] is from the outside" (*l'origine est du dehors*). Another saxophonist, Blaise Loukou, affirmed, "brass instruments are for the foreigners, not the Beninese." Gesturing vaguely over his shoulder, Blaise explained, "They come from over there" (*Ils viennent de là-bas*). We can recall that, in the local French vocabulary, *là-bas* and *l'extérieur* are synecdoches for any place beyond Benin's borders. This outside is not necessarily precise; rather than denote a specific place, the outside is often an indistinct or unknown quantity.

In what follows, I illustrate my interlocutors' instrument-centered experiences that encourage their conceptions of brass instruments as being foreign or "from the outside." First, I illustrate that geographies of brass instrument distribution and acquisition, coupled with online exposure to Western brass instrument communities, solidify brass instruments' identity as foreign instruments. Second, I show that the difficulties of acquiring materials and technologies for instrument maintenance and repair are everyday reminders that brass instruments do not originate in Benin. Third, I suggest that brass

instruments' outsideness proffers their practitioners cultural capital and a sense of connection to geographically distant places.

Instrument acquisition

Many of my interlocutors learn that brass instruments originate outside of Benin through the act of acquiring them. Yet when I asked musicians to locate where in the outside brass instruments originate, people equivocated. Names of countries—in West Africa and farther afield—were tossed around and substituted. Some musicians pointed to Nigeria and some to France, others to China or New Orleans, and others still to Greece. The trombonist Geoffroy Whékpé, for example, pondered:

> I don't know exactly. They come from Nigeria. No, no, we buy them from Nigeria, but they are from the United States. Or maybe they are from Ghana. Or Europe. Well, they are imported, in any case. In fact, I did research on the Internet. I did research on the tuba. You know, the tuba, it was invented by the Greeks. But a long time ago… At the beginning. I think it was the year 1,055. But at that time they did not call it the tuba. It was called the sackbut. But they changed the instrument and made it better and now it is the tuba.

Geoffroy's comments elucidate experiences of brass instruments that reinforce their conception as imported. First, he pinpoints geographies of brass instrument distribution. The modern brass instrument family—i.e., trumpet, trombone, baritone, and so on—was born in continental Europe in the sixteenth century (Baines 1976). Brass instruments are now manufactured across the globe yet the most celebrated instrument manufacturers are in Europe and North America. Brass instruments are neither manufactured in Benin nor, to my knowledge, is there a brass instrument manufacturer on the African continent. To obtain instruments, then, Beninese musicians turn to international markets and commercial distributors. While professional musicians like those in Gangbé Brass Band

can afford to purchase Western manufactured instruments in Europe's formal economy that is taxed and regulated, most amateur brass players rely on local informal markets to obtain theirs. The informal economy for brass instruments in Cotonou provides a stream of mass manufactured, low quality instruments. Off-brand instruments such as those labeled "Premier" and "Peak" are manufactured in China, imported to Nigeria, and then smuggled across Benin's border by entrepreneurial Beninese to avoid taxes. Thus, as Geoffroy said, brass instruments literally "come from Nigeria."

Geoffroy's remark also highlights how foreign countries—particularly far-away places like Greece—become known as locales of musical significance through knowledge circulation. In our conversations about the origin of brass instruments, musicians recalled Morocco, Greece, Romania, the Czech Republic, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Portugal as possible homes to the original brass instrument. While some of these countries have major holds in the global economy—not to mention Benin's history—others are lesser known to the Beninese public. I observed that Greece, Romania, and the Czech Republic become known to amateur musicians through the exchange and proliferation of digital files. Many of the musicians I know do not have ample access to the Internet because smart phones, phone credit, and data are expensive. Instead they learn about brass instruments and brass band cultures, and about new music in general, through word of mouth and digital file sharing (usually via Bluetooth).

File sharing between members of a socially tight musical community in a compact urban area has a snowballing effect.[9] Certain songs and music videos are propelled to popularity not necessarily because they are musically remarkable but because they are

[9] For more on electronic file sharing in music cultures, see Bickford (2017), Steingo (2016a), Gopinath and Stanyek (2014), and Astley (2012).

digitally accessible, of relatively decent audio-visual quality, or of a small file size. Moreover, my interlocutors were most intrigued by videos and images of white persons playing brass instruments, and their collections of MP4s and JPEG files reflected this preference. The saxophonist Blaise, for example, has stored on his phone a series of English-language pedagogical videos by a white U.S. American saxophone player (despite the fact that Blaise does not speak or understand English). On numerous occasions during my fieldwork, I was given a specific audio-visual file of an anonymous Romanian brass ensemble performing on stage in elaborate red and white costume; it was one of many seemingly random videos of European brass ensembles circulating between brass musicians. These pedagogical videos from *yovotome* (the land of the white man) serve to further the perspective that brass instruments are "for foreigners."

Lastly, the countries and continents that Geoffroy identified evoke iconic (and sometimes indistinct) places in musicians' global imaginaries. Ghana, for example, looms large in southern Benin's musical communities and is commonly considered a hegemon of West African instrumental music. Although Beninese musicians do not import brass instruments from Ghana, they liberally borrow from Ghanaian musical styles and popular forms (e.g., trending dances like azonto). Geoffroy, for one, is intimately familiar with Ghana's iconic genres, such as highlife and hiplife, and drew connections between Ghanaian and Beninese brass band cultures. Geoffroy's mention above of the United States and Europe, as I interpret it, reflects the distinct cultural associations he has with those places (e.g., his knowledge of Louis Armstrong, or awareness that Gangbé Brass Band goes to Europe every summer to tour world music festivals), as well as his more indistinct envisioning of their cultural and economic potentialities. As observed in

neighboring Togo (Piot 2010), young people in Benin frequently invoke the U.S. and Europe as bastions of wealth and knowledge, and as places they ardently hope to visit. I will have more to say about my interlocutors' global imaginations and future-orientations in this thesis' Conclusion. I highlight here that the brass instrument, in its conception as an instrument from the outside, can index multiple geographical locations and musicians' imaginings thereof.

Instrument maintenance and repair

The requisite practice of instrument maintenance reminds fanfare musicians that their instruments are not produced locally. The trumpeter Abel told me that some young musicians believe that brass instruments are made in Benin—after all, their only experience of these instruments has been *chez nous* (here or here at home)—but they soon discover that brass instruments are "from over there" when their instrument malfunctions and they cannot find the appropriate materials to fix it. Specifically, Abel lamented that products for brass instrument maintenance, such as valve oils and slide grease, are not commercially available. These things are "made in the exterior" and difficult to find in Benin.

When musicians cannot access international musical supplies, they draw on local material substitutes. In lieu of professional quality valve oil, for example, brass players use palm oil or peanut oil purchased at local markets. Another common valve oil substitute is gasoline—smuggled from Nigeria, mixed with additives, and sold illegally from glass containers on the streets—and motor oil. The most common substitute for slide grease is gear grease purchased from automobile and motorcycle mechanics. Yet

these improvised lubricants are ineffectual and sometimes destructive. Maxime Agbahoungba said that motor oil and gasoline can corrode metal, and that palm oil makes trombone slides sticky and sluggish. Moreover, palm and peanut oil deposits organic particles inside of instruments that fester and mold. Maxime insisted that it is best to use "proper" and "real" valve oils, if only they were less expensive and more readily accessible in local markets. The inaccessibility of such imported products, plus the annoyances imposed by local substitutes, are daily reminders to Beninese musicians that brass instruments and their accessories originate abroad.

There are many other instrument stories like these in Benin. Beninese jazz guitarist Lionel Loueke, for example, struggled to maintain a functional instrument early on in his career (Himes 2000). It took him a year to earn the money to buy his first guitar and thereafter he could not afford to replace the guitar strings, which had to be special ordered from Nigeria. He soaked his original strings in vinegar to keep them clean and, when the strings finally broke, replaced them with bicycle brake cables (ibid.). The use of alternative materials in instrument maintenance—e.g., the application of palm oil and gear grease—reflects musicians' creative response to the absence of resources. More generally, it speaks to a mode of do-it-yourself cultural production known the world over and particularly within impoverished economies (see Badi 2012).

Brass players are also reminded of their instrument's foreignness when it breaks and needs repair. To illustrate, I refer to the instrument repairman Segboton Cledjo, whom was introduced in Chapter One. Segboton is one of only three brass instrument repairmen in southern Benin that I am aware of, and the only one who has received formal training. Shortly after Segboton joined the Republic of Dahomey's military, he

was chosen to complete an apprenticeship in brass instrument repair in Mâcon, France. Upon receiving a certificate in 1984, he returned to Porto Novo and spent the remainder of his career repairing instruments for the national military and police ensembles. Segboton is now retired but continues to practice instrument repair from his home workshop just outside of Porto Novo. Segboton, along with his wife and four children, resides in the adjacent one-bedroom house, and his chickens and goats roam around the expansive yard. In this unassuming location, he runs a bustling business for an increasing customer base. Segboton is the favored instrument repairman for most of the Beninese brass instrumentalists I know—including the musicians in Gangbé Brass Band—and musicians come from all over West Africa to see him. Segboton said that his non-local customers come mostly from Niger, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon. While Segboton is known to charge exorbitant prices for repairs (he once quoted 50,000 CFA [77 USD] for a broken trombone slide), musicians rely on him for his know-how. "Segboton knows how to juggle," the trombone player Didax Barnabas told me. Despite not having the machines or technologies of European factories, Didax said, Segboton can fix anything.

I first visited Segboton's workshop in September 2013 with Lucien Gbaguidi, the saxophonist in Gangbé. Lucien's tenor saxophone was broken: a felt keypad had deteriorated and needed replacing. Segboton is the only repairman who has access to Italian-made felt keypads and so we traveled the forty-five minutes from Cotonou to Segboton's home. When we arrived, we found Segboton at work at a single wooden table set against a wall of his concrete house, sheltered by a tin roof (Figure 2.5). The table was scattered with tools (screwdrivers, superglue, scissors), instrument parts (trumpet valves, saxophone keypads, a trombone bell), and other objects (a yogurt bottle, a rubber sandal,

a feather) (Figure 2.6). Upon consulting with Segboton, Lucien was dismayed to learn that Segboton did not have imported felt pads—he depleted his stock from the Italian manufacturer and was saving money for another order. But Segboton had a proxy solution: he could replace the broken pad with a piece of rubber taken from an old sandal. When I looked skeptically at the rubber sandal, Segboton laughed and exclaimed, "It works!" Lucien accepted the rubber substitute, saying he had no choice because he needed a functioning instrument for an upcoming performance. They agreed on a price and Segboton made the repair as we waited (Figure 2.7).



Figure 2.5: Lucien Gbaguidi consults with Segboton Cledjo at Segboton's home workshop just south of the Yewa River.
Porto Novo, 29 September 2013.



Figure 2.6: Segboton's workshop table. Porto Novo, 5 November 2015.



Figure 2.7: Saxophone keypads that Segboton constructs from rubber sandals.
Porto Novo, 5 November 2015.

Segboton's quick fix with the rubber sandal is demonstrative of local craftsmen who, in the face of material limitations, employ creative techniques like salvaging and recycling.[10] Such creative improvisation is locally referred to as "juggling." As Segboton explained, "Here in Benin, there is nothing. We have nothing. Here, we get by. We, like, juggle" (*Ici, on se débrouille, on jongle quoi*).[11] Despite his adeptness at juggling, Segboton told me that he struggles to preserve his professional skills and to pass on knowledge: "People come to learn from me but I don't have the material to show them

[10] Methods of recycling and salvaging are also employed in indigenous modes of instrument making, which I discuss below. A comparable case is seen in Didi Badi's (2012) article on the artisanal and craft economy in Tamanrasset, Algeria. Badi shows how unpredictable market fluctuations encourages artists to opt for readily available recycled materials over inaccessible, imported ones.

[11] The French term *débrouiller* literally translates as "to untangle" but connotes "to cope," "to manage," or "to get by."

properly. I need certain things to teach well." Moreover, he feels that his repair work is undervalued (and, importantly, underpaid) because he uses recycled and local materials. The value people give to your work, he told me, depends on the materials you have at your disposal: "Your work materials qualify your profession" (*Tes matériaux de travaille qualifient ton profession*). Segboton's declaration underlines two ideas that will return later in this chapter: that imported materials have social value, and that the material one works with lends both social status and obligations.

Altogether, these instrument-centered practices are everyday reminders that brass instruments and their constituent parts are from the outside. Musicians like Maxime are often frustrated by the absence and inaccessibility of imported instrument accessories, and instrument repairmen like Segboton work with limited technologies and resources. Even Benin's most celebrated musicians, like those in Gangbé Brass Band, must contend with the inconvenience that the material things comprising their musical practice come from the outside.

Instrument ownership

Having observed the physical trajectories of instruments and the material means of their repair, I turn next to ways that my interlocutors conceive brass instruments as material possessions. The following examples illustrate musicians' aspirations to instrument ownership, the real and perceived value of Western-designed instruments, and the places that certain instruments evoke. In all, I show that brass instruments' outsideness is tied to their status as material emblems of wealth and cosmopolitanism.

In Benin, the ownership of a brass instrument is a symbol of wealth. As mentioned above, most amateur musicians play low quality, Chinese manufactured instruments, such as those branded Premier. Although these instruments are inexpensive relative to Western manufactured ones, their price still prevents many musicians from purchasing them. Maxime, for example, spent 90,000 CFA (138 USD) of his university scholarship to buy a Premier trombone, yet the instrument became dysfunctional a few years later; his trombone slide developed holes, possibly caused by the corroding effects of gasoline, and began leaking air. He is now borrowing a trombone from a Celestial Church parish in Ouidah while he saves money to replace his own. Maxime expressed frustration about his situation: he is active as a freelance musician and plays with fanfares and orchestras in Cotonou, Ouidah, and Bohicon. But because the borrowed trombone must remain on church premises when not in use, he is obliged to travel to Ouidah each time he needs the instrument—a journey that costs 2,000 CFA (3 USD) round trip by shared taxi from Cotonou. Maxime's situation is typical for many amateur musicians. Musicians often cannot afford to own a brass instrument yet borrowing an instrument also presents a financial burden. Instrument ownership—even of a low quality or secondhand instrument—is desirable for the pragmatic reason that the accessibility of a personal instrument offers more opportunity to perform and accrue income.

To own a Western manufactured or uncommon instrument is all the more desirable. I observed that amateur and professional musicians alike put a high premium on unusual instruments. In late July 2016, David Akande took me to see the Fanfare de Police Nationale (National Police Fanfare). The Fanfare de Police was hosting lengthy public rehearsals to prepare for Benin's Independence Day parade on 1 August, an annual

festivity that features the national military, police, and fire brigade fanfares in procession with politicians, servicemen, and armored vehicles. David and I sat on the sidewalk of Avenue Jean-Paul II, opposite the entrance to the National Police School, and watched as the Fanfare de Police lined up in ranks on the street. Their brass instrumentation was eclectic and impressive: it featured trumpets, flugelhorns, cornets, and bugles; tenor, bass, valve, and slide trombones; baritones and euphoniums with bells both upwards and forward facing; helicons, sousaphones, and tubas; and a colorful range of plastic instrument mouthpieces. From where I was seated, I could see that most of their brass instruments were from Western manufacturers. In addition to this barrage of brass instruments and their accessories, the fanfare had a large military percussion section and selection of clarinets and flutes. The Fanfare de Police's conspicuous display of uncommon instruments is notable; both the financial value and inaccessibility of Western manufactured instruments carry cultural cachet.

Musicians also seek out instruments of particular designs for their associations with particular foreign places. The trumpet player Abel Hounyemin, a university student and member of Voix des Anges Brass, spent a substantial sum of money to purchase a new pocket trumpet (a compact-sized Bb trumpet) from an instrument vendor in Nigeria. Abel already owned a Bb trumpet and C cornet, though he was still a student and not particularly wealthy. When I asked him what motivated his decision to purchase a third instrument, he responded that he had seen "a white [person]" (*une blanche*) play "American jazz" on a pocket trumpet in a YouTube video and thought the instrument was "cool." "Plus no one else has this instrument," he added, smiling. The professional musicians I know also prize instruments for their uniqueness and cultural associations

with certain musical traditions. Athanase Dehopumon of Gangbé Brass Band, for example, plays a flugelhorn, an instrument favored in French and Belgian fanfare traditions rather than a trumpet, a staple of British and U.S. American brass bands. Gangbé member James Vodounnon, in contrast, foregoes a helicon, the typical bass instrument of the French military band tradition, in favor of a sousaphone.[12] James told me that his choice of the sousaphone was inspired by the instrumentation of Rebirth Brass Band, a black brass band from New Orleans (see Sakakeeny 2013). By playing a sousaphone, James breaks from the French fanfare tradition and instead associates himself (and, in turn, Gangbé) with the New Orleans brass band tradition.[13] These examples show that a musician's choice of instrument can reflect their cultural influences and orientations.

Similarly, instrument ownership can index international experience and self-asserted cosmopolitanism. As mentioned, only those musicians that travel abroad and whose careers are profitable have access to high quality brass instruments sold in Europe. Ownership of a Western manufactured instrument, then, is an "indexical ground" of international travel (Shipley 2013: 102). For the professional musicians in Gangbé Brass Band, the spoils of European travel include instruments, commodities, and wives. During my summer with the band, musicians boasted about these foreign items: Athanase displayed a flugelhorn that he picked up in Belgium and a trumpet he bought in France; the trumpeter Eric Yovogan bragged about his extensive U.S. American CD and DVD

[12] The sousaphone is an instrument of U.S. American design, developed by the Conn instrument manufacturing company in 1898 (Bevan 1978: 260), and popularized in the 1960s by the "black brass band music" of New Orleans, Louisiana (Sakakeeny 2013: xii).
[13] Gangbé Brass Band credits Rebirth Brass Band as their formative influence and the reason they call themselves a "brass band." See Politz (2017) for a more detailed history of Gangbé Brass Band and their contemporary, Eyo'nlé Brass Band.

collection; and the saxophonist Lucien Gbaguidi flaunted pictures of his "white wife" in France. For the professional musicians in Gangbé, the ownership of foreign things is a source of pride, not to mention a social expectation. Amateur musicians also accumulate musical things from the outside. Abel's purchase of a pocket trumpet is a good example. Additionally, in the wider amateur community, there is a dense circulation of musical objects—from headphones to sheet music to tuning forks—that people exchange and take pride in possessing (even when the headphones are inoperable and when the musicians do not read Western staff notation). These foreign objects afford a sense of global connectedness to musicians who have not had the opportunity to travel abroad.[14]

Several of the ideas above—that brass instruments index wealth, cosmopolitanism, and international travel—come together in an anecdote about Gangbé's sousaphone player, James. When I first met James in the summer of 2013, he owned three instruments: two nickel-plated baritones and one fiberglass sousaphone. James boasted that he was the only person in Benin with a sousaphone, saying, "Yes, yes. I have plenty." Yet James expressed discontentment about the inferior quality of his instrument: "It isn't good. It is plastic, not metal." Compared to "international standards," he said, his instrument was unremarkable: it was a fiberglass Conn knock-off, with mix-matched tubing, and much wear and tear. A professional musician like him should have "a real instrument, a brass instrument," he insisted. It seemed to me that James was embarrassed that he did not own an instrument befitting his local reputation as a celebrity, not to mention a high(er) quality instrument suitable for his skill level. During my stay with

[14] This comment recalls a scene from Steven Feld's (2012) monograph, in which he narrates the Ghanaian members of La Drivers Union Por Por Group, a musical ensemble comprised of squeeze-bulb honk-horns that predominantly play for funerals, learning about the New Orleans brass band tradition for the first time. Feld describes the La Drivers musicians' fast fondness for the New Orleans bands as a "sense of felt and imagined intimacy" (2012: 189).

Gangbé that summer, James repeatedly asked me for money to fund his purchase of a Conn brass sousaphone.[15] After I left Benin, too, James reached out to me on Facebook to remind me of his dilemma. "I need souzaphone, Lyndsey, my own is break…" he commented on my photograph, and then followed up in a message to ask if I would help him purchase a sousaphone and a flight case. My Facebook cover photo at the time—a panoramic picture of myself holding a brass sousaphone—no doubt provoked his request and, likely, sense of injustice.[16]

James' desire for a Conn brass sousaphone emphasizes the high premium given to brand name, Western manufactured instruments. These instruments are of foreign provenance and design, and of substantial financial value—they are what Paul Gilroy would call "luxury goods and branded items" (2010). Likewise, his mention of "international standards" suggests an aesthetic orientation that looks to the outside; the outside is the origin of brass instruments and, correspondingly, their standard of measurement. Moreover, James' distaste for fiberglass and desire for brass demonstrates that an instrument's material—in this case, metal—affords symbolic value.[17] In his organological study *The Tuba Family*, Clifford Bevan writes, "Brass itself is not cheap, and this conspicuous consumption of expensive materials may be seen as paralleling the contemporary fad for four-wheel drive vehicles to collect the children from suburban

[15] As is common to social relations in Benin and elsewhere in West Africa (see Piot 1999), my relationship with James was built on exchange. He had extended an invitation of hospitality for me to spend time with Gangbé, and had arranged for me stay with one of his family members. I was thus indebted to him—a debt that I attempted to repay with financial gifts (paying for his car insurance, meals, and concert tickets), gifts of things (music pedagogy books [the Real Book] and European clothing), and friendship. Yet, as I told in this thesis' Introduction, James had other ideas about what I owed him.

[16] James at last purchased a brass sousaphone in Europe in 2016.

[17] I will argue later that the prestige of brass instruments echoes the historical value of brass and other metal products in precolonial Dahomey.

schools" (1978: 292). A similar ideology is at work in Benin. In a place where most cannot afford to own instruments, instrument ownership is a sign of material plenty. The ownership of high quality, foreign manufactured *brass* instruments, in particular, is a conspicuous "wealth in things" (Guyer 1995).

Modern instruments

The above examples show that musicians value brass instruments in part because they are expensive emblems of the exterior. The glossing of brass instruments as being from the outside recalls a point I made in Chapter One: that the outside is more than a spatial category and part of the aesthetic experience of fanfare. For those musicians who think of fanfare as an international genre, their performance of that genre affords a sense of association and connectedness with a foreign—though not necessarily Western—musical world. A brass instrument symbolically functions in a similar way: a brass instrument indexes foreign places like Ghana and Greece, and concomitant associations of wealth and travel, and that cultural capital extends to the person who plays it. Along with things like foreign-printed wax cloth (Sylvanus 2016) and digitally edited photos (Vokes 2012), brass instruments mark a desirous outside that is geographically far-off but symbolically close.

My interlocutors' attraction toward imported instruments and unfamiliar geographies recalls cultural orientations toward the outside that scholars have observed elsewhere in West Africa. Speaking in broad strokes, in West Africa, people and things from the outside have value and power. Ethnographers have documented the favoring of slaves from different ethnic groups in precolonial Dahomey (Monroe 2011; Herskovits

1938); an "aesthetics of alterity" in Nigerian masquerade performances (Pratten 2008); the appeal of imported musical instruments in a Baga village (Sarró 2010); the simultaneous attraction and danger of strangers across West Africa (Bonhomme 2012; Shack and Skinner 1979); and so on. If seen against this backdrop, the desirability of brass instruments seems to echo a regional fetishization of things from the outside and fascination with the unfamiliar.

Relatedly, I suggest that my interlocutors' valuing of brass instruments is entwined with their ideas of the modern. As noted in the preceding chapter, there is a collective sense in southern Benin's musical community of the simultaneous need to valorize and modernize traditional culture. One way that musicians modernize traditional musics is by performing them on so-called modern instruments: namely, brass instruments, keyboards, drum sets, and electric guitars. A prevailing idea is that these modern instruments have traction in international music industries—recall Euzèbe's exclamation that white people love brass instruments—thus their inclusion in Beninese ensembles will open doors with European music managers and world music festivals alike. The phenomenon of modernizing traditional music is evidenced by the *tradi-moderne* genre, which is buoyed by sponsorship from Benin's Ministry of Culture and continues to grow in popularity among amateur musicians.

Crucially, the desire for "modern instruments" is not about being European or colonial; it is about being modern. Beninese musicians and non-musicians alike speak of the imperative "to develop" and "progress," to be "modern" and "civilized." While some of this language evokes *la mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission) undergirding the colonial project, this is not the sense in which my interlocutors employ these terms. When

musicians declare, "One must modernize!" they mean that one must keep up with the times.[18] That is, one must urbanize and advance local infrastructure, update and develop technologies, make education more accessible, make political participation more efficient, and participate in the global economy—acts not easily reducible to Frenchness or whiteness. For my interlocutors, to be modern does not mean to be white. Rather, to be modern means to access and own the things of the modern world; it is to flaunt cosmopolitanism, it is to consume and display.[19] Brass instruments, like other first-class materials procured via the global economy, represent both the outside and the modern. The desire for brass instruments, then, does not reflect a desire to be European as much as an aspiration to be modern, and for Benin to be on par with the West.[20]

In all, Part I demonstrated that brass instruments in Benin are often thought to be from the outside, a contention underscored by how instruments are acquired, maintained, valued, and sought after. I illustrated the physical trajectories and networks of instrument acquisition and exchange, material means of instrument maintenance and repair, financial cost and social value of instrument ownership, and interconnections of instruments with the outside and the modern. Overall, my ethnography suggests that, through musicians' geographic imaginaries and materialist desires, brass instruments are entangled in ideas

[18] Brad Weiss (2009) documents an analogous deployment of the phrase "keep up with the times" among youth in Tanzania.

[19] This conception of modernity aligns with what James Ferguson (1999) has described among mining communities in Zambia. Ferguson indicates that Zambians seek modernity in material culture: "the signs and symbols of modernity" are "the 'first-class' things in the world—cars, suits, fine clothes, a decent necktie" (1999: 13). Other Africanist anthropologists have similarly located modernity in tin roofs (Piot 1999), mobile phones (Archambault 2017), and haircuts (Weiss 2009).

[20] Charles Piot suggests a similar understanding of the fixation for foreign goods among the Kabre in Togo: "Rather than seeing local appetites for things Western as a type of colonization, I prefer to see them as creative appropriations—as 'cannibalizations' (Jewsiewicki 1997: 103) of the cultural inventory of the West" (1999: 174).

about wealth, status, and progress—ideas that are themselves entwined in an idea of an elsewhere beyond Benin's borders. The remainder of this chapter serves to complement and complicate the idea that brass instruments are from the outside. Namely, I explore domains of material practice and culture where the idea of brass instruments as "instruments from the inside" might get some purchase.

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Part II

Instruments from the inside

At the same time that my interlocutors regard brass instruments as foreign, they conceive brass instruments within indigenous political histories, religious traditions, and material culture practices. As we saw in Chapter One, musicians make explicit associations between brass instruments and metal instruments indigenous to Benin. They also draw parallels between brass players, metalworkers, and adepts of Gu. Furthermore, material practices around brass instruments—including modes of instrument making, and the inclusion of brass instruments in sculpture and visual art—suggest that brass instruments are enveloped within local categories of metal and methods of metalwork. In what follows, I expound on these symmetries and suggest that they emanate from my interlocutors' ideas about metal and its properties. My discussion is structured around five topics: the value of brass, the sound of metal, metalworking and instrument making, metal workers and worshippers, and the plastic arts.

The value of brass

To begin, I address a query I posed earlier: What does the brass of brass instruments have to do with it?[21] As we have seen, the metal material of brass instruments encourages musicians' perceptions of these instruments as luxury goods. James' desire for a brass sousaphone served to illustrate. Building on this observation, I suggest here that my

[21] Brass instruments are made of raw brass with optional surface coatings. Some are left in their pure state, some are coated with a clear (often plastic) lacquer, and some are coated with a thin layer of silver, nickel, or gold plating. My interlocutors call instruments of all variations "brass instruments." I did not observe a preference for instruments of raw brass or those with certain metal plating.

interlocutors' valuation of brass instruments as prestigious objects is in line with preexisting (and, importantly, precolonial) ideas and significations of brass and brass artifacts in Dahomey. To illustrate this point, I synopsize the history of brass in West Africa. In particular, I highlight the prior institutionalization of brass in precolonial Dahomey and neighboring kingdoms as a metal with political and social capital. I then juxtapose the regional valuation of brass as prestigious and powerful with contemporary conceptions of brass instruments.

Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc that was first produced in quantity by the Romans in the first century B.C.E. (Craddock 1990). Archaeologists agree that brass was not independently produced in sub-Saharan Africa (Childs and Killick 1993). Rather, brass arrived on the African continent via Arab traders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Craddock 1990). Brass and copper alloys were first introduced north of the Sahara and then arrived in small quantities to West Africa via the trans-Saharan gold trade and hand-to-hand bartering (see Herbert 1984; Garrard 1980).[22] When the Portuguese arrived in West Africa in the late fifteenth century, they established trading posts and brought increased quantities of copper and copper alloys from Europe (Childs and Killick 1993: 324). From the fifteenth century onwards, brass bracelets and basins were standard trade goods across West Africa (Herbert 1984: 126).[23]

The influx of copper alloys in turn gave rise to metal casting traditions in West African kingdoms (Childs and Killick 1993). These metallic arts developed independently of Europe and were strongly associated with royal status (Herbert 1984:

[22] The earliest brass recovered in Mali and the Senegal River valley dates to 900-1000 C.E. (Childs and Killick 1993: 323).
[23] Although raw copper was available during this period, brass' second metallic component, zinc, was not; zinc was imported to Africa only in the nineteenth century, at which point some local smiths did learn to make brass (Herbert 1984: 99).

91). Perhaps best known are the lost-wax casting traditions of the Benin and Owo kingdoms, which spanned present-day Nigeria.[24] The Obas (kings) of Benin kingdom commissioned plaques and portraits in bronze and brass to celebrate their reign and decorate their palaces (Ezra 1992; Blackmun 1990; Drewal et al. 1989). The Ashanti kingdom, in present-day Ghana, controlled the rich Akan goldfields and produced royal regalia in gold. In the Dahomean kingdom, meanwhile, imported brass replaced locally forged iron as the royal metal of choice.[25] Reporting on their fieldwork in Dahomey in 1931, Melville and Francis Herskovits observe:

> Brass is regarded as a precious metal in Dahomey. During the native régime, it had the same value—appreciatively, if not in terms of European exchange—as gold, and among the mass of people this evaluation still holds, for its possession remains a luxury of ruling chiefs and men of wealth. (Herskovits and Herskovits 1934: 68)

Edna Bay (2008) likewise documents the prestige of brass in the Dahomean kingdom. Brass and silver were visible in Dahomean palaces as early as the 1720s, and were considered rare and precious metals (Bay 2008: 68). Brass, silver, and gold also featured in royal processions, and the wives of kings would carry silver staffs and wear gold-plated brass bangles on their wrists (ibid.). Brass was favored in Dahomey for its red color and malleability,[26] and brass-casted sculptures and architectural reliefs adorned royal palaces. Indeed, there was a political monopoly on brass: Dahomean kings patronized artisanal brassworking and brass sculptures and figurines came to emblemize

[24] Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin.
[25] In Fongbé, the words for iron and brass have the same root: iron is *gan* and brass is *gan-vó*, or "red iron" (Blier 1995: 336).
[26] The color red has potent spiritual meaning in Vodun (see Blier 1995), and important significations elsewhere in sub-Saharan African societies (see Herbert 1984).

kings (ibid.).[27] Objects made of brass and other precious metals were insignia of wealth and social status more broadly.[28] Non-royal but wealthy Dahomeans, too, ornamented their homes with metallic arts (see Bay 2008) and wore metal jewelries for aesthetic embellishment (see Herbert 1984).

In Dahomey, metals embody divine as well as political power. Scholars have shown that metal—particularly, iron, copper, and copper alloys—features in cosmologies and spiritual practice across West African societies. For example, Eugenia Herbert (1984: 261) notes that Yorùbá Ifa diviners use chains of brass links as amulets, and Jean Rouch (1960: 192) depicts Songhay diviners' use of copper objects and copper chains. Similarly, in Benin, "ring or chain forms of copper or brass" are used in ritual healing to counteract fever (Blier 1995: 252). Moreover, in indigenous West African religions, specific metals are often associated with specific deities. Among the Yorùbá, for example, iron is associated with Ogun, the male orisha of iron, and brass with the female water spirits of the Niger Delta (1984: 286). And, among peoples in Dahomey (as well as present-day Benin), iron is associated with Gu (the Vodun of iron, metallurgy, and warfare) and Heviosso (the deity of thunder and lightening). Gu's association with metal proliferates in particular: he is the patron deity of blacksmiths and craftsmen, his material icon is an iron bell, shrines to Gu are often composed of metal, and to worship Gu usually entails the use or sacrifice of metal. Notably, Gu is said to animate metals other than iron. I will have more to say about Gu and metal's spiritual overtones later.

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[27] Suzanne Blier (1995) suggests that Dahomean brass figurines represented both Gu and the King Glele (1858-89). Relatedly, the Herskovitses (1934) describe how Dahomean kings gave brass figurines as gifts to their lords in neighboring states.

[28] Metal objects are used to claim and validate social status across African cultures. See Kriger (1999) and Herbert (1993) for a socio-cultural history of iron and Herbert (1984) for that of copper in sub-Saharan Africa.

The socio-cultural history of brass and other metal artifacts in Dahomey is an alternative backdrop upon which to understand the contemporary valuation of brass instruments in present-day Benin. Harking back to the examples offered in the preceding section "Instruments from the outside," I want to compare them to those presented here and identify several symmetries. First, both brass and brass instruments index wealth; they are prized materials and luxury goods. Second, both brass and brass instruments signify prestige and forms of power, be it the political strength of a royal lineage or the social status of Gangbé Brass Band. Third, both brass and brass instruments are associated with spirituality and ritual practices—a point that I elucidate later. Given these parallels, one could reason that contemporary conceptions of brass instruments arise from the legacy of brass and precious metals in West African cultures. Objects like brass plates, brass bangles, and brass instruments have more in common than their metal: they index wealth and prestige, and elicit respect and desire.

My point here is that brass and other imported precious metals have long-accreted social value in Benin and West Africa broadly. As such, when brass instruments enter Benin, they join a preexisting legacy of brass artifacts and the valuing of precious metals. In other words, they become instruments from the inside. The ensuing topical discussions advance the idea that brass instruments are conceived, interpreted, and used according to local logics around brass and metal. Several of the above themes will also reappear; in particular, the connection between metal and spirituality, and the place of metal objects in Dahomean history.

The sound of metal

As demonstrated, contemporary conceptions of brass instruments in Benin resonate with the long established value of brass and other metals in Dahomey. Importantly, these resonances between brass instruments and other metal objects also extend to the sonic domain. My interlocutors tell me that the sound of brass instruments has spiritual efficacy akin to iron bells, and that the performance of brass instruments in Christian churches mirrors the sounding of bells in Vodun rituals and that of metal clarions in Dahomean royal courts. Likewise, I see correspondences between brass instruments, metal currencies, and metal idiophones; these sounding metals have practical value in secular and everyday spaces. Below, I discuss several of these sonic associations, which together articulate a case for brass instruments belonging to a metallic soundscape from the inside. Many of the examples offered illustrate the role of sounding metals in indigenous religious and ritual practices, underscoring the fact that local valuations of metal (and its sound) predate colonialism.

For many fanfare musicians in southern Benin, the sound of brass instruments has religious, and specifically Christian, overtones. Musicians say that brass instruments' sound speaks to divine spirits, angels, and God. The trombonist Euzèbe Hounsou, for example, claimed that their sound pleases God:

> People say that brass instruments are instruments that can make God move in his seat. You see, no? That is why people really like brass instruments. This is why, in my church, when we play religious songs, we don't play the guitar, we don't play the piano—well, we play the piano but it is not a primary instrument—we play brass instruments. . . . People tend to say that when you play the trombone or the trumpet, that the sounds these instruments make can make God move and dance. This is a belief shared by all Christians. The manner of playing brass instruments, that is the sound that God likes.

Euzèbe emphasizes the ability of brass instruments to foster a spiritual connection with God. Furthermore, he posits a general Christian preference for brass instruments, one evidenced by the predominantly Christian fanfares of southern Benin. Notable, too, is that Euzèbe portrays God moving and dancing, which he takes to be a sign of God's pleasure. I will have more to say about dance, performance, and pleasure in Chapter Four and the Conclusion.

Similarly, the trombonist Celestin Comlanvi said that members of the Celestial Church consider brass instruments to be "divine instruments" because they can speak to God and heavenly spirits. To illustrate, he drew equivalence between gan and brass instruments. A Celestial pastor "strikes the gan to call the spirits," Celestin said, and musicians "blow brass instruments to call the spirits." Yet, he elaborated, there is a difference between gan and brass instruments: whereas bells are made of pure iron, brass instruments are made from "mixed metal" (*le métal mélangé*); they have "aluminum and brass and other things."[29] Celestin continued:

> In brass instruments, the power of iron is diminished. For this reason, brass instruments do not call the angels as well as bells do. Yet many people say that angels like brass instruments. Trumpet players say that the angels love the trumpet the most, but that is because they play the trumpet. Really, angels love all brass instruments.

Celestin compared iron bells and brass instruments to emphasize that the sound of metal can speak to the divine.[30] Although brass instruments lack some of the spiritual power of iron—a remark that recalls Gu—they can still "call the spirits" and are beloved by angels.

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[29] Celestin's comparison of iron and brass recalls my earlier comment that the Fongbé terms for iron and brass share etymological roots.

[30] This association has been documented elsewhere in West Africa. See, for example, Steven Friedson (2009: 50-66) on the role of iron bell in Brekete rituals in southern Ghana. Similarly, Eugenia Herbert (1984: 281) details numerous examples of the use of bells to speak to deities among the Bambara people.

This focus on angels is a familiar one. Many of my interlocutors, particularly those in the Celestial Church, substantiated their comments about the divine sound of brass instruments with reference to biblical representations of angels blowing trumpets, such as in the book of Revelation. Ange Soussou told me, "The Bible says that on judgment day the trumpet will sound. So it is important that on the day of a funeral a trumpet is being played." And the trombonist Victorin Zossou-Tomassou affirmed, "Angels love trumpets. They play trumpets in heaven. If someone in church dies, you must bring the fanfare to the funeral." Angels sounding trumpets are frequently depicted in Celestial imagery, such as on the walls of church sanctuaries (Figure 2.8).

Other musicians suggested that the sound of brass instruments summons both Christian and Vodun Gods. The trombonist Apollinaire Akpali, who leads the trombone and percussion ensemble Okpe Band, told me that the significance of sounding metal instruments depends on the performance context. "Iron instruments are for Vodun," he asserted, "Those are for the Vodun rhythms." When I pointed out that iron instruments are also played in the Celestial Church, of which Apollinaire is a member, he countered:

> Yes, yes, that's true. But in that case they are not for Vodun. You see? The iron instruments are for rhythm. The bells. But the brass instruments are for melody. They speak and chant and sing. In the Celestial Church, these instruments sing for God. In Vodun, they sing for Vodun. These instruments are not exactly the same. You see, no? The bell sings the rhythm, but the brass instrument, it sings the chant. But they both sing for God.

Apollinaire's former colleague, Germain Kpadonou, also described the divine sound of metal with nuance. Germain is a successful musical director in a Celestial Church parish near Porto Novo and the former saxophonist in Fanfare Okpe (from which Apollinaire's Okpe Band splintered). Germain is a devout Christian whose musical practice is a significant part of his worship; he told me that his saxophone is his voice to speak to God

(Figure 2.9). When I asked Germain why he chose to play the saxophone, he replied that he loves the sound. Plus, he added, brass instruments have "spiritual meaning."[31] Germain elaborated: when in church, "brass instruments sing to God," but, outside of church, "they have a Vodun color." That brass instruments can simultaneously sound toward Christianity and Vodun reflects the religious plurality in Benin's southern region, as well as the sonic entanglements of metal and metal instruments in local spiritual practices.

[31] As mentioned in the thesis' Introduction, in Benin, saxophones are often considered brass instruments (and not woodwind instruments) because they are made of brass.



Figure 2.8: Crépin and Roger pose in front of the side transept of a Celestial Church parish in Akossombo. The wall of the transept features paintings of angels blowing trumpets. Akossombo, 7 February 2016.



Figure 2.9: Germain Kpadonou's saxophone, the bell of which is adorned with a sticker that reads, "God is Able." Ekpe, 27 September 2013.

As we have seen, my interlocutors' performance of brass instruments in the Celestial Church sits squarely within a local phenomenon of sounding metals in ritual practices. The likening of brass instruments with indigenous instruments like the gan arises in part from my interlocutors' notion that metal is a spiritually powerful material and that, in spiritual contexts, brass functions similarly to iron. For example, in a

conversation about traditional funerals, Euzèbe folded brass instruments into an assemblage of metal objects that can summon divinities. Specifically, he drew a connection between the use of iron to call forth Gu in Vodun rituals and the use of brass instruments to talk to God in Christian funerals:

> Me: Can you say more about the relation between brass instruments and metal?
> Euzèbe: Regarding brass and all of that, it is Gu. Because, back at the beginning, when our ancestors wanted to communicate with their Gods, to make fetish, they used iron. They would put pieces of iron together, pour palm oil on the iron, and say prayers. Iron, it's like a God. Now, at burials, when people see trumpets they also think it is God speaking [through the instruments]. That's it.
> Me: When you play the trombone at a funeral, are you communicating with the same Gods [as the *vodunsi*]?
> Euzèbe: For me, I know that there is one God. There is a God, who no one has ever seen. When the colonizer came, they came with the word of God, and taught us how to worship this God. Our ancestors also had their own Gods, and those are also Gods that had never been seen. So, the religion is here [puts hand on his chest]… Belief is in the heart. If you believe in something, it is between you and God. It's something that you feel inside.

Euzèbe's analogy—that iron is to Gu what brass instruments are to God—echoes Apollinaire's perspective presented above. Both musicians alluded to the role of metal in animist religion, with Euzèbe saying that iron "is like a God." Indeed, adepts of Vodun believe that the spirit of Gu animates iron itself, and particularly iron objects that have been consecrated.[32]

[32] Gilbert Rouget (1996) offers a good illustration. Speaking about the royal set of iron bells in King Gbèfa's court, Rouget indicates that the power of Gu resides in the gan: "It is the property that metal has" that invites Gu, and thus to touch a consecrated gan is to be in contact with and receive some of the power of Gu, "who lives naturally in this instrument made of forged iron" (1996: 149, my translation). Rouget describes how touching objects of any kind of metal, and even hearing the sound of metal, can cause someone to be possessed by Gu: the wives of King Gbèfa say that when they play the *alunlun* that "[Gu] climbs into their head" (1996: 151, my translation). Similarly, Rouget describes how when Dahomean kings touch iron bells in ritual ceremonies they become "impregnated" by "the power of Gu" (1996: 150, my translation). These states of trance, Rouget concludes, are "more or less enlivened by the sound of metal" (1996: 153, my translation).

My interlocutors also communicate with ancestral spirits (and not just divine ones) with brass instruments. Celestin explained that people play brass instruments at funerals because their sound is loud and they can "sing for long distances." Thus, both the ancestors and angels can hear their music. It is especially important to have a fanfare at the funeral of a brass player, Celestin said, "because the spirit of the deceased will love the sound." The trumpet player Émile Djoï suggested something similar: "If you play the trumpet then people far away can hear your sound. The trumpet is stronger than the voice; there is no need for a microphone." Émile added that deceased persons and spirits could also hear the trumpet. When I asked why spirits could hear trumpets but not voices, Émile answered, "It's, like, the sound of the trumpet, the message of the sound."

Metal objects that are not necessarily sounding also proliferate in Dahomean and Beninese ancestral worship A canonic example from the south of Benin is the asen, a metal sculpture built to honor ancestral spirits and Vodun deities (see Bay 2008).[33] The material presence of metal in ancestral worship predates and, Euzèbe and others suggest, encourages the contemporary performance of brass instruments in funerary ceremonies and spiritual rituals. In all, the above examples demonstrate that, in Dahomey and Benin, the sound of metal has spiritual efficacy.

The sound of metal also has traction in secular domains. For one, it is a marker of royalty. We can recall that, when discussing the history of fanfare, brass musicians pointed to the performance of metal instruments in the Dahomean kingdom. Euzèbe explained that clarions (single-note end-blown metal horns) were the favored instruments

[33] Asen are long staffs whose tops are often decorated with metal figurines of humans and animals that are said to embody ancestral spirits.

in the royal court of Nikki, which was the capital of the Baatombou kingdom.[34] Traditionally, the kings of Nikki had a personal ensemble of clarion players to accompany their processions, and clarion players were males initiated into the practice. We can remember, too, that Ebenezer suggested that the practice of fanfare in funerals relates to the performance of metal instruments like the *alunlun* in Porto Novo's royal ceremonies. Another example of royal metal instruments is the gan, which had a special place within Dahomean royal palaces (see Rouget 1996). These instruments, all made of metal, are symbols of royalty and are sounded for kings. These kingly associations extend to brass instruments. As discussed above, brass instruments have cultural cachet reminiscent of brass regalia in the Dahomean kingdom. And, more straightforwardly, I observed male brass musicians jokingly refer to one another as kings and, when speaking about their instruments, boast, "Brass is king."[35]

The sound of metal is also a standard of value. I am thinking specifically of the historical use of metal currencies in West Africa (see Kriger 1999; Herbert 1984). Manillas—horseshoe shaped metal rings, usually of brass and copper–were fabricated in Europe and used as currency on the West African coast (particularly around the Niger Delta region) from the early sixteenth century until they were discontinued in southeastern Nigeria in 1948 (Herbert 1984: 201, 99). During this period, West Africans assessed the worth of manillas by attending to their physical properties, such as their shape, size, weight, and sound. A manilla with a good, clear sound was a measure of its

[34] These metal horns are called *les clarions* and *les trompettes* in French, *guèssèrè* or *kankangi* in Baatonum (the language of the Bariba), and *ván* in Fongbé. Clarions continue to be played in Nikki, Parakou, and Kandi (cities in the Bariba and Dendi areas in northern Benin) and are featured at the annual Gaani festival (see Tchogbo 2017).

[35] It is worth noting that Benin's most prominent traditional artists often adopt royal titles—e.g., Le Roi Gbèzé, who specializes in *tchinkoume*, and Le Roi Alekpehanhou, who specializes in *zenli*—and carry royal accessories, such as staffs, in their photographs and music videos.

high value and acceptability (Herbert 1984: 281). The example of the manilla underscores the interconnection of the value of metal and the value of its sound. This physical-aural relation is also evident in the cross-cultural use of sounding metal objects—such as metallic bangles, anklets, and bells—to decorate and adorn bodies and other objects (see Herbert 1984: 237-9). Much like manillas, decorative anklets and bells index wealth and power, and their sound focuses attention on the object's owner (ibid.). While brass instruments are clearly different from manillas and bangles—they are neither used as currency nor worn as jewelry—they share similar associations with wealth and power.

Lastly, the sound of metal is pragmatic. In urban Cotonou, sound-making metal objects are ubiquitous and an everyday means of attracting attention. Burkinabe migrants walk the side streets of Cotonou's quarters clicking scissors to advertise their manicure services. Young boys push Styrofoam carts of Fanmilk (a packaged, iced treat from Togo) and advertise their product by honking squeeze-bulb horns and, sometimes, blowing through them (Figure 2.10). Caravanning vehicles attach aluminum cans to their bumper with rope and trail them down the streets. Town criers walk the dirt roads of their neighborhood striking an accelerating staccato pattern on an iron bell, pausing time enough for residents to focus their attention, and then reciting the daily news. Mechanics set up shop on sidewalks to solder and hammer vehicle parts both because they cannot afford property rent and, this way, potential clients can see and hear them. These brief sketches demonstrate that metal's sonic attributes—particularly its timbre and volume—are valuable for the straightforward reason that they are useful. Sounding metals are loud and can be heard above the bustle and buzz of a busy, urban city. My interlocutors say

that brass instruments are practical for the same reasons: they are loud and can be heard from far away—as Celestin said, a brass instrument can "sing for long distances"—and have the added advantage of being mobile and acoustic. In this sense, the sound of metal is not a symbolic marker of spirituality, royalty, or wealth, but one of everyday utility.



Figure 2.10: A young man selling Fanmilk blows through a squeeze-bulb horn, mimicking the Celestial fanfare that plays behind him. Cotonou, 7 February 2016.

In sum, brass instruments share both purpose and meaning with other sounding metals in local material culture. Importantly, these acoustic associations span the spiritual, secular, and even ordinary domains, and stretch from the precolonial to post-independence periods. For example, I showed that certain meanings associated with the sound of metal predate the colonial era. Just as my interlocutors use brass instruments to sing to God, their ancestors used iron to communicate with Gu and brass to consult the Fa. And just as my interlocutors value brass instruments for their social and cultural resonance—they are a symbol of wealth and the outside—people in Dahomean royal courts prized artisanal metal bells, and West Africans in the Atlantic era valued brass manillas. These juxtapositions point to parallels between precolonial cultural practices around sounding metals and contemporary ones around brass instruments.

Metalworking and instrument making

As we saw in Part I, imported brass instruments are conceived as emblems of the exterior and prestigious objects from the outside. Even methods of instrument repair—often frustrated by material lack—serve to remind brass musicians that their instruments are not from Benin. In what follows, I complicate these observations by demonstrating local means of making musical instruments with metal. I describe how Beninese instrument makers increasingly use scrap metals to make instruments of both indigenous and foreign design. I also observe a change in the production of indigenous musical instruments that favors imported metal over locally available materials like wood and clay. Of particular interest is the local fabrication of fanfare instruments, including bass drums, cymbals, trumpets, and trumpet mouthpieces. This organological survey showcases how

instrument makers respond to a changing metal economy and material landscape. Moreover, the local fabrication of fanfare instruments proffers an example of instruments from the outside being produced on the inside.

I preface my discussion of instrument making with a brief summary of metallurgy in sub-Saharan Africa. Metallurgy and the mining of metals is an indigenous practice to sub-Saharan Africa that predates colonization by millennia.[36] Metals indigenous to Africa include iron, gold, copper, and tin (Childs and Killick 1993). As noted above, brass and other copper alloys were imported to West Africa in large quantities beginning in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century with the expansion of trans-Atlantic trade. Prior to this time, metals in West African kingdoms were of limited quantity and high value, and predominantly reserved for royal families. During the colonial era, African mining and extraction was directed toward Europe. Imperialist agendas shaped African nations into largely exporting economies and African metals provided the raw materials for European industrialization (see Grätz 2009). Trans-Atlantic trade from the mid-nineteenth century onwards also brought metal imports to Africa. European metals, and especially aluminum, were more desirable and less expensive than locally produced metals, and spurred a rapid decline in indigenous mining (Childs and Killick 1993: 325).[37] Today, indigenous African metallurgy has effectively ceased and most metalwork is done with scrap metals

[36] There is a large literature on African metallurgy and mining, and particularly of iron. Key work includes Chirikure (2015), Alpern (2005), Killick (2004), Schmidt (1996), van der Merwe and Miller (1994), Childs and Killick (1993), and Herbert (1993, 1984). Patrick McNaughton's (1988) monograph on Mande blacksmiths details the history of metalworking, metalworking techniques, and portraits of blacksmiths in Mande society. Eugenia Herbert's studies of copper (1984) and iron (1993) in sub-Saharan Africa are also noteworthy.

[37] James Ferguson's (1999) monograph of struggling mineworkers in the Zambian copperbelt is an exemplar of a community driven into poverty following the decline of the local metal industry.

and affordable sheet metals (ibid.). In contemporary Benin, only a few artisanal and small-scale mines continue to produce raw metals (see Grätz 2006).

Two examples from the literature on Dahomean music and art exemplify this shift in Dahomey's metallic landscape. First, Gilbert Rouget's (1996) study of music in the royal court of King Gbèfa documents a change in palatial bell making. Whereas palatial metalworkers previously made forged bells (*les cloches forgées*) from iron ore, they now use imported precious metals to make melted bells (*les cloches fondues*). Rouget explains that, beginning around 1850, each king of Porto Novo commissioned a new set of consecrated bells of a different metal depending on what metal was considered valuable.[38] Edna Bay (2008: 111) likewise documents a shift in the metals of manufacture of ancestral asen in Abomey sparked by an economic downturn in the 1980s. When precious metals like silver became unavailable, metalworkers turned to aluminum, which was available at the time and provided the color of silver. Bay notes that blacksmiths also made asen with *gan vóvó* (red metal, or brass), which they "acquired from taps and other plumbing fixtures," and that "[asen] adorned with cast brass figures were the most prestigious" (2008: 111). The examples of gan making in Porto Novo and asen making in Abomey demonstrate a change in Dahomean and Beninese metals of manufacture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, they show that, even though affordable metals like aluminum and scrap iron became accessible in the late twentieth century, a preference remained for prestige metals like brass.

[38] For example, King Dè Sôdji commissioned a set of bells in copper around 1850; after him, King Dè Tôfa commissioned a set of bells made "of money," presumably melted metal currencies (Rouget 1996: 264-8). Rouget comments, "The innovation [was] desired by King Dè Sôdji for reasons of pure prestige, and consisted of replacing the ancient bells of *ajogan* with the new ones" (1996: 264, my translation).

Benin's contemporary metalworking culture, in which aluminum and scrap metals dominate, is reflected in musical instrument making. To illustrate, I refer to my visit with André Hounkpévi (whose surname means "little drum" in Fongbé), a metalworker and instrument maker in the village Adjarra.[39] During my visit, André showed me his workspace: a small area in the interior of his family compound with an in-ground furnace covered by a thatch roof, with a crowbar and bellows nearby. He then displayed the variety of bells that he makes: *gan* (the Fongbé word for iron, which also denotes a single bell), *gansú* (large or father bell), *ganvinon* (small or child bell), *gankogui* or *gankéké* (double bell), and *ahuanégan* (pigeon or banana-leaf bell) (Figure 2.11).[40] When we sat down to speak, André explained that his ancestors purchased iron ore from local metallurgists but he prefers to purchase scrap iron from junkyards because it is cheaper. He detailed that he uses iron sheets to make bells of smaller sizes, but for larger bells, such as those played for the *adjògàn* rhythm, he purchases old car pipes and vehicle parts. Sometimes André scavenges for scrap iron himself; he finds discarded metal along the banks of the Yewa River to the south of Porto Novo, but much of the scrap iron that he finds is from abandoned railroad tracks.

[39] There are two main metal markets in southern Benin: one in Adjarra, a village northeast of Porto Novo, and one in Sé, a village west of Grand Popo near the border with Togo. These markets sell metal objects for various purposes, including music making and Vodun shrines, and their surrounding villages are home to longstanding families of metalworkers. The Adjarra market is said to have the best selection of musical instruments and, in particular, gan. André belongs to one of several metalworking lineages in Adjarra.

[40] André also makes accompanying mallets with iron and various woods. For the latter, he prefers to use wood from a guava tree because it is strong and does not break.



Figure 2.11: A gankogui and gan forged of scrap iron. Abomey, 13 March 2016.

André's use of scrap metal to make musical instruments is not unique. In recent decades, Beninese instrument makers began fabricating indigenous instruments typically made of non-metal materials (e.g., wood or clay) with recycled metals.[41] For example, the church choir at the Celestial Church in St. Rita, Cotonou has a *kpézin* made of aluminum (Figure 2.12). The *kpézin* has its origins in precolonial Abomey, where it is was the primary instrument for the royal funerary genre *zenli*.[42] Today, the *kpézin* is played in royal, religious, and secular settings. Like other royal musical instruments and rhythms, as well as sacred ones previously confined to Vodun convents, musicians say that the *kpézin* has "exited." The *kpézin* is traditionally made from terracotta clay, but the St. Rita choir director, Billy Achille, told me that he purchased an aluminum version of the drum because it is more durable. Terracotta drums are easily broken if dropped or knocked over, which is a likely hazard in a crowded choir room with children running about.

Another traditional drum I have seen made with metal is *gbon,* a drum native to the Fon ethnic group that is usually carved of wood. Étienne, a musician in Fanfare de Sodohome, plays a metal gbon painted in green that was made from a recycled trashcan (Figure 2.13). While gan are almost exclusively made of iron, instrument makers prefer aluminum and metal alloys to make drums because they are cheaper. Indeed, sheet metals are relatively inexpensive and widely available. We can recall the sheet metal stacked

[41] Steven Friedson (2009) describes similar organological changes in Ghana. Friedson observes that the *brekete* drum, the principle drum of the rhythm *abey,* is originally a wooden drum from the north of the country but was "transformed" into a drum "made from used metal chemical or oil barrels in the south" (2009: 26). Friedson credits a renowned drummer and priest with "the innovation of utilizing used metal gasoline containers to make the *brekete* drums" in response to a lack of local resources; at the time, "wood was scarce and expensive on the coast" (2009: 125-6). The resulting sound of the metal drum "was striking" and "people flocked to his shrine" because they assumed that "gods with music like this must be strong" (2009: 126).

[42] See da Cruz (1954) for a compendium of Dahomean musical ensembles and their instrumentations.

high in Gangbé's music video "Sofada" and the roof over Segboton's outdoor workshop—aluminum sheets like these are ubiquitous in Benin, and favored for their lightness and resistance to corrosion. Aluminum and tin are used in instrument manufacturing for similar reasons: they are inexpensive, lightweight, and durable.



Figure 2.12: An aluminum *kpézin* owned by the Celestial Church St. Rita parish. Cotonou, 2 November 2015.



Figure 2.13: A metal gbon owned by Fanfare de Sodohome. Lokossa, 30 January 2016.

Indigenous instruments are also manufactured using recycled objects. Rather than melt, remold, or otherwise refashion a metal object, some instrument makers integrate them whole into musical instruments. A good example is *assan,* a handheld shaker filled with mobile elements (usually small beads).[43] *Assan* are made in varying shapes and of different materials: I have seen their external body made of solid iron or aluminum, woven metal wire, metal bowls, clay, and wickerwork of different plant fibers; and their internal pieces made of plastic, clay, metals, and broken kitchen utensils. *Assan* are

[43] *Assan* is called *le hochet* in French, though most of my interlocutors used the Fongbé name.

traditionally made of vegetal fibers (Figure 2.14). The more popular *assan* played in Benin today, however, are made of repurposed objects: two imported metal bowls (which are available for purchase in most local marketplaces) are filled with small metal beads and welded together, and a plastic handle is attached (Figure 2.15). Much like the metal *kpézin*, metal *assan* are durable, and musicians claim that they produce a louder sound than their wicker counterparts.[44]

Two other indigenous instruments are worth noting for their composition of recycled objects. The first is kpanou, a percussion instrument introduced in Chapter One. The kpanou is made of a mass manufactured plastic plate, the rim of which is punctured with holes that are then affixed with iron rings, and is played in a similar style to the tambourine (Figure 2.16). The musician William Codjo told me that the kpanou was originally fabricated with iron but the material "spoiled quickly," presumably from rust, and so now instrument makers use plastic plates—typically Chinese manufactured dishware, which were first imported to Benin in the mid-twentieth century. These plastic plates can be purchased at local markets in bulk: twelve plates are 2,500 CFA (3.80 USD). Although the contemporary kpanou is made from an imported object it is considered an indigenous instrument. Maxime described the kpanou as part of "folklore" and "tradition," and others told me that it "has always been here" and "was played by our ancestors."

The second is a percussion instrument formed of a single piece of salvaged railroad track, which is positioned on a stand or on top of one's head, and played by striking its sides with two metal rods (Figure 2.17). The instrument is generally called

[44] The shift from making *assan* with vegetal fibers to metal mirrors a similar transition in the production of other traditional objects, such as the (now metal) sculpture *asen.* Beninese art historian Joseph Adande comments, "It is not absurd to think that the desire to have an everlasting device led to the usage of iron to shape it" (2007: 7).

gan for the reason that it is made of iron and played in the same manner as other gan. The railroad gan forms part of the instrumentation for traditional *kàkà* percussion ensembles and is associated with Zangbeto, the guardian spirit of the night.[45] There are many other instruments like these—i.e., instruments formed of (nearly) unaltered recycled objects—in Benin and the surrounding region. For example, we can think of the Por Por horn band in Accra that refashions brass-tube squeeze-bulb car horns recycled from English lorries as musical instruments (Feld 2012; La Drivers Union Por Por Group 2007). These instruments exemplify the notion of imperial debris (Stoler 2008): they are composed of objects that were brought to West Africa in the colonial and neoliberal eras, and then picked up and made useful.



Figure 2.14: A group of musicians play traditional *assan* made of vegetal fibers at a funeral reception. Pahou, 10 August 2016.

[45] *Kàkà* is the ceremonial musical genre for the Zangbeto of Porto Novo. Its iconic instrument is a piece of hollowed and split bamboo that is struck on the side. *Kàkà* ensembles also include a selection of traditional wooden drums and gan. The well-known Beninese musician Sagbohan Danialou first "popularized" and "modernized" the rhythm *kàkà* in his albums from the 1970s (see Politz 2017: 112).



Figure 2.15: *Assan* made of metal bowls owned by the Celestial Church St. Rita parish. Cotonou, 20 August 2015.



Figure 2.16: A musician sings and plays the kpanou at a funeral reception. Porto Novo, 6 February 2016.



Figure 2.17: A *kàkà* ensemble performs outside in procession en route to a funeral reception. A musician plays the gan made from a piece of railroad on the far left. Allada, 12 September 2015.

Fanfare instruments of foreign design are also locally manufactured with recycled metals. The military band clash cymbal is perhaps the easiest fanfare instrument to reproduce. Its simple design of a concave metal plate can be manufactured in aluminum at a low price, and the standard leather hand strap easily replaced with a piece of *pagne* (local wax cloth) (Figure 2.18). Even so, most fanfare musicians prefer to purchase Chinese manufactured clash cymbals made of copper alloys. Maxime explained that imported cymbals give a brighter and more desirable sound than their aluminum counterparts, whose sound tends to be dull and lower in pitch. The fanfare instrument most frequently manufactured in Benin is the bass drum.[46] Instrument makers build the

[46] The bass drum is the principle drum of fanfare ensembles and is most commonly known as *fánfán houn* or "the fanfare drum" (*fánfán* being a phonetic spelling in Fongbé of the French

body of the drum with recycled metal of various alloys (I have seen drums in cast iron, steel, and aluminum) as well as wood. Locally fabricated bass drums always have imported plastic drumheads (typically the knock-off brand Premier England), which cost approximately 2-3,000 CFA (3-4.50 USD). The bass drum player in Fanfare St. Joseph, Mathias Adjaï, makes his own bass and snare drums. Mathias told me that he constructed his first bass drum from a salvaged iron trashcan; he borrowed tools from a metalworker to bend, cut, and solder the iron into the shape of a drum. The metal drum was heavy and gave him back pain, however, so he built a second drum from plywood (*contreplaqué*), which Mathias said is lighter and gives a "better bass sound" (Figure 2.19).

Bass drummers also make their own mallets. Mathias carved his mallet's handle from the wood of a cashew tree (though he said one can also use wood from an orange or mango tree), and fashioned the mallet's head with rubber from a recycled sandal. Mathias said that rubber heads are stronger than those of imported mallets, which are made of either plastic or cloth, and give a better sound. He elaborated: "The wood-rubber mallet gives a sound closer to our traditional rhythms. The white man doesn't know the sound of our country. We have our own standards." The bass drum player Alexandre Ahononhoué also plays locally manufactured drums. He commissioned a metalworker to make the bodies of a bass and snare drum with aluminum, which is lighter in weight than iron. Alexandre then made his own bass drum mallet from the wood of a guava tree and recycled rubber, and snare drum sticks from the wood of a cashew tree (Figure 2.20). Alexandre explained that mallets produced in Benin, which he called "Beninese mallets,"

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fanfare, and *houn* the generic Fongbé word for drum). As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, many amateur fanfare musicians did not receive formal education and are illiterate. I met several bass drum players who did not know of the bass drum's European provenance and refer to their instrument only by its Fongbé name.

are shorter, lighter, and more versatile than European military bass drum mallets. He also emphasized that the style of playing bass drum in Benin is significantly different to that in Europe. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, bass drummers use only one mallet; they use their second hand to strike the drumhead or side of the drum, and to bend the drumhead, thereby changing its tension and pitch.



Figure 2.18: Aluminum cymbals with straps of wax cloth. Lokossa, 30 January 2016.



Figure 2.19: David Akande plays Mathias' plywood bass drum using a mallet made with wood from a cashew tree and recycled rubber. Mathias Adjaï stands on the right and Celestin Comlanvi on the left. Cotonou, 9 November 2015.



Figure 2.20: Alexandre Ahononhoué poses with his son, Kelly. They hold an aluminum bass drum and aluminum snare drum, respectively, and mallets that Alexandre made. Sodjeatinme, 18 July 2016.

Beninese musicians have also attempted to make brass instruments of Western design.[47] Julien Aïdasso, a trumpet player in Fanfare St. Joseph, told me that he and his

[47] Musicians also make brass instrument accessories, such as mutes, using recycled materials. I highlight this practice in Chapter Three.

father endeavored multiple times to manufacture their own trumpets yet did not succeed. His father, Aimer Aïdasso, is the head of a soldering shop in Porto Novo and a skilled metalworker. Julien described how Aimer tried twice to make a trumpet using recycled iron from trashcans but it proved too difficult: Aimer was able to make a mold of a trumpet using a foreign model but the inner workings of the valve system were impossible to construct. As alternative, Aimer attempted to solder the valve system from an imported trumpet to the instrument parts he had constructed with iron, but that failed, too: "The instruments did not mix. The air did not blow," Julien said. Aimer, now retired, volunteers his time to repair instruments for the members of Fanfare St. Joseph; he asks only to be reimbursed for the expenses of soldering materials and electricity.[48]

Local metalworkers have had more success making brass instrument mouthpieces. The trumpet player Abel Hounyemin, for example, owns a locally manufactured mouthpiece made of recycled aluminum (Figure 2.21). He commissioned the mouthpiece from a shop that makes aluminum kitchenware (Figure 2.22), and gave the metalworker his imported mouthpiece (Premier No. 67) to use as a mold. Abel said he enjoys the aluminum mouthpiece because "it sings well." An additional advantage of the aluminum mouthpiece is its affordability: it costs approximately 2,500 CFA (3.80 USD) compared to 5,000 CFA (7.50 USD) for an imported mouthpiece. Although Abel's aluminum mouthpiece is produced locally, the aluminum from which it is made is not. Abel specified that his mouthpiece is made of *alu mélangé* (mixed aluminum), which he

[48] My interlocutors' efforts to fabricate instruments recall the work of Ghanaian artist Nii Noi Nortley who invents and makes "afrifones." Steven Feld describes Nortley's afrifones as instrumental inventions that combine "portions of African, Asian, and Western instruments with saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces" (2012: 16). Although the instrumental inventions I have seen in Benin are less ambitious, there are parallels between Nortley's disassembling and reconstruction of Western instruments and those of Beninese musicians like Aimer.

believes is aluminum mixed with zinc, both of which are imported to Benin. The examples of Aimer's trumpet and Abel's mouthpiece illustrate that instrument makers do not attempt to reproduce foreign instruments exactly—in other words, they do not import raw brass so as to construct a trumpet with the same material stuff—but rather use locally available materials that are accessible and affordable, but that may or may not render a different musical sound.[49]



Figure 2.21: Abel's aluminum trumpet mouthpiece. Akpapa, 25 January 2016.

[49] I discuss Abel's trumpet mouthpiece and its effect on pitch in Chapter Three.



Figure 2.22: Aluminum kitchenware for sale on the roadside.
Porto Novo, 26 January 2016.

I suggested earlier that instrument repairers and players respond to changes in the availability of raw materials with creative techniques like salvaging and recycling. The examples discussed here show that instrument makers, too, are resourceful. This was perhaps most evident in their material substitutions. André builds bells from scrap iron instead of raw iron ore; Mathias made a bass drum mallet using wood from a cashew tree and rubber from a sandal instead of plastic and cloth; Abel commissioned a trumpet mouthpiece out of aluminum instead of nickel-plated brass. We saw a similar readiness to substitute materials in Segboton's repair shop (e.g., he inset slices of rubber for a saxophone keypad) and Maxime's ingredients for instrument maintenance (e.g., he

applies gasoline and motor oil to his trombone). We also saw a number of instruments made of non-standard objects—the *assan* from bowls, the kpanou from plastic plates, the gan from a railroad track, and so on—which exemplify these techniques.

The observation that materials for instrument making are readily substituted prompts me to consider whether changes to an instrument's material affects musicians' perceptions of its identity (especially as an indigenous or imported object). My earlier discussion of instrument repair and maintenance showed that minor alterations (e.g., the addition of a piece of rubber) do not change musicians' conceptions of their instruments as foreign. To the contrary, the difficulty of procuring requisite materials for maintenance and repair serves to remind musicians that their instruments were manufactured abroad.

That said, I observed that larger alterations to an instrument's material or formal design did affect musicians' conceptions of its provenance. For example, Mathias claims that his bass drum is from here (*chez nous*) because he crafted the drum from salvaged metal and the mallet out of a cashew tree. Alexandre also claimed that his bass drum is "a Beninese instrument"; he explained that his drum is "traditional" because he made it from "a mix of materials" and uses it to play traditional rhythms. For Mathias and Alexandre, when instruments of foreign design are locally fabricated—and, crucially, when they are made with local materials—they are instruments from Benin, or from the inside. The trumpet player Abel took a middling position: reflecting on his aluminum mouthpiece, he said, "Well, [the instrument manufacturer] Premier is from Nigeria, but the aluminum is from here, so it is like Beninese." Other musicians disagreed that an instrument's material affects its identity. Maxime, for example, asserted that an instrument's design is what makes it foreign or indigenous. Maxime pointed to the aluminum cymbals as an example:

even though they are constructed from local materials, he insisted, they are still foreign instruments. For him, an instrument's design determines its identity, no matter its material.

The above examples suggest that a musical instrument's identity as foreign or indigenous becomes entangled in its material and means of making. When an instrument whose design originates from the exterior is made with materials from inside of Benin, its identity as a foreign object is sometimes complicated. The bass drum and aluminum mouthpiece are good examples. In those cases, an instrument otherwise from the outside took on "insideness" through the material accrual of local substances (some of which, ironically, are also international imports). Yet when an instrument of local design is made with imported materials, its identity as an indigenous object seems steadfast. The metal *kpézin* and gbon are considered no more foreign than their counterparts made of clay or wood. Similarly, the *kpanou* and *assan* are considered traditional instruments; their Chinese manufactured elements do not compromise their insider status. I reiterate that musicians disagreed on what identifies an instrument as indigenous or foreign, and that their disagreements centered on an instrument's material and design. Notably, my interlocutors' understandings of instruments imply that the categories "indigenous" and "foreign" are not fixed.

Metal workers and worshippers

I now turn from metal instruments and objects to the people who play and work with them. In the course of our conversations about metal and its meanings, I perceived that my interlocutors associate their brass instrument practice with metalwork. Julien Aïdasso,

for one, asserted that his father's work in Fanfare St. Joseph and a soldering shop are extensions of the same profession: "My father is an iron forger and a brass player, so one could say that he lives [by way of] metal (*il vit du métal*). The iron forger and the brass player both work with metal. They both earn their living with metal." Euzèbe also pointed to camaraderie between brass players and metalworkers. He noted that the fanfare version of Voix des Anges Brass represents Cotonou's metalworkers' union at the annual Labor Day parade at Dantokpa market each year, and said that brass players and metalworkers are "like brothers." In what follows, I explore these associations in more detail. I point first to symmetries in the social lineages of brass musicians and metalworkers, as well as the gendered nature of their work. Then I highlight parallels in the spiritual practices of those who play brass instruments and those who work with metal.

In Benin, as elsewhere, brass instrument performance is a specialist male activity.[50] Brass instruments' history within colonial and postcolonial military bands—services that were, until recently, a singularly male occupation—likely helped to codify them as masculine objects and instruments for men. My interlocutors also say that fanfare performance is male dominated because brass instruments are difficult to play. The trombone and snare drum player Severin claimed that women do not play brass instruments because they are large and heavy. Fanfare performances are physically demanding, he explained, and to play a brass instrument requires intense exertion of the diaphragm and lips—exertion only a man is capable of doing. The saxophone player, Lucien, confirmed that, "here in Benin women do not blow." This is not because women cannot blow, he clarified, but "it is tradition" that they do not. Lucien elaborated, "People

[50] Existing studies of brass band practices show that is a male-dominated phenomenon across cultures (e.g., Reily and Brucher 2013; Sakakeeny 2013; Booth 2005).

say it is improper [for women to play brass instruments] and, in any case, women prefer to sing." The gendered practice of brass instruments recalls the traditionally male performance of clarions (*ván* in Fongbé) and flutes (*kpètè* in Fongbé), as well as most idiophones indigenous to Benin (see da Cruz 1954). It also reflects the gendered nature of musical performance in Africa more broadly. Like griots in Mali (Durán 2013; Charry 2000), *jùjú* musicians in Nigeria (Waterman 1990a), *isicathamiya* singers in South Africa (Erlmann 1996), and highlife musicians in Ghana (Plageman 2013), brass musicians in Benin are predominantly male, and their specialist practice runs in families.

Moreover, musicianship and knowledge about brass instruments is passed down patrilineages. David Akande, the leader of Fanfare St. Joseph, learned to play trumpet from his father, Joseph, and later inherited his father's fanfare. Julien Aïdasso and his brothers also learned to play trumpet from their father, Aimer, who was one of Fanfare St. Joseph's founding members. When Aimer retired a few years ago, Julien joined Fanfare St. Joseph to replace him. Geoffroy Whékpé, too, learned to play trombone from his father, and is now teaching his younger male siblings. We can also think of the Ahouandjinou brothers who inherited their musical profession from their father, Henri. There are innumerable cases like these. Those musicians who did not learn to play brass instruments from their biological fathers usually identify with another patrilineage, such as with male musicians in the military or church. We can remember that Ange Soussou recounted his place in a male lineage of teachers, the first of whom was a member of the military fanfare. Knowledge about brass instrument making and repair is similarly passed down male lines. Segboton Cledjo, for example, has trained only three people in his trade: his two sons and his nephew.

Like brass instrument practice, metalworking in Benin is a specialist male activity that runs in families (see Grätz 2006).[51] Rouget (1996) documents that Porto Novian kings each sponsor a palatial metalworker whose profession, like that of the royal family, is hereditary and patrilineal.[52] The patrilineal tradition of metalworkers continues today both within and outside of royal courts. André, the metalworker from Adjarra, is an exemplar: his father was a metalworker, as was his paternal grandfather, and he is now teaching his sons the same trade. An illustration of the correspondence between the patrilineal professions of metalworking and brass playing in Benin is the Hountondji family from Abomey. We can recall from Chapter One that my interlocutors named a particular military bandsman from Abomey, Nester Hountondji, as one of the fathers of fanfare. The Hountondji family's reputation as skilled musicians continues today. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Hountondji family is also known as a lineage of artisan blacksmiths who established themselves in Abomey in the mid-nineteenth century through the patronage of Dahomean kings (Bay 2008: 61). The Hountondji smiths were, and still are, known for their brass work; their brass repoussé decorates the prayer house of King Gezo and, throughout the twentieth century, they held a monopoly on the production of brass-casted sacred asen (Bay 2008: 12). The parallels here are clear. The

[51] The same can be said of metalworkers elsewhere in West Africa. Colleen Kriger's (1999) *Pride of Men*, a historical study of ironworking in West and Central Africa, describes how women are widely excluded from metalworking across African cultures and that knowledge of ironworking is often shrouded in secrecy by male societies. Patrick McNaughton's (1988) ethnography of Mande blacksmiths also depicts a patrilineal metalworking culture. Childs and Killick confirm, "interdictions against the presence and participation of women in African metalworking were widespread" in precolonial societies (1993: 328).

[52] Parallel examples are seen in the Benin and Dahomey kingdoms, where there were hereditary guilds of bronze and brass casters who worked for royal courts (Ezra 1992; Herskovits and Herskovits 1934).

Hountondji family is known as both a smithing lineage and a lineage of military band musicians, and both professions work with brass.

Both metalworkers and brass players share a strong association to the spirit world. Metalworkers, in particular, have a relationship to the Vodun deity Gu, who is the patron of metalworkers and craftsmen.[53] I was told that the "children of Gu" are anyone who works with metal, including metalworkers, sculptors, carpenters, taxi and motorcycle drivers, and, sometimes, brass instrument players. While Christianity is widespread in Benin's southern region, metalworkers' allegiance to Gu still prevails. André, again, serves as an example. His ancestors were both metalworkers and Gu initiates and, while André converted to Catholicism as an adult, he still pays respects to Gu. "One cannot abandon tradition," he told me, and, if he were to "leave the side of Vodun," he would surely invite Gu's wrath and consequent danger to himself. Thus he makes regular sacrifices to Gu at a shrine in his home. I also know several Christian brass musicians who maintain a spiritual relationship with Gu. One musician said that he pays his cousin, who is a *vodunsi*, to perform sacrifices to Gu on his behalf. Because he is not the one "making the fetish," he said he "can rest at ease on my side, in the church." Another, Pablo, explained that even though he is a Celestial Christian he is "obliged to pay respects to Gu" because he is both a brass player and a motorcycle taxi driver.

Brass musicians in rural towns and villages where Christianity is less pervasive expressed a stronger relationship to Gu. In March 2016, I visited Fanfare Pionniers de Bohicon, a fanfare comprised of Vodun initiates. The fanfare's leader, Émile Gankossou, is an adept of seven Vodun deities, including Gu. To prove his status to me, Émile

[53] Metalworkers across African societies have strong ties to spiritual power. See Herbert (1993, 1984), McNaughton (1988), and van der Merwe and Avery (1987).

displayed a wooden chest filled with fetish objects, including a stuffed animal intestine, beads, shells, scrap metal, wax cloth, a feather, and *sodabi* (a local alcohol). "I am a leader of Vodun. I am very strong inside," Émile boasted. Because of Émile's connections to Vodun, Fanfare Pionniers performs mostly for Vodun ceremonies in the surrounding villages. Émile said that the spirits Egungun and Zangbeto, and the Vodun deities Gu and Sakpata (the deity of earth and illness) enjoy the sound of fanfare most of all, thus the fanfare performs primarily for ceremonies for those deities. When I asked why Gu enjoys fanfare, Émile alluded to a common denominator of metal, saying, "Gu and fanfare, they are the same thing."

The above examples elucidate the social and religious parallels between metalworkers and brass players.[54] Both professions are specialized, inherited, and patrilineal. Moreover, practitioners of both trades have close relationships with the spirit world and acknowledge, if not embrace, an association with Gu. Of particular note is that some brass musicians consider fanfare performance a type of metalwork; as Julien indicated, brass players also earn their living with metal.

The plastic arts

To complement my earlier discussion of metal's sonic register, I want to briefly consider the visual. During my fieldwork I encountered brass instruments in unanticipated places:

[54] A further area of interest, which I do not explore here, is the musicality of metalwork. Patrick McNaughton's explication of Mande blacksmithing techniques showcases the presence and utility of rhythm in the labor of metalwork; namely, in the rhythmic acts of pushing air through bellows and hammering hot iron (1988: 24-30). McNaughton observes: "The sounds produced when hammers meet hot iron are thick and sonorous, and they carry quite a distance from the forge. Like bellows' sounds, they provide an opportunity to make music, and many smiths generate basic rhythms as they forge" (1988: 30).

in sculptures, paintings, murals, *les appliqués* (textile arts), and *bas-reliefs* (low reliefs).[55] I also observed brass musicians treat their instruments as visual art objects, decorating them with paint or affixing ornaments. These are more tangential observations, however, as I see it, the incorporation of brass instruments into the non-musical arts lends weight to the idea that brass instruments are encountered, handled, and conceived according to local material culture logics.

As mentioned above, contemporary artisanal metalworking is frequently done with scrap rather than raw metals. I illustrated this with reference to Rouget's (1996) observations of gan making in Porto Novo's royal court and my own of the Beninese metalworker, André. I also showed that musical instruments are fabricated from salvaged railroad track and made from metal that was recycled, melted, and remolded. In the same way that instrument makers transform metal and metal objects to create musical instruments, Beninese plastic artists transform metal and metal objects—including brass instruments—to create art objects. A vivid example is the artist Virgile Nassara, who displays his sculptures at his workshop in Porto Novo. Three of Nassara's sculptures in particular caught my attention. The three pieces are made of mixed media (wood, metal, plastic, clay, cowry shells, and acrylic paint) and feature a musical instrument (a French horn, gan, and talking drum, respectively) (Figure 2.23). Nassara exhibits the three sculptures together, inviting the observer to encounter them as a complete set.

[55] These art forms fall within the broad category of plastic arts. The more narrow meaning of plastic arts denotes three-dimensional art (e.g., sculpture or bas-relief) that involves the physical manipulation of a plastic medium, but the term is applied more broadly to connote all forms of visual arts (e.g., to include painting and photography).



Figure 2.23: Sculptures by Virgile Nassara. Porto Novo. Photograph by Jorge Serpa.

Nassara's sculptures serve to illustrate three techniques in local plastic arts that pertain to my broader discussion of the indigenous meanings of musical instruments. First, musical instruments are familiar symbols of Vodun deities. Certain Vodun deities are associated with certain musical instruments—e.g., Legba with the kpètè, or Gu and Heviosso with the gan—and the pairs are often represented together. For example, Legba is often depicted holding a kpètè and Gu is typically represented by a metallic sculpture that contains a gan (Figure 2.24). Seen against this background, Nassara's metal sculpture with a French horn made of *gan-vó* (brass) and a bell made of *gan* (iron) seems a likely invocation of Gu. My point here is that, in both local musical and visual arts, metal instruments (be they of foreign or local design) have distinct spiritual significations.

Second, Nassara's sculptures evidence the creative practice of mixing media, which some scholars posit is a pan-African aesthetic (see Feld 2012; Thompson 1969).[56] For instance, Nassara's combination of a French horn, gan, and drum reminded me of the Ghanaian artist Nii Noi Nortley's "afrifones," which are wind instrument inventions that combine "portions of African, Asian, and Western instruments with saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces" (Feld 2012: 16).[57] Also relevant are Nortley's "sound sculptures," which are large installations that combine Western and local musical instruments with other artifacts, such as photographs and car parts. Both Nassara and Nortley's mixing of musical instruments—and especially Nortley's manufacturing of a new instrument with old instrument parts—recalls the creative instrument manufacturing techniques of my own interlocutors. We saw that craftsmen combine objects of diverse origin and design—from aluminum pots to iron trashcans to plastic plates—to create new musical instruments. A common denominator in these artistic/musical practices is that of material mixture.

Third, Nassara's work highlights the aforementioned technique of recycling and, in particular, the use of recycled materials in contemporary Beninese plastic arts. I am thinking of Calixte Dakpogan, a celebrated local sculptor who solders recycled metal. Notably, Dakpogan is an ancestor of Sagbo Ayato, who was a metalworker under King Toffa in the royal court of Porto Novo, and was raised in Porto Novo's Goukoumé neighborhood (called "the quarter of Gu"). Another relevant artist is Romuald Hazoumè, also from Porto Novo, who is known internationally for his series of masks made from

[56] Robert Farris Thompson, for one, postulates, "the taste for mixing the main medium of the sculpture (wood, bone, brass) with a minor medium of beads, brass, or iron is very African" (1969: 148).
[57] Steven Feld (2009) also documents Nortley's work in his film trilogy.

recycled jerry cans.[58] While my mention of these artists is cursory, I note that each uses recycled materials to create works of indigenous form. I further suggest that their artwork is illustrative of a broader cultural reckoning with imported objects and imperial debris. Just as my interlocutors find a place for plastic plates and abandoned railroad tracks in their musical practice, so, too, do contemporary Beninese artists make creative use of leftover materials.



Figure 2.24: Sculpture for Gu outside of the Ouadada Cultural Center. Porto Novo, 31 July 2016.

[58] Jerry cans are plastic canisters that are used to smuggle gasoline from Nigeria to Benin.

To further illustrate the interconnection of fanfare instruments and local artistic practices, I describe below two forms of popular visual art that Beninese musicians have themselves embraced. First, Beninese fanfares commission painted murals to advertise their musical work. Murals are a popular form of public advertisement and commercial art across Benin. They typically advertise private businesses—from barbershops to pounded-yam restaurants to Fa consultation—but also deliver public health announcements, such as the narrative frescoes depicting the stages of pregnancy adorning the walls of maternity clinics. Murals typically feature images rather than text, as the majority of Benin's adult population is illiterate.[59]

Engaging with this tradition, in recent years fanfares and other musical ensembles have used murals to advertise their services to potential (and potentially illiterate) clients. A good example is Fanfare les Synthetiseurs de Ouidah, the flagship fanfare of Ouidah. Fanfare les Synthetiseurs is led by Zed, a charismatic elder musician known for his good humor, social connections, and drinking habit. When I visited Zed for the first time in 2015, I noticed that the outer wall of his home was painted with a large mural depicting the fanfare's name and phone number along with musicians playing a sousaphone, bass drum, and trombone. The musician pictured in the center represents Zed and bears his characteristic scarifications (Figure 2.25).[60] Zed explained that he got the idea for a mural from his neighbor; Zed's compound is across the street from a Fa diviner (*boconon* in

[59] The most recent statistics from UNICEF show that twenty-nine percent of adults, forty-one percent of male adults, and eighteen percent of female adults are literate. Meanwhile, forty-two percent of youth, fifty-five percent of male youth, and thirty-one percent of female youth are literate (UNICEF 2015).

[60] Zed belongs to the Vodun cult of Dangbe, the royal python, which is associated with agricultural fertility (see Law 2004). Members of the royal cult of Dangbe have facial scarifications that represent the fangs of a python. Zed has three sets of fangs: one on each cheek and one on his forehead. Fanfare les Synthetiseurs also has several Gu initiates in its ranks.

Fongbé), whose own abode is adorned with a painted mural and phone number (Figure 2.26). Zed decided to advertise his profession, too, and commissioned a mural of Fanfare les Synthetiseurs from a local artist. I have seen numerous painted murals advertising fanfares, orchestras, and other musical groups around Benin.



Figure 2.25: Mural advertising Fanfare les Synthetiseurs on the outer wall of Zed's compound. Ouidah, 8 September 2015.



Figure 2.26: Mural advertising the services of a diviner. Ouidah, 8 September 2015.

A second form of plastic art utilized by fanfares is the *bas-relief* (low relief).[61] In Benin, bas-relief is historically a religious art for Vodun and the official art form of the Dahomean kingdom (Piqué and Rainer 1999: 105; see also Waterlot 1926). The most celebrated bas-reliefs are in Abomey, which is home to families of artisans (such as the Hountondji and Tokoudogba lineages) who constructed the bas-reliefs on the walls of Dahomean palaces (Piqué and Rainer 1999: 51, 107). The bas-relief remains a favored architectural decoration for palaces, shrines, marketplaces, and other important sites across southern Benin. For example, the perimeter wall of the *Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (The Central Bank of West African States) in Cotonou is decorated with bas-reliefs of scorpions and the façade of the building with cowry shells; King Glélé's palace in Abomey is embellished with bas-reliefs of his signature animals, the lion and the hornbill bird (Piqué and Rainer 1999: 61-2); the entrance of the Kpasse Sacred Forest in Ouidah is decorated with a bas-relief of a tree and two leopards (Figure 2.27); and a village shrine near Bohicon is ornamented with a bas-relief depicting Legba with an erect phallus (Figure 2.28).These bas-reliefs embellish, celebrate, and attract attention to the structure, as well as the persons, spirits, and things that reside therein.

The association of bas-reliefs with wealth, royalty, and power is perhaps what motivated an accomplished military bandsman in Abomey to commission a bas-relief on the wall of his own home (Figure 2.29). The relief of Fanfare Mere Semansa is elaborate: it portrays the fanfare's full instrumentation and then some: the tuba, saxophone, French horn, and bass drum are portrayed alongside the gan and *assan*. The addition of electronic

[61] Bas-relief is a type of sculpture where a flat surface of material is cut or chiseled away so that the unsculpted parts appear raised. Bas-relief is called *noudidè* in Fongbé, from the word meaning "to design" or "to portray" (Piqué and Rainer 1999). Whereas bas-reliefs in Dahomey were originally made with clay and palm fibers, today they are made of plaster and cement.

instruments, including a guitar, keyboard, and microphone, endorses the group's ability to play *sur scène* (on stage) as well as *à pied* (on foot). Constant Samson, a long time resident of Abomey and career assistant to many anthropologists in Benin, took me to see the structure and explained that it was the first bas-relief-cum-musical advertisement of its kind. Although Fanfare Mere Semansa is now defunct following the death of its founder, the bas-relief remains and its paint is regularly restored.

The examples of the mural and bas-relief illustrate that fanfare and its instruments are incorporated into familiar forms of public visual art. Like maternity clinics, Fa diviners, and the Central Bank, fanfare is a local service and is advertised via local means. Relatedly, the preceding examples of metal sculpture suggested that brass instruments are folded into local material categories (specifically, of metal objects). Together, these examples indicate that fanfare and its instruments join a preexisting inventory of practices and objects that are used in local arts—they, too, are soldered, sculpted, and painted—and, importantly, are visible and made familiar via their presence in public sculptures and portrayal on public walls.



Figure 2.27: Bas-relief above the entrance to the Kpasse Sacred Forest. Ouidah, 8 September 2015.



Figure 2.28: Bas-relief decorating a shrine to Legba. Bohicon, 12 March 2016.



Figure 2.29: Bas-relief advertising Fanfare Mere Semansa. Abomey, 13 March 2016.

In sum, in Part II of this chapter I forwarded the idea that brass instruments can be conceived as indigenous objects. First, I reflected on parallels between the valuation of brass in precolonial Dahomey and that of brass instruments in contemporary Benin. Second, I illustrated my interlocutors' claims that brass instruments and indigenous metal instruments are analogous, and acutely so in their sonic registers. Third, I demonstrated how local techniques of metalworking and instrument manufacturing complicate the identities of foreign instruments. Fourth, I expanded on the perspective that brass musicians and metalworkers are "like brothers," and showed some similarities between the two professions. Lastly, I explored the presence of brass instruments in local plastic arts. Overall, I suggested that my interlocutors understand brass instruments partly according to local logics around material, and specifically metal and its sound. By exploring southern Benin's material landscape—of metallurgy, metalworking, and metallic arts—I aimed to demonstrate that brass instruments are also "instruments from the inside": objects that derive utility and value from the meanings of metal in this particular place.

Conclusion: Le métal mélangé

I end this chapter where it began. The members of Gangbé Brass Band stand atop piles of scrap metal, their brass instruments glimmering in the sunlight. Athanase's flugelhorn, Lucien's tenor saxophone, and James' sousaphone index wealth and material plenty. These expensive instruments obtained abroad invite Beninese audience members to imagine the exterior and its presumed abundance of resources. The scrapyard simultaneously reminds them of the scarce resources at home—resources ill-suited for

repairing these imported instruments. Scenes from the surrounding village—of men melting iron over a furnace and children fashioning toys out of tin cans—summon a local history of metallurgy and metalworking. The initiated viewer can imagine these men crafting locally available metals into sounding instruments of their own. Images of sepia-toned brass and stately posed musicians recall Dahomean brass casting and royal metallic arts. And the montage of a trumpet with Zangbeto, and a trombone with a Gelede mask, situates brass instruments within a regional history of metal and spirituality. Altogether, this metallic imagery juxtaposes the indigenous with the foreign, the past with the present, Benin with the beyond. Gangbé's aural compositions, "Sofada" and "Ema dja," also evoke multiple histories and geographies. At the same time that their pentatonicism, gan timeline, and gbon rhythms resound with tradition, their jazz-infused harmonies and brass band instrumentation signal musical cosmopolitanism and global connectedness. Their sound of metal speaks to both the inside and out.

Gangbé's music videos exemplify the material entanglements evidenced throughout this chapter. Metal and its sound invite a plethora of meanings for Beninese musicians, and these material-cum-aural resonances are strategically deployed. To drive home the entangled reality of brass instruments in Benin, I refer back to a trenchant observation made by the trombonist Celestin: that brass instruments are made of "mixed metal." While Celestin meant this literally—to say that brass is composite, not pure—the idea of mixed metal is also a helpful metaphor for conceiving brass instruments' multiple and simultaneous entanglements. Brass instruments are "mixed metals" not only in the sense of their metallurgic composition but also because the varied meanings of metal are mixed up within them. As we have seen, a brass instrument is a symbol of Western

wealth and Dahomean royalty, an index of international travel and an artifact from *chez nous*, a voice of God and a vessel for Gu. These meanings are not mutually exclusive but often simultaneous. (Much in the way that brass is at once copper and zinc but not reducible to one or the other.) It is this mixture of historical, social, and religious entanglements that proffer brass instruments such semiotic traction and allow for performances like Gangbé's. In other words, it is because brass is a polyvalent, mixed material that brass instruments have multiple valences. It is because of the material properties of brass instruments—their brassiness or metalness—that they are so efficacious in southern Benin's musical and material landscape.[62] It is because of their material, the stuff of which they are made.

This chapter, together with the one that preceded it, illustrated the historical and material context of contemporary Beninese fanfare from my interlocutors' vantage points. The instrument-centered ethnography presented above, furthermore, supported a central claim of this thesis: that the material properties of brass instruments (and players' conceptions of them) condition amateur musicians' social, affective, and musical experiences. The following chapters build on this background and offer thematic studies of musical pitch, labor, breath, and pleasure. I turn first to the sonic register to analyze pitch and tuning in amateur brass instrument performance.

[62] In employing the suffix "–ness," I concur with a critique that Tim Ingold made about Christopher Tilley's (2004) phenomenological study of stone: "[T]he stoniness of stone does *not* reside in its 'nature'—that is, in its materiality—but rather in the manifold ways in which it is engaged in the currents of the lifeworld. It has to do with the properties and qualities of materials, not with the materiality of objects" (Ingold 2005: 124).

CHAPTER THREE

Pitch, Tuning, and the Materiality of Tolerance

In this chapter I examine a specific musical element—pitch—and its expression and manipulation in amateur brass instrument performance. Questions guiding my examination here include: How do brass musicians talk about pitch? Do brass musicians alter pitch according to scale systems, performance context, or musical repertoire? Do brass musicians adjust the tuning of their instruments and, if so, how and to what tuning system? What roles do instruments play in pitch and tonal expression? I address these questions, in part, through methodologies of musical analysis and pitch measurement: for example, I compare pitches produced by individual players across pieces in different keys, and pitches sounded in both pentatonic melodies and diatonic Protestant hymns. Participant observation and interviews further elucidate the varied factors that influence pitch expression: I observe instrument pedagogy, techniques of instrument maintenance, tuning practices of individuals and ensembles, and the material conditions of performance. Throughout my discussion I foreground musicians' explanations of the factors—ideological, material, contextual, or otherwise—that affect pitch.

A core theme in this chapter is the tension between materials and ideology. More specifically, my ethnography suggests that the idiosyncrasies of musical instruments, material circumstance, and individual choices disrupt the presumed hegemony of Western tonality in postcolonial brass instrument performance. I illuminate this tension with two main points. First, I show that particularities of pitch expression do not correlate with the pitch ideals of either imported or indigenous tonal resources but rather evince local pedagogical techniques, knowledge frameworks, and players' ability. Second, I

demonstrate how brass instruments' physical designs motivate, or demand, Western tonality yet material conditions—such as instrument disrepair, makeshift valve oils, locally manufactured mouthpieces, and climate—limit and constrain it. Overall I argue that fanfare musicians' pitch expressions and tuning manipulations are not ideologically motivated but rather technical, performative, and sometimes involuntary.

My central aim is to demonstrate the contingency and constraints of the material environment—particularly the effects of instruments' material designs—on discrete aspects of musical sound. For example, I am concerned with how material factors, such as malfunctioning instruments or atmospheric elements, influence pitch expression, and how these relate to tonal consciousness, aesthetic preference, and valuations of musical styles. My consideration of how the physical design and material stuff of brass instruments motivates certain pitches and tuning techniques builds on my discussion of the material conditions of instrument maintenance and fabrication in Chapter Two.

I would be remiss to not describe how my experience as a long-term participant in the Beninese brass instrument community encouraged my thinking about pitch and tuning. As detailed in this thesis' Introduction, I entered the world of Beninese fanfares as a U.S. American musician trained in classical tuba performance. During my fieldwork I performed with numerous fanfares, an activity that afforded a unique vantage point for studying musical intricacies. My entrainment in performance methods and pedagogical techniques of Western art music meant that, in the context of Beninese fanfare performance, I was challenged to reckon with my own musical inclinations so that I could adapt to the performance style of my Beninese colleagues. This entailed a variety of musical negotiations, including a struggle to discern what Beninese musicians

considered acceptable pitch expression. My experience of learning (and unlearning) musical knowledge during fieldwork—an experience familiar to many ethnomusicologists (see Barz and Cooley 2008 [1997])—undoubtedly motivates the comparative impulse evident in my questioning. That is to say, in questioning Beninese musicians' expression and discrimination of pitch I am implicitly comparing it to my own. As Gerhard Kubik (1985: 46-8) and others have noted, this comparative impulse—to apply Western concepts or methods to non-Western music—underpins much ethnomusicological scholarship.

Embracing this methodological anxiety à la Devereux (1967), I would like to underline two points that support my choice to give attention to the musical category of pitch. The first concerns my implicit perpetuation of pitch and tuning as necessary topics for the analysis of African music. These terms have their roots in the Western art music tradition, a tradition that animated much of the early ethnomusicological literature in sub-Saharan Africa. Contemporary ethnomusicological thinking has come to view the earlier use of these terms as carrying with them a normative impulse to classify non-Western musics as unusual, odd, and, often, deficient. Such value judgments were so pervasive that they continued to haunt subsequent analyses that utilized bespoke systems of notation and transcription.[1] In invoking this literature, I am making a gamble of sorts: that rehashing the scholarly record, warts and all, ultimately allows me to thoughtfully critique it.

The second point is that to deny African music and musicians a discussion of pitch—or any other category common to Western musical discourse—reinforces

[1] See Agawu (2003: 64-8) for an overview of the notational systems used by James Koetting, Rose Brandel, David Rycroft, and others.

difference. In the study of African music, musicologists should employ Western tools to the extent that they are helpful, but not make normative statements that deny Africans equality. Kofi Agawu (2003) argues this point well in *Representing African Music*. Agawu claims that only by beginning with sameness—namely the use of the same vocabularies and analytical techniques—can musicologists gain a better appreciation of "true difference" rather than difference as a construct of neocolonialism (2003: 67-8). From Agawu's perspective, to avoid the concept of pitch in analyses of African music and instead fetishize a newfangled system would be to reinscribe Africans as fundamentally different. My deliberate use of pitch, then, supports his appeal for a premise of sameness. I use the concepts of pitch and tuning inherited from the Western system because they are useful signifiers intelligible to musicological audiences, and also because, in broadening the subject of their application to Beninese music, I aim to subvert their normativity and nuance their meanings.

The remainder of the chapter is structured in three sections. The first, "Approaches to pitch and tuning in African music," frames my study within two areas of musicological scholarship and demonstrates its contribution. The second, "Pitch and tuning in Beninese fanfares," explains my methodology, examines musical examples, and discusses the factors that influence pitch expression and tuning manipulation among amateur fanfare musicians. This section is subdivided around eight topics: (1) conceptions of and vocabularies for pitch; (2) pitch expression within scale systems; (3) pitch expression within different repertoires; (4) tuning manipulations and techniques; (5) the role of musical pedagogy, skill, and error; (6) material factors and conditions; (7) the interrelation of timbre and pitch; and (8) the oft-discussed "margin of tolerance."

Throughout I amplify my interlocutors' perceptions and modes of listening, and foreground their observations over mine. The third section offers my concluding thoughts.

Approaches to pitch and tuning in African music

My examination of pitch engages primarily with two bodies of musicological literature: classificatory work on non-Western musical systems and studies of indigenous African music and instruments. First, my study builds on a longstanding literature that describes musical systems of non-Western societies. Much of the early literature on non-Western tone systems, scales, modes, and so on aimed to classify and catalog musical elements, particularly in terms of geography and ethnic group.[2] Musicological scholarship in the early twentieth century was especially prone to colonialist categories, racial divisions, and evolutionist thinking. The work of Percival Kirby (1934, 1930, 1926) serves as an exemplar. More recent research, however, has moved beyond documentation and classification of musical systems and toward understanding how they relate to social, cultural, and material phenomena.[3] Michael Tenzer (2000) and Marc Perlman (1998), for example, have explored the socio-political dimensions at play within the manipulation of tuning in Balinese and Javanese gamelan, respectively. Laura Leante (2009) has drawn connections between musical pitch, interval, embodiment, and gesture in Hindustani classical music. My objective here connects with this latter body of tuning-related studies

[2] For an overview of this literature, see Albrecht Schneider's (2001) article on methods of tone measurement in ethnomusicology and Roger Vetter's (1989) retrospective on gamelan tone measurements.

[3] See Tenzer (2006) and Solis (2012) for arguments against the division of music theory and social theory and in support of music theory and analysis in the discipline of ethnomusicology.

in that I am most interested in how my interlocutors' production of particular pitches and tonal expressions relates to social, material, and contingent conditions.

Second, I situate my questioning within scholarship on tonality, pitch, and tuning in African music. This scholarship mostly includes Anglophone and Francophone studies from West and Central Africa and is scarce compared to work on rhythm in Africa.[4] On the whole, scholarship on pitch in African music emphasizes indigenous styles, scales, and instruments.[5] Gilbert Rouget's (1964, 1961) work on tonal languages and micro-tonality in Dahomey (now Benin) is exemplary of the analytical impulse toward the indigenous, as well as relevant for its geographical focus.[6] Hugh Tracey (1958), Laz Ekwueme (1980), and Gerhard Kubik's (1985) articles are representative of the scholarly focus on African scale systems. With regard to the tuning of instruments, particular attention is paid to chordophones (e.g., King 1972; Rycroft 1966; Wachsmann 1950), lamellophones (e.g., Kubik 1980; Berliner 1978; Tracey 1969), and idiophones (e.g., Cooke 1999, 1970; Wiggins and Kobom 1992; Aning 1989; Rouget 1969; Jones 1964; Kubik 1964b) over other organological categories.[7] Xylophones and mbiras stand out as favored subjects. In general, this foundational work in Africanist musicology gives little attention to imported musical elements or instruments. A critique of this scholarship, as forwarded by Agawu (2016a, 2003), is that by limiting the scope of their research subject to indigenous instruments and scales, scholars fail to account for the complexity of

[4] Key studies of African rhythm include Polak (2010), Agawu (2006), Anku (2000), Temperley (2000), Arom (1991 [1985]), Locke (1982), and Chernoff (1979) among many others.
[5] Gerhard Kubik's (1985) article "African Tone-Systems: A Reassessment" is a helpful introduction to this literature. See J. H. Kwabena Nketia's (1986) review of Western perspectives on African musicology for a critical overview.
[6] Cf. Agawu's (1988) upset of the assumed correlation between speech tones and musical tune in early Africanist ethnomusicology (e.g., Schneider 1961; Jones 1959).
[7] Notable exceptions include studies of vocal music (e.g., Ngumu 1975; Rycroft 1967; Euba 1967), flutes (e.g., Merriam 1957; Blacking 1955), and horns (e.g., Kaminski 2008).

contemporary African tonal expression. Agawu also argues that scholarly fixation with African rhythm and disinterest in tonality and pitch has precluded musicologists from critically thinking about Western tonal rule as a "colonizing force" (2016b).

In reaction to Agawu's provocation, and in contribution to that scholarship, this chapter offers several new perspectives on the study of pitch and tonal expression in contemporary African music. For one, I discuss the pitch and tuning of imported aerophones, thereby adding a complementary organological take to pitch- and tuning-related studies. I also expand scholarly focus on indigenous scale systems by attending to musical ensembles that also utilize so-called Western scale systems. In the Beninese context, brass instruments are used to play music in both indigenous tonalities (such as pentatonic or language-based tonalities) and imported (usually diatonic) ones. Furthermore, my choice to feature amateur musicians—those who have minimal training, play for recreation, and, importantly, make mistakes—challenges the idea that African music exists outside of the everyday realm of material disadvantage and human error. In particular, my examples of material contingency and sonic situated-ness contend with the implicit argument in earlier Africanist musicology that every sound in African music is intentional, and every rhythmic disparity or one-off micro-tone is an example of the magic of African difference (see Agawu 2016b for this argument). Beninese brass musicians, like musicians everywhere, have performance ideals that they may or may not reach, and inconsistencies in their performances have unintentional and often material causes.

Pitch and tuning in Beninese fanfares

This section illustrates the various factors that affect pitch expression in amateur brass instrument performance. I focus on the Bb trumpet and Bb tenor trombone, the two brass instruments most commonly played in Benin today. Other brass instruments in circulation include the C trumpet, Bb cornet, Bb baritone, and, more rarely, the Bb or Eb tuba. Brass instruments are not locally manufactured and their provenance varies. Instruments produced by high-end manufacturers like King, Conn, and Yamaha are expensive and uncommon. These instruments are usually acquired by churches or military bands, and then passed down institutional and family lineages or sold secondhand. Instruments produced by low quality Chinese manufacturers, like the knockoff brands Premier and Peak, are more common among amateur brass players. Chinese manufactured instruments are typically exported to Nigeria and then sold on the informal market; they arrive in Benin via Nigerian traders or enterprising Beninese who travel to nearby Lagos and return with contraband. Amateur brass players favor Chinese manufactured instruments because of their (comparatively) affordable price: during my fieldwork, a new trumpet sold for around 80,000 CFA (then approximately 123 USD) and a trombone for 100,000 CFA (154 USD). Many amateur players do not own their own instruments, however, and must borrow them from churches, schools, or fanfares.

My analytical process consists of both quantitative and qualitative methods. I analyzed audio recordings using methods of musical transcription and pitch measurement.[8] My qualitative methods consist of interviews, audio-visual elicitation, and

[8] I used computer-aided analysis—e.g., Transcribe, Audacity, and Sonic Visualiser—for pitch measurement. The complex tones of brass instruments, which are rich in harmonics, and the quality of audio files sometimes compromised these programs' ability to judge pitch centers with

listening. My examples are drawn from conversations, field recordings, and participatory musical experiences made during my extended fieldwork trip in 2015-2016. While only a few individuals and ensembles are featured in these examples, the selection is from a larger pool of recordings featuring more than fifteen fanfares and their members. I stress that these individuals and ensembles are representative of the heterogeneous fanfares in southern Benin only; fanfares in the central and northern regions of the country typically have more homogenous ethnic compositions and display different musical characteristics and influences. The remainder of this section presents my observations on eight topics.

The concept of pitch

How do amateur brass players talk about pitch? Maxime Agbahoungba, a trombonist and university student living in Cotonou, answered: "It's simple, we don't talk about it. We don't have a word for this thing you're describing." Local musical vocabularies do not include a term with the narrow denotation of a valuation of sonic frequency; there is no direct translation of the English term "pitch" in Fongbé, Gungbé, or other languages local to southern Benin. This is not to say that musicians do not talk about or attend to pitch—of course they do. Musicians everywhere are attentive to pitch and pitchy aspects of sound, regardless of whether this attention emerges in vocabulary or verbal discourse. I observed that, in lieu of a readily available indigenous term, brass musicians use French terms with broader connotations to refer to pitch, such as *le ton* (tone), *le son* (sound), *le note* (the note), or *l'èscale* (step, or scale degree).

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absolute certainty. Thus I preface my examples with a full acknowledgement of the subjectivity of pitch discrimination.

The most common pitch vocabulary used in southern Benin is tonic sol-fa. Sol-fa is a Western derived pitch naming system imported to Benin in the colonial era, where *do* indicates the first and lowest note of a seven-note diatonic major scale (*do re mi fa sol la ti*). In Benin, most brass players learn sol-fa notation and mnemonic syllables, as well as how to play brass instruments, within a church musical environment. Church-educated brass musicians use fixed *do*, meaning *do* always refers to the pitch C irrespective of the key of a particular piece of music. In the context of fanfare performance, however, brass musicians often use moveable *do*, meaning *do* refers to the tonic in the respective key. Brass players distinguish between *do clavier* ("*do* on the piano," referring to C) and *do chez nous* ("*do* for brass players," referring to Bb, the nominal pitch of most brass instruments).[9] Brass ensembles throughout Benin prefer to play in the key of Bb or closely related keys (usually G minor, Eb major, or F major), and many amateur fanfares perform exclusively in Bb diatonic and anhemitonic pentatonic major. Working within a moveable tonic sol-fa system makes it easier to name recurring pitches in Bb tonality.

Beninese brass musicians also have an expansive aesthetic vocabulary to describe and evaluate pitch. During audio and video-elicitation interviews, I asked musicians to evaluate various fanfare performances and to point out when they heard mistakes or incorrect notes. When identifying an error, musicians often remarked on the "goodness" of a pitch, saying, "it's not good" (*c'est pas bon*) but not offering a detailed critique. Another frequent comment was that a certain pitch was not "within" the correct pitch space—"it's not within the note" (*c'est pas dedans le ton*). Generally, musicians would classify pitches as "not good" or "not within" only if they were a semi-tone or more away

[9] The nominal pitch is defined by the harmonic series sounded when a brass instrument has no valves depressed or slide extended.

from the intended pitch. Only sometimes would musicians remark on the relative frequency of a pitch, describing it as "too low" (*trop bas*) or "too high" (*trop haut*). Such aesthetic and spatial metaphors are complemented by moral descriptors such as "dishonest" (*malhonnête*) or "not fair" (*pas juste*) and, less frequently, aural assessments such as "in tune" (*bien accordé*) or "out of tune" (*désaccordé*). Such expressions attest to brass musicians' keen awareness of, and aesthetic orientation to, pitch; even the most novice musicians have developed ideas about the quality of sound they want to produce. This point will be emphasized further in my ensuing discussion of local methods of pitch measurement and instrument tuning.

Pitch expression within scale systems

I turn next to the topics of scale systems and pitch content. In contrast to Beninese indigenous instruments (which are often limited to certain performance styles for reasons of ritual, religion, or other custom), brass instruments are used in a range of musical ensembles, such as fanfares, choirs, jazz bands, and traditional orchestras. These varied performance contexts occasion the use of diverse scalar resources, including pentatonic, diatonic, chromatic, and hexatonic. By far the two most popular scales among fanfares are Bb diatonic major and Bb anhemitonic pentatonic major. The overlap in pitch content between these two scales is convenient for amateur brass players, many of whom learn only the pitches of the Bb diatonic scale before performing in fanfares. Moreover, most musicians play Bb instruments, which means they can play notes of the Bb natural harmonic series without pressing valves or moving slides. This is efficacious for performances and invites participation by less skilled musicians.

To assess whether individuals alter pitch according to its position in a scale system, I asked trumpeters and trombonists to perform melodies of different scale systems in different keys. I chose two common melodies from the fanfare repertoire. The first is a diatonic melody from a hymn popular in the Celestial Church called "*Toyiyi to yise me*" (which Celestin Comlanvi translated as "Walk with faith"). The second is a pentatonic melody from a well-known song commonly associated with the Egungun (ancestral spirits) and Nago (an ethnonym for the Yorùbá) called "*Émi èni sodjè mon ba djèdé*." I recorded individual musicians playing each melody in the keys of Bb, C, F, and Eb. I then compared pitches across each individual's performances to discern whether there was more consistency in their production of specific pitches or of scale degrees. My thinking was that if a musician plays the pitch C3, for example, with a consistent fundamental frequency across their performances, this might imply that the musician conceives an ideal pitch that is independent of a tonality or scale system. On the other hand, if the pitch C3 is not consistent, this might suggest that the musician adjusts the approximate frequency of a pitch according to its relative position in a scale system. A related question was whether musicians adjust pitches to maintain scalar relations—as in, the standard frequency distance between scale degrees—as dictated by certain tonal systems. I address these questions below with reference to trombonist Celestin Comlanvi, whose performances serve as representative examples.

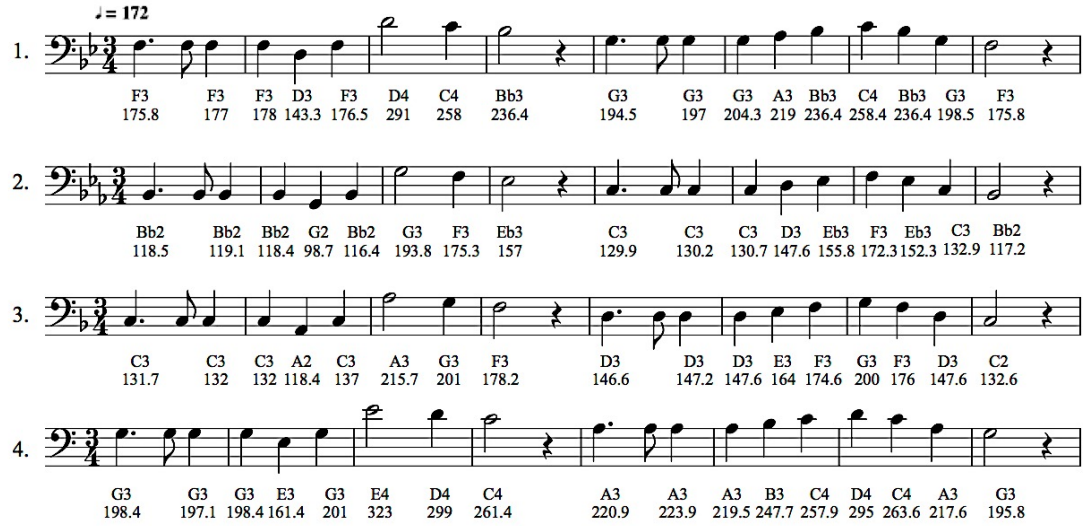
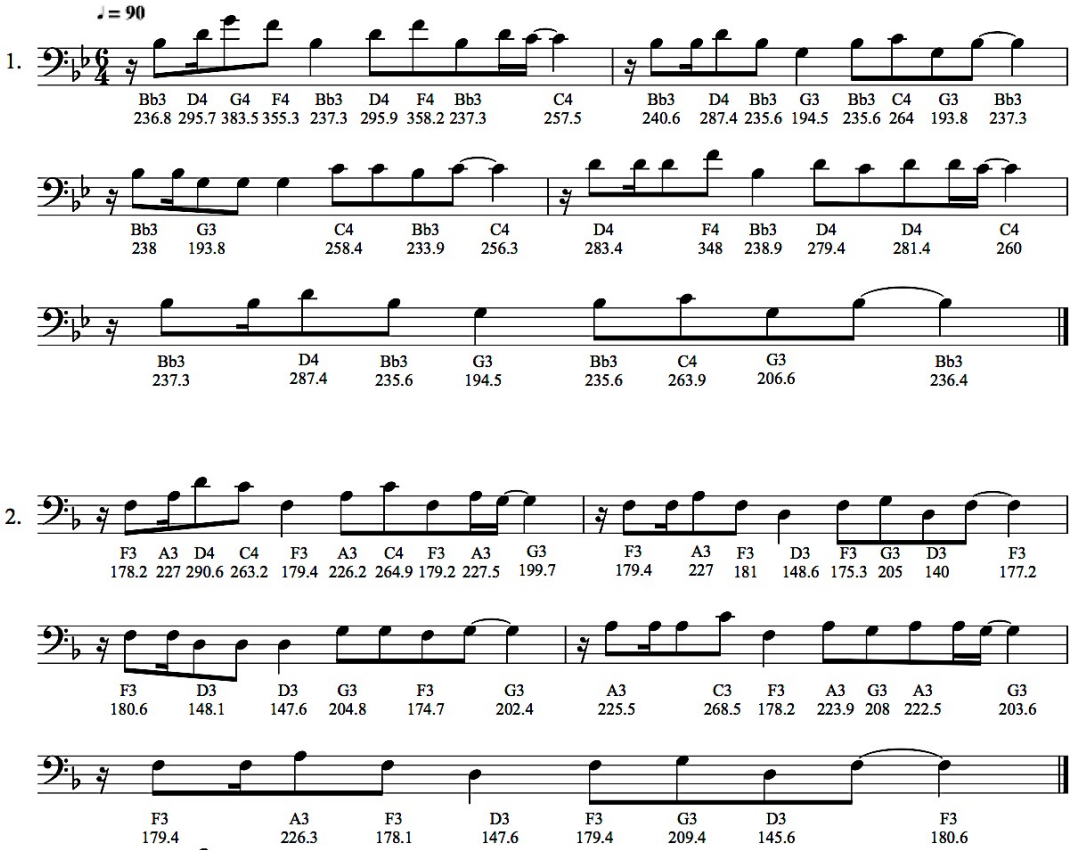


Figure 3.1: Transcription of the opening phrase of the "Toyiyi" melody in (1) Bb diatonic major, (2) Eb diatonic major, (3) F diatonic major, and (4) C diatonic major with pitch levels in Hz. Performed by Celestin Comlanvi on trombone. Recorded on 2 March 2016.



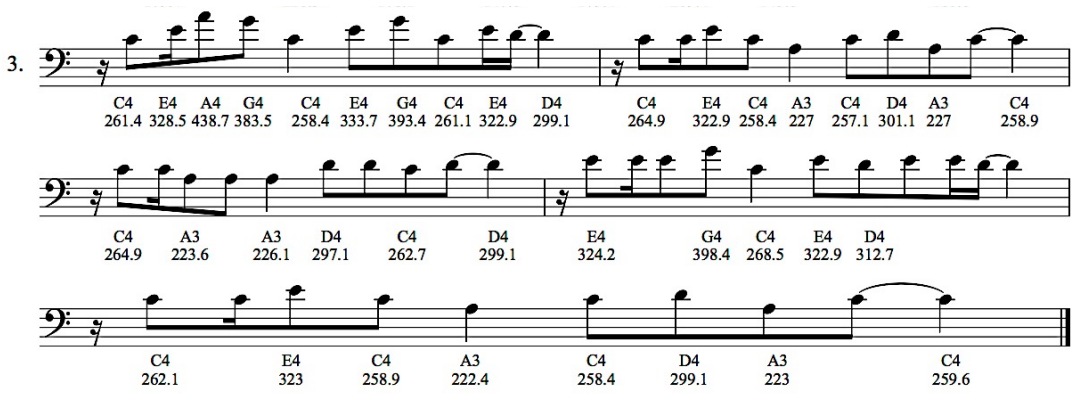


Figure 3.2: Transcription of the opening phrase of the "Émi èni sodjè" melody in (1) Bb pentatonic major, (2) F pentatonic major, and (3) C pentatonic major with pitch levels in Hz. Performed by Celestin Comlanvi on trombone. Recorded on 2 March 2016.

In Celestin's performances of these two melodies, there are several observable pitch characteristics that give weight to the idea that he adjusts pitch according to its relative position in a scale system. For one, it seems that Celestin lowers the pitch of the third scale degree in diatonic major. In the Bb diatonic major rendition of the "Toyiyi" melody, we see that the fundamental frequency of D3, the third scale degree, is approximately 143 Hz (Figure 3.1, Number 1). This is lower than the frequency ideal propelled by the Western dominant equal temperament system (around 146Hz). Yet when D3 reappears as the seventh scale degree of Eb diatonic major (Figure 3.1, Number 2) and the sixth scale degree of F diatonic major (Figure 3.1, Number 3) its frequency is approximately 147.6 Hz. The pitch D3 is also consistently around 147-148 Hz across Celestin's performances of "Émi èni sodjè" (Figure 3.2). The pitch D4, meanwhile, is expressed within a wide frequency range when it appears as the third scale degree of the Bb pentatonic major scale (Figure 3.2, Number 1), and at a relatively lower frequency of 291 Hz in the context of Bb diatonic major (Figure 3.1, Number 1). These measurements could imply that Celestin is implementing the Western tonal practice of slightly lowering

the third scale degree in diatonic scales. This tonal orientation could also explain the lower frequency of the third scale degree A3 in the F major rendition of "Toyiyi" (215.7 Hz in Figure 3.1, Number 3), since A3 appears with a frequency range of 217.6 to 223.9 Hz in the C diatonic major version of "Toyiyi" (Figure 3.1, Number 4) and even as high as 227 Hz in the C pentatonic major rendition of "Émi èni sodjè" (Figure 3.2, Number 3).

With this said, there was generally more consistency in Celestin's production of specific pitches and not in the performance of scale degrees. For example, in the Bb version of "Toyiyi" the pitch F3 sounds between 175.8 and 178 Hz (Figure 3.1, Number 1). Since Celestin is playing in the key of Bb major, it is possible that he was expressing F3 as a perfect fifth in just intonation, which would sound slightly higher than the Western equal temperament tuning of 174.6 Hz. Yet in Celestin's performances of "Toyiyi" and "Émi èni sodjè" in other keys, where the pitch F3 serves a different scalar position, the pitch had approximately the same frequency range. Other pitches seemed to be consistently inconsistent. For example, the pitch A3 had a similar frequency range within different keys: its frequency range is between 222.3 and 227 Hz when it serves a third scale degree position in the key of F pentatonic major (Figure 3.2, Number 2), and similarly its range is 222.4-227 Hz when it serves the sixth scale degree position in C pentatonic major (Figure 3.2, Number 3).

On the whole, the pitches Bb3, C3, and F3 had the smallest deviation in fundamental frequency and were similarly expressed across key areas. It is notable that Bb3 and F3 both occur in the Bb trombone's natural harmonic series and are played in the first slide position. Several Beninese trombone players told me that the first slide position is the easiest position because the slide is fully pushed in, thus there is no room

for error. These pitches are additionally familiar to fanfare musicians because they are common denominators of the favored Bb diatonic and pentatonic major scales. The pitch C3, however, which is played in the relatively more challenging sixth slide position, was also consistently expressed in Celestin's performance. Perhaps it is the case that Celestin hears, and thus expresses, pitches in the lower register of his instrument in a more consistent manner than higher ones.

These observations indicate that Celestin does not manipulate pitch to accommodate concepts of scale systems. This was also the case in the performances of other musicians who participated in this exercise. Altogether, brass players expressed different pitches within varying frequency ranges that seemed independent of the respective melody's key or scale. Some pitches were more consistent than others (e.g., Bb3, F3, and C3 in Celestin's performance) yet these, too, varied between players. In all, players' pitch expression did not appear to be motivated by the pitch ideals of a particular tuning system (e.g., equal temperament) or tonal system (e.g., diatonicism). Impelled by this ambiguity, I consider next whether brass musicians alter pitch according to performance context or musical repertoire.

Pitch expression within repertoires

My interlocutors tell me that they vary pitch depending on the pitch resources and creative opportunities afforded by different repertoires. Fanfare musicians commonly distinguish between three generic categories—the traditional, religious, and popular—although there are songs that bridge these categorical divides. The traditional repertoire, generally speaking, draws from a pentatonic tonal palate and local rhythms, many of

which are associated with Vodun. Traditional songs often utilize the anhemitonic pentatonic scale, open intervals of fourths and fifths, call and response forms, repetition, and vamping. The religious music performed by fanfares originates in Protestant hymnody. Hymns typically utilize the diatonic system, elements of functional harmony like I-IV-V chord progressions, plagal and perfect cadences, and intervals in thirds. The popular repertoire typically uses an expanded pentatonic scale and elements of diatonicism, as well as a breadth of instrumental, harmonic, and rhythmic elements from outside of Benin. An example is the *tradi-moderne* style: the "traditional-modern" was born in the post-independence era, when traditional heritage was elevated for the advancement of a pan-ethnic national culture, and became "modernized" during the economic liberalization of the 1990s in urban Benin. The *tradi-moderne* is characterized by its combination of local rhythms with imported tonal and harmonic elements and musical instruments—in particular, the drum set, electric guitars, and brass instruments.

The trumpet player David Akande has performance experience across these repertoires: he is the bandleader of Fanfare St. Joseph in Cotonou, principle trumpet player for the *tradi-moderne* ensemble La Groupe Gankéké, music director of his Evangelical church choir, and a frequent performer for Vodun rituals. Given his musical proficiency, David is well situated to speak to the implications of repertoire for pitch expression. David told me that the creative use of pitch and timbre—including pitch bending, lip or piston trills, vibrato, growl sounds, and so on—is often reserved for pieces in the traditional repertoire. Protestant hymns, in contrast, rarely include such techniques. When performing hymns in church, he said, musicians are expected to play "carefully"

and "seriously," and to lower their overall volume. It is less acceptable to play creatively with pitch, as one must "be inside of" the sound of the keyboard.

Within the realm of folklore and the traditional, however, brass players can exercise more expressive techniques. David boasted, "I can do anything I want in the domain of folklore." Indeed, in the fanfare community, David is known for using extended performance techniques and taking melodic and tonal liberties in his improvisations and solos. David's solo during a performance by Fanfare St. Joseph at *MusiCaravane: Le Festival des Fanfares* in Porto Novo on 23 February 2016 is a good example. David prefaced the fanfare's performance of "Émi èni sodjè" with a solo replete with improvisatory pitch and timbral expressions.[10] David's solo showcases the additive melodic features and timbral embellishments that brass players use when playing traditional melodies. These include techniques like trills, bends, vibrato, calls, and other "interjectory particles" that are meant to heighten expression and call attention (Agawu 2016a: 234).[11] Signals and calls usually take the form of a falling or rising glissando (reminiscent of the sound of an animal horn or a shout) or a series of loud, rapid notes in quick succession (reminiscent of a town crier playing staccato strikes on a bell prior to making an announcement). These call features are especially useful in performance spaces like outdoor funeral receptions, where the meeting of DJs, fanfares, and roaming percussion groups create competition for sonic space and brass players must demand audience attention.

David told me that extended pitch techniques are also an attempt to emulate the melodic characteristics of Beninese traditional songs and vocalizations. For example,

[10] A recording of this performance is available online at https://youtu.be/3sg-RLEdmts.
[11] See Agawu (2016a), particularly Chapters Three and Five, for a discussion of pitch resources and expressive techniques in African melodies.

many traditional songs and lyrical slogans end with a vocable like "waaaa" that descends in pitch. David said he emulates this vocal technique by lowering or bending the pitch of elongated notes and playing descending glissandos at the ends of phrases.[12] This metaphorical fall is echoed in visual registers, too: upon arriving at the end of a song, brass players will often drop their instruments in choreographed fashion, and dancers will close a sequence with a decelerated kick or swing of the leg that throws the upper body away from the performance space, as if they are quite literally falling out of the song.[13] David's reflection confirms he is well versed in the musical characteristics of both traditional and religious repertoires, and emphasizes one or the other with intentional pitch expressions.

Two other brass musicians living in Cotonou, brothers Ange and Abraham Soussou, described the religious and traditional repertoires as having different "tonalities" and "sounds." Like David, Ange and Abraham suggested that religious repertoires require sonic and expressive restraint while traditional ones permit relative freedoms:

> Ange: There is one sound that we play in the fanfare, in the funerals, in the ceremonies like that, and one sound that we play in orchestras, or at church. That is to say that, to play properly at church, the sound is a little…
> Abraham: It's muted!
> Ange: It is muted. That is to say, the tonality… we vary the tonality. Every song has its own tonality at church. Same thing in the orchestras. Every song has its own tonality…. But, on the side of fanfare, when we go to play in the ceremonies and for the marriages and all that, we have only one tonality.
> Abraham: Uh… two tonalities.
> Ange: Two tonalities. The key of *sol* and the key of *do*. But the key that is used most often is the key of *do*. It is a key that is a little strong. Because fanfare is a party and the sound of *do* is louder.
> Me: What do you mean by muted?

[12] Compare to Kaminski's (2008) study of "surrogate speech" among Asante Ivory trumpeters.
[13] One can view this dance movement in Fanfare St. Joseph's online videos. See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA5Nlp0dUyE and https://youtu.be/oDYEdU2v3-s.

Ange: That is to say, not too high. Not too much. We put a mute inside so that the sound does not cover the room. So that it is not too loud. We don't want people to have a heart attack, eh!
Me: [Laughs] And why is the key of *do* louder?
Ange: The key of *do* wants to leave the hand.
Abraham: It is the first key…. The key of *do* is the loudest. It is louder than the other keys. We fanfare players (*fanfaristes*) play that key so that, even if [the audience] is far away, they can hear the sound we are playing.

Ange and Abraham's comments remind of fanfare musicians' dependency on the keys of Bb (here, the implied *do chez nous*) and F (*sol chez nous*). While fanfares composed of amateur musicians often stick close to the familiar key of Bb, church choirs and gospel orchestras—whose repertoires depart from traditional pentatonicism—demand flexibility in other keys (here, "tonalities"). Moreover, Ange and Abraham indicate that they adjust volume and tone quality depending on their performance context. The manner of playing brass instruments in church is characterized as "proper" and "muted," and that of playing in fanfare as "louder" and "like a party." While there is much more to say about the sonic features of fanfare's repertoires, these examples illustrate the simpler point that brass instrumentalists alter their pitch expression, and sound more generally, depending on the musical repertoire and performance context.

Tuning manipulations and techniques

Do Beninese brass musicians manipulate the tuning of their instruments and, if so, how and to what tuning system? I consider first the tuning practices of individuals and second those of ensembles. Most brass players do not tune their instruments. One reason for this is that instruments are often in states of disrepair, and dented and rusted slides are immovable. A second is that some musicians believe their instruments to be automatically in tune. One musician told me that the trumpet is like the keyboard: when

you press the valves the right note comes out. Another, Prosper Odjo, confirmed that many trumpet players keep their tuning slides "closed," meaning pushed in to its shortest position, because they assume that this is the instrument's "proper" state. Other musicians told me that they do not tune their instruments because they do not know how, and others still did not understand the concept of tuning.

Musicians who do manipulate their instrument's tuning usually do so by adjusting the length of their instrument's main slide. Not all brass players I spoke to, however, were aware of the sonic relation between the length of a brass instrument's tube and its pitch. Celestin, for example, told me that he only tunes his trombone when he plays with other people. He explained that he positions his tuning slide to match the length of the tuning slides of the other trombones; like that, he will be in tune with the ensemble. Yet he said is unsure of how shortening or elongating the tuning slide affects pitch. In situations of uncertainty, he said he elongates his tuning slide or will "search for the note" by moving his main slide—a practice familiar to trombone players worldwide. David, meanwhile, tunes his trumpet by adjusting the tuning slide. He said that some trumpet players also move their third valve slide, but in his opinion "that does nothing." Most trumpet and trombone players I observed keep their main tuning slide fully compressed as a default position. None of the musicians I interviewed mentioned additional strategies to adjust the tuning of their instruments, such as using alternative valve combinations or slide positions, yet some trumpet players said that they elongate their main tuning slide to transpose the nominal pitch of their instrument (a technique I elaborate on below).

Acting as a musical participant allowed me to observe the tuning practices of ensembles firsthand. Here I describe the practices of two ensembles active in Cotonou:

Fanfare St. Joseph and Voix des Anges Brass. Fanfare St. Joseph, like many other amateur fanfares I worked with, did not regularly tune their ensemble. There was neither an intentional effort to tune instruments according to Western systems of tuning such as equal temperament, nor was there an effort to reproduce pitches in a uniform way. Generally, pitch agreement was not of great concern to the musicians, and critical or corrective comments during our rehearsals focused on musical categories such as rhythm, dynamics, or style. Yet tuning practices did surface on some occasions. For example, in the run-up to our performance at MusiCaravane, David invited a retired military band member, Monsieur Crépin, to act as Fanfare St. Joseph's "musical director." In this role, Monsieur Crépin assisted David, the bandleader, and coached our rehearsals. Monsieur Crépin began each rehearsal by instructing the brass players to tune to a Bb. Monsieur Crépin would then walk among us, inspecting each instrument to ensure that our tuning slides were positioned in the same place. Ironically, he took an ocular centric approach to a usually sonic practice.

When I asked David about tuning practices in Fanfare St. Joseph, he laughed. His fanfare is full of "disorder," he lamented, and does not know how to tune properly. Other fanfares are also disorderly, he said. They do not tune often and, when they do, they appoint an individual to be the pitch regulator in lieu of an objective pitch measurement device:

> Me: How do brass musicians (*les ventistes*) tune their instruments?
> David: In fact, there are tuners. But in fanfare, *if* people tune their instruments… you come with your instrument and all the instruments tune to one single instrument, and that's okay (*ça va*). After all, there are not many tuners. Me, I have my own tuner. I have my recorder and it is at home. Apart from that, I have a tuner on my cell phone, just to tune when I am taking a break at the studio. . . . But in fanfare, there are trumpets of occasion (*les instruments d'occasion*), secondhand trumpets that don't work too well, that aren't too…things like that. So, everywhere,

> [musicians] know to tune to someone who is a bit…a bit better, like. They choose a trumpet…a person who is more…who hears…who has a good sound. And they say, good, everyone will tune to you, and if that works, we will tune to you.
>
> Me: So it's not necessarily the leader of the fanfare [to whom the group tunes]?
>
> David: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.
>
> Me: Ok. But it is the person who is the best [player]?
>
> David: Yes, yes, yes. And one tunes, and something that is pleasing to the ears, even a little pleasing to the ears, is already fine (*ça va déjà*), and the rest does not matter (*ils s'en foutent du reste*). The rest does not matter, because there is not a lot of precision, but…we know how to work with it.

Here, David illustrates the flexible practice of tuning in a typical fanfare: tuning is optional and, when done, not necessarily systematic. Pitch measurement technologies are often unavailable and secondhand instruments are unreliable pitch regulators. In the face of these obstacles, fanfares that want to regulate pitch between members consult the musician deemed most talented—i.e., the musician with the best sound. This behavior suggests that some musicians conflate good timbre with good pitch. Also notable is David's emphasis on tuning as an arbitrary musical act; not only is the method of tuning flexible, but so is the ideal pitch to which musicians tune. As he said, if a pitch "is even a little pleasing" then it suffices. I will argue later that this sonic flexibility is indicative of a wide margin of pitch tolerance observed across African music cultures, and is propagated in Beninese fanfare by material and pedagogical factors.

Voix des Anges Brass was more attentive to tuning. Composed of nine university students in their mid-twenties from different ethnic groups and regions of the country, Voix des Anges Brass is alternately a fanfare and brass band. The members of Voix des Anges Brass aspire to be famous and thus conduct their rehearsals with an air of professionalism. They always begin their rehearsals with a performance of a hymn and a prayer, followed by a tuning exercise. The latter entails sustaining pitches of the Bb major triad: the lead trumpet player plays the tonic and others stack subsequent chord

notes on top in ascending order. The musicians sustain these notes until there is unspoken consensus that the chord is in tune. During this group tuning exercise, individuals occasionally pass around an electronic tuner on a mobile phone application to tune individually, but the poor quality of phones and microphones mean this is done with little accuracy. During my fieldwork, for example, the bandleader's Nokia smart phone was old and malfunctioning; rather than show a stable reading, its tuner application spewed out a flurry of seemingly random hertz values. The musicians passed it around nonetheless.

Voix des Anges Brass' attentiveness to tuning is exceptional for amateur ensembles. For one, they are unique among the fifteen plus fanfares I observed in using an electronic tuner to regulate pitch between members—a fact that showcases the influence of new technologies on musical practices in Benin, particularly amongst youth. It is no coincidence that Voix des Anges Brass is composed of tech-savvy university students who have greater dexterity with smart phones and online resources than do the typically middle-aged members of groups like Fanfare St. Joseph. Second, Voix des Anges Brass' structured tuning procedure reflects the tonic-centered pitch hierarchy of Western diatonicism entrained in church music making.[14] My time as a participant in a Celestial Church ensemble in Sainte Rita, Cotonou supports this observation. At the St. Rita parish, the keyboard in tempered tuning was the pitch regulator.[15] Brass instrumentalists, guitarists, vocalists, and percussionists alike were directed to tune to the pitch C4 on a Casio keyboard. Yet the overindulgent overtones of the Casio in organ

[14] The practice of tuning instruments to a diatonic major scale can be traced to musical education in colonial mission churches (see Stevens and Akrofi 2004).
[15] Compare with Agawu (2016a: 207), who reminds us that the keyboard is not a pitch regulator for the majority of music making in Africa.

setting meant that the fundamental frequency was difficult to discern and the musicians tuned with varying success. Like the St. Rita ensemble, Voix des Anges Brass endeavored to regulate pitch through an objective measure but were frustrated by technological malfunction.

Brass players sometimes manipulate the nominal pitch of their instruments to aid in transposition. Trumpet player Isaac Zohoun told me that trumpeters who have not mastered keys other than Bb will "tune" their instruments to A by extending the main tuning slide to its greatest length, thereby lowering the instrument's nominal pitch by a semi-tone. Isaac demonstrated this technique for me, and I recorded him playing both before and after the alteration. In my measurement, the pitch A4 differed by approximately 30 cents between the two instrument tunings. During my time with the St. Rita ensemble, I observed keyboardists use analogous technical short cuts to transpose to a different key. This was especially popular among novice keyboardists who would familiarize themselves with the black keys of the keyboard (the pitches of a Gb pentatonic scale), and then transpose the instrument whenever they required a pentatonic scale in a different key. It is possible that trumpet players adopted the idea of extending their tuning slide for transposition from keyboardists.

The examples above suggest that tuning practices among individuals and amateur ensembles are not standardized. For the most part, amateur fanfares do not practice tuning. In the event that they do, musicians will tune their instruments relative to one another—be it aurally or visually. On the rare occasion that musicians tune according to an objective pitch regulator, they do so with reference to technologies such as electronic tuners and keyboards. My point here is that tuning practices fluctuate both within and

between fanfares, and are dependent upon pedagogical knowledge (e.g., Monsieur Crépin's military band training) and available resources (e.g., keyboards and functioning smart phones). Moreover, I note that idiosyncratic tuning practices, while intentional, are not intentional reifications of either a Western or indigenous tonality. Although instruments and pedagogies biased toward Western tuning systems abound—the equal tempered keyboard, the electronic tuner, the major triad, and so on—musicians make use of these elements due to their presence in the local tonal tapestry rather than in service to diatonicism's "tonal regime." Similarly, alternative methods of tuning (or even the absence of tuning) do not indicate an intention to "retune" brass instruments according to a pitch ideal indexical of precolonial music making. My interlocutors tuned their instruments in the interest of pitch agreement within an ensemble or to facilitate their performance within a particular key—both pragmatic motivations. None of my interlocutors cited the pitch ideals of particular tuning systems as a reason for why they do or do not tune their instruments.

Pedagogy, skill, and error

The above examples of intentional pitch and tuning manipulation notwithstanding, many brass musicians feel they lack the knowledge and ability to control their pitch expression. Maxime, for example, was adamant that a lack of access to music education impedes his ability to express the correct pitch. In one conversation, he lamented the dearth of institutionalized music education in Benin and that he had not received "proper" training in brass instrument pedagogy. Like many Beninese brass players, Maxime learned to play his instrument within the Celestial Church. His parish loaned him an old, corroded

trombone and he received infrequent lessons from elder members of the church ensemble. Yet Maxime said that church-based pedagogy is not always reliable because teachers sometimes choose not to pass on musical knowledge for fear of their student surpassing them in skill level. For this reason, Maxime said young brass players must search and "juggle" (*jongler*) for educational resources. This juggling takes many forms. Musicians download online videos of master classes given by Western professionals (many of which are in languages Beninese musicians do not understand), and trade the digital files among friends using Bluetooth or USB sticks. Those without online access or smart phones exchange outdated music books and handwritten pedagogical documents. Since photocopying is expensive, musicians often transcribe pedagogical information and diagrams from these documents into personal notebooks (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). In addition to these material exchanges, young musicians also organize informal practice sessions amongst themselves to exchange knowledge and tips.

The ways that pedagogical information circulates in Benin—through decomposing paper notebooks, virus-riddled electronic media, or individuals with agendas—means that musical knowledge is uneven. As a result, musicians have different understandings of the way that brass instruments work, which in turn creates discrepancies in performance practice. Maxime proffered an example: he opened his diligently compiled notebook and pointed to his hand drawn diagram of a trombone (Figure 3.3). Tracing his sketch of a trombone slide with his fingertip, he said that he took great care to measure the distance in centimeters of each slide position, however, not every trombone player knows about the importance of these measurements. Maxime explained that many trombonists play *mi chez nous* (the pitch D3) incorrectly because

they do not know the precise third slide position. The correct slide position, he said, is located just past the instrument's bell. Yet many trombonists assume that it aligns exactly with the bell and, as consequence, play this pitch "too high." He emphasized that such variation in pitch expression is because of a lack of proper musical training in Benin.

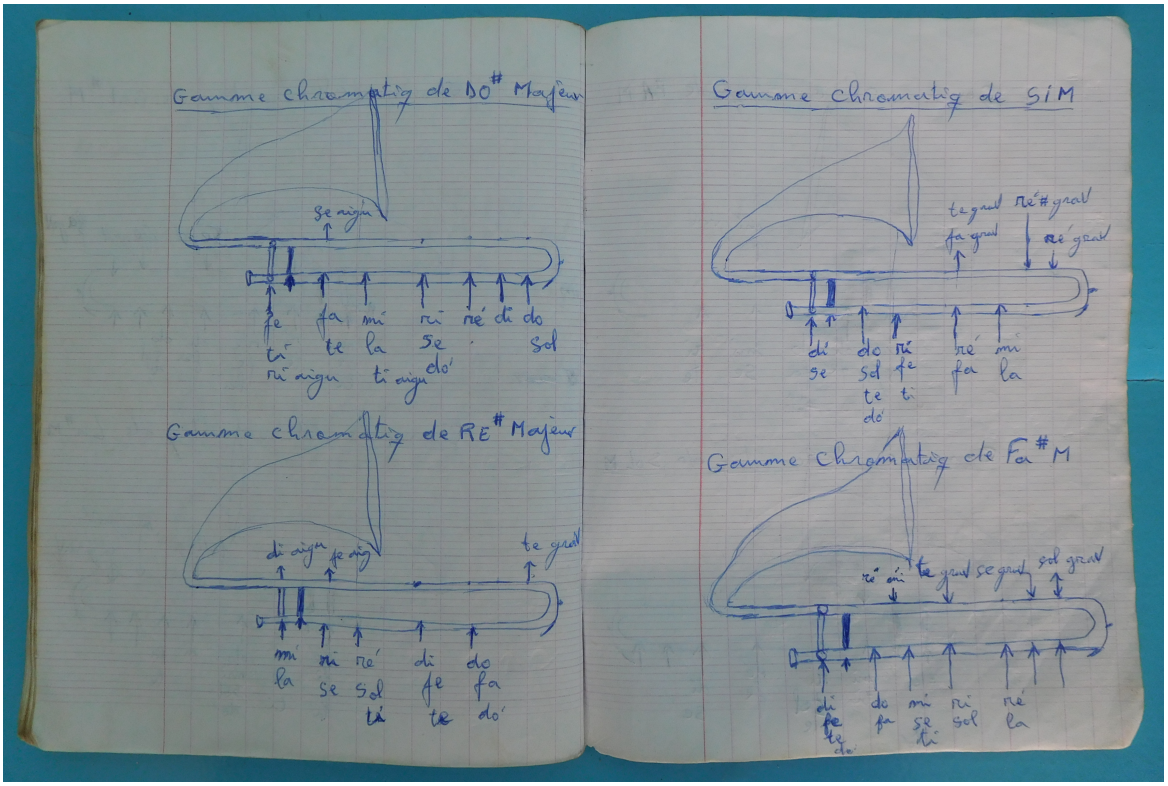


Figure 3.3: Maxime Agbahoungba's diagram of trombone slide positions.
Cotonou, 29 February 2016.

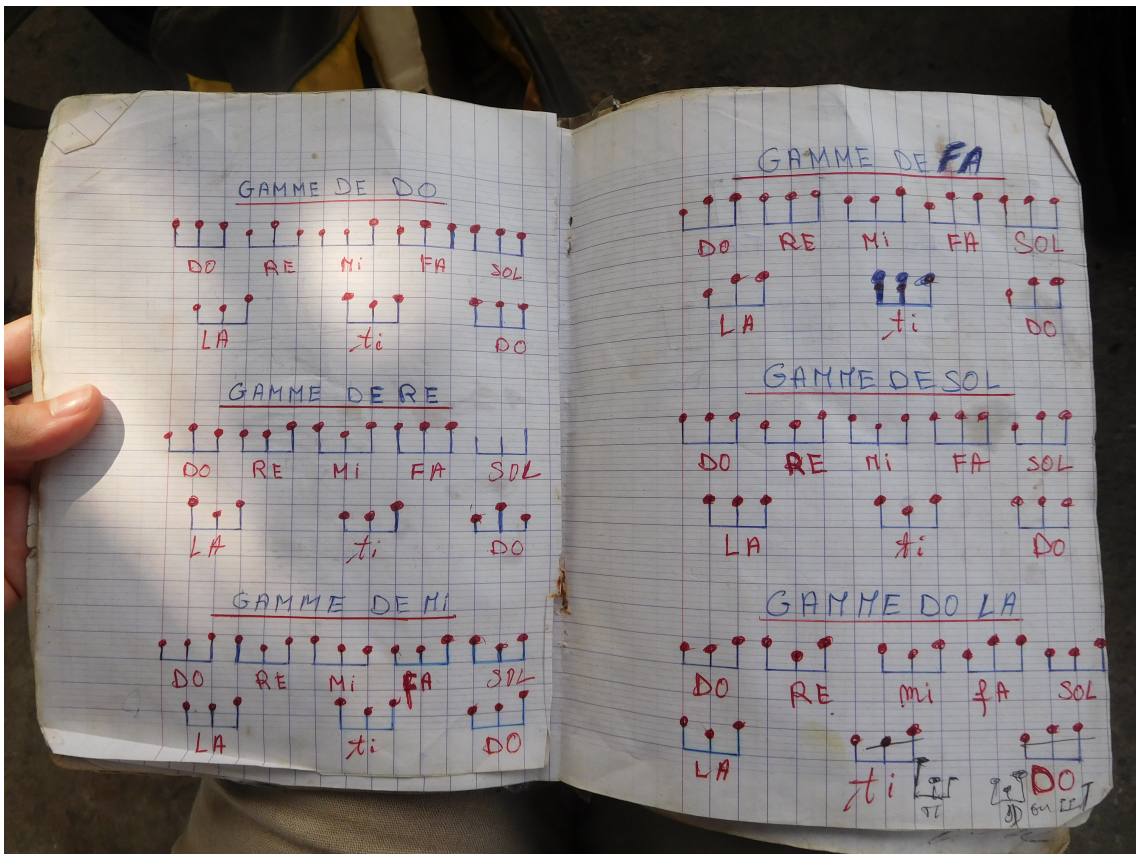


Figure 3.4: Isaac Zohoun's illustration of trumpet valve combinations.
Cotonou, 18 February 2016.

It is perhaps obvious that consistency and flexibility in pitch production is correlated with instrument pedagogy, individual skill level, and variations in performance practice. Yet the longstanding focus on professional and master musicians in Africanist musicological discourse has meant that issues of lack of training, musical skill, and errors are often overlooked. Agawu, for one, highlights the importance of attending to musical errors: "Errors made during rehearsal or performance . . . and the ways in which they are immediately corrected constitute rich sites for the study of aesthetic norms, conventions of grammar and syntax, and constraints on performance" (2003: 108). Agawu suggests that attending to mistakes and errors works to demystify African music by

acknowledging not every sound produced is intentional and, as an analytic, affords a more realistic image of music making.

In the case of Beninese amateur brass performance, listening to what musicians think is difficult, and what errors they make, points to constraints on musical knowledge and instrument pedagogy, as well as relative familiarity with competing tonal systems. The most frequent comment musicians made was that they felt unfamiliar with keys other than Bb diatonic major. As noted earlier, Bb is often the first, and sometimes only, key that brass players learn, and most brass instrument pedagogy is built around the repetition of pitches in Bb major. Additionally, musicians expressed a general discomfort with pitches outside of the anhemitonic pentatonic scale, and especially chromatic notes outside of the diatonic major scale. On many occasions I observed brass players make errors when trying to sing or play these chromatic pitches. The flattened seventh degree of the diatonic scale is particularly bedeviling.

A performance I observed at a Harvest Festival at the Celestial Church parish in Akossombo, Cotonou offers a vivid illustration.[16] Before the event began, around twenty brass instrumentalists gathered near the driveway entrance of the church, and proceeded to play songs in an improvisatory fashion and solicit monetary donations from attendees as they arrived. Although all musicians were dressed in the customary white robes of the Celestial Church, they were from different parishes and, thus, unaccustomed to playing with one another and not necessarily familiar with the same repertoires. The group performed popular hymns with ease yet confusion and dissonance arose when a trumpet player introduced a lesser-known song in Bb major with a flattened seventh scale degree (Ab). When the other musicians joined in the song's call and response pattern there was a

[16] This performance can be viewed online at https://youtu.be/-1mgvM9G2qc.

noticeable crunch of flattened and major sevenths—not everyone had heard the Ab. The lead trumpet player used the next percussion break as a pedagogic opportunity: he repeated the call at a lesser volume, adding emphasis to the flattened seventh as a reminder and corrective. His reminder went unheeded, however, and when the call and response resumed the other players forged ahead with a major seventh (A).

After the festival, I sat down with Isaac, a participant in the performance, to watch my audio-visual recordings. During the song in question, Isaac is seen in the bottom left corner of the screen, playing a major seventh in second valve position but seeming unsure (0'25"-0'35"). Without my prompting him, Isaac identified his performance of a major seventh as an error, explaining that he is not accustomed (*bien habitué*) to playing a flattened seventh degree and did not know the corresponding trumpet valve position. He said that the error was repeated so many times in this performance because the other brass musicians present did not hear a difference between the two sevenths. Indeed, some brass musicians I know consider both the major and flattened seventh scale degree as permissible expressions of the sol-fa pitch *ti*. That said, most musicians, Isaac included, do hear a difference between a major and flattened seventh, and would identify the example given here as an error.

Speaking about a highlife song performed by the Ghanaian Peace Brass Band, Agawu remarks on the same phenomenon: a seemingly infelicitous flattened seventh scale degree.[17] Agawu interprets the flattened seventh as evidence of brass musicians attempting to perform harmonic parallelism (a feature of African pentatonicism) within a Western harmonic language that forbids certain parallels (of seconds, fourths, and fifths). Drawing an analogy to the errors made when speaking a foreign language, Agawu claims

[17] Track 2 on the CD, Frozen Brass: Africa and Latin America (Spoorman 1993).

that the Peace Brass Band musicians are caught between "opposing impulses" in different musical languages (2016b: 341). In a way, Isaac's performance with the Celestial fanfare supports this idea. Although compelled by both the lead trumpet player and a local musical impulse toward parallelism to play a flattened seventh, Isaac and his fellow performers could not release themselves from the pull of the diatonic major scale entrained in church-based music education. That said, one might question whether my interlocutors consider diatonicism a *different* musical language. While Beninese musicians today distinguish between the pentatonic and diatonic scale systems—the former carrying a stronger association with traditional songs and the latter with Protestant hymnody—diatonicism is not necessarily considered foreign. As noted earlier, most brass musicians are trained in a church environment where diatonicism prevails, and their earliest introduction to their instruments entail repetitions of the diatonic scale. Perhaps the "opposing impulses" entrapping the trumpet players in Akossombo, then, were those between the muscle memory of pressing the second valve to produce an A, and the aural-visual cues to press down the first valve for an Ab.

Lastly, Isaac's self-identified error showcases the regularity of pitch discrepancies in a musical practice dominated by amateur instrumentalists. As I elaborate below, pitch discrepancies can be considered types of "participatory discrepancies" (Keil 1987) in that they create an accommodating space for non-professional musicians and community bystanders to contribute. Yet sometimes, and as was the case in the performance at Akossombo, Beninese musicians consider such discrepancies to be inaccurate instantiations of their ideal performance. Speaking about African musicians' self-assessment of their musical performances, Agawu rightly reminds ethnomusicologists:

"as long as individual African communities are satisfied with whatever tuning they have achieved, and as long as they have a mechanism for correcting performance errors, all is well" (2016a: 207). While I support this principle, my interlocutors' comments do not satisfy its premises. Musicians like Maxime and Isaac criticized their own (and others') performances, and said they lacked the pedagogical resources and knowledge needed to correct their errors. Rather than feel that all is well, it seems to me that these musicians are discontent with the tuning that they and their colleagues have achieved.

Material determinants and conditions

I now consider briefly the impact of materials on pitch expression. Recent ethnomusicological scholarship posits the materiality of instruments as a phenomenon of musical consequence (e.g., Roda 2014; Bates 2012). Extending this focus, I suggest that the material of brass instruments (e.g., brass or aluminum), materials applied to instruments (e.g., oil and grease), and the (im)material conditions surrounding musical performance (e.g., air temperature), all play a part in pitch expression.

Almost all of the musicians I interviewed pointed to the degeneration or malfunction of their instruments as a debilitating factor in their performance. As discussed earlier, brass instruments are not manufactured locally, and their acquisition is expensive and often difficult. Many musicians play secondhand instruments and struggle with their state of disrepair (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). The deficiencies of old instruments—corroded metal, dented trombone slides, sticky trumpet valves, air leakages and holes in tubing—impede musicians' ability to perform to their ideal. Moreover, attempts to maintain secondhand instruments often cause additional complications. Substances like

gasoline, gear grease, palm oil, and peanut oil serve as affordable local alternatives to Western manufactured instrument valve oil and slide grease, yet those materials corrode, degrade, and rust instrument metals (Figure 3.7). One can imagine how a trombone slide covered in palm oil becomes sluggish, its slowness aggravated by the warm humidity of southern Benin's coastal climate. One can also see how an unwary trombone player may fail to accommodate for this material effect, over- or under-shooting their intended pitch in error.



Figure 3.5: Damaged cornet mended with tape and netting. Cotonou, 7 February 2016.



Figure 3.6: Damaged baritone horn with missing valve caps and evidence of welding repair. Cotonou, 14 February 2016.



Figure 3.7: Instrument repairman Segboton Cledjo shows the motorcycle gear grease he uses as a substitute for brass instrument slide grease. Porto Novo, 5 November 2015.

The material composition of brass instruments—literally the stuff they are made of—also affect pitch. This point is demonstrated well by the instruments and accessories of Abel Hounyemin, a student at IRGIB University Africa and trumpet player in Voix des Anges Brass (Figure 3.8). Abel has two mouthpieces: the first is imported from Nigeria and made of nickel-plated brass (Premier No. 67), and the second is locally manufactured by a metalworker and made of recycled aluminum. The two mouthpieces are of identical shape and size, as the latter was molded on the former. I recorded Abel playing the pitch Bb4 on each mouthpiece; the pitches were sampled in quick succession and no alterations were made to the body of the instrument. When he played I perceived a difference between the pitch centers produced with the brass and aluminum mouthpieces; in my measurement, the pitch of the latter was over 50 cents lower. Abel did not discriminate

between the pitches produced by the two mouthpieces, however, and maintained that the tuning of his instrument remained the same. Yet we both agreed that the mouthpieces produced different timbres. Abel described the sound of the brass mouthpiece as "brighter" and "louder," producing a sound characteristic of a trumpet; in contrast, he said the sound given by the aluminum mouthpiece was "darker" and "softer," and more like a bugle. Abel said that he enjoys changing mouthpieces depending on what song he is playing, and will use the aluminum mouthpiece when he wants "to add the color of a bugle" to an ensemble.



Figure 3.8: Abel Hounyemin poses with his locally manufactured aluminum mouthpiece. Akpapa, 28 January 2016.

The example of Abel's mouthpieces illustrates that pitch is contingent upon the physical conditions of performance as well as the position of the listener. Scholarship in acoustic science confirms that a brass instrument's material encourages certain pitch tendencies (Pyle 2010). The (im)material environment surrounding instruments—e.g., temperature, humidity, wind speed, and other atmospheric conditions—also affect musical sound and pitch (Logie 2012). Metal has particular sonic qualities, and responds to heat, cold, moisture, and other environmental elements in particular ways. Air temperature also influences the intonation of brass instruments: the pitch of brass instruments descends in cold temperatures and ascends in warm temperatures (Worland 2011). Furthermore, the discrepancy between Abel's and my hearing of his performance confirms that pitch perception varies between individuals—a claim supported by scholarship on music perception (see McAdams and Giordano 2009).

The materiality of timbre

Abel's use of sensory metaphors to describe sound quality evokes an enduring yet challenging topic in (ethno-)musicology: timbre. Although timbre has proven something of a bugaboo for ethnomusicologists—and I am no exception—it is crucial to consider here. Cornelia Fales points out that timbre has taken a back seat in ethnomusicological discourse because we lack a language to talk about it: "timbre must be described in metaphor or by analogy to other senses" (2002: 56-7). Embracing this irony, I illustrate the timbres produced on Abel's two mouthpieces—which he himself described using visual metaphors—with visual aides (Figures 3.9 and 3.10). These spectral graphs illustrate the frequency composition of the pitch Bb4 when played on each mouthpiece.

The timbral differences are evident in the frequency distribution: the brass mouthpiece produces relatively focused and lower frequencies, while the aluminum mouthpiece produces relatively dispersed and higher ones. This is visually illustrated by the relative resolution and brightness (on a green-yellow-red color scheme) of each frequency domain (see Figure 3.9). Differences in the fundamental frequency produced by each mouthpiece are also discernible. The brass mouthpiece produced a fundamental frequency of approximately 479 Hz while that of the aluminum mouthpiece was 456 Hz, a difference of over 50 cents (see the peak frequency spectrogram in Figure 3.10).

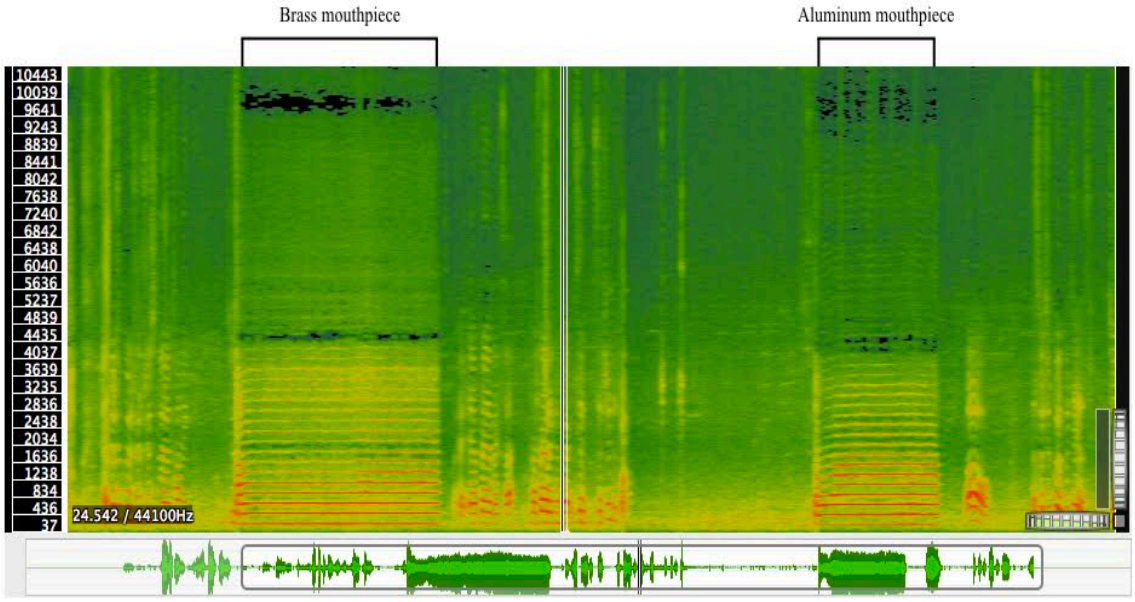


Figure 3.9: Spectral-graph of the pitch Bb4 played first on the Premier No. 67 nickel-plated brass mouthpiece (shown on the left) and second on the aluminum mouthpiece molded on Premier No. 67 (shown on the right). This graph was created using Sonic Visualiser's "plain spectrograph" option, which shows a linear frequency scale. Performed by Abel Hounyemin on trumpet. Recorded on 25 January 2016.

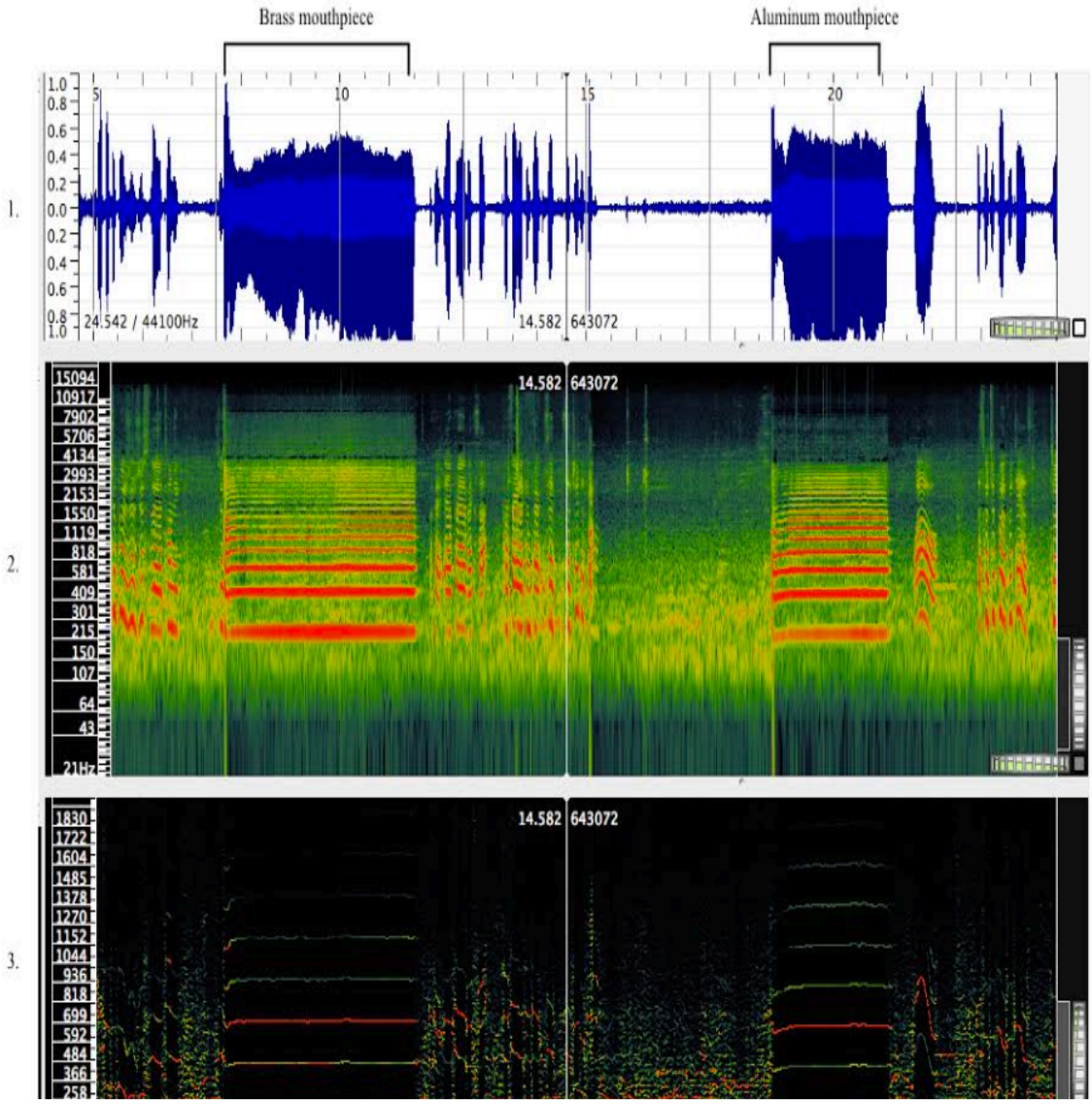


Figure 3.10: Three graphs of the same audio recording produced using Sonic Visualiser. They show (1) a waveform peak display; (2) a spectrogram with a logarithmic frequency scale; and (3) a peak frequency spectrogram. Performed by Abel Hounyemin on trumpet. Recorded on 25 January 2016.

These spectral graphs visually depict how an instrument's material affects its timbre. Research in acoustic science confirms the dependence of a brass instrument's timbre on its size, shape, and metal alloy (Zicari et al. 2013; Pyle 2010). As noted, Abel's mouthpieces were the same size and shape; the dependent variable was their material composition. Perhaps Abel's attention to the mouthpieces' distinct timbres occluded his

perception of their fundamental frequencies—work in music perception shows that timbral qualities can affect listeners' perception of pitch (McAdams and Giordano 2009: 78). Africanist ethnomusicologists also attest to the interrelation of timbre and pitch. For one, timbre can index an instrument's pitch register. Heather Maxwell, for example, has observed that certain timbres accompany particular vocal registers in Malian *wassoulou* singing: the nasal and heady with the high, and the open and thick with the low (2008: 44-5). Timbre can also encourage and amplify different scale patterns (Kubik 1985: 49). This might explain why Abel prefers to substitute mouthpieces to fit certain songs and scale systems.

Instrument mutes and muting techniques also affect timbre and, sometimes, pitch. As professional quality mutes are not available in Benin, many players make their own instrument mutes using recycled materials like plastic bottles, rubber sandals, and string. Trumpet players Émile Djoï and Euzèbe Hounsou demonstrated local methods of mute fabrication for me one afternoon, creating trumpet and trombone mutes out of salvaged yogurt bottles (Figure 3.11).[18] During their demonstration, Émile and Euzèbe recounted the advantages of these homemade plastic mutes: they are inexpensive, easy to make, and versatile for both rehearsal and performance settings. Additionally, these plastic mutes "give a soft sound," which is desirable for church performances. Émile added that the plastic mute will affect an instrument's tuning, causing it to sound 'too high', yet Euzèbe claimed that most musicians do not notice the mute's effect on pitch.

[18] A recording of their demonstration is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAV26YeGgC0.



Figure 3.11: Brass instrument mutes fabricated by Émile Djoï and Euzèbe Hounsou using recycled yogurt bottles, rubber sandals, string, and glue. Sikécodji, 11 February 2016.

Another improvised mute popular among trumpeters is called the "mouthpiece mute." Isaac illustrated this muting technique for me: he held his trumpet vertically with the bell upwards and dropped a mouthpiece into the bell so that it became lodged in the cylindrical tubing. Like this, the mouthpiece obstructed the expulsion of air and diminished the possible sound volume. This mouthpiece mute also altered the instrument's tuning: I recorded Isaac playing the pitch Bb4 with and without the mouthpiece mute, and perceived the muted pitch to be approximately 20 cents higher. In addition to raising the trumpet's nominal pitch, the mouthpiece mute affected its timbre: the mouthpiece vibrated against the trumpet's tubing and created an audible buzz.

Some brass musicians, Isaac included, use the mouthpiece mute to create a buzzing timbre and are ambivalent to its effects on volume and pitch. The aesthetics of buzz is common to sub-Saharan Africa: musicians attach timbre-altering resonators to xylophones (Kubik 2010; Jones 1964), ring buzzers to harps (Kubik 2010), metal rattles to membranophones or the bodies of instrumentalists (Nketia 1974: 70), and metal beads or sea shells to mbiras (Berliner 1978). In a similar style, Beninese brass players sometimes attach buzzing metal rings, paper clips, keys, and other objects to their instruments for sonic effects. I also observed trumpet and baritone players partially unscrew the caps of their piston valves so that the loose caps would vibrate and make noise.

While the use of timbre-altering techniques can be an aesthetic choice, sometimes buzz is unintended. Busted slides and broken spit valves that allow metal to clink or air to leak are common causes of unwanted buzzing sounds. Whether intentional or not, buzzing timbres affect perceptions of pitch. In my spectral analysis of Isaac's performance with the mouthpiece mute, for example, the metal-on-metal buzzing produced dispersed frequencies that overlaid, and interfered with, those of the fundamental frequency. Ethnomusicologists have observed elsewhere that timbre sometimes operates as an obfuscator to pitch, disrupting pure frequencies in favor of a buzzing sound (see Meintjes 2003: 236; Berliner 1978: 279).[19]

The above examples imply that the material used in an instrument's construction—the aluminum of a mouthpiece, the plastic of a mute—affects both its pitch and timbre. We also saw that the production of particular timbres can be both intentional

[19] Relatedly, Avorgbedor and Pyne (1999) posit a pan-African preference for "unusual" and "heterogenous" timbres.

and involuntary; buzz can be both a choice and a mistake. In all, these examples support a long-held position in musicology that "pitch and timbre are mutually constitutive" (Olwage 2004: 205). Different pitch registers produce different timbres and timbre affects (our perception of) pitch; relatedly, both pitch and timbre are dependent, to some extent, on an instrument's material. In the next section I consider these observations of the materiality of pitch and timbre against prior scholarship's emphasis on the sonic.

(Material) margins of tolerance

As we have seen, amateur brass players in southern Benin approach their performance practice with a flexible attitude toward pitch. This behavior is well characterized by the notion of a "margin of tolerance," a concept which indicates a culturally accepted norm that allows for certain deviation or variation in musical elements like pitch. Margins of tolerance in pitch and tuning have been described and theorized by a number of music scholars. Roderic Knight's (1991) study of tunings in Mande instrumental music is an exemplar. In his reassessment of African tone-systems, Kubik remarks that "certain measurable deviations from an ideal tuning pattern are, of course, tolerated in any musical culture," but the margin of tolerance for pitch observed in African music cultures is relatively wide (1985: 47). Kubik reasons that "tolerant" indigenous tuning systems in Africa are more willing to adopt imported tonal elements such as Western diatonic or chromatic pitch systems. He claims that the diatonic pitch system was particularly well assimilated in the heptatonic area of Africa's west coast, where some societies "do not conceive of any difference between the Western diatonic scale and their 'own' tone

system" (1985: 50-1). Kubik's remarks accurately illustrate the perspective of most of the musicians represented here.

Scholars have also pointed to the musical and participatory advantages of margins of tolerance. Simha Arom, for one, observes that the wide margin of tolerance in Central African xylophone tuning, which can accommodate pitch discrepancies as wide as a semitone, "seems to be intentional, for such a margin of tolerance is precisely what allows the instrument to accompany songs belonging to both the G-A-*B*-D-E and G-A-*C*-D-E types without having to be retuned (or even replaced, in the case of an instrument with fixed tuning)" (1991 [1985]: 227). Agawu echoes Arom, claiming that such margins of pitch tolerance evince a "flexibly conceived goal" that accommodates imperfectly realized pitches (2016a: 207). The trope of community participation in studies of African music evokes Charles Keil's (1987) notion of "participatory discrepancies." Keil posits that pluralistic pitch environments make space for participation: music must be "out of time" and "out of tune" to be "personally involving and socially valuable" (1987: 275).

The margin of pitch tolerance exercised by amateur brass players is generally in this participatory spirit. That a major and flattened seventh are sometimes accepted as being within the same tolerable pitch space means that musicians with limited ability—say, only a Bb major scale under their fingertips—can participate in music making. Some people, such as Isaac, may raise an eyebrow or move to correct the error, but many will not. In general, brass musicians and audience members alike are forgiving with regards to pitch discrepancies, and often appreciate the space that pitch tolerance allows for amateur participation and creativity of expression. David's playful employment of pitch within a traditional repertoire served as an example. Moreover, brass musicians enjoy relatively

more pitch choice than those who play traditional aerophones such as the five-note end-blown flute (*kpètè* in Fongbé) or one-pitched brass horn (*ván* in Fongbé). Not only do the physical designs of brass instruments proffer more pitch resources than these indigenous instruments (e.g., a trumpet produces a chromatic scale while a traditional flute produces a pentatonic), but their status as so-called imported instruments also affords more aesthetic freedom than instruments entrenched in local tradition and customary practice.

At the same time, the typically flexible pitch margins in African music manifest in Beninese brass instrument performance in a unique way. In contrast to instruments such as the voice or harp, where there are relatively fewer constraints on pitch expression, the mechanics of brass instruments command certain pitches and obstruct others. The trumpet is designed to produce the pitches of a chromatic scale; to play other pitches, one must disrupt its natural inclinations. We can remember, for example, how Isaac extended his trumpet's tuning slide to transpose to the key of A. Those who accept the manufacturer's tuning of their instrument often take its predetermined pitches to be precise—recall the comparison made between the piston valves of a trumpet and the keys of a keyboard. Trombonists, too, are taught (via Western-derived pedagogy) that certain slide positions are correct. For example, while trombonists may tolerate 150 Hz as being D3, as soon as the slide moves into the territory of second position, the pitch is no longer a D3 but an Eb3. That is to say that D3 has a "correct" pitch to the extent that it has a correct slide position on the trombone or a correct valve combination on the trumpet.[20] The margin of accepted tolerance is limited to the immediate environs of the pitch as

[20] This recalls Kubik's comments on motor-image and acoustic-image in "The Phenomenon of Inherent Rhythms" (1962: 33).

prescribed by the instrument and, thus, the margin of pitch difference is actually made smaller.

The observation that brass instruments constrain what may otherwise be a wider margin of tolerance may also serve to reinforce Agawu's (2016b) claim that Western tonality operates as a colonizing force in places like West Africa. The operating force that encourages certain tonal expression, in this case, is not only the concept of a tonal system or aural entrainment in Western pitch systems but also the material and sonic constraints imposed by brass instruments. For one, the technologies of trumpet valves and pedagogies around trombone slide positions pose "material constraints on pitch choice" (Agawu 2016a: 207) by delimiting the chromatic pitches of Western tonality. Constraints are also imposed by the degrading material conditions of instruments; as I mentioned above, brass instruments in Benin are often pre-owned, decades old, and of poor quality. Even when instruments function to factory standards, the Western tonality welded in their very design necessarily mediates their tonal output. This perspective suggests a more materialist (and perhaps deterministic) circumstance that troubles the idea that deviations in pitch expression are intentional.

A materialist perspective also nuances the idea of a single pitch ideal and the presumed sonic measurement of its margin. In delineating an "ideal tuning pattern," Kubik (1985) presumes one sonic ideal for every pitch, around which there is a zone of tolerance. Among the brass instrumentalists I worked with, however, there is a plurality of fundamental frequencies accepted (and not just tolerated) for any one pitch, none of which is necessarily the ideal. We can remember Fanfare St. Joseph, where "there is not a lot of precision" and musicians are ambivalent about pitch. Or Voix des Anges Brass,

which structured their tuning procedure around Western diatonicism. Or Isaac, who said that some musicians accept both a major and flattened seventh as the scale degree *ti*. Although these fanfares and brass players are members of the same musical community, there is no collective agreement on an ideal tuning pattern. Likewise, there are different methods of tuning instruments, not all of which are sonic. We can recall Monsieur Crépin, who tuned Fanfare St. Joseph by comparing lengths of tuning slides. Or Celestin, who positioned his tuning slide to match that of other trombonists. Or Maxime, whose diagram correlates ideal pitches to trombone slide positions quantified in centimeters. These are not sonic measurements though they have sonic consequences.

Conclusion

This chapter complemented existing scholarship on African pitch systems and musical instruments by illustrating the case of amateur Beninese brass players and fanfares. I observed pitch expression in performances of pentatonic and diatonic scale systems, and described how pitch expression relates to factors like musical repertoires, instrument pedagogy, individual skill, and material circumstance. I also relayed players' explanations of the intentional, unintentional, and extra-musical factors that affect pitch: from the pitch resources of particular repertoires, to idiosyncratic tuning methods, to personal error. Throughout I paid special attention to how brass instruments' physical designs motivate, or demand, Western tonality yet how material conditions limit and constrain it. Abel's mouthpieces, whose different materials produce different timbres and pitches, are a good example. I also showed that musicians sometimes measure pitch via

physical (rather than sonic) means—an observation that expands upon previous scholarship's presumption of a sonic margin of tolerance for pitch and tuning patterns.

Altogether, my ethnographic materials indicate the non-standardized nature of pitch expression and tuning practices among brass instrumentalists. Pitch is sometimes technical (e.g., Maxime's comment on slide positions), sometimes performative (e.g., David's use of additive features), and sometimes involuntary (e.g., Isaac's reflection on error). These observations support my main argument that pitch expression is situational and contingent upon the interplay of musicians' intentionality and instruments' materiality. On the one hand, players exercise aesthetic choice and intentionally adjust pitch with tuning manipulations. On the other, an instrument's material and mechanics impose limitations and tonal demands of their own. The traction between material affordance and constraint, between musical choice and determinacy, is especially tangible in the materiality of brass instruments. This point emphasizes one of the overarching claims in this thesis: that the material and materiality of brass instruments play an integral role in my interlocutors' musical expression and experience. This point is also an important counter to earlier scholarship on African musical systems, which tends to overlook the material, pragmatic, and even ordinary limitations affecting pitch expression in everyday musical practice.

My emphasis on the (material) contingency of pitch expression encourages my secondary argument: that pitch in Beninese fanfare is not necessarily motivated by Western or indigenous tonal ideals. This nuanced assessment pushes against the tendency in musicological scholarship to characterize elements of African music as belonging to either the "indigenous" or the "imported," the Western or the African. By resisting the

urge to categorize, I also resist inscribing political motivations on my interlocutors. Beninese brass musicians today are neither wielding diatonicism in a fog of false consciousness nor reaching back to pentatonicism to make a political point. Rather, the musicians I know play their instruments in a manner that pleases them, and in light of available material and pedagogical resources. Pitch and tuning, in this context, are not ideological endeavors but pragmatic and even arbitrary phenomena. Ethnomusicologists—particularly those versed in postcolonial theory—should continue to challenge themselves to be comfortable withholding ideological categories from their interlocutors.

This chapter and those that preceded it spoke to themes of the historical, material, and sonic. The remainder of the thesis considers the bodily and affective. I turn first to my interlocutors' corporeal experiences of fanfare performance and reflections on their musical work. Specifically, I examine how musicians engage with the variegated concept of labor.

CHAPTER FOUR

Music as Labor: The Effort and Value of Fanfare Performance

Sometime in early July 2016, Émile Djoï's grandfather passed away. Émile sent a text message to the members of Voix des Anges Brass to announce the death. Then, at our next Monday night rehearsal, he made a proposition. His grandfather's funeral would take place the coming weekend and he hoped that we would agree to perform. Because this funeral was "inside the family," we would not ask for a fee, but Émile assured everyone that the cost of transport would be covered and food provided. The funeral was in Émile's home village, Pahou, about an hour west of Cotonou on the road to Ouidah. The journey was too far to make on motorcycle taxis so we would need to rent a vehicle. Everyone readily agreed and, a few days later, we piled into a ten-person bus and set off for the weekend (Figure 4.1).

On the way to Pahou, we listened to the radio and passed around cellphones, exploring each other's collections of Mp3s. At some point we stopped for gas and pooled our loose change to pay the young woman selling it illegally on the roadside. As we approached the village, we turned onto an unmarked dirt lane. The percussionist Joël called out to Émile and playfully asked whether we were really going to Pahou: "Are you sure? You're certain we're not going to Niger? Maybe Burkina?" The inside joke was that two weekends prior we had traveled to Porto Novo to fulfill a contract for a funeral performance. Those hiring us had arranged the transport; all we had to do was meet them at a bus stop in Cotonou and they would take us straight to the venue. After an hour and a half of driving, though, we became suspicious; the trip to Porto Novo usually took only forty-five minutes. We realized then that the van had veered off course. It turned out that

the funeral was actually in a village in western Nigeria, somewhere between the Beninese town Adjarra and the Nigerian town Tube. Our employer had rightly suspected that we would have denied the gig if we had known its location—the border guards along Nigeria's southwest coast are notorious for harassing people—and so they decided to take us there against our will. Remembering this story, we howled with laughter.

When we arrived in Pahou, we went straight to work. The deceased had just been buried in a local cemetery and the funeral caravan was winding through the village toward the family's home. We hopped out of the van and quickly joined the procession, escorting dozens upon dozens of people to the large reception tents awaiting them. Once at the reception we proceeded to play for hours, seeking to please our audience and invite tips with well-known traditional melodies from the Ouidah region, and popular songs by Sagbohan Danialou, Johnny Sourou, David Saxo, Gnonnas Pedro, L'Artist Ahouessi, L'Artist Alekpehanhou, and others. Once we had exhausted the ears and wallets of the reception attendees, it was time to animate the family compound. Émile gathered the musicians together to explain that half of his family was *vodunsi* and half Catholic, so as we meandered around the clay buildings we improvised a medley of Catholic hymns and songs for Egungun and Zangbeto. We performed—ambulating, playing, and dancing—until the *bonne dame* ("good woman," to refer to a matriarch) of the household approached us and waved her hand for us to stop. It was nearing midnight and the rituals of the evening wake were soon to begin. We packed up our instruments and retreated to our designated corner of the courtyard. A young girl brought us pots of rice, pounded cassava, vegetable sauce, and a red crate of sugary sodas. As we ate, a group of youth

from the neighborhood formed a circle in the courtyard and played the rhythm *djegbe*.[1] Another girl came with a pile of straw mats; we would sleep there on the ground underneath a thatch canopy.

After eating, we reclined on our mats, our bellies full and feet tired (Figure 4.2). We counted our earnings and complimented one another on a job well done. Musicians then began to tell stories about other performances. Euzèbe recounted a fanfare gig he played across the border in Togo the previous year, at which the employer failed to arrange accommodation for the band. For two nights, he and his fellow musicians slept on the side of the road without mats. Sleeping outdoors is relatively common practice during the dry season, when the heat of the harmattan renders poorly ventilated concrete rooms unbearable. Yet that performance was during the rainy season and, sure enough, as the musicians slept a heavy thunderstorm came. Euzèbe chuckled as he imitated his friends' cries of annoyance, and how they tried unsuccessfully to cover themselves with straw mats, plastic buckets, and even the percussionist's cymbals. Euzèbe, meanwhile, had the bright idea to seek shelter underneath a car.

When I grumbled in sympathy, Euzèbe shrugged. He reminded me that broken contracts and deceitful behavior are normal in this line of work: "Remember when they smuggled us into Nigeria?" he laughed. "In any case," he assured me, "it doesn't do anything (*ça ne fait rien*). In fact, it gives! It gives something for your mentality and your body." That "something," Euzèbe specified, is strength, perseverance, and a badge of

[1] *Djegbe* is a rhythm from Porto Novo that originated in royal funeral ceremonies. Politz (2017: 187) explains that it was originally played using minimal instrumentation, such as two bells and a shaker, to accompany vocalists. *Djegbe* is associated with imported Vodun like Mami Wata (the goddess of the sea) and Tron (a deity associated with the kola nut), and is also a popular rhythm in the Celestial Church of Christ (Politz 2017: 87). See Tall (1995b) for more on Vodun cults and their association with the Celestial Church of Christ.

masculinity: “Hardship (*la duressse*) gives you strength. A man should sleep outside.” I happen to know that this particular performance—contracted by a wealthy Togolese expatriate living in Porto Novo—also gave money. I opened my mouth to ask another question but Euzèbe closed his eyes and murmured, “Tomorrow, tomorrow, we will talk.” After a few more minutes of drowsy chat, I lay down next to Beatrice and covered myself with a wax cloth. We fell asleep to the sound of voices and gan playing the music of Egungun. We would awaken a mere six hours later to the sound of Gregorian chant over a loudspeaker system. After a bowl of sweet porridge, our performance would begin again.



Figure 4.1: The members of Voix des Anges Brass take a selfie en route to Pahou. Cotonou, 23 July 2016.



Figure 4.2: Joël, Beatrice, Abraham, and Abel recline on a mat with plates of food. Pahou, 23 July 2016.

In this chapter I examine how fanfare musicians engage with the variegated concept of labor. As the above anecdote illustrates, fanfare performances often extend over multiple days in outdoor venues. The hours are long, performance conditions are challenging, and musicians are poorly rested. This work is also precarious: wages are low, contracts are broken, and musicians are at risk of exploitation. As we will see, fanfare performance is first and foremost a form of economic labor. My interlocutors conceive it not as leisure activity but rather a type of work. As Maxime put it, "Fanfare is not a music for pleasure." This particular musical labor, moreover, requires various and simultaneous efforts that musicians often find strenuous. Labor is a nebulous term and I

appreciate that it has valence in multiple registers. In this chapter I focus on but two. On the one hand, I give attention to labor in the sense of exertion and, in particular, affective and physical efforts. On the other, I discuss labor in the sense of economic participation, as a synonym for employment. Over the course of the chapter I will show that, for my interlocutors, these two senses of labor are intertwined. My objective is twofold: I aim to demonstrate the various efforts required in fanfare performance and, secondly, how fanfare musicians make meaningful a musical labor that is difficult, exhausting, undervalued, and underpaid.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section, "Fanfare as musical labor," gives definition to the concept of musical labor with reference to existing ethnomusicological scholarship. I then present my ethnographic material in two parts, each of which is comprised of two sections. In Part I, I discuss the efforts required in fanfare performance and musicians' experiences thereof. The section "Affective labor" explains that musicians are tasked with "making ambiance" and "turning grief into joy," and describes how they perform particular affects through song choice, dance, and gestures, among other acts. The section "Corporeal experience" presents musicians' reflections on the physical challenges of performance. I draw attention to two corporeal experiences—fatigue and hotness—which musicians interpret as indices of physical strength and health.

In Part II, I examine my interlocutors' assessments of fanfare performance as work and the forms of value it affords. The section "The musician as worker" demonstrates that fanfare is a form of informal waged labor in which musicians partake, above all, to earn money, and the precariousness of which they seek to secure through

labor collectives. The section "The value of hard work" discusses how musicians make meaningful a challenging musical labor that brings meager financial compensation. I suggest that musicians understand the hard work of fanfare as an extension of everyday practices of bodily discipline and modes of personal development. A final section brings together the preceding ideas to argue that musicians valorize their hard work via multiple, overlapping logics, and then concludes.

Fanfare as musical labor

The intersection of music and labor is a well-discussed topic in ethnomusicological scholarship. Below I delineate four ways that my own framing of musical labor builds on and extends this literature. First, I frame music *as* labor. Following Ana Hofman (2015), I give attention to musical labor itself, and discuss fanfare performance both as a labor practice and an affective and sensorial experience. This perspective departs from extant scholarship that discusses musical practice in the context *of* (non-musical) labor. A prominent example from Africanist ethnomusicology is the work of Frank Gunderson.[2] Writing about labor songs in Western Tanzania, Gunderson uses the phrase "musical labor" in order "to draw attention to the context and processes of those activities surrounding labor activity where music is present, which include composition, performance, transmission, as well as the song and song text itself" (2010: 10). Whereas the musical labor Gunderson discusses is music performed to aid a different labor task (e.g., work songs to accompany rhythmic agricultural activities), I propose that fanfare performance is musical labor because it is itself the main labor task. Fanfare is not part of

[2] Anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard (1929) and Ruth Finnegan (1970) have also commented on the function of work songs in Africa.

a larger labor activity but rather is the labor activity. It is labor in the common sense: a job performed to earn money. It is not music *for* work but music *as* work.

Second, I lend attention to the labor of performance and not merely the labor of creating musical compositions or artifacts. The field of ethnomusicology has historically made efforts to distance itself from the "work concept," a fraught inheritance from historical musicology that heralded great musical compositions and valorized the great men that produced them.[3] In their preface to the special issue "Audio Work: Labor, Value, and the Making of Musical Aesthetics," Jesse Weaver Shipley and Marina Peterson helpfully center the terms labor and value in the analysis of music and sound. They observe that scholarly conversations about the relationship of labor to music often focus on the value of copyright, composition, and authorship, thus occluding "music as labor, whether as organized labor or in a more general sense of practice and performance" (2012: 406). To avoid assumptions about aesthetic autonomy, they urge scholars to attend to "labor as a form of embodied practice that creates, challenges, and transforms value" (2012: 405). "By placing labor at the center of the analysis of sound," they explain, "we hope to shift conversations around music by relinking aesthetic value to its complex modes of production" (2012: 405). Following Shipley and Peterson, I give attention to labor as performance practice, and aim to appreciate the ways that "music is always caught up in markets, commerce, and laboring bodies" (2012: 399).

Third, I emphasize the material and bodily dimensions of performance, thus extending phenomenological conceptions of musical labor as an embodied practice. A

[3] Marina Peterson (2013) forwards this point. Reflecting on the American Federation of Musicians' recording strike of the early 1940s, Peterson notes "the ways in which technology and copyright emphasize work as an artifact occlude both live music and music as labor" (2013: 797). To uphold the autonomous power of music-as-artifact is to disenfranchise musicians and trivialize their non-recorded work.

plethora of music scholarship takes up the interrelated realms of materiality and embodiment. These include the materiality of electronic music (Steingo 2016a); the physicality of music making and the sound of work (Peterson 2016); embodied and craft labor (Pettinger 2015); musical labor as a live, sonic practice (Peterson 2013); mobile-musical labor (Gopinath and Stanyek 2014); the musical work of making mediated sound (Brennan 2012); and the physical labor of work songs (Gunderson 2010). While themes of materiality and the body appear elsewhere in this thesis (Chapters Two and Five, respectively), I highlight them here to make a simple point. For my interlocutors, musical labor exceeds the production and circulation of sound. To "play" in fanfare performance is to produce sound from one's instrument, yes, but also to do a number of other bodily acts. To perform in fanfare is to play, sing, walk, march, move, dance, stretch, sweat, smile, joke, breathe, and blow. Crucially, none of these is tangential to the labor of making music. Although I do not dive deep into theories of embodiment in this chapter, underlying my ethnography and analysis is the notion of music making as an embodied practice, and its commercial performance as embodied labor.

Fourth, I join a chorus of scholars who discuss the practice of music in terms of socio-cultural value. To allege that music making produces socio-cultural value is far from a radical claim: indeed, it invites the question of whether a musical activity exists that does *not* operate in and reflect upon social and cultural fields. But my aim is to portray the role of socio-cultural value in the context of musical labor more specifically; to ask, in other words, what does musical performance produce in labor scenarios apart from the monetary compensation one would expect? In the edited volume *Audible Empire*, Steingo (2016b) links the "immaterial labor" that produces popular music and

the labor machine of industrial capitalism. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa where the unemployment rate is estimated to be as high as forty percent, Steingo argues, "the cultural, social, and aesthetic aspects of music . . . are immediately economic" (2016b: 254). Each of music's aspects is a means and mode of transaction. With Steingo, I agree that to undertake musical labor is to participate in an economy—to give, take, exchange, produce, and consume—yet, in the context of Beninese fanfare, money is of variable centrality. Fanfare musicians maintain that money is their primary incentive to perform but when financial returns are negligible they hold that their work has non-monetary value. Thus I aim to draw out other costs and benefits of fanfare participation—what musical labor asks of musicians and what value they expect in return.

◆ ◆ ◆

Part I: Effort

> Beninese music is not based on melody and harmonies—in the south we don't have a harmonic instrument like the guitar. Rhythm inspires the dancer who in turn inspires the singers. The movements of the body are transformed into riffs of percussion on which the lyrics begin to dance. Dance and music are inseparable: you simply cannot imagine one without the other. – Angelique Kidjo (2014: 85-7)

Affective labor and physical exertion

In this first section of Part I, I turn to fanfare performance, and showcase some of the affective and physical efforts required of this particular musical labor. First, I relay musicians' assertions that their primary job in performances is to "make ambiance" (*faire l'ambiance*). I frame the task of creating ambiance as an affective labor that requires the strategic and skillful deployment of musical sound and human bodies. Second, I zoom in on one particular performance activity: dance. I show how playful, humorous dances evoke laughter and joy, and contribute to the successful production of *l'ambiance.*

My main aim is to demonstrate that musicians create affect—and perform affective labor—through multiple efforts, such as the performance of particular songs and slogans, as well as bodily movements like ambulation, gesture, and dance. The examples presented below are by no means exhaustive of the kinds of work occasioned by fanfare's many performance contexts, yet they offer a sense of their variety. These selected examples allude in particular to the physicality of fanfare performances. For example, I describe how musicians move within and between performance venues, position their bodies in relation to their audience members, and engage their body (and that of their musical instrument) in dance. In doing so, I set up context for Part I's second section on musicians' corporeal experiences.

Before proceeding, I want to clarify my use "affective labor," a concept that has drawn recent attention in ethnomusicology (Tochka 2017; Hofman 2015; Tatro 2014).[4] Kelley Tatro, for one, glosses it as the labor of "performing appropriate attitudes and affective states" (2014: 446). She describes how punk musicians in Mexico City "[stimulate] the circulation of valued affects" through song lyrics, vocal timbre, physical exertion, and the staged "display of the hard-working body" (2014: 442). Through "extreme vocalizations" like screaming, Tatro posits, punk musicians perform affects like anger and rage that "arouse the intense feeling of their audience" (2014: 447). Similarly, Ana Hofman describes affective labor "as work intended to produce or modify peoples' emotional experiences" (2015: 28). And Nicholas Tochka explains, "Affective labour, especially as invoked in ethnographic work on musicians, refers to work intended to produce emotional states such as, in Hardt's widely cited phrasing, 'a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion—even a sense of community'" (2017: 291, citing Hardt 1999: 96).

Affective labor was originally coined to describe the production of affect in the particular political-economic context of late capitalism. In the late capitalist, or neoliberal, world, affect is "a saleable experience and an important commodity of exchange" (2015: 33). The sociologist Andrea Muehlebach, for example, defines affective labor as a kind of relational work that produces not material goods but "good feeling" (Muehlebach 2011: 61, cited in Tatro 2014: 446). Yet ethnomusicologists have

[4] Others have forwarded critical perspectives, claiming that "affective labor" is too vague (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008: 115) and that all forms of labor can be said to be affective (Gill and Pratt 2008: 20). I concur with Ana Hofman's response to these critiques, which is to attempt to appreciate "the affective nature of music labour in all its registers, both positive and negative" (2015: 32). Paying attention to "the frustration and stigma" that certain musical labors invite can trouble the romantic notion of an affective economy that is "*a priori* pleasant" (ibid.)

recently departed from this capitalist reading, offering ethnographies of affective work outside of capitalist economies, namely, in socialist states (e.g., Tochka 2017; Hofman 2015). In my own usage of the concept, I do not engage with its political valences. The musicians with whom I work do not express overt political agendas, nor is their musical labor compelled by political regimes. Like Tochka, Hofman, and Tatro, I find the concept useful because it brings attention to sensorial, material, and embodied dimensions of labor. In what follows, I illustrate my interlocutors' creation of *l'ambiance* as an affective labor that, like the production of rage among punk musicians in Mexico City, depends on "the affective impact of a hard-working body" (Tatro 2014: 435) and the exertion musicians render into sound.

Performing l'ambiance

Fanfares usually perform for large social events and, in particular, funerals. Funeral receptions take place in sprawling, open-air spaces such as streets, abandoned fields, public squares, or private courtyards, which are dotted with tarp-covered plastic tables and chairs. As opposed to a stage, where performers' bodies are set apart from their audience, at funeral receptions performers are often on ground level, their bodies surrounded by those of audience members and their movements hindered by the compression of the crowd and obstacles like furniture and moving vehicles. Despite these obstructions, it is the fanfare's job to move around the funeral reception and family home(s), performing songs, dances, and lyrical slogans that contribute to the event's atmosphere, and bring joy and laughter to the attendees.

Fanfare musicians maintain that their primary task during a funeral performance is to create the sought after sense of *l'ambiance*. In my interlocutors' usage, ambiance refers to a mood or atmosphere—something like Ben Anderson's (2009) "affective atmosphere"—that is said to make a performance enjoyable and successful. This ambiance is expressly positive.[5] Maxime explains, "For me, ambiance is that atmosphere that we observe among musicians during a performance, causing a kind of pleasure while playing. It makes them feel each other with an open heart. It makes their performance very attractive." The trumpeter William Codjo told me, "Ambiance, it's like a feeling (*c'est comme un "feeling" quoi*). Fanfare gives ambiance because it makes people dance." While Maxime and William gloss ambiance as a desirable "atmosphere" and "feeling," others pinpointed specific affects like happiness and joy. Once in conversation with Beatrice and Euzèbe, I asked why people hire fanfares to play in funerals. "Because fanfare is associated with dance," Beatrice responded, "and people love it. It, like, animates." Then Euzèbe chimed in, "To express… To express joy! With a fanfare, you have the possibility to request a song. And we play happy songs. Our role is to help people get rid of sadness and grief and worries they feel during the funeral. That is why it tends to be a fanfare."

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[5] Ryan Skinner (2015) likewise observes the importance of *l'ambiance* in Bamako, Mali. Speaking about the usage of the term in postcolonial Bamako, Skinner offers this definition: "*Ambiance* is a French word implying 'mood', 'feeling', and 'atmosphere', which, in its usage in francophone urban Africa, conveys a specifically musical sense of 'vibe' and a general sentiment of conviviality in public spaces of music making and listening" (2015: 59). Skinner continues, "For a musical event to be ambiant it must evoke sociable pleasure (being 'gay and lively', in Meillassoux's words); this is achieved as much by the music itself as by the relations between and among performers and audiences" (2015: 61). Writing about female griot singers in Mali, Lucy Durán writes that their particular vocal production is "associated with the style sometimes called '*musique d'ambiance*' (music for dancing at weddings and other life-cycle celebrations)" (2007: 591). And Bob White (2008) notes that *ambiance* appears in discourse about urban popular music in the DRC, saying, "The term generally refers to the city's particular combination of sexuality, spectacle, and dance music" (2008: 254n9).

As Euzèbe suggests, the circulation of affect is particularly important for funerals, for which fanfares are contracted to "animate" a somber space.[6] The means of creating affect are numerous, and include the performance of particular songs, slogans, dances, jokes, and gestures. The following excerpted interview with David Akande elucidates:

> Me: What is the role of the fanfare in burials and funeral ceremonies?
> David: In burials? It is the ambiance above all. In fact, in funerals, here, when people die, there is a grief that hits the house like that. This is why the people have decided to transform all of their grief into joy. And to have joy, you must have animation. Because when you have animation there is comedy, there are songs, there are melodies . . . And [the fanfare] does nothing but sing melodies.
> Me: What melodies do you play?
> David: In the beginning, we do not play joyful melodies. We [play] hymns, the hymns that talk, the hymns that convey a message. And we also play [traditional songs] that also talk. . . . [In the church] we play hymns, standards, imported songs. But you cannot automatically play the joyful songs. We are obliged to play hymns very soft. But when someone is not from the church…there are also [traditional pieces] like that. And when the corpse comes, there are songs that are cool, cool, cool, cool, cool that we play. And after the burial, we transform everything now into joy.
> Me: What rhythms do you play during funeral ceremonies?
> David: We play *zenli* after the burial, because *zenli* is a joyful rhythm for those in Abomey.[7] When the deceased is there, we cannot be joyful. We cannot play joyful songs. When the deceased person has been buried, then we can play joyful music to create ambiance. When we create ambiance, people give money.
> Me: How do you decide what music to play?
> David: Sometimes we have to play because there is a big man who has money. Maybe we know him, so we play something to make his heart joyful and then take money from him. Big men do not want to wait. You must be quick. You must go

[6] An interesting analog is the affective work of Indian wedding bands. Gregory Booth (2005: 8) similarly documents that Indian brass bands are hired to help generate emotions like ecstasy and joy that are paramount to performance occasions—in this case, weddings. Another overlap between Beninese and Indian bands is their central role in public processions. As in Benin, brass band musicians in India are expected "to maintain or at least approximate the desired atmosphere of emotional enthusiasm, if not ecstasy" (Booth 2005: 280) and are tipped with banknotes if their performance is affecting.

[7] As noted, *zenli* is the traditional funerary genre of the Dahomean kingdom and the Fon people. It maintains a central place in funerals and burial ceremonies in Benin today, even in multi-ethnic and predominantly Christian communities such as those in Cotonou. Fanfares are often called upon to perform *zenli* in place of a *zenli* percussion ensemble. Yet *zenli*'s intricate polyrhythms and tonal percussion are difficult for a three-person fanfare percussion section to reproduce on the bass drum, snare drum, and cymbals. Many fanfare percussionists told me that they avoid playing *zenli* for reasons of its difficulty. See Politz (forthcoming) for more on *zenli* and its history.

and play something to create joy, joy, joy, and take money from him before you go back. Normally, after the burial, you have to play and take money from people.

Me: Can fanfares play popular songs, profane songs?

David: Yes a lot! At funerals, you must bury the person before. Then you can play any rhythm that you want. If you walk over here and see someone from Pobè, you will play *bolodjo*,[8] and then you come here and you see someone from Comè, and you play... You see? Every region has their melody. On the ground, it is [the ground] which guides us and constitutes our performance. If we play a rhythm that does not bring money then we will change it quickly. Just to find money. What song we play depends on what we find. . . . If you think someone is from Ketou, you think, you start to play a song from Ketou, but unfortunately what you play… [spits]. It doesn't work. They are crazy. So you change that very quickly. If we change and [the audience member] doesn't move, and we change again and he doesn't move, that means he doesn't like fanfare. So we leave.

Me: What is the relation of the fanfare to the other musical groups that play at funerals? Is there something that unites them?

David: In fact, you see, the fanfare has a unique vision for funerals. What vision? To make the family forget their grief. We turn grief into joy. . . . Fanfare has the job to make people happy. Just for this occasion. Every group has its corner. Every group has its role to play. . . . For our part, we must make ambiance (*Chez nous, on doit faire l'ambiance*).

David's commentary is rich in detail and describes multiple aspects of funeral performances. I want to draw attention to a few.

First, David notes that *l'ambiance* is partly achieved through the performance of particular songs that are pleasing to audience members. As he implied, song choice is paramount. While musicians "play joyful songs to create ambiance," the performance of joy is restricted to the time post-burial.[9] The fanfare must know what songs are appropriate at different stages of the ceremony, which requires knowledge of the funerary

[8] *Bolodjo* is a rhythm and dance from the region around Pobè and Sakété. It is associated with the Yorùbá (called Nago) people and the Gelede (also Guelede and Guèlèdè) masquerade.

[9] Gilbert Rouget (1994: 37-8) likewise observes that, in funerary rituals among the Gun of Porto Novo, the rhythm *agóduhún,* which he translates as "*musique de réjouissance*" ("music of rejoicing" or "music of enjoyment"), is played only after the cremation of the body. He notes that *agóduhún* also refers to "a group of musicians—instrumentalists and singers—united around a drum who constitute a semi-professional ensemble whose services are hired for the occasion" (1994: 38, my translation). Like this traditional musical style, "fanfare" designates both a rhythm or style and a particular ensemble of working musicians. Fanfare functions similarly to musical styles-cum-ensembles like *zenli* in Abomey and *agóduhún* in Porto Novo in traditional funerals and burial ceremonies.

traditions of different religions as well as different ethnic groups.[10] When a fanfare performs in a church, they must play the favored hymns of that Christian denomination. When a fanfare performs for a non-Christian (normally, Vodun) family, they must be able to play traditional songs or sacred songs of the relevant Vodun convent that serve a similar function to hymns; songs that are soft, subdued, "cool," and convey a mood-appropriate message. This means that fanfare musicians in southern Benin, most of whom are Celestial, must have at least a basic knowledge of Vodun culture and its music. Unlike staged performances, fanfares do not have a predetermined set list or even a fixed repertoire. Rather, fanfare musicians rely on their accumulated knowledge of melodies and rhythms and, when a particular song is unknown to them, their ability to improvise. Later on in our interview, David emphasized this improvisatory nature of performances. "Everything is possible," he explained, because performance decisions are made in real time. "It is on the ground that we know what product to produce. . . . We know what to play to please people."

Second, David underscores that ambiance contributes to the financial success of a performance. When a fanfare plays joyful songs, they stimulate an affective response from their audience and, importantly, summon monetary gifts: "When we create ambiance, people give money." In my experience, audience members are most likely to show appreciation (expressed through monetary donation) when musicians are perceptive, clever, and make musical jokes. A ready example is the funeral performance I participated in with Fanfare de Sodohome in the city Lokossa, which I narrated in the Prelude to this thesis. During that performance, Étienne wooed a pretty girl with fair skin

[10] Joël Noret (2010) and Melville Herskovits (1938) both elucidate the roles of particular musical styles and instruments in Fon burial ceremonies in Abomey and its environs. Rouget (1994) discusses funeral vocabularies and activities among the Gun in Porto Novo.

by playing a well-known slogan on his gbon; his witty performance made the girl blush and feel obliged to give money. This example also illustrates that musical decisions are often based on corporeal cues. Musicians are expected to recognize the physical traits, scarifications, clothing, and dance movements of audience members so that they can play songs suited for those individuals. As David said, when you see someone from Comè, you must play a song from Comè. This type of responsiveness demands an intimate knowledge of Benin's religious and ethnic groups (along with stereotypes of their traditional dress, physical appearance, and dance movements) as well as familiarity with a wide repertoire of traditional, religious, and popular songs. David insisted that when a musician recognizes such identifiers and subsequently performs a song catered to that individual, the audience member is obliged to give money: "When [the audience member] is touched by your song, they have to pay. It is forced!"

Third, David conveys the central role of dance and bodily movement in ambiance. For one, he implies that a song "works" when it makes an audience member "move" or dance. Dance is taken to be an expression of joy, thus when a fanfare makes an audience member dance they have done a good job. Similarly, Beatrice observed that people associate fanfare with dance because fanfare "animates"—it enlivens a space with affect, sound, and movement. David also hinted that movement is imperative for musicians, noting that musicians walk and move as they engage different audience members. Indeed, foundational to any fanfare performance are musicians' strategic and skillful ambulation through performance spaces, and gestures tailored for particular audience members. Again, this aspect of performance is well represented by the example of Fanfare de Sodohome. Their performance featured a host of movements—including ambulation,

dance, spinning, gyrating, and vehicular travel—that were performed for the specific setting. Our ambulation through the reception and compound, and dancing within them, elicited audience participation and remuneration. The Fanfare de Sodohome musicians also engaged their audience through playful gestures and facial expressions. In addition to these more choreographed movements, the performance necessitated other physical efforts: collecting money from people's hands, wiping sweat off of foreheads, sidestepping tables and chairs, squeezing into the trunk of a car, and dodging the path of a speeding motorcycle. As this performance makes clear, it is the combination of tailored songs and cunning slogans with musicians' adept movements and pleasing dances that create ambiance and elicit monetary donations. I will discuss dance in more detail in the next section.

Finally, I want to underline David's comment, "it is [the ground] which guides us and constitutes our performance." Here David invokes a favored phrase of fanfare musicians: *C'est le terrain qui command* (It's the ground/venue that commands/orders [the performance]), a direct reflection on musicians' curtailed artistic choices.[11] Maxime calls this "the principle of fanfare," and would frequently cite it in response to my questions about the happenings in performances. When we sat down together to watch my audio-visual recordings of Fanfare de Sodohome's Lokossa performance, for example, I asked a deluge of questions: Why did Basile play this slogan? Why did Étienne play gbon in this song but trumpet in that one? Why did the fanfare play a hymn

[11] Fanfare musicians use the term *le terrain* (a ground or field, as in for sports) to denote both the geographic locale of a performance and the people and affective atmosphere situated therein. The French verb *commander* is used variably in Benin to mean to order (as in food or a service), to command or instruct, or to ask. Maxime's mention of command (and, thus, lack of choice) recalls common sentiments expressed among low income, amateur musicians: *il n'y a pas de moyen* (there are no means) and *on n'a pas de choix* (one doesn't have a choice).

at this moment but a Gangbé cover at that moment? To each variation of "Why did the fanfare play *this* song at *this* time, in *this* place, for *this* person?" Maxime responded with the tired tone of someone repeating something obvious: "Oh, but Lyndsey, it's the ground that commands." Effectively, Maxime's answer was that the fanfare played this or that song because they were ordered or, more accurately, compelled to do so by a particular audience member or performance setting or affective atmosphere. In this way, Maxime and other fanfare musicians perceive their musical performance as contractual labor: their task is to juggle varying audience expectations and spontaneous instructions from employers so as to deliver the service "commanded" of them. I expand on the idea of musicians as workers in Part II.

To summarize, fanfare musicians' primary purpose in funeral performances is to create ambiance. This affective labor requires various efforts. Ambiance is partly achieved through the performance of particular songs that are pleasing to audience members. Musicians must be adept at recognizing persons' ethnicities, origins, and religious beliefs, and choose songs that will elicit the desired affective response. Notably, musicians do not play original compositions but rather cover well-known popular songs that are recognizable to audiences. Ambiance is also created by way of musicians' strategic and skillful ambulation through performance spaces, and gestures and dances tailored for particular audience members. Through these efforts—which are performed on command—musicians "turn grief into joy" and summon monetary donations. In what follows, I look more closely at dance as a form of expressive movement that elicits joy and produces *l'ambiance.*

Two popular dances

Fanfare performance is highly somatic. The creation of ambiance requires specific bodily and affective techniques, and musicians use their bodies as a performance tool. Ana Hofman calls such performance strategies "somatic modes of producing affect" (2015: 42). Below, I discuss dance as one such somatic mode. First, I illustrate that musicians-cum-dancers perform well-known, popular movements that are legible to audiences and invite participation. Second, I show that certain dances are privileged in fanfare because they play on popular laughter around bodies. My objective is to portray the importance of dance, and bodily movement generally, to fanfare musicians' affective labor.[12]

During my fieldwork, dance movements in fanfare performances were primarily drawn from traditional repertoires. The most common dances were those accompanying music associated with royal courts, Vodun, or other rituals.[13] Other dances were those trending in global and African popular music genres, such as soukous, coupé décalé, azonto, hip-hop, and salsa. Musicians prefer to perform well-known, pre-existing dances because they are familiar to audience members and invite participation, although

[12] While I do not engage closely with theories of dance here, I want to acknowledge scholarship by Louise Meintjes (2017), Hélène Neveu Kringelbach (2013), Lisa Gilman (2009), Francesca Castaldi (2006), Kofi Agawu (2003, 1995), and Paulla Ebron (2002) for bringing attention to the historically overlooked role of dance in African musical performance. Foundational texts in the study of African dance and movement include Ranger (1975), Thompson (1974), Blacking (1967), and Mitchell (1956). I anticipate that dance will feature more prominently in future iterations of my ethnography.

[13] For example, *zenli* refers both to the funerary rhythm from the royal court of Dahomey (now Abomey) and to its accompanying dance. *Zenli* dance entails a slow, elegant rotation of the shoulders and elongation of the neck to emulate the slinking and writhing of a python. Another example is the characteristic dance of the Egungun: an elegant movement performed low to the ground with bent knees, wide sweeps of the leg, spins, and a straight back. When fanfares perform traditional rhythms—be it *tchinkoume*, *adja, adjògàn, agbaza*, or *zenli*—musicians and their audiences partake in the corresponding dance.

performance conditions sometimes limit a dancer's mobility.[14] Above all, dance movements serve to generate ambiance by inciting pleasure and rousing laughter. After all, as David said, the job of a fanfare at a funeral is "to turn grief into joy." In my observations, the arousal of an audience's laughter is most successfully done through dance movements that play on local bodily and sexual humor and, in particular, dances that are highly sexualized.[15] Hofman (2015) observes similar dance techniques among female Yugoslav singers, who perform particular emotional states through erotic postures and sensual, interactive dances. Sexualized dance is especially profitable for female singers who entice male patrons to give them money. Hofman observes:

> Seductive dancing and a more intimate encounter with patrons were considered to be a part of the performer's conscious strategy to obtain more money. Interaction between singers and patrons implied attractiveness and eroticisation in order to intensify their pleasure and desires in which a visceral component was crucial. (Hofman 2015: 43)

In the context of Beninese fanfare, bodily engagement between musician and audience member likewise contributes to the production of affect and invites monetary donations. While some dances are charged with sexual tension, others are more playful and humorous.

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[14] In the context of funeral performances, where a musician's ability to dance is often impeded by tables and chairs, or the necessity of keeping one's body upright and stable in order to play properly, some dances are more popular than others. Dances that involve a vertical drop—knees bent, buttocks extended, shoulders pulled back—are a staple. Dance moves that emulate sexual intercourse are also favored, since the critical movement is in the lower body. Dances that incorporate upright spinning, deep bowing, or lying on the ground are not practical for musicians to undertake while playing and are usually performed during dance breaks. See, for example, Fanfare St. Joseph's performance at the MusiCaravane festival, during which musicians stop playing their instruments and move to the front of the stage to perform more difficult dances. A video of this performance is available online: https://www.youtube.com/edit?o=U&video_id=oDYEdU2v3-s.

[15] One might contrast my description of playful dances with Kofi Agawu's (1995: 92-9) discussion of "serious dances" that are characterized by exclusivity and constraint, and are performed for particular rituals. Agawu delineates between "serious or sacred as opposed to playful, secular or recreational" (1995: 92).

Two particular dances stand out for their playfulness, popularity, and success in attracting laughter. The first dance mimics the motions of sexual intercourse by using musical instruments as phallic props. In its most crude instantiation, a brass instrument player holds their instrument in front of his groin, extends it horizontally like an erect phallus, and thrusts their pelvis forward and backward. This dance is also performed with a bass drum. In this case, the drum is positioned between the bass drum player and an audience participant, both of whom gyrate their lower bodies against it (Figure 4.3). Sometimes the two dancers will thrust their pelvis forwards, mimicking sexual movement, while simultaneously bending their knees and lowering into a low squat. The dance then becomes a competition in balance. Sometimes the dance is less explicitly sexual, particularly when the audience participant is female, and resembles more of a partner dance between the audience member and the bass drum, with occasional gyrations of the buttocks.



Figure 4.3: A male audience member gyrates against the bass drum of a musician in Fanfare Adonaï Jazz. Porto Novo, 6 February 2016.

Of all fanfare instruments, the bass drum is by far the favored recipient of pelvic gyrations. One reason for this is the principle musical role of the bass drum. An additional reason is that the bass drum is physically accessible and convenient. In southern Benin, bass drum players typically carry the drum with a cross-shoulder strap elongated so that the drum is positioned low in front of the player's groin. Like this, the player has ample vertical space to move their mallet upward and downward for acoustically and visually loud hits. Already at waist height, the drum's position is convenient for those craving an object to thrust toward or gyrate against, and is naturally inviting for the provocateur desirous of an erotic joke. Perhaps appealing for others, however, is that the bass drum acts as a physical barrier between the musician and audience member; its nearly three foot wide diameter puts a comfortable distance between the two dancers' groins. Given Benin's current homophobic climate, this is likely reassuring in cases when both dancers are male.[16]

This sexualized dance speaks to social norms and values around the body. Firstly, it reminds of widespread instances of humor and popular laughter around the phallus in sub-Saharan African cultures (see Mbembe 2001). In Benin, too, the phallus and other sexualized bodily regions are often sites for social and political humor. An example are the satirical political cartoons of Alexandre Kossoko, a long-time contributor to the country's largest daily paper, *The Benin Times*, who distorts the bodies of corrupted politicians in his comic strips (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Amongst Beninese brass players, the groin is an area of particular interest for the reason that it sits close to the diaphragm and is potentially affected by deep breathing. Some male musicians worry that if they breathe

[16] Homophobia is prevalent in southern Benin. While homosexual acts are not penalized, LGBTQ rights remain unprotected and public acts of homosexual behavior are actively discouraged.

too deeply, or incorrectly, that they may cause adverse effects such as inguinal hernias or sterility (see Chapter Five).

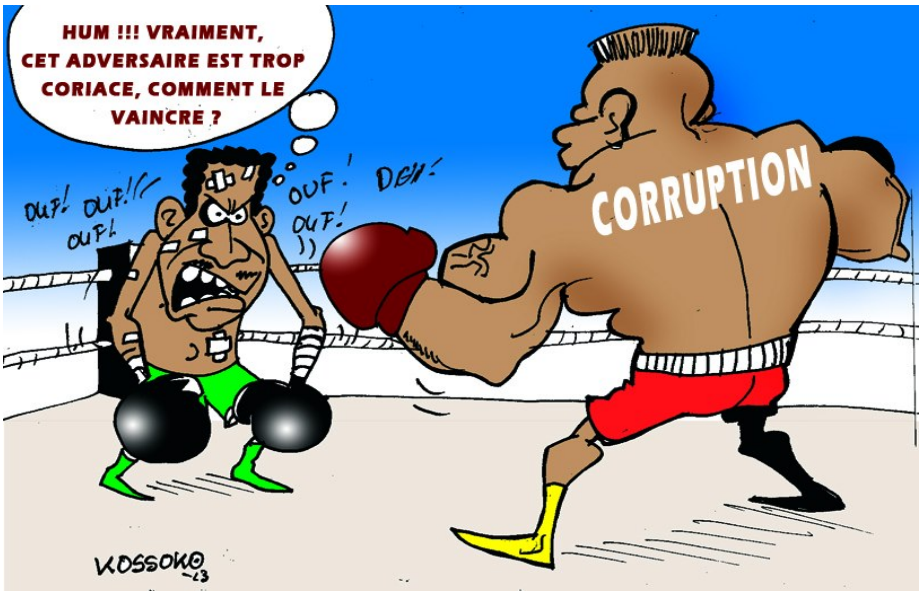


Figure 4.4: Cartoon by Alexandre Kossoko featuring a weakened President Boni Yayi attempting to fight his muscular adversary, Corruption. Printed in *The Benin Times,* 2013.



Figure 4.5: Cartoon by Alexandre Kossoko featuring the Vodun deity Legba, depicted as a mound with an erect phallus, who is pleased to hear of news of Minister Ahanhanzo's economic crimes. Printed in *The Benin Times,* 2013.

The deployment of instruments as indices of phalluses also hints at local views on hyper-masculinity and homosexuality. For one, the exaggerated scale of a bass drum-cum-phallus and the positive laughter it summons can be interpreted as a sign of virility and celebration of male sexuality. An analogous case is the visual representation of Legba; he is heralded for his musical, sexual, and intellectual prowess, and commonly depicted with an exaggerated phallus (Figure 4.5). As I mentioned above, the fact that fanfare ensembles are almost exclusively male spaces, and that this dance of pelvic thrusts and gyrations is commonly performed between men, adds another layer of signification. The fact that such dance movements are performed only with the "instrumental" barrier of a bass drum or trumpet, and never without, reminds of pervasive social discomfort with homosexuality. All of this is to say that, in Benin, the phallus and the groin are ripe with social and private meanings as well as anxieties and discomforts. As is true in many places, sexual innuendos are at once thrilling and embarrassing, and that tension leads to laughter.

Moreover, this dance illustrates the performative role of musical instruments in choreography and visual presentation. As in this case, brass instruments and drums are used as props in humorous movements. Even when not deployed in sexual humor, instruments are objects with which musicians engage audience members in their performance. For example, trumpet players will often position their instrument bells close to the bodies and ears of their audience members, forcing them to hear the music. Though this act is an invitation to listen and dance, sometimes it backfires and annoyed audiences cover their ears with their hands. Trombone players also employ their instruments as props and can get quite creative with their slides. I once saw Celestin, a trombone player

in Fanfare St. Joseph, lift up a woman's skirt with a quick flick of his slide—crudely suggesting that she unwrap her *pagne* and give him some of the coins folded inside. Brass and percussion players alike use their instruments to visually enhance their dance movements, for example by swaying their instruments from side to side or lifting them high into the air. Lastly, and importantly for wage-seeking musicians, instruments offer a tactile surface on or in which people can place money (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: A musician receives monetary donations inside of his saxophone bell. Porto Novo, 9 July 2016.

I want to contrast this first dance—and particularly its humorous evocations of sexual health—with another dance trending during the time of my fieldwork. The second is a dance movement that emulates persons with physical disabilities, particularly those with genu varum (commonly called bow-legged-ness). The movement is primarily in the lower body: the dancer bends their knees down- and outwards so that the shinbone makes a forty-five degree angle with the floor; holds their arms to the side in a crooked position, as if to stabilize themselves; and shuffles their feet forward in an unsteady fashion (Figure 4.7). When I asked Jude, a member of Voix des Anges Brass, what this dance meant, he responded with laughter. "Oh that," he said, "yeah we are like those people, you know, who walk like this," and he then performed his imagining of how a person with genu varum walks. When I was silent in response, he contemplated: "Perhaps it's not nice, but the people, they like it." Jude is right to identify the dance's popularity, and I observed several other fanfares perform the dance in live performances to elicit laughter and money from the crowd.



Figure 4.7: Steven Hounsou performs a dance that imitates a person with genu varum. Yenawa, 5 August 2016.

The practice of perverting bodies in dance is an extension of a genre of popular laughter around visibly disabled bodies that was omnipresent in Benin during my fieldwork. Like the sexualized body, disabled bodies are often featured in printed comic strips and televised cartoons for humorous effect. The derision of persons with disabilities is also widespread in public theatre and film. For example, in January 2016 I attended a performance of comedic theatre at a public youth festival in Ouidah that featured a person with Dwarfism as the dunce archetype, and which elicited much laughter from the audience. Another example is the widespread viewing of sports performed by persons with Dwarfism, such as Le Sabre National, a traditional wrestling championship in Niger. The event was televised on Benin's national station and enjoyed as a genre of comedy by Beninese musicians I know. Like these comedic genres, the bowlegged dance presumes that differently abled bodies are humorous in and of themselves, and especially humorous when doing activities normally dominated by normatively abled bodies (e.g., sports and dance).

I juxtapose the pleasure of imitating sexual intercourse between abled bodies and the comedy of parodying disabled bodies so as to suggest that the two dances evince compatible ideas of physical attraction and healthy bodies in movement. The first dance celebrates a hyper-sexualized body with a large phallus, which signals virility and sexual prowess. In contrast, the second dance mimes and mocks a disabled body, whose appendages are presumed dysfunctional. Despite these apparent differences, I suggest the two dances speak to the same social and aesthetic values. For one, they both corroborate bodily tropes in Beninese popular comedy (e.g., exaggerated and hyperbolic dimensions of the phallus or a person's height). They also both advertise the dancer as sexually fertile

and able-bodied—the first through explicit simulation and the second through opposition and mockery. In addition, both dances are productive for the performance in that they prompt laughter from audience members who appreciate the social resonances and, consequently, reward the performer with money. I will have more to say about musicians' bodies and their awareness of physical health and sexuality in Chapter Five.

The sections above illustrated ways that fanfare musicians create *l'ambiance*. We saw that, in order to perform the desired affective atmosphere, musicians deploy a variety of skills: from recognizing facial scarifications and clothing styles, to improvising melodies and slogans, to walking tactically, to dancing in humorous ways. My selected examples emphasized how bodily techniques assist the performance of particular affects. I also showed how certain bodily movements—e.g., walking, bending, gyrating, and prostration—are motivated by musical tradition, financial incentive, social decorum, and ideas of humor and sexuality. The physical effort expended in fanfare performances, as evidenced here, gives context to my ensuing discussion of corporeal experiences.

Corporeal experiences

Building on my account of the affective and physical efforts of fanfare performance, in this second section I contemplate musicians' corporeal experiences thereof. The physical work of performing affect, as we saw, contributes to a successful performance but also takes a toll on the performer's body.[17] My narration of Fanfare de Sodohome's funeral

[17] Tatro (2014: 435) makes this same observation about the negative after-effects of screaming. Booth's (2005) study of Indian wedding bands offers another example. Like my interlocutors, Indian bandsmen march in crowded, noisy processions that demand physical exertion and caution, and can pose bodily danger. Booth describes how in caravans packed with people, vehicles, and even elephants, bandsmen must "be on the look out for collisions with dancers, other bandsmen, or passers-by. Lips and teeth are all vulnerable to significant damage in such

performance again serves to elucidate. That performance demanded long hours of walking and playing outdoors and, throughout, the musicians felt exhausted, hot, thirsty, and poorly slept. While musicians sometimes complained of discomforts, they felt compelled to continue. Such performance conditions are typical for amateur fanfares, as are musicians' grievances about the negative after-effects performances have on their bodies.

These observations encourage my analytical attention to bodily experience. First, I discuss the fatigue that many musicians feel (and talk about) during and after a performance. Second, I consider the sensation of hotness and its corporeal manifestation as sweat. Of course there are plentiful other feelings and sensations bound up in musicians' performance experiences—from pleasure to pain to pride—that I do not discuss here. Yet I focus on purportedly negative experiences of fatigue and hotness because these are the experiences that my interlocutors talk about. While performances can be pleasurable and fun, musicians iterate that they are exhausting and hard work.

Fatigue

In Benin, things are often tired. Crumpled, faded, or torn bills are tired; coins with their faces worn down are tired; knives that are dull and rusting are tired; phones with broken screens and slow buttons are tired; trumpets with chipped lacquer and sluggish valves are tired. *Ça là, c'est fatigué* (That there, it's fatigued), people say. To be fatigued is to be slow, slightly inoperable, and less efficient—a state of tiredness or fatigue marks a loss of function, though not yet a state of dysfunction. The latter state is commonly glossed as

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contexts. One must also give attention to the ground over which one is walking. Many families arrange for fireworks as part of the procession, requiring bandsmen to walk especially carefully and to risk their hearing" (2005: 221).

"spoiled." Car engines that sputter and die are spoiled; dented and inoperable trombone slides are spoiled; moldy pineapples are spoiled; swimming pools without water are spoiled; corrupt politicians are spoiled; national economies are spoiled. *Ça là, c'est gaté* (That there, it's spoiled). To be spoiled means to be broken beyond repair—a state of dysfunction and either material or moral decay.[18] Though spoiled is not the same as fatigued, in my view they are extensions of the same organic metaphor. The catholic distribution of spoil and fatigue points to an anthropomorphism of things that assumes inanimate objects follow an organic lifespan. This metaphor of organic disintegration is a direct translation from the Fon term *gblé* and uncommon in French vocabularies outside of Benin.

In fanfare performance, too, things become tired. Musicians say that old, secondhand instruments that are dented and rusted are already *fatigué*, but instruments old and new can become tired during the course of a performance. Namely, atmospheric conditions cause them to malfunction: trumpet valves and trombone slides become slow and sluggish in the heat, and accumulated sand and dirt clog their tubing. To counteract these effects, musicians pour sachets of water through their instrument's tubing in attempt to cool them down and rid the interior of congealed oil, grease, and dirt. Percussionists also describe plastic or animal skin drumheads as being fatigued; heat makes their material stretch and lose tension, causing their pitch to lower. The sounds that instruments make can also become tired: a drum pitch that is too low is tired; a tempo that is too slow is tired; a call and response pattern that becomes repetitive is tired;

[18] "Spoiled" is also used among Pidgin speakers in neighboring Nigeria. See Larkin (2008) on related themes of degradation and breakdown in the context of northern Nigeria.

a popular song past its heyday is tired. When ascribing fatigue, musicians do not discriminate against things immaterial.

Fanfare musicians are also tired. After hours of ambulation and dance, muscles ache, heads throb, feet are sore, and lips are chapped. The physical labor required in a miles-long procession is extreme, and the climatic conditions—of oppressive heat and humidity—quicken a person's exhaustion. Beatrice once told me that she performed in a procession that began at Place Lénine in Akpapa, moved westward across the old bridge (*l'ancien pont*) to downtown Cotonou, circled L'Étoile Rouge in Sikécodji, and then returned over the new bridge (*le nouveau pont*) to Place Lénine. The nine-mile route took six hours, the musicians took no breaks, and the recompense was a meager 2,000 CFA (3 USD) per head. Shaking her head in disbelief, she exclaimed "Oh! The fatigue! You can imagine eh? That did me harm. I slept for two days after that," and vowed she would never do it again. Celestin recounted a similar experience after a weekend-long performance with Fanfare St. Joseph. He detailed, "At funerals, you become sick after you play for two days straight. You must take medicine to stay awake. And if you are tired, people will tease you, 'What? You don't have breath?' . . . It's not easy, eh!"

Such complaints of fatigue are commonplace. Once in a Facebook Messenger chat, Maxime narrated a "fatiguing" procession he performed in the weekend prior. Intrigued by his use of the term fatigue, I asked him for more detail: What does fatigue mean? In what ways is fanfare fatiguing? His reply, written mostly in English and replete with emojis, portrayed fatigue as the negative after-effect of physical exertion:

> Me I think that it is fatigant (fatiguing or tiring).
> You would be walking for hours, under the sun, behind a dead person that is not even a member of your family and that you didn't know before ☺.

> The principle of brass instrument that orders to "Put down the instrument when you are tired" is no more respected. Even if you are tired you shouldn't stop. Like that the lips too are tired and hurts sometimes. Supposed that you did such a performance twice or three times successively in a week. It is not easy.
> Walaï Lyndsey ! Fanfare is too fatigant. During the performance one does not notice the fatigue or does not care, because money is coming ☺. Once at home, now we start facing the consequences (headache, malaria, muscles pains...).
> Talking about my own experiences in fanfare, I say fanfare is fatigant.

While Maxime's position on fatigue is straightforward, other musicians were more equivocal. Fatigue was alternately a good thing, because it meant you had worked hard and were strengthening your body in the long term, and a bad thing, because you depleted your body of energy in the short term. Joël, a percussionist in Voix des Anges Brass, told me that being tired was ultimately good for your "organism." "It bothers you now," he explained, "but that will give something in the future." Some musicians denied ever feeling fatigued. David, for example, claimed, "I do not get tired. I am used to it already," and suggested somewhat paradoxically that, because being fatigued is habitual and routine, he does not feel fatigued. Yet other musicians, including Beatrice and Maxime, readily embrace their fatigue, relishing in the drama of laboring, tiring, and then recovering.

This segues to an important idea in Maxime's message: that fatigue is a sensation that has an afterlife beyond the performance. While fanfare musicians may distract themselves from fatigue—the pain of exhaustion, sore muscles, blistered hands, or chapped lips—they will continue to suffer the physical ramifications of their musical labor for days. Like fatigue itself, talk of fatigue is extended along a temporal range. In the days after a performance, it is common practice for members of a fanfare to follow up with one another in a text, asking something like: "*Tu es bien rentrée ? J'espère que tu as dormi bien. Comment tu vas et la fatigue ?*" (Did you return home? I hope you slept well.

How are you, and [your] fatigue?). My friends Maxime, Beatrice, and Steven were particularly consistent in sending post-performance messages. For example, after a performance in Allada with Fanfare St. Joseph, Maxime texted me: "Hello Lyndsey I hope you are fine. How is your fatigue? Are you well rested?" And, after the trip to Pahou with Voix des Anges Brass, Beatrice texted me: "Hello my dear how are you and your health? I hope you have rested a bit."

Perhaps such messages were sent to me disproportionately—I was the newcomer, after all, and people looked after me—yet I observed many similar texts sent between Beninese musicians. After performances, fanfare members will text back and forth about their relative state of fatigue, quality of sleep, and health. And, upon seeing one another again, they will make light of particularly arduous performances with joking exclamations. Texting and talking about fatigue seemed to be a way of remembering the performance and the effort people expended together. Asking after a friend's fatigue also displays care for their well-being, as well as public attention to health more generally. Like elsewhere in West Africa, greetings (called *les coucous*, an onomatopoeia for a knocking sound) in Benin are highly valued, and it is both regular and expected that friends and colleagues ask after one another's day, family, and state of health.[19] Moreover, sending a text message indicates your care and appreciation for that person because the act incurs a financial expense.[20]

[19] For example, Charles Piot (1999) documents the import of greetings and social exchanges among the Kabre in Togo.

[20] Anthropologists have made similar observations about the social value of text messages elsewhere on the continent. See Archambault (2017) on mobile communication among youth in Inhambane, Mozambique. See Gilbert (2018) on the social politics of texting among female friends in Calabar, Nigeria.

For my interlocutors, fatigue is at the same time a measure of exhaustion and strength. If a musician is fatigued, it means that they worked hard, an activity that requires a certain level of physical strength. If a musician were weak, they would not have been able to perform to begin with. In a male-dominated realm that celebrates masculinity and strength, to be fatigued is acceptable, but to be weak is a reproachful state. The trumpeter Abel Hounyemin once spoke disparagingly about a group with whom he recently started playing, Fanfare Espoir. He said that the fanfare is composed of elder members who are too old to play, drink too much alcohol, and get tired after a few hours. Now the group is searching for younger members to build up their ranks but, frustratingly for Abel, they continue to pay elder members the lion's share of the earnings despite their shortened and lackluster participation. Furrowing his brow and clicking his tongue, Abel said, "Fanfare Espoir is not good. They are weak. They are not serious." Indeed, in my experience, musicians commonly associated weakness with old age. Young fanfare musicians disparage elder musicians for their poor musical skills and inadequate physical performance, a critique I suspect is fueled by the youth's frustration that the older, well-established groups monopolize the gig market.

Fatigue was not only a topic of conversation among compatriots but also a rationale for exclusion. Namely, the fatiguing nature of fanfare performance was wielded as a reason for why women do not, and even cannot, play. The following declaration by Ange Soussou represents a common opinion about women and fanfare:

> It's difficult to play brass instruments. It requires good morality and good technique. Also, it's a thing of breath. For example, in funerals, often fanfares have to play for ten hours at a time without food or drink, in the heat, outside. Women can't do that. It's a matter of physical shape and health. Women do not have the strength or the breath.

Ange boasted that, in contrast, young men "have the force" and can therefore sustain the fatigue, heat, hunger, and other difficult experiences brought on by long performances. The stereotype that women are physically weak and incapable of performing in fanfare is propagated by the enduring absence of women in this musical work. A director of Benin's flagship police fanfare, Gervais Chabi, told me that women do not perform in fanfare because "they do not have the strength" and "they are not used to the work." When I asked if there were female musicians in his fanfare, Gervais replied, "Yeah there are some. But, the women, they complain. It's too much for them. Women don't like to work." The trombonist Apollinaire Akpali, meanwhile, said that women *do* like to work but just not *this* type of work: "Women do not often play brass instruments because women love the market and are not interested in instrumental music."

I relayed some of these comments to Beatrice, the only female musician I know who performs in Cotonou's fanfare scene. She confirmed that people think women cannot play brass instruments and said men assume that she is weak. It was this stigma that inspired her to play in fanfare. Beatrice commented:

> I have never seen in my life a woman who plays the trombone. And it is that that motivated me to play the trombone. I wanted to make the difference. That is why I chose this instrument. I will show that a woman can play the trombone. . . . When I go somewhere to play, I am proud of myself.

The conflation of weakness with womanhood serves to stoke male anxieties. Male musicians want to maintain their masculinity—characterized by physical strength, virility, and power—and, for some, fatigue feels uncomfortably close to weakness.[21] Perhaps this is what encourages David to insist that he does not, in fact, get tired.

[21] Louise Meintjes (2017) discusses the stigma of weakening bodies among ngoma dancers in KwaZulu-Natal. She connects dancers' concerns to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa.

These accounts demonstrate that fatigue is at the fore of musicians' performance experiences. Fatigue is born of physical exertion during a performance yet lingers for days onward. It is largely a negative experience; as Maxime pointed out, musicians may enjoy a performance's momentary pleasures of laughter or money but upon returning home, they will "face the consequences" of exhaustion and bodily injury. At the same time, fatigue is an indicator of bodily strength; as Ange intimated, to perform in fanfare—and thus be fatigued by it—requires good "physical shape and health." I will return to the topic of physical health and strength in Part II of this chapter. But first I turn to another common corporeal experience, that of being hot.

Hotness

The tropical, coastal environment of southern Benin presents unique challenges for fanfare musicians whose performances primarily take place outdoors. Musicians regularly find themselves marching for hours on end in funeral procession: sweating in the steaming heat and humidity; squinting in the sunlight reflected off asphalt streets; breathing in air thick with car exhaust; coughing through tornadoes of dust fueled by the winds of the harmattan; playing without rest or food or water at the command of others. Cries of "Ah the heat!" and "Oh it's hot out!" and "I'm so thirsty!" interrupt performances, as do the irritating sensation of thirst and incessant need to wipe sweat from one's brow. Such heated sensations are felt most intensely during a performance yet being in heat also contributes to enduring fatigue. As Maxime wrote, the effort of walking for hours "under the sun" leads to fatigue and headache, both of which are symptoms of heat exhaustion.

For fanfare musicians, sensations of dehydration, thirst, sweatiness, and hotness are par for the course. But, even for those living in coastal Benin, it is beyond one's corporeal capacity to acclimatize to extreme hotness. Thus musicians adjust their behaviors to prepare and protect their bodies for heat exposure. William said that he rests and hydrates for many hours before a performance so that he does not become dehydrated. Beatrice sometimes applies sunscreen to her face and arms to protect her skin from the sun. Musicians also dress for the heat by wearing sunglasses and light clothing. For example, David told me that Fanfare St. Joseph's choice of uniform (matching button-down shirts) had two motivations: mass manufactured shirts are less expensive than tailored outfits, and cotton fabric breathes more and is thus cooler than customary wax cloth. These preventative measures notwithstanding, hotness is inescapable.

My observations of musicians' experiences of heat, and my own struggle with climatic conditions during fieldwork, encourage me to consider the tangible qualities of temperature—in particular the materiality of heat and its effect on musical bodies. For one, we can think of hot bodies or, rather, bodies producing heat. With movement and physical exertion, bodies produce energy and body temperatures rise. Perhaps the most visible index of hotness is sweat, the body's productive response to heat. In Benin there is a local aesthetics around sweat and the appearance of hot bodies. My interlocutors tell me that to sweat—to embody heat, to show hotness—is to show strength, health, and physical ability. For example, Beatrice proposed that perspiration is a sign that your body is working and that you are getting good exercise. "It's good for your organism," she assured me, "That means that [your body] goes" (*Ça signifie que ça marche*).

Sweat is also a symbol of work and labor, which in turn invites remuneration. Indeed, audience members show their appreciation for a musician's work by engaging with their sweat. An audience member might hold a banknote in front of a musician, luring them to come closer. Once the musician is within reach, the audience member will rub the banknote on the musician's sweaty face, putting into contact the material of physical exertion and its reward. How convenient that money sprayed sticks to sweaty foreheads (Figure 4.8).[22] I have also seen audience members use a towel or piece of *pagne* to wipe the sweat off of a musician's brow while they played. Like this, they contribute to the performance not by paying the musician but by symbolically cooling them off. These examples suggest that physical effort is perceived in perspiration. As Beatrice suggested, sweat indexes a healthy body doing work.



Figure 4.8: A Celestial Church member wipes a banknote on the sweaty forehead of Fanfare St. Joseph member David Akande. Cotonou, 8 November 2015.

[22] "Spraying" money as a form of tipping is an act of praise observed across West and Central Africa. See, for example, Bob White (2008) on spraying practices in Congolese dance band performances.

Sweat has become something of a hot topic in recent Africanist ethnographies, with stories from South Africa (Meintjes 2017; Steingo 2016a) to Ghana (Feld 2012; Friedson 2009: 117) to the Democratic Republic of Congo (White 2008) pointing to rich social aesthetics around hotness and perspiration.[23] For example, Gavin Steingo (2016a) gives detailed attention (and footnotes) to sweat in his monograph on kwaito. Proffering explanation for kwaito's varying tempos, he points to local aesthetics of hot, sweating bodies:

> At many South African clubs where this faster kwaito music is featured prominently, people dance with handkerchief in hand, continually wiping beads of sweat from their brows. In such contexts sweating is viewed as a bodily expression, an embodied reaction to music. Sweat is an involuntary outpouring of the body that emerges through a relationship with music. Sweat is thus often seen as attractive—as a sign that the body is alive and well, not to mention moist and lubricated. (Steingo 2016a: 50-1)

Steven Feld (2012) similarly chronicles a musical aesthetics of sweat in Accra, Ghana. Paraphrasing drummer Nii Otoo Annan, Feld posits sweat as:

> a deep expression of the spiritual merger of a drummer and his drums, the workout libation that seals their bond. . . . Sweat, of course, indexes the energy and bodily engagement of work, the exhibition of its passion, its seriousness. (Feld 2012: 142)

In her *Dust of the Zulu*, itself hot off the press, Louise Meintjes (2017) evocatively portrays Zulu ngoma dancers gesturing to their own heat as a symbol of their fitness for competition:

[23] It bears mentioning that hotness exists both in and out of Africa. For example, Kelsey Klotz's (2015) paper "Sweating Sound" draws on theories of sweat by Anthony Braxton and Roland Barthes to argue that Miles Davis' performance of sweat is subversive. Michael Iyanaga's (2013) dissertation on Catholic rituals in an Afro-Brazilian community attends to hot tempos and hot sambas. Jessica Baker (2015) also alludes to the trope of hot tempo in her dissertation on Afro-Caribbean music and fastness. Comparable examples of what hotness looks, feels, and sounds like in the African diaspora abound.

> [Zabiwe] rushes out, postures. Kneeling, stick held erect, upper body as supple as a reptile, he wipes his face and chest in a gesture marking that he's hot as a dancer. He's made his point and he retreats. (Meintjes 2017: 114)
>
> In a blink, Mboneni has broken out of the supporting ranks. He is dancing center stage, wiping his face because the moment is hot, readying his steps, slapping his back because no one can touch him in dancing. (Meintjes 2017: 201)

Similar to my Beninese case, for those in Johannesburg and Accra and Msinga KwaZulu-Natal, sweat is semiotically dense. Steingo's claim that sweat is a sign of bodily health and attractiveness is particularly pertinent to my interlocutors' own interpretation of fatigue and sweat as evidence of strength and a healthy organism. Feld, too, emphasizes the "bodily engagement of work" evinced by this bodily function. My interlocutors likewise speak of the value of seriousness—a bodily practice and attitude that elides with musical talent, professionalism, and trustworthiness (more on this below). These crosscutting meanings point to a shared phenomenology of sweat across cultures. I second Steingo's statement that "An entire social history deserves to be written about the relationship between music and sweat in Africa" (2016a: 52n72).

Fanfare musicians also strive to look cool—one does not want to sweat *too* much.[24] The trombonist Celestin told me, "sweat is a good thing" because it is a sign of hard work, but too much sweat shows weakness: it means that "you don't have the energy, you don't have the force." Too much sweat is a marker of fatigue. Celestin then boasted that, when he performs, he "perspires just a little." It seems there is a threshold of sweatiness that fits the "cool" aesthetic. Steingo also points to a seeming paradox around

[24] The theme of coolness evokes Robert Farris Thompson's (1973) canonical article "An Aesthetic of the Cool" and his writing on coolness in subsequent texts (e.g., 2011, 1984). Like hotness, Farris Thompson's coolness has manifestation in local metaphors, moral sensibilities, and bodily practices.

an aesthetics of sweat in Soweto. While sweat is seen as attractive, an index of a healthy and functioning body, kwaito's listeners also strive to not sweat:

> Commenting on kwaito's slowness, the famous singer Thandiswa Mazwai exclaimed: "It's because black people don't like to really sweat, you know? You just wanna move enough to style, not enough to get sweaty, just enough to look cool" (quoted in Lusk 2003, 43). During my fieldwork, I often noticed the association between dancing and sweat, or rather the lack of sweat. At a Sunday stokvel party in Soweto, for example, a middle-aged lady who was dancing to big-band jazz shouted repeatedly: "The aim is not to sweat!" In fact, this maxim—that the aim of smooth dancing is to not sweat—is common to the musical aesthetics of several sub-Saharan African countries. (Steingo 2016a: 50)

My interlocutors, too, attempt to control their production of sweat. One reason to do so, as Celestin made clear, is that sweatiness can display weakness. Another is that sweat can cause technical troubles. For example, during Fanfare St. Joseph's performance at the MusiCaravane festival, the bass drum player dropped his mallet; the slick wood, well oiled from years of use, slipped through his sweaty palms. The desire to control bodily hotness is evinced by the popular style of draping towels around one's neck. The towels serve both a practical and symbolic purpose: they absorb sweat and convey a cool composure.[25] I observed towels worn by a multitude of demographics, including fanfare musicians and wealthy politicians, women and men (Figures 4.9 and 4.10). Towels and handkerchiefs are particularly handy for percussionists who need to dry their hands, and for brass players who wipe sweat off of their brow so that it does not drip down to their lips and into their mouthpiece. Towels worn around the neck often feature in performative gestures; they are twirled around the head or used to playfully swat a passerby.

[25] The presence of towels, and particularly white towels, in Beninese cultural performance might be productively compared with the political history of the white handkerchief and its use in public performances in the Republic of Guinea (see Dave 2013).

These behaviors around sweat are modes of controlling one's body—and, especially, its experience of temperature. One can thus conceptualize temperature as a function of corporeal movement; hotness is a product of bodily exertion, and coolness that of bodily control. One can also think of the musical practice of "warming up" (*le chauffement*) as effectively a regiment around temperature; there is a bodily progression from cold to hot.



Figure 4.9: A fanfare surrounds local politicians wearing high quality clothing and towels around their neck at a public rally for the presidential candidate Lionel Zinsou. Yenawa, 27 February 2016.



Figure 4.10: A bass drum player and audience member wear towels around their neck during Fanfare St. Joseph's performance at a funeral reception. Porto Novo, 10 July 2016.

Hot bodies can be refashioned as bodies in heat—a word play that emphasizes heat's (in)tangible effects. As mentioned above, I heard many of my interlocutors complain of the overwhelming feeling of hotness brought on by Benin's near-equatorial climate and stifling humidity. The trombonist Maxime suggested that heat can both surround and penetrate. During long, arduous parades through the streets of Cotonou, he said, a brass musician breathes actively and deeply, inviting a wealth of pollution, exhaust, and dust to enter their body. Air in urban cities has been "worked already," Maxime claimed; replete with carbon dioxide rather than oxygen, this poor quality air constitutes a health hazard. Maxime called this "hot air" (*le souffle chaud*), comparing it

to "cold air" (*le souffle frais*) that is clean and fresh. Moreover, because brass players often breathe through their mouth, they sometimes inhale the air inside of their instruments, ingesting the hot air they exhaled only moments before. Hot air is harmful for your health, Maxime told me, but musicians like him have no choice but to breathe it because they need the money earned in performance. To mitigate the harm, he breathes away from his mouthpiece so that he inhales as much oxygen as possible. In this rendering, heat exposure takes an internal form, as the necessary act of breathing invites hot air and its toxic accoutrements into the body. Hotness for Maxime, then, denotes harmful microbodies that brew environmental impurity and pose bodily risk.[26]

The above examples suggest that heat permeates performance contexts and human bodies.[27] Heat's effects are equivocal: on the one hand, heat encourages sweat, which is interpreted (to an extent) as a good thing; on the other, heat exposure contributes to sensations of fatigue, exposure, and poor health. Heat also encourages and obstructs certain movements. I am reminded of the practice of dancing and gesturing with towels and Maxime's effort to breathe away from his mouthpiece. My aim in illustrating experiences of hotness was to show that musicians do not perform in an atmospheric void but rather in a particular and challenging climatic environment.

Together, these portrayals of fatigue and hotness demonstrated that fanfare performance is a constant physical challenge for musicians. This is perhaps most evident in musicians' emotive expressions. Extreme fatigue provoked Beatrice's frustration and complaint; the controlled expression of sweat, for Celestin, summoned pride; and the inhalation of hot air goaded Maxime's anxiety about his bodily health. Moreover, we saw

[26] I discuss breath, exposure, and anxiety further in Chapter Five.
[27] Heat can also have detrimental effects on musical instruments (see Chapter Two).

that these corporeal experiences play into musicians' assessment of fanfare as hard work. In Part II, I consider the value of this work, and how working musicians make meaningful a musical labor that is difficult, exhausting, and poorly paid.

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Part II: Value

> Grumbling and sweating through an exhausting life, the colonized expresses himself or herself primarily in a fantastic language that, invoking both muscular strength and the power of dream, almost always ends up dissolving into unreality… – Achille Mbembe (2001: 182)

> This is a call for all [Africans] in their fields to do something to move forward Africa. We shouldn't always think about our pockets. You must well understand that you need to sacrifice yourself and the future will belong to you. Do not live without leaving your mark, live so that people will know that you have lived. . . . So I urge everyone, man, woman to think and return to our values, because it is the only way that leads to integrity and prosperity. – Jah Baba (Zoueme 2012)

The working musician

In Part II of this chapter, I move from a discussion of musicians' efforts, or what they do in their musical labor, to that of value, or what they receive in return. In Part II's first section, I demonstrate that my interlocutors regard fanfare performance as informal, part-time, and precarious waged labor that is undervalued in Beninese society. I show that playing in fanfares is one among many waged labor activities that musicians partake in to "search for money" and "satisfy a need." I then relay fanfare musicians' discontents with their employment insecurity and their unsuccessful attempts to organize and unionize.

The search for money

The musicians I know perform in fanfares for numerous and overlapping reasons, among them musical experience, professional development, financial remuneration, and pleasure.[28] By far the most common motive that musicians express is to earn money. Steven Hounsou, a trumpeter and university student living in Yenawa, told me that he plays in fanfares on the weekends "to search for money" (*pour chercher de l'argent*). "I

[28] I discuss several of these motivations later in this chapter, as well as in the thesis' Conclusion.

play for free at my church," he explained, "but I accept invitations for fanfare because those will give something. It's not a lot, but you can find some money there." The trumpeter Abel likewise emphasized financial remuneration as a motivator for musical work: "[Fanfare musicians] always have an objective. Either their objective is to earn money and improve their financial situation, or to travel and become a celebrity." I asked Abel whether a third objective might be pleasure, and whether people play in fanfare because it is enjoyable and feels good. "Sure," Abel responded, "that too. But really, the primary objective is to find money." Reflecting on his experience performing with an Evangelical Church fanfare, the trombonist Geoffroy said, "[The fanfare musicians] there do not care about music. They care only about money." I asked Geoffroy whether this was the case in other fanfares, to which he answered, "For the elders, [fanfare] is for money. It is always for money. But, the youth, well, they also play fanfare to find money."

"To search for money" and "to find money" are stock phrases in southern Benin. Money is something not only to be earned but also to be found, and people search for it in particular places. Fanfare work is most available in urban areas around Cotonou, Porto Novo, and Bohicon, where the population is dense and performance opportunities are more numerous. "People come to Cotonou to search for money," Celestin told me. "People are always searching for money. Fanfare musicians are trying to make money. And they come to Cotonou because the money and the business is here." Celestin himself moved to Cotonou from a village near Ouidah about a decade ago. During the week, he works nightshifts in a printing factory in the city center and, on the weekends, he performs in fanfares and his Celestial Church parish. When money is tight, he picks up

shifts at his cousin's tailoring shop. Celestin's positionality is representative of many fanfare musicians in and around Cotonou. He is a minimally educated adult without full-time employment who migrated to Cotonou for job opportunities.[29] He plays in fanfare on a freelance basis and in conjunction with other part-time work. Fanfare is one among many informal, low waged labor activities through which marginalized workers like Celestin search for extra money. It is an everyday labor activity in a broader gig economy.[30] The prevalence of poorly paid, part-time work in southern Benin is characteristic of urban areas in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, where societies struggle with chronic underemployment and informal waged labor is the status quo.[31]

Despite its prevalence, fanfare remains a low status form of musical work. Non-musicians in Benin referred to fanfare as "noise" and "music for the streets" and "not real music." A female market vendor I befriended in Sikécodji, whom asked me to call her Mama, used to tease me for hanging out with "the guys" and "the thieves" who "make noise throughout the neighborhood." When I had first told her that I studied fanfare, she responded, "Oh fanfare, is that what the people call it? I see the guys doing that. They walk down the streets and make noise and ask for money. But that's not music. That's just to make noise."[32] Mama's characterization of fanfare musicians as thieves reflects a more widespread social distaste for low-class workers who search, ask, or even beg for

[29] The rural to urban trajectory of working class musicians like Celestin recall those of migrant musicians and laborers elsewhere on the continent, such as in South Africa (e.g., James 1999; Erlmann 1996; Coplan 1994).
[30] According to recent statistics from the World Bank (2018), informal labor accounts for an estimated sixty-five percent of Benin's economy, and informal laborers over ninety percent of the labor force. In 2015, Benin had a national poverty rate of over forty percent.
[31] See work on labor, economic precarity, and social distribution by Ferguson (2015), Makhulu et al. (2010), Lindell (2010), and Hansen and Mariken (2004), among others.
[32] Fanfare musicians would agree that part of their job is to "make noise." I discussed the utility of noise making in public and the effectiveness of acoustic instruments and horns in Chapter Two.

money. Celestin corroborated the low status of fanfare musicians, saying, "The people do not respect our work." He explained that members of the public discount fanfare as "real music" because it does not sound like traditional music and "they are not habituated to the sound."

Fanfare's relatively low social status, particularly as compared to traditional and *tradi-moderne* genres, is a sore spot for fanfare musicians. David Akande, who is quite a successful freelancer in the fanfare network, frequently complained that people did not respect him and that his work is underpaid. "I am a professor of music, isn't it so?" he once asked provocatively, "But the people do not respect [me]." Joseph Mahinou, a percussionist and student at the University of Abomey-Calavi, provides a second evocative example. In a recent Facebook post, Joseph protested against critics of fanfare and justified his participation in funeral performances (Figure 4.11). He writes:

> You criticize me [because] I play under the tarps….. But you have a problem you know? Me I am proud of what I do to take care of my family . . . I do not know why [do you hire a] fanfare for the burial of your family members? Worse you want to negotiate the contract and you even look [for a fanfare for] free. IS IT YOU WHO [IS GOING TO] FEED MY FAMILY? My brother GET OUT OF HERE! !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

I want to underline three points in Joseph's declaration. First, Joseph claims that his musical work is being criticized and hypocritically so, since those who chide him for playing "under the tarps" (presumably of funeral reception marquees) also hire him to perform at their family's funeral. Second, he is proud of his work in fanfare because the earnings enable him to care for his family. Third, he seems frustrated that potential employers negotiate lower prices and coerce him to play for free—topics that allude to the precarity of performance contracts, which I elaborate on below. Joseph's statement is dramatic (and Facebook a histrionic medium) but his expression seems genuine and these

sentiments are certainly shared by other fanfare musicians I know. Even though fanfare musicians feel that their work is disrespected they continue to perform in the interest of earning money. As the trumpet player Isaac Zohoun put it, "One has need, huh. We do not have a choice" (*On a besoin, hein*. *On n'a pas de choix*).



Figure 4.11: Screenshot of Joseph Mahinou's Facebook post, which features a photograph of him playing bass drum and text in French. 12 May 2018.[33]

Financial remuneration is the primary motivator for working class musicians. Yet the money earned in fanfare performance is often shrugged off as negligible. Geoffroy confirmed, "You will not earn a lot of money [in fanfare]. It is just to satisfy someone of their need. The majority of the money [that I earn], I can't do a lot with it. I eat and it's finished. Or I buy some phone credit and it's finished." Given the meager financial

[33] This Facebook post is publicly available.

remunerations, I asked Geoffroy what motivates him to play in fanfare. "For the money," he answered, laughing, and then added, "It is also to pass the time."[34] Other amateur musicians similarly framed the money earned through fanfare performance as supplementary. Celestin told me that the money he earns from fanfare is "on the side" of his income from the printing factory; it is not enough to pay for rent, so he uses it to buy sodas and food. Uriel, a saxophone player, told me, "[W]ith music, you cannot earn a living. You can only do some things with that money. It is just small small."[35] My friend Maxime provides another example. He is a student at the University of Abomey-Calavi and receives a scholarship from the Beninese government. The scholarship does not cover all of his living costs, however, so he sleeps on the floor in his uncle's house for free, and then plays in fanfares on the weekends "to satisfy some needs." When he finishes his bachelor's degree, he told me, he will return home to Bohicon to find a job.

Notably, these musicians differentiate between "to earn one's living" (*gagner sa vie,* literally "to win one's life") and "to satisfy one's need" (*satisfaire son besoin*). Playing in fanfares is not full-time employment; performance opportunities are largely on the weekends and most musicians play only part-time. Correspondingly, musicians regard the money earned during fanfare performances not as salary but rather as something "on the side" that can "satisfy some needs." Maxime makes this distinction:

> To earn one's living (*gagner sa vie*) is not actual satisfaction but an avenue to win your bread. It is like a job. So the money goes farther. But to satisfy one's need…

[34] Geoffroy's mention of passing time recalls literature on experiences of waiting and boredom in stalled sub-Saharan African economies, particularly among unemployed youth (e.g., Masquelier 2013; Weiss 2009; Mains 2007). Yet Geoffroy's mode of passing time, like that of most musicians I know, is productive. No one actually sits around and waits, rather they get out, do things, and earn money. See Archambault (2017: 12) for a critique of the misleading narratives of stasis and waithood among youth in Africa.

[35] The repetition of adjectives for emphasis is a common verbal practice in both French and Fongbé.

> it is just to take something to satisfy your need for the moment. . . . I need to drink water so I take water right now. For fanfare players generally, fanfare is to satisfy a need. . . . We youth play fanfare because we have a need. It is cash that counts.

Also of note is that musicians use earnings from fanfare to purchase specific things, notably, food and drinks and other consumables. This practice is indicative of the small amount of earnings but perhaps also the idea that money that is not salary can be used for pleasure. Euzèbe, who has a wife and two small children, told me that he takes home his earnings from his job as a schoolteacher but keeps his earnings from music gigs for himself. He uses the latter to purchase clothing and musical instruments, and "to take a tour of the night clubs" (*faire un tour des boîtes de nuit*). Julie Soleil Archambault (2017) identifies a similar distinction between salaried income and income from informal wage work among young workers in Inhambane, Mozambique: "[I]ncome acquired through wage work was, to a large extent, used to purchase life's little extras rather than strictly for subsistence. The population came to depend on salaries to live (*viver*), more than to survive (*sobreviver*)" (2017: 46). Similarly, I suggest that my interlocutors conceive the income earned through fanfare performance as money that satisfies not only needs but also desires: as Archambault says of young persons in Inhambane, they are "living, not merely surviving" (2017: 16).

Performing in fanfare is both informal and precarious labor. Performances are almost always arranged through oral agreements; while musicians may refer to an agreement as a "well signed contract" (*un contrat bien signé*), it is not actually written or signed. The absence of legally binding agreements coupled with the low status of this particular musical genre puts fanfare musicians at risk of exploitation.[36] Agreements are

[36] For another case of the compounding of economic and social precarity among uneducated, waged laborers, see John Miller Chernoff's (2003) *Hustling Is Not Stealing.*

frequently broken and musicians are often "searching" for money that is owed to them. Maxime once told me a story in which campaign members of a prominent politician requested that his fanfare animate a political rally. Maxime and his colleagues arrived at the appointed time to welcome the politician from his office and escort his procession to the location of the rally. After over four hours of waiting and making numerous unanswered phone calls, they learned that the rally had been canceled yet the organizers had failed to notify them. Maxime called and texted the organizer daily thereafter, insisting that his fanfare be reimbursed for their time, and even went to the campaign office, yet to no avail. David, the leader of Fanfare St. Joseph, told me similar tales of "chasing money" from gigs performed. After recounting an upsetting instance in which his friend failed to pay him for a gig, David protested: "You see, no? You see what people are like here. They always do this. It's really not good. We worked, no? We have a right to get paid. They are just inflated men who think they can do anything." Stories of exploitation and hustling abound in the fanfare community, which stirs up pessimism and distrust amongst musicians.[37]

A final example of the significance of financial remuneration is my own experience navigating payment as a member of fanfares. When I first joined Fanfare St. Joseph, for example, I intended to not profit from performances. The musicians were doing me a favor by allowing me to join their group and I did not want to put them at a disadvantage by taking a cut of our earnings.[38] Thus, after my first gig with Fanfare St. Joseph in September 2015, I declined to accept payment. David, the leader of the group,

[37] I speak about social distrust in more depth in Chapter Five.
[38] Indeed, I was heartened to realize later that fanfares tended to earn more money when I performed with them; the presence of a *yovo* (white person) in a local musical ensemble was a spectacle pleasing to audience members.

had offered me payment comparable to that which the other young members receive, but I urged him to put the money back into the pool and redistribute it. David was surprised but accommodated my request. Later that evening, the trombonist Maxime sent me a text message to thank me for my "effort" and say that he disagreed with my refusal of money (Figure 4.12). When I attended Fanfare St. Joseph's rehearsal the next week, three other members likewise questioned why I did not accept money. "But you must work before taking money," Celestin said in admonishment, "And you worked, so you must take. You are among us." From then on, I was obliged to accept payment for each performance, albeit a small percentage. My experience in other fanfares was similar. The pressure put on me to accept money, as I see it, reflects musicians' understanding of fanfare as waged labor as well as their sense of the injustice of working and not being paid.

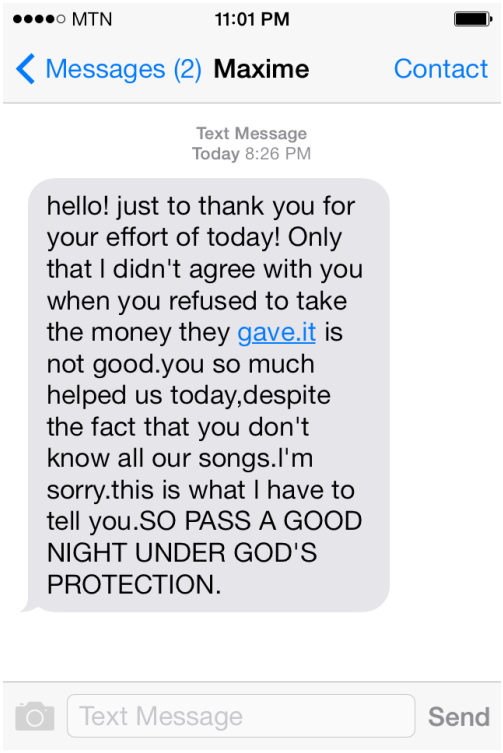


Figure 4.12: Maxime's text message expressing his disagreement. 21 September 2015.

These selected examples demonstrate that fanfare performance is a form of informal, waged labor. Its laborers are working class musicians (or worker-musicians), and its remuneration is meager and at times precarious. Notably, fanfare is not a leisure activity. Fanfare is indeed a musical practice with associated aesthetic experiences but musicians' motivations for participating in it are primarily economic. Fanfare musicians do not have accumulated resources, financial or otherwise, to support unwaged cultural production. Rather, musicians rely on income earned during performances to supplement their salaried job—if indeed they have one—and to satisfy basic needs. This particular musical practice is, above all, a form of work.

The Federation of Fanfares

To further illustrate the notion of fanfare as labor, I want to briefly highlight my interlocutors' recent efforts to form labor collectives and government-recognized labor unions. In the face of job insecurity, fanfare musicians have sought to secure benefits through the formation of informal collectives of workers. These collectives—variously called associations, organizations, collectives, societies, and unions—are not legally recognized labor unions. Rather, they are unofficial collectives within circumscribed areas, usually neighborhoods and villages, whose membership is optional. Euzèbe explained that there is a Union of Fanfares in Godomey, a suburban neighborhood to the west of Cotonou, and a Union of Fanfares in Akpapa, the area east of the Cotonou Lagoon. These unions collect dues from participating fanfares and provide small

insurance policies for fanfare workers who become sick.[39] Yet Euzèbe complained that these unions "do not function," and that the leaders "eat all of the money" and do not support the members.

In the past five years or so, prominent members of the fanfare and brass band community have attempted to bring together these smaller collectives under an umbrella organization: the Federation of Fanfares (*la Fédération des Fanfares*). The idea is that, with power in numbers, the Ministry of Culture will formally recognize the Federation as a labor union and fanfare musicians can at last secure benefits and be protected by labor laws. As of 2016, the Federation of Fanfares had formed but was not yet officially recognized by Benin's Ministry of Culture. The Federation had two branches representing two of Benin's southern zones, each one headed by an Ahouandjinou brother.[40] Magloire Ahouandjinou leads the Federation branch that represents Cotonou; he is a former member of Gangbé Brass Band and the current leader of Viviola, an afro-funk ensemble, and Fanfare Onola. In an interview, Magloire explained the need for the Federation of Fanfares. I offer an extended excerpt of our conversation:

> Me: Why did you form the Federation of Fanfares?
> Magloire: There are already several Federations within the Ministry of Culture. There is the Federation of Musicians, the Federation of Plastic Arts, and the Federation for Dance and Theatre, and others. But there is not a Federation of Fanfares.
> Me: Why not join the Federation of Fanfares with the Federation of Musicians? Fanfare musicians (*les fanfaristes*) are musicians, too, are they not?
> Magloire: A great question. And the answer is because fanfare is not valued enough in Benin and people do not consider them as musicians. That is why the tradition is devalued and degraded and fanfare musicians do not get paid enough money for

[39] Other scholars have documented labor collectives among musicians and artisanal workers in African societies, such as those among Mande musicians (Charry 2000) and Mande blacksmiths (McNaughton 1993), and isicathamiya musicians in South Africa (Erlmann 1996).
[40] Magloire Ahouandjinou heads the Federation of Fanfares for the Atlantique-Littoral region, which encompasses Cotonou. Rock and Mathieu Ahouandjinou head the Federation representing Oueme-Plateau, which includes Porto Novo. There was also talk of forming a branch to represent Mono-Couffo, which includes Ouidah.

their work. Contracts are broken. And much of this is the fault of the fanfares themselves, because they do not value their own work and they do not act professionally, or dress professionally, or even insist on contracts. They let themselves be treated poorly. People do not think they are real musicians. So that is why fanfares need their own Federation, to help develop the tradition and bring attention to the problem. If they were to join the Federation of Musicians, they would get lost.

But when you look at the work fanfares do, they actually work much more and much harder than musicians in orchestras or jazzmen! One can make a comparison. When an orchestra like Viviola plays a gig, at the French Cultural Center for example, it is one hour, maybe two hours long. That is normal. Concerts in Europe are just one hour. And do you know how much these single musicians are paid for just one or two hours of work? Anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 CFA (46 to 77 USD). Just for one hour!

But a fanfare, for example, they are a group of seven or ten musicians, and they go to work at funerals and they play for a long, long time. They are at the house at night time when people come to visit the corpse, they are there at 5am in the morning to escort the corpse from the morgue, they are at the church, they are at the wake, they are at the reception. They must play for at least ten hours! They play for ten hours and they don't even have proper shoes. They wear sandals! And how much do they get paid? Maybe just 15,000 or 20,000 CFA (23 to 31 USD) for everybody! Plus the little money that people give them during their performances, but that amounts to nothing. If a single fanfare musician earns 10,000 or 15,000 CFA (15 to 23 USD) for a funeral, that is a really, really good performance. That is really a lot of money. And that happens very rarely.

So you see the problem. Fanfare is not valued as real music and people are underpaid. But fanfare musicians work as hard as other musicians, even harder, and many fanfare musicians are men who are fathers and who are the heads of their family. They depend on fanfare to eat and to feed their families. Yet they make no money. And then what happens if the fanfare musician gets sick? If he cannot play, he cannot earn money, and his family does not eat. There is no support or security. And this is something the Federation can offer.

I want to highlight two points from Magloire's statement. First, Magloire insisted that the Federation of Fanfares be separate from the Federation of Musicians. His reasoning was that fanfare musicians are not considered "real musicians." The social disrespect for fanfare coupled with the bias of the Ministry of Culture toward *tradi-moderne* orchestras means that, even if fanfare groups were included on the union roster, when it came time for the distribution of funds they would "get lost." Unless fanfare musicians organize their own Federation, Magloire emphasized, they will remain at risk

of exploitation. This point underscores a wider struggle to valorize Beninese music, one measure of which is the receipt of Ministry funds. Magloire implies that if the Ministry of Culture allocates recognition and/or funding to the Federation, then the general population will value fanfare as a Beninese tradition, too.

Second, Magloire's comment brings attention to the difficulty of fanfare performance. He portrayed the fanfare musician as a hard worker, and fanfare gigs as hard work. "Fanfare musicians work as hard as other musicians, even harder," he claimed, drawing attention to the long hours and poor performance conditions. Yet their financial remuneration is significantly less than that earned by "jazzmen" or musicians who play orchestra gigs. Notably, Magloire characterized hard work by physical exertion. He made no mention of "intellectual labor" or "creative work," such as that put into musical arrangements or performance planning (although this work, of course, is also bodily). Rather, he emphasized corporeal and temporal registers, such as the physical exertions demanded at funeral gigs and the time spent. In doing so, Magloire implies that fanfare musicians do a different type of work than orchestral musicians, and that this work is comparatively harder.

In sum, this section demonstrated that fanfare performance is a form of informal and precarious waged labor, which musicians pursue primarily for financial remuneration. Yet this particular musical labor is often exploited, and fanfare musicians feel their work is undervalued and underpaid. Fanfare musicians seek security in labor collectives and unions yet, as of 2016, these organizations remain unrecognized by the Ministry of Culture and unprotected by national labor law. As such, the working musician endures both physical hardship and economic insecurity. In what follows, I

contemplate how musicians render meaningful this financially unrewarding and sometimes frustrating musical labor.

The value of hard work

Underpinning this chapter's narrative thus far is this observation: performing in fanfare is hard work. Performances demand a host of efforts and take a toll on musicians' bodies. In what follows, I relay my interlocutors' commentaries on the non-monetary value of this work. First, I elucidate that the physical exertion required in fanfare performance is an extension of everyday practices of bodily discipline. Second, I show that musicians valorize their musical labor through narratives of personal development and progress—concepts circulating in Benin's neoliberal economy. My aim in this section is to demonstrate how fanfare, with its physical challenges and meager financial earnings, is claimed and made meaningful. In other words, why musicians think their efforts are worth it.

Bodily discipline

As we saw above, some of my interlocutors understand fatigue as indicative of a hard working and healthy body. They defend purportedly negative corporeal sensations as familiar and habitual, and as indices of physical strength. I want to further propose that the physical challenges of this particular musical labor sit squarely within a broader pattern of bodily discipline in my interlocutors' everyday lives. Self-disciplining behaviors, I suggest, afford male musicians a sense of professionalism and manliness.

Modes of bodily exercise and entrainment are familiar to musicians the world over.[41] In Benin's fanfare community, there is a high premium put on physical fitness and bodily appearance. For example, Fanfare St. Joseph's rehearsals often included the regulation of instrument position and bodily carriage, and sometimes physical training and exercise. We can recall Monsieur Crépin, who adjusted the instrument positions of the members of Fanfare St. Joseph. David, the leader of the group, would also correct the posture and embouchure placement of musicians, and playfully punish people who were slouching with a swat on the back. His disciplining extended to physical appearance and presence, too. David often chided the members of Fanfare St. Joseph for not looking "proper." One day he stopped the rehearsal to complain that musicians were holding their instruments with one arm instead of two, and some people were wearing the wrong shoes: "There is too much disorder here! This is not professional!" he exclaimed.[42] David also seemed to enjoy delivering monologues about the values of militaristic order and punctuality. Once he threatened to impose a fine of 500 CFA (approximately 80 US cents) on anyone who was late to our next rehearsal, only to show up late himself.

Another example comes from a rehearsal I observed of IRGIB University Africa's music ensemble (called IRGIB Africa Musique). This particular rehearsal was led by a retired military officer and former director of Benin's premiere military fanfare, whom the ensemble's usual director had invited to "promote discipline" amongst the students. The military officer began the rehearsal with a stern call to attention and a speech about punctuality. He then led the students through a long series of physical exercises to "warm

[41] Scholars have given attention to embodied pedagogy (e.g., Iyer 2016; Hahn 2007; Le Guin 2006).
[42] David's reference to shoes harks back to Magloire's disparaging comment about fanfare groups that do not "dress professionally" and lamentation that musicians perform in sandals.

up" their bodies (though, notably, not their instruments). During the ensuing rehearsal, the military officer roamed about the room, correcting students on their posture, instrument position, and embouchure.[43] The officer was primarily concerned with physical appearance and gave little advice or commentary on expressly musical matters. After the rehearsal I asked a baritone player, Jude Soussou, if IRGIB Africa Musique normally began their rehearsal with physical exercises. He answered no and, laughing, said that the military officer was putting on "a spectacle." I asked the trombonist Geoffroy Whékpé the same thing. He nodded his head, responding, "We have to be strong because the instruments, they need strength." Geoffroy then raised his fist and flexed his bicep.

Regardless of the regularity of IRGIB Africa Musique's exercise routine, it is noteworthy that the military officer presented an understanding of a "disciplined musician" as one whose body is disciplined. The value given to a disciplined and ordered body is also evidenced in performance contexts. In IRGIB Africa Musique's public performances, for example, they present as a military fanfare. The members wear outfits resembling a military band, perform a selection of national anthems from around the world, and march in choreographed procession (Figure 4.13). In a similar fashion, Fanfare St. Joseph rehearses and performs two-by-two marching and militaristic call to orders. Such visual enactments of disciplined bodies display order and promote a kind of professionalism. We can remember Magloire's imperative that fanfares "act professionally" and "dress professionally," and David' conflation of orderliness with

[43] In brass playing communities, the embouchure refers to the lip placement inside of the instrument mouthpiece.

professionalism. A paradox here is that Benin's fanfares are not "professional" according to the local category; rather, fanfare musicians are amateurs with professional aspirations.



Figure 4.13: Abel Hounyemin poses in his IRGIB University Africa uniform. Photograph courtesy of Abel Hounyemin.

A further point to underline is that disciplined bodies-in-performance contribute to the production of affect. As Jude alluded, the spectacle of discipline impresses and an

audience impressed is more likely to show appreciation. A connection can be drawn between discipline inciting reaction or approval and what I wrote above about dance arousing laughter and inviting audience participation. Neither bodily performance is expressly about sound or music, but both make the act of music making rewarding for musicians. Both the disciplined body and the dancing body are affective and effective.

In addition to these discrete acts of musical pedagogy, modes of bodily discipline take a protracted form.[44] One such mode is the self-imposition of austere comportment and appearance. For example, around eights months into my fieldwork, I noticed that Euzèbe's behavior changed. Usually cheerful and chatty, Euzèbe seemed downcast, stern, and quiet. After a few weeks with the gloomy Euzèbe, I expressed concerned and asked him if something was wrong. "No, no," he said, "Everything is fine. It's just, I am practicing being reticent and introverted." Euzèbe is a French teacher at a primary school and he explained that his colleagues had recently told him that he was being too kind to his students. They told Euzèbe that he needed to be harsher or else the students would begin to favor Euzèbe over them. "Plus," Euzèbe added, "I am not a youth anymore. I need to learn to behave like a man." He elaborated that men do not have the air of lightness and happiness that youth have, so he is "trying not to smile." In Euzèbe's case, discipline is an affective entrainment that regulates both body and mood.

The example of Euzèbe draws attention the ubiquitous concept of seriousness, something of a catchall term to describe actions and attitudes that are professional and

[44] For brass musicians in southern Benin, discipline manifests patently in Christian contexts. As per the religious rites of the Celestial Church of Christ, musicians will not eat or drink—or eat very little—before church rehearsals. Celestial Church members say that one is meant to have a pure body during religious services. Indeed, one of the Celestial Church's strictest bodily regulations forbids women from entering the church grounds while menstruating or in the post-partum period. The Celestial Church also imposes rules on physical appearance and dress, which differ between men and women.

position one to succeed. I once discussed seriousness over lunch with Celestin. We were reminiscing about our performance at the MusiCaravane festival in Porto Novo and, to my surprise, Celestin offered a negative appraisal. His critique was that our group neither wore matching uniforms, nor had choreographed dancers, nor arrived together. Compared to the other fanfare that performed at the festival, Celestin said, Fanfare St. Joseph "was not serious." When I asked what seriousness means, Celestin offered an example of another ensemble in which he plays, La Groupe Adeniké. He explained that the group rehearses at the same time every week and is "very professional." "The musicians there," he said, "they want to develop, they want to work." Seriousness, in Celestin's rendering, is both a bodily practice and an attitude that elides with professionalism. To be serious is to be present, to be on time, to dress well, and to work hard. Musicians like Celestin and Euzèbe judge, and are judged by, their peers by the effort they invest in self-discipline and how well they enact the idealized persona of a disciplined man. In this way, effort and discipline cultivate a serious attitude and invite social respect.

Relevant, too, are self-disciplining practices around bodily consumption. Instrumentalists practice dietary regimes that amend customary nutrition according to the peculiar demands of their instruments and biological sex. Brass musicians, for example, claim that certain *pâte* (a gelatinous form of pounded flour, called fufu in Anglophone West Africa) and vegetables are good for "blowers," while others cause indigestion or problems in the abdomen or groin. For example, many men disavow sweet potatoes and certain beans, claiming that their ingestion (especially in large quantities) can cause testicular hernias. Brass musicians of both sexes avoid eating too much *igname pilée* (pounded yam) because it is heavy and hurts your stomach when you try to blow. Others

insist that certain foods should not be eaten at the same time. During the weekend performance with Voix des Anges Brass in Pahou, the trombonist Abraham stopped me from serving myself a plate of rice with *klin klin*, a sauce of green vegetables that is usually served with *pâte*. As I reached for the *klin klin*, he grabbed my arm and sternly instructed that I could eat the two foods in sequence but not conjunction or else I risked "harm to my organism." When I asked why he answered, "I don't know, but anyway it's not good for your organism. It will harm your stomach." I discuss topics of food consumption and sexual health in depth in Chapter Five. Suffice it to say here that dietary regimes are pervasive among fanfare musicians, and are modes of disciplining and controlling what enters one's body.

Self-disciplining practices also incorporate physical exertion. Fanfare musicians I know build strength and maintain good health by doing regular physical exercises, and often in the name of their musical practice. The trumpeter and percussionist William Codjo once recounted his morning exercise routine. He said he "prepares his body" for performance every day by doing strengthening exercises such as sit-ups and push-ups. Among the varied physical exercises are breath aerobics, including a series of sustained, deep inhalations and exhalations that relax his diaphragm. The muscles in your torso and lower diaphragm are particularly important for brass players, he explained, because they give you "force of breath." Likening fanfare performance to a sport, he said exercise is part of his job as a musician:

> It is like those who go to their job, like those who go to work. This is my work. I do this every morning. So, that is my job. The wind is my job. You must do everything you can that will give you breath because your work is breath. If you not have breath, you cannot blow. Even if you are a little sick, you cannot blow. So you must prepare your health beforehand.

In addition to his morning routine, William ensures that he is well rested, fed, and hydrated before a performance. "Fanfare is endurance, you must have endurance or else you will get tired," he said. Essential to the preservation of bodily energy is the practice of sexual abstinence; sex makes you "too tired," he explained, so he does not sleep with his wife for several days before a performance.[45] Harking back to my discussion of fatigue, the example of William elucidates how some musicians take preventative measures to avoid such experiences. Notable also is William's claim that preparatory practices are part of his job as a musician, even though those efforts are not directly financially compensated.

Discipline, in these instances, is a bodily regime. To be disciplined is to exercise, control, and work one's body. Discipline is also a musical regime; as William noted, a brass musician's ability to perform rests on their physical strength and health. Furthermore, I showed that discipline is protracted in fanfare musicians' everyday lives. Forms of bodily exercise and deprivation are familiar, which perhaps makes the physical challenges of fanfare performance more tolerable. Against this background, my interlocutors' remarks about the middling effort of fanfare—the familiarity of fatigue, the normality of sleeping outside, the habitual length of multi-mile processions—seem to be an indication of the ordinariness of these efforts and not necessarily their easiness.

Lastly, I want to emphasize the benefit and value that bodily discipline brings. As we saw, bodily control and exercise afford physical benefits, such as a healthy organism and physical strength. Disciplined behaviors also accrue social value; a musician who is disciplined is professional, serious, and manly. The examples of William and Euzèbe, in

[45] The practice of abstinence before a performance or ritual event has been described elsewhere in sub-Saharan African societies. See, for example, the work of Victor Turner (1975, 1969) and, more recently, the work of George Paul Meiu (2017).

particular, served to show how some musicians associate bodily control with a masculine identity. We can think of William's sexual abstinence and Euzèbe's attempt to not smile; part of being a man is having control over one's urges. Through such acts of physical exertion and even deprivation, musicians cultivate a treasured masculinity predicated on discipline. An analog is found in sociologist Lucia Trimbur's (2013) ethnography of amateur boxers in Gleason's Gym in New York City.[46] In the absence of secure waged labor and in the face of racial discrimination, Trimbur suggests that young men of color regard the physical exertion of boxing as a means of identity formation and a substitute for work:

> [A]lthough amateur fighters are unpaid, they consider boxing to be their job. They approach training with the insistence and purpose of an occupation . . . and they use pugilism to implement discipline, create identities, and earn respect from others. By engaging in amateur athletics, young men are able to see themselves as a different kind of laborer, and produce a new kind of work—bodywork—and attendant forms of value. (Trimbur 2013: 18)

Like these boxers in New York City, Beninese fanfare musicians cultivate a sense of self-worth through their physical exertions and practices of bodily discipline. This is particularly true for men whose bodily strength is culturally understood as a measure of masculinity. They conflate physique with persona. The physical effort of fanfare performance, then, has social value.

Formation for the future

The hard work of fanfare not only has value in the present moment. Fanfare musicians repeat mantras about the payoffs of hard work, claiming that struggle and even forms of bodily deprivation are necessary for future reward. An exemplar is Euzèbe's epilogue in

[46] Kelley Tatro (2014: 434-5) likewise uses Trimbur (2013) to understand the hard physical effort of punk music performance in Mexico City.

the video, "How to Make a Trumpet Mute."[47] After Euzèbe and Émile had finished their demonstration, I asked whether they wanted to offer final remarks for their YouTube viewers. Euzèbe, until then appearing blasé with his dark sunglasses and nonchalant pose, straightened his back, cleared his throat, and said:

> So I… can encourage the youth who [play] brass instruments, to persevere… that… it is with work that the big ones (*les grandes*) can obtain what they want; it is with work that can get you far; it is with work that you can make it out;[48] it is with work that you can also travel… I invite you to work, without rest! Work, work, work, and work always under God. Thank you.

Euzèbe's presumed audience is comprised of young Beninese musicians in comparable socio-economic circumstances; after all, they are watching a video about how to construct a trumpet mute from recycled plastic. His message to them—that work will get you things, take you places, and help you emigrate—is meant as encouragement and counsel. Euzèbe's resolute belief in the promise of work recalls a maxim circulating among the young musicians I know: that if you work hard enough, and for long enough, you will be rewarded. This discourse was especially prominent among the young musicians I know, whose devotion to hard work seemed unwavering. "If you work, really work, God will surely give you something," Beatrice told me. "You must persevere. It will work out," Ernest told me. And, in a Facebook post, the trombonist Geoffroy posted the phrase, "Work or nothing guys," to accompany a photo of him and his colleague Abel playing their instruments (Figure 4.14).

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[47] As described in Chapter Three, Euzèbe Hounsou and Émile Djoï demonstrated how to fabricate a trumpet mute with recycled materials like yogurt bottles and rubber sandals. I filmed the demonstration and, at their request, put it on YouTube. This video is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAV26YeGgC0. The remark quoted above begins at 6'32".

[48] The phrase *tu peux s'en sortir* (literally, "you can exit") has multiple meanings. Similar to *se débrouiller, s'en sortir* can mean, "to pull through." It can also mean, "to make it out," as in to make it in the world, achieve financial success and social status, or travel.



Figure 4.14: Screenshot of Geoffroy Whékpé's Facebook post, which reads "*Le travail ou rien les gards* [sic]" (Work or nothing guys). 17 October 2016.[49]

Months later, I shared Euzèbe's speech with Maxime and put the question to him: Do you agree with what Euzèbe says about work? Maxime's written response corroborates Euzèbe's position that work will bring future results and remuneration. Moreover, Maxime spotlights physical and affective payoffs in the present:

[49] This Facebook post is publicly available.

> For me, this statement is right. Because, naturally each work does have its remuneration/result. The remuneration may be positive or negative (depending on the kind of work). Then, when the work is hard, at the same time its remuneration increases. For a musician, a hard work is somewhat referred to his personal training. Which will be appreciated one day during a performance and make him/her feel happy. So a hard worker musician is forming himself/herself for a great glory in the future that he/she doesn't know yet. As far as physical exercise is concerned, you agree with me that it makes stronger everybody, not only musicians. But for musicians, they have to know the kind of physical exercise they should practice. Examining the goal of the physical exercise before starting, is important. Not jump into physical exercises because it gives strength. Some may be waste of time for them and make them feel tired. . . . Anyway I do agree with [him].[50]

Both Maxime and Euzèbe stress the value of hard work and work in large quantities. They also delineate hard work as physically laborious, emphasizing physical exercise and "work without rest." Indeed, Maxime suggests a linear correlation between effort expended and the remuneration received. Work's reward includes not only physical strength but also an affective payoff; as Maxime notes, it can make you feel happy. Importantly, both musicians emphasize that work's remuneration—be it positive or negative—is in the future.

Other musicians also attested that remuneration for their musical work is still to come, and offered this as rationale for their participation in performances that are not immediately financially successful. For example, Celestin plays regularly with La Groupe Adeniké yet the group has no paid engagements. When I questioned the value of playing in a group that does not make money, Celestin answered, "No, you are right, it does not pay now, but one day we will travel. One day it will give [something]." Likewise, David said that Fanfare St. Joseph's performances may not pay much now but they will pay off by way of future contracts. David's optimism is stoked by his understanding of fanfare as a genre that white people enjoy (see Chapter One). When Fanfare St. Joseph was invited

[50] I lightly edited Maxime's written statement, adjusting spellings for legibility.

to play at the MusiCaravane festival, David persuaded the members of the band to participate with stories of the wealthy foreigners we would meet there. For David, the potential of attracting a European manager in the festival audience was rationale enough to ask all members of Fanfare St. Joseph to take off work and pay out of pocket to travel to Porto Novo. Musicians' associations of fanfare with the West encourage their hopes that their hard musical work will take them to the exterior. It is fantastical imaginaries like these that undergird Maxime's comment that a hard working musician will experience "great glory in the future."

I also want to expand on Maxime's idea that hard work amounts to "personal training." In my interlocutors' discourse, "training" or "formation" (*la formation*) encompasses musical, social, and even moral aspects. Fanfare musicians most often referred to training to denote the development of musical skill and knowledge. The trumpeter Isaac Zohoun, for example, told me that fanfare "trains" young musicians by affording performance opportunities with elder musicians who "can share the good techniques." The trombonist Ernest Dagbo confirmed, "[Fanfare] helps with your formation. When you see someone do a thing and you think that's cool then you copy it. It, like, gives you ideas." The trumpeter Émile Djoï, too, said, "[Fanfare] forms a lot. It helps you exercise and play quickly. It's a training corner (*un coin de formation*)." Indeed, it is common opinion that playing in fanfare is good practice for the learning musician who needs to master the basics. In this way, some musicians find value in the learning experience of fanfare: it offers useful musical instruction even when it does not provide monetarily.

Musicians also claimed that fanfare "forms" in that it develops professional attitudes that prepare a person for future success. A good example is the entrainment of seriousness, which I discussed above. Through disciplining practices, musicians work to develop certain comportments that they believe will serve them, be it in musical spheres or elsewhere. We can recall that Celestin said the members of La Groupe Adeniké were serious because "they want to develop, they want to work." The formation of particular attitudes, like that of physical strength, can be seen as part of musicians' larger project of self-making. Musicians are not just leaning back and holding out for anticipated rewards, but rather actively developing and preparing themselves so that they can appreciate the rewards when they come.

At other times, musicians alluded to a different type of formation, one with moral connotations. The trumpet player Prosper told me that playing music makes him a "good person." When you play in an ensemble, he explained, you must learn how to work with other people. We can remember Ange, who said that fanfare performance requires "good morality and good technique." Other young musicians also framed their participation in fanfare as an experience that forms moral personhood. An anecdote about Maxime serves to illustrate. One day in October 2015, Fanfare St. Joseph performed for a daylong Celestial Church harvest festival. When we finished late in the evening, Mathias and the other elders in the group pooled the earnings from the day and allocated them in a distribution skewed to benefit the elders. Rather than receive an equal share, Maxime, being the youngest in the group, received the smallest—an amount too small to cover the cost of his transport home. Upset on his behalf, I asked Maxime why he did not complain to David. He responded that he must accept the money given to him, for it was his "place

as a youth" to trust the decision of his elders. When we discussed the incident a few days later, however, Maxime gave additional rationale. He said, "My objective in music is not money. It is evolution." The day that Mathias did not pay him enough, Maxime said that he developed a sense of what bad leadership looks like. Mathias behaved like someone "greedy" and "inflated" (*gonflé*), he told me, "but I want to pass him. I want to evolve."

Evident in musicians' commentaries is a particular constellation of synonyms: to develop, to evolve, to form, and to progress. This vocabulary reminds of evolutionist thinking and the civilizing language of French colonial officers and missionaries. Such colonialist ideologies persist today in Benin and their residue is patent in the enduring fetishization of things white and Western among the Beninese persons I know. Yet, as I understand it, progress has a different denotation in talk about fanfare. Musicians like Maxime do not speak of evolution in the sense of a civilizing eugenics or development in the sense of broad scale economic growth. Rather, they speak of personal desires and goals: the development of musical technique, professional attitudes, and moral personhood.

These are future-oriented positions encouraged by several simultaneous work ethics. First, they evoke neoliberal logics that emphasize productivity, self-management, modernization, investment, success, and hard work. As we saw, musicians framed work as an invested, a down payment for an eventual payout. They also derive value from work in the present: hard work "forms" and "develops" a person, and cultivates skills that have relevance within and outside of musical contexts. Musicians are willing to work hard in order to progress. At the same time that neoliberalism looms large, a Protestant work ethic drives musicians to be self-sacrificial, to aestheticize the narrative of struggle.

As Jah Baba, a well-known popular musician and brass player living in Cotonou, professed, "We shouldn't always think about our pockets. You must well understand that you need to sacrifice yourself and the future will belong to you." Thus the value of work exceeds economic exchange.

Yet my interlocutors' lives are not about asceticism or monasticism; they indulge in consumption, dream of excess, and anticipate "great glory." These are markers of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity's prosperity gospel, which tells that if one is devout enough and waits long enough then one will be rewarded. But my interlocutors do not only wait, they also work. Indeed, work becomes something of a substitute for devotional activity. Euzèbe urged young musicians to "work under God," and Beatrice assured, "If you work, really work, God will surely give you something." These interconnecting work ethics encourage Beninese musicians to understand their work as more than economic labor; it is also a narrative of personal development, and an investment in their future.

Underlying these religious ethics is a social logic about the value of hard work. To illustrate, I put into conversation Maxime Agbahoungba and Melville Herskovits. In conversation about his own motivation to work, Maxime recalled his childhood in a Fon village. His reminded me that his parents are farmers and, when he was growing up, everyone in the village worked every day: "Everyone has a job; everyone has their place. And their work brings them pride." He acknowledged his upbringing for "showing [him] the importance of good work," and the "role of work in society." Maxime elaborated:

> There is a manner of working in Benin. We work for ourselves but there is also another branch, a principle of work. We work not just to satisfy our family need but also to help friends in their time of need, and also our family in law (*la belle famille*). You must attend to your family in law before your own, at least [that is the case for] men. . . . Only a thief does not want to work. If I do good work, then I will appreciate the value of what I am.

Maxime postulates "a principle of work" in Benin that is tied to sociality and reputation, and rooted in longstanding communal values. Melville Herskovits (1938) does the same. In *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, which documents Fon social life in the early twentieth century, Herskovits observes a rigid stratification of occupations that mirrors that of social class, as well as an overarching work ethic that promotes "organisation" and "constant discipline" (1938: 29). Herskovits suggests that such social principles support individuals' tolerance of and "capacity for hard work":

> It is not strange, therefore, that this [regimentation of life] is reflected in the inner life of the people, where it expresses itself in terms of a ready response to discipline, and above all the acceptance of the stricture that the path to ultimate satisfactions lies in constant application to the task at hand. For the Dahomean, it must be understood, exhibits a capacity for hard work that is in striking contrast to the stereotype of the tropical Negro. How intense the application which the farmer gives to his fields, what long hours the iron-worker spends at his forge, and how constantly the weaver applies himself to his loom. . .
>
> Furthermore, this traditional view of hard labor as praiseworthy is held by women as well as men. A woman who sells in the markets often first walks thirty, forty or more kilometers to the centers of wholesale distribution where she buys her wares, and then transports her burden to the market on her head; or, arrived at the market at daybreak, she spends long hours selling her goods; while, the day over, there still remains for many of the sellers the evening meal to be prepared. Boys and girls are encouraged early in life to occupy themselves with the tasks that will be theirs when they are grown, and thus the ideal of hard work is inculcated. (Herskovits 1938: 29-30)

Like Maxime, Herskovits posits a "traditional view of hard labor" that praises long hours and taxing effort, and claims persons derive a sense of self-worth from their "occupational worth" (1938: 50). There is more to probe with regard to Maxime and Herskovits' suggested social value of work—e.g., whether it varies between ethnic groups or between rural and urban societies, and how it has changed over time—yet I introduce it here to make the point that Maxime and musicians like him venerate hard

work for multiple reasons. As we saw, Maxime rationalizes the hard work of fanfare with simultaneous logics: it helps him "satisfy a need," permits him to "evolve," signifies "the value of what [he] is," and will bring him "great glory in the future."

Altogether, the above sections on bodily discipline and personal formation highlighted why my interlocutors think that fanfare performance is worthwhile. Musicians say that the hard work of fanfare builds physical strength, fosters seriousness, enhances masculinity, develops musical technique, forms ethical persons, and promises future success. Notably, these valuations of hard work do not venerate financial remuneration. While amateur musicians may hold out hope for wealth, they also derive self-worth from their participation. As such, the value of fanfare exceeds networks of economic exchange. Through fanfare performances, musicians enact their ideals of labor and value: good work is hard work, and hard work will be remunerated.

Conclusion

To conclude, I invite the reader to return to the scene that opened this chapter. My fellow musicians and I are gathered on straw mats in Pahou, reflecting on the day's arduous work, analyzing the success of our performance, trading stories of deceitful middlemen, and looking forward to what the future—the next day, the next gig, the next opportunity for professional and personal advancement—may bring. As demonstrated in Part I of this chapter, fanfare participants undertake a complex form of musical labor predicated on a series of intersecting responsibilities, actions, and ramifications. As contracted laborers, musicians are tasked with creating ambiance—and, in the context of funerals, converting mourners' grief into joy—through the strategic deployment of sound and movement.

Fanfare musicians do so interactively: they playfully engage audience members through lewd and sardonic dances, and witty slogans and songs. These efforts are highly somatic and exact a toll on musicians' bodies, an effect exacerbated by Benin's sweltering climate.

As shown in Part II, musicians' efforts are encompassed within various systems of monetary and symbolic value. Despite the centrality of money in their stated motivations (and in their ongoing efforts to unionize), musicians seldom receive sufficient payment to make their labor financially worthwhile. My interlocutors instead derive benefits beyond monetized compensation. This non-material value can take the form of discipline on and through the body, as a hard-working (and hard-worked) body is indicative of a serious, professional, and masculine person. Value is alternatively conceptualized as a reward-in-waiting, a payoff destined to come to those who work hard and persevere. And for some, the received value from fanfare performance takes the form of personal training—the inculcation of traits desirable for an ethical and successful individual.

The value of fanfare performance, and the many forms it takes, is reinforced through moments of fraternity like the one I shared with the members of Voix des Anges Brass on our straw mats in Pahou. Our bodies ached and our feet were tired, but so too were our pockets full(er) and our senses of self improved. Our experience was not just of fatigue or frustration but also of pleasure and accomplishment. In all, I am struck by the way that effort and value follow not a single, teleological path, but intersect and—to invoke a term from earlier in this thesis—entangle. The hard work of fanfare performance is, at times, its own reward, a hardship-as-betterment narrative inherited from the

Protestant work ethic and reinforced in a neoliberal era where little escapes the forces of marketization. But when fanfare's many efforts overwhelm a rationale situated in the present, the future holds latent possibility. To borrow words from Mbembe, the "grumbling and sweating" of "an exhausted life" finds expression in "both muscular strength and the power of dream" (2001: 182).

In the next chapter, I continue my discussion of the body started here by engaging with musicians' anxieties about the potentially dangerous effects of brass playing on their bodily health. Thereafter the thesis' Conclusion returns to the theme of value by considering how my interlocutors derive pleasure from their musical performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Anxiety of Blowing: Experiences of Breath and Brass Instruments

Within amateur musical circles in Benin, one is told that if a male blows too hard into a brass instrument his testicles might swell up, fall off, or even run away. Concerned parents warn their children against "blowing brass instruments" (*souffler les cuivres*), telling stories of "testicular hernias" and infertility, and many maintain that male brass players must take preventative measures and attach their testicles with string. Females, meanwhile, are cautioned that playing brass instruments will prevent pregnancy and are discouraged from the practice altogether. Accompanying this unease about blowing out, and the potentially dangerous effects of the forceful exhalation of air through instruments, is a complement concern for breathing in, and the possible inhalation of microorganisms or poison through the mouth.

Abraham Oke, a twenty-five year old university student and trombone player, is one of many Beninese brass players I know who experiences anxiety about his musical practice. "There are stories, you see," he told me, alluding to the rumors that blowing into brass instruments can harm one's physical health, "and we cannot be sure whether they are true." Abraham said that not knowing "the truth" about brass instruments causes him to worry (*Je sais pas la verité donc parfois je m'inquiète*). When he entertains stories that playing trombone can cause bodily harm, he said he becomes nervous, his heart beats quickly, and he sweats. To calm himself, he will check his bodily posture, clean his instrument mouthpiece, and take care to not blow too hard. Like many brass players in Benin, Abraham does not let other people (especially strangers) use his instrument or

mouthpiece. If you are not careful, he told me, an enemy can tamper or perform sorcery with them and you will be harmed.

Abraham's worries are not unique. As I have shown in previous chapters, my interlocutors experience fanfare within a local context of uncertain knowledge and ambiguous histories, limited financial means and material want, and enduring unemployment. Musicians like Abraham—predominantly working class, minimally educated young males—perform in fanfares for the straightforward reason that they need to earn money, but also because they enjoy playing music and believe in the future payoffs of hard work. While playing in fanfares is often pleasurable, and occasionally profitable, for laboring musicians, their discourse and pedagogical behaviors also evince cautious and anxious attitudes.

Engaging with this anxiety of blowing, this chapter takes seriously my interlocutors' concern with the consequence of playing brass instruments on their bodies. In doing so, I join a chorus of Africanist anthropologists who account for beliefs and ideas that others might dismiss as superstition or false conviction. Here we can think of Luise White's (2000) study of vampires in colonial East Africa, Harry West's (2007) analytical (re)positioning on witches and lion-men in Mozambique, and Julien Bonhomme's (2016) anthology of African rumors about penis snatchers, among others. It is not these scholars' objective, nor is it mine, to verify or falsify people's beliefs. Mine is an exploration of social meaning, knowledge, and experience, not of epistemological "truth."

My main argument is that understandings of the precarious nature of breath are at the core of musicians' experience of anxiety. I begin by describing the operative terms in

the title: anxiety and blowing. This section brings together disparate literatures, including anthropological work on bodies and affect, interdisciplinary perspectives on breath, and writing on uncertainty in contemporary Africa. My theoretical framework sits at the interstice of the latter two, which I call "breath studies" and "uncertainty literature," respectively. By advancing attention to breath, the body, and anxiety, I hope to add a new perspective to conversations about affect, lived experience, and uncertainty in Africa.

The subsequent ethnographic sections—on blowing out and breathing in—present portraits of Beninese brass players next to contextual and comparative examples. I show how their experiences of playing brass instruments elucidate concerns for fertility, fears of witchcraft and contagion, distrust of other people, and a permeating sense of bodily insecurity in Benin. The section entitled "Conceptualizing breathing bodies" extrapolates from my ethnography to posit three empirical and metaphorical relations between breath and the body—relating, penetrating, and protecting—an endeavor that hints at a common phenomenology of breath across cultures. By attending to sameness, I am explicitly trying to not exoticize what may appear to be a humorous or sensational subject. In the final section, "Breathing anxiety," I bring together ideas about anxiety, bodies, and breath to show the value of using a "breathing body," as Tim Ingold (2007a) has it, as a device to think, and to advance breath as a site of meaning-making, feeling, and scholarly inquiry.

Anxiety and uncertainty

What do my interlocutors mean when they speak about anxiety? Throughout my fieldwork, brass players expressed consistent feelings of anxiety concerning their musical

practice. Musicians used a wide vocabulary to describe these feelings, including terms like worry or problem (*un souci*), unease (*être mal à l'aise*), bother (*une gêne*), nervousness (*nervosité*), and, most commonly, anxiety (*anxiété*). For reasons of the term's favor in local discourse and rhetorical facility, I use the word anxiety to refer to the connotations implied by these synonyms. Harking back to my conversations with Abraham, I see in his rendering of anxiety a quality of feeling that is subjective, affective, and directed inward. He *feels* anxious, and anxiety causes bodily suffering and personal angst. But it is also relational, situated, and directed outward. Abraham feels anxious *about* something, and his worries are triggered and assuaged by events and other people. Anxiety, then, is at once emotional and expectant, visceral and somatic.

Anxiety has been conceptualized across scholarly disciplines, and has recently featured in a robust discourse on postcolonial experience in Africanist anthropology. Drawing attention to scarce resources, limited choices, and indefinite futures, scholars have characterized life in contemporary Africa with descriptors like uncertainty, precarity, or insecurity (see contributions to Cooper and Pratten 2015), contingency (Whyte and Siu 2015), anxiety (Mercer 2014; Berthomé et al. 2012), ambiguity (Geschiere 2013; Ferme 2001; Piot 1993), nervousness (Gaibazzi 2010; Weiss 2009), and doubt (Shipley et al. 2010; see also Pelkmans 2013). This "uncertainty literature," so to speak, suggests that anxiety and its correlates are not idiosyncratic to confined ethnographic settings, but rather symptomatic of a pervasive social experience characteristic of postcolonial places, something akin to a postcolonial "mood" or "atmosphere" (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 3). While anxiety features in its lexicon of terminology, scholarship on uncertainty and insecurity in Africa is not really about

emotion or feeling. Scholars of contemporary Africa have been more concerned with how people navigate situations of uncertainty, indeterminacy, poverty, violence, and oppression—"how people think and act in relation to the uncertainties wrought by these conditions" (Cooper and Pratten 2015: 13)—and less with subjective feeling or emotive experience as such.

By foregrounding the concept anxiety and its affective experience, then, I push the uncertainty discourse a step further by questioning what situations of uncertainty actually feel like. I take my lead from Julie Soleil Archambault's (2017, 2016) recent work on uncertainty, intimacy, love, and affect in Mozambique. While scholarship on African youth often emphasizes uncertainty for the future, eliding the "near future" (Guyer 2007) or the experiential and affective elements of the present, Archambault explores an affective level that gets at the experiential, embodied, relational, and spatialized aspects of structural uncertainty. Thinking with anxiety—much like with intimacy and love—means paying attention to the affective, sensorial, and bodily dimensions of experience, and subjective emotions and feelings—arguably, exactly that which literature on uncertainty misses.

Les souffleurs du Bénin

My attention to breath, like anxiety, comes out of the discourse of my interlocutors. Breath (*le souffle*) and blowing (*souffler*, *soufflant*) feature centrally in brass instrument practice and in musical vocabularies. In Benin, brass players are commonly referred to as "blowers" (*les souffleurs*) or "wind players" (*les ventistes*). It is said that good brass players "blow well" (*il souffle bien*) or have "strong breath" (*un fort souffle*) and that bad

brass players "blow weakly" or poorly (*il souffle faiblement*), intimating an elision of breath control, bodily strength, and evaluations of musicianship. In musical contexts, "to blow" differs from "to exhale" (*exhaler*) in that it denotes the bodily skill of projecting air through a musical instrument to produce sound. Whereas exhalation is often involuntary, non-directional, and relaxed, blowing exceeds exhalation in its intention, direction, and force. Outside of musical vocabularies, too, expressions about breath abound: *ça me coupe ma souffle* (that takes my breath away)*, avoir du souffle* (to have breath, endurance or strength), *le souffle de vie* (the breath of life), *un souffle divin* (a divine intervention or a miracle), *souffler quelque chose* (to steal something), *manquer de souffle* (to lack inspiration), *il est gonflé* (literally, he is inflated or swollen, to refer to someone who is corrupt), and so on.

Such idioms of breath, which appear in French as well as indigenous languages in Benin, point to the utility of breath as metaphor. Yet, as my interlocutors' narratives will illustrate, brass players do not only speak about breath metaphorically. Remembering anthropologist Harry West's (2007: 5) reflexive consideration of metaphor and truth, I am careful to not dismiss my interlocutors' "anxiety of blowing" as metaphorical. Rather, I heed my interlocutors' conviction that breath and the act of breathing can cause bodily harm. Like them, I conceptualize breath as a tangible medium that works quite literally.

This theorization of breath contributes to a burgeoning area of scholarship we might call breath studies. Since anthropology's sensory turn (see Porcello et al. 2010), attention to sensorial experience has expanded to address environments, atmospheres, materiality, and the intersensorial. Out of these thematic directions, sensorial mediums that connect human bodies to their environments, such as air and its corollaries wind and

breath, emerge as rich sites for studying experience and meaning (e.g., Lovatt 2017; Crawley 2016; Kittler 2013; Hsu and Low 2007). Working in the interstice between anthropology and geography, Tim Ingold (2010, 2007a) produces, from my perspective, some of the most creative thinking about breath. By bringing bodily processes and body-environment relationships into focus, Ingold invites scholars to attend to the mediums—particularly air and breath—through which bodies and materials (or musician and musical instrument) interact.

The following narrative sections attend to the centrality of breath in my interlocutors' discourse. I highlight the experiences of three people in particular—William, Beatrice, and David—to illustrate brass players' cautious behaviors, self-surveillance, and sense of bodily insecurity. I consider musicians' affective experience of breathing in the world around them and suggest that their sensorial experience of breath is an instance of an affective experience of anxiety. At the same time, I lend credence to an otherwise sensational subject by showing that associations are made between breath, musical instruments, fertility, bodies, and health the world over.

Testicles, wombs, and beliefs about blowing out

Early on in my fieldwork, I was told that if a man blows too hard into a trumpet, his testicles might swell up and fall off. Not only can blowing into brass instruments cause trouble in the testicular region, it can also make a woman infertile, or cause digestive problems, or turn your lips different colors, or make your teeth fall out. What were these stories about? Did brass players take them to be true, or were they just rumors?

Eventually I worked up the courage to ask my friend William about his testicles. William is a skilled trumpet player in his early forties and I trusted him as a knowledgeable musician. "If you blow too hard, can your testicles really swell up?" I asked. William answered with an emphatic yes. Blowing is a strenuous physical exercise, he insisted. Although blowing hard is necessary, he told me—for in Benin, a good brass player is a loud brass player—blowing too forcefully can cause stomach trouble, testicular discomfort, or, at worse, infertility. William explained that blowing into brass instruments demands a great force of air, whose source begins deep within the abdomen and surges through the upper chest and exits through the mouth. "If you have a sickness in the testicles you cannot play," he said, gesturing toward his lower abdomen and groin, "because the breath comes from here." If your muscles are not prepared, or not strong enough, the effort of expulsing air from the body can cause strain and "sicknesses": "One must be careful, if not one might blow a hernia" (*Il faut faire attention, sinon on peut souffler une hernie*).[1]

To ensure such a fate does not befall him, William takes precautions. He said he is careful to maintain a relaxed stance when he plays the trumpet, and he practices breathing deeply and without tension. William told me that "good breath" comes from the abdomen and lower stomach, whereas "bad breath" comes from the chest and sides of one's torso. He went on to say that blowing with force is not good, as it makes you tired and can produce an ugly sound—relaxed breathing is key. To produce a "round" and "sweet" sound, he said, one must blow steady air through an open mouth with the tongue kept low. Like many of my interlocutors, William points to a correlation between the

[1] Here William refers to an inguinal hernia, or hernia of the groin, which in southern Benin is colloquially called a "testicular hernia" or "genital hernia."

body parts engaged in breathing and the quality of resultant sounds. Moreover, William often practices his trumpet sitting down, so as to relieve his genitals from suffering both the force of blowing and the force of gravity. Yet, during long performances that demand hours on his feet, such as funeral caravans or church concerts, William wears close-fitting underwear that holds his testicles tight against his groin.

William also takes care to prepare his body before a performance: he gets ample sleep, stretches his muscles, and abstains from sexual intercourse. The physical effort of intercourse, he explained, exhausts you and expends your breath:

> If you are a man, you must not sleep with women too much. It is not illegal. But men, when we make love we work all the time, and when you are done working, you are out of breath. That makes you tired. Same thing if you are a woman. You must not sleep with men too much. You must not make love too much… Because wind, that is breath. Because if you do not have breath, you cannot blow.

Abstinence alone, however, is not enough to preserve breath. Brass musicians must also expand their breathing capacity through sport and physical exercise. William elaborated:

> A brass player must play sport. Every morning! You must play sport to have breath. It is like those who go to work. This is my work. The breath is my job. You must do everything you can that will give you breath. Because your work is breath. If you do not have breath, you cannot blow. Even if you are a little sick, you cannot blow. You must prepare your health beforehand.

William's precautionary and preparatory measures underscore his attention to his bodily health, and specifically his body's capacity to blow. In his portrait of the working musician, breath is both a lifeline and a livelihood, and good breath is a synecdoche for health and skill. To speak of a healthy body is to speak of a body that breathes and blows.

These precautions notwithstanding, William conducts routine check-ups on his genitals to ensure they are functioning correctly when he plays. William described his routine: he disrobes, stands before a full-length mirror, spreads his legs, breathes in

deeply, and blows long tones on his trumpet. When he does this, William said his testicles move slowly up and down, contracting with each breath, but they do not enlarge or become swollen. William assured me that this means his testicles are healthy and functioning properly, and went on to boast that he has five children and is "very fertile."

William's dramatic description of his testicle check-up, and less-than-subtle references to his fertility and my marital status, made me question his intentions in telling me these stories. I doubted whether the concerns he voiced for his bodily health were sincere. Perhaps this was merely an opportunity to boast about his virility; perhaps he was just putting on a show for a young, female anthropologist. Yet the following year, after our friendship had grown stronger, William disclosed that he suffers from what he calls "a performance injury" (*une blessure de performance*): a hernia on the back of his neck, which he hides behind a wardrobe of high-collared shirts (Figure 5.1). William said the hernia embarrasses him: "I am a star," he boasted, "so I can't have sicknesses like that." He is not sure what caused his hernia, but that his trumpet playing, specifically the strain that blowing puts on his esophagus and neck, aggravates it and possibly makes it bigger. He also worries that playing trumpet might cause a second hernia in his groin, hence the meticulous attention he gives to his genital health. "I suffer already," he told me, "and I do not want to suffer more."



Figure 5.1: William plays trumpet at a Celestial Church harvest festival.
Cotonou, 13 November 2015.

William's perspective on blowing and bodily health is representative of the brass playing community in southern Benin. Every musician I spoke to during my fieldwork was aware of widespread claims that males must attach or bind their testicles while playing brass instruments, and approximately one in five male musicians told me they wear sports underwear (*un caleçon sportif*) when they play brass instruments. While most musicians do not believe the hyperbolic tales of testicles falling off or running away, stories of male musicians known to have inguinal hernias serve to caution others about their genital health. Fears of blowing hernias are not unique to Benin, and I have found comparable ideas among musical communities in Asia, South America, the United States, and elsewhere in Africa (e.g., Herdt 1994 [1981]; Gordon 1987: 9; Edwards 1983). LAcknowledging that hernia anxieties exist across cultures serves to dissuade

exoticization and preclude essentialist conclusions that my interlocutors' ideas stem from a *uniquely* African imagination (see Agawu 2016a: 14-9 for this caution).

Masculinity and virility

I understand William's fear of inguinal hernias within a social context that predicates ideas of masculinity on sexual reproduction and virility, and pits them against homosexuality and impotence. For one, William's concern for his testicles draws attention to public concern for virility and sexual health. Medical research shows that societies in sub-Saharan Africa have the highest rates of inguinal hernias in the world (Beard et al. 2015). Due to a lack of surgical resources and high cost of treatment, many individuals do not undergo corrective surgery. Inguinal hernias are especially risky if left untreated and can cause infertility. My interviews with French and Beninese medical professionals in Cotonou confirmed that many people believe forceful blowing can cause hernias in the lower diaphragm and groin. Against this background, the locally circulated stories of testicles swelling up and running away can be read as colorful allegories for inguinal hernias. These stories serve to warn young brass players of the health risks of hernias and simultaneously reproduce social valuations of male virility.

Other scholars have suggested that social valuations of sexual health play out in symbolic imaginations of the body in African popular culture. Achille Mbembe, for one, illustrates how figurations of a corrupt and ineffectual postcolonial state often take the form of amplified, corpulent, vulgar, and impotent sexualized areas of the body, with a particular focus on the genitals, mouth, and belly (2001: 107, see also Shipley 2010: 108). Like these popular illustrations, William's sense of shame about his hernia suggests a

social milieu that correlates virility with masculinity and sexuality with power. The importance of virility to social status (not to mention male ego) was borne out during my interviews with male musicians. The trombonist Abraham explained: "In Benin here, you must have children. It's forced! If you do not produce children, you are unimportant. You cannot be a big man." My friend Celestin put it even more dramatically: "Without a penis and testicles, you cannot live. If you don't function well, your wife will leave you. You must be good down there." As I understand it, William makes effort to hide the hernia on his neck, and takes preventative measures to prevent one in his groin, in mindfulness of these social mores—he wants to be seen by others as healthy, masculine, and sexually potent.

The experiences of other male musicians I know confirm the import of physical health and appearance to perceived masculinity. Apollinaire, a well-known trombone player in Cotonou, suffers from a cyst on the side of his neck. When I first met Apollinaire in 2013, he told me he was going to travel to Europe to have a medical operation to remove the cyst. The trip never transpired, however, and by 2016 the cyst had nearly tripled in size. When I last saw Apollinaire he was in near constant pain, as the cyst was pushing against his esophagus and breaking through his skin. He told me that the pain hinders his musical practice: he can no longer "blow hard" or for long durations, so he is forced to decline invitations for fanfare gigs that demand loud and long performances. But even worse, he said, is his embarrassment about "the sickness." He fears that his authority as a "big musician" is undermined by this visible cyst, and said there are rumors circulating that he also has a "testicular hernia." I, too, heard defaming gossip that Apollinaire could no longer blow and was probably infertile.

Fertility and gendered respiration

Female musicians also experience anxieties about the consequences of blowing. Beatrice, a twenty-six year old trombonist from Porto Novo, is one of only two female musicians I know who actively plays brass instruments in public. Benin's music scene is male dominated and there is a simmering animosity toward women in the performance sphere. Beatrice told me her parents and church elders often discourage her from playing the trombone, citing potential risks to her health. The most frequent warning she receives is that playing brass instruments will make her infertile and unable to have children—a severe condition in a society that defines a woman's role as child bearer and homemaker (see Falen 2011).

Warnings of infertility instilled in Beatrice a fear that playing the trombone might cause her harm. When I asked what it is about brass instruments that can cause harm, Beatrice shrugged her shoulders, saying, "Playing trombone is like eating food. Sometimes it does you harm, and sometimes it does you good." If you inhale too much air, she said, you might stretch your lungs and strain your diaphragm and internal organs, which in turn can "do something" (*faire quelque chose*) to your womb. Although Beatrice's choirmaster told her these stories are not true, and that it is safe to play the trombone, she said she is not sure whom to believe. Since one does not know exactly what blowing brass instruments might do to the belly, Beatrice reasoned, "one must take care" (*on doit faire doucement*).

One way that Beatrice mitigates the potential harm of playing trombone is through practices of bodily control. She ensures that her body is healthy and physically prepared for performance, and she is strict with her diet. Beatrice explained that there are

certain foods that are good for brass players to eat—rice, corn flour, and manioc—and certain foods that are bad—pounded yam, pork, and alcohol. To justify her precautions, Beatrice told me the story of a woman who "blows in the military [brass band]" who "contracted appendicitis" from not chewing her food properly. "After that," Beatrice said in a heavy tone, "she was forced to leave the trumpet." There are also foods males should avoid—sweet potatoes and some kinds of beans—as they can cause swelling in the testicles. William concurred: "When you eat too many sweet potatoes you will have a problem in the testicles. So brass players must not eat too many [sweet potatoes] to protect their testicles." In addition to her dietary regiment, Beatrice is vigilant about when and how she plays trombone. She neither plays in the mornings nor immediately after eating nor when she is ill. And, to avoid straining her diaphragm, Beatrice takes care not to blow too hard. She also told me that she would stop playing music during her future pregnancies for fear of harming the baby.

Like William's concern for his testicles, Beatrice's worry for her womb is encouraged by the importance of sexual reproduction and fertility in Beninese society. Yet, for the female body, the mechanics of blowing pose a different threat. The force of blowing does not cause an enlarged external appendage but rather strained and stretched internal organs. An elder trumpet player named Mathias explained to me, "Women cannot blow hernias because they do not have testicles." Like Beatrice, Mathias cautioned that female brass players must "blow carefully" so they do not "inflate" (*gonfler*) their organs. This divergence suggests that blowing affects the respective reproductive anatomy of different genders in different ways. Yet, at the same time, William and Beatrice's stories converge at where they think breath is located: in the

lower diaphragm or belly. As noted earlier, most brass players I know perceive the lower belly as the site of breath, and are attentive to respiration as a bodily function and index of health. This example prompts consideration of gendered bodies in music performance and the gendered nature of respiration.

Looming large in Beatrice's account is the theme of consumption. In her analogy of playing and eating, brass instruments are categorized as a substance, like food, that one consumes—metaphorically or otherwise—through the mouth and whose effects one ingests. Beatrice is able to draw equivalence between ingestion, inhalation, and playing trombone because she believes that their effects materialize in the same place: the belly, a site of consumption, respiration, and reproduction. Recalling J.F. Bayart's (1989) seminal theory, the example of Beatrice and her womb also hints at what might be called a gendered "politics of the belly": the idea that gendered expectations, social reproduction, and forms of power also play out in female bodies.[2]

Pedagogy and knowledge

The stories of William and Beatrice draw attention to breath pedagogy. Beninese brass players, like musicians around the world, practice particular breathing methods they hope will better their musical performance. Common practices I observed in southern Benin include repetitions of deep breathing, quick exertions of fast air, and the entrainment of a bodily posture that elongates the belly and chest. Musicians-in-training are taught to inhale through an open mouth and fill their diaphragm with "big air" that will produce a "round sound." Such discrete acts of musical pedagogy are entrained primarily in the

[2] See comparative examples of the "gendered belly" and the cultural meaning of wombs in African societies (Mate 2002; Ferme 2001: 171-96; Feldman-Savelsberg 1999; Boddy 1989).

Celestial Church of Christ. As noted in the Introduction, Benin's public schools offer little by way of arts and music education, and today the Celestial Church is the most prominent site of music education in southern Benin. Nearly all of my interlocutors learned to play their instruments within this church. While it is probable that the Celestial Church's musical pedagogy has its roots in missionary music education, my interlocutors did not draw this connection. Rather, musicians were more likely to relate their performance practice to indigenous instrumental practices.

Maxime, for one, told me that playing brass instruments is much like playing the *kpètè*, a five to seven note end-blown wooden flute prevalent among the Fon ethnic group. Maxime is himself Fon. He was born in a small village outside of Bohicon and moved to Cotonou some years ago to attend university. I once traveled with Maxime to his home village and he arranged my visit with Paulin Gansou, an elderly and accomplished *kpètè* player who leads a local orchestra specializing in the genre *tchinkoume*.[3] My conversation with Paulin confirmed that precedent for ideas about blowing brass instruments is found in pedagogies of indigenous blown instruments (Figure 5.2). Paulin told me that many young brass players in his village come to him for advice on instrument pedagogy and breathing techniques.[4] For one, he instructs both *kpètè* players and brass players to prepare their instruments for performance by soaking them in water. This cleans the instruments and helps them "give a pure sound." Paulin also stresses the importance of breath control and bodily health in his teaching. In both *kpètè* and brass performance, he said, one must "blow carefully" so as to avoid "blowing a hernia."

[3] See Politz forthcoming for a history and description of *tchinkoume*.
[4] The cultural understanding of flutes in Benin can be productively compared to ideas about flutes in other settings (Sarró 2010; Hill and Chaumeil 2011; Herdt 1994 [1981]).



Figure 5.2: Paulin with his *kpètè* at his village home. Abomey, 13 March 2016.

Like many *kpètè* players in Benin, Paulin is a *Legbasi*, or adept of Legba. Legba is a deity in the Vodun pantheon and the gatekeeper or guardian of entrances, exits, and crossroads. He is also the trickster figure—embodying humor, deceit, and sexuality—and is known for his prowess in music and dance (Pelton 1980). Legba is often depicted unclothed, with an enlarged phallus, and playing a *kpètè* (Figure 5.3). The overtones of musical agility, sexual virility, and mastery of blown instruments in Legba's tale are conspicuous. While many brass players I know are practicing Christians, the deities and culture of

Vodun are pervasive in Beninese society and my interlocutors drew my attention to these thematic connections.



Figure 5.3: Wall mural identifying a shrine to Legba. Porto Novo, 7 September 2015.

My references to indigenous organology and pedagogy serve to illustrate that the associations between blowing, blown instruments, and genitalia are longstanding in local musical practices. These associations seem to be independent of the material composition or origin of the musical instrument. Whereas the *kpètè* is made with wood from locally sourced trees (Paulin carved his own *kpètè* from a mango tree in his courtyard), brass instruments are manufactured abroad and made of raw brass coated with lacquer or metal plating. Brass instrument mouthpieces are likewise made of metal and while they are usually imported they are also manufactured in Benin (see Chapters Two and Three). My point here is that blown instruments and their mouthpieces, whether imported or locally

manufactured, share the same corporeal risks. Those risks derive from the manner of making sound on the instrument—e.g., the inhalation of air, contraction of the diaphragm, tightening of the lip muscles, expulsion of air—and necessitate the same precautionary pedagogy.[5]

The perspectives of William and Beatrice also suggest that breath pedagogy helps to manage anxieties around knowledge. Scholars have shown that, in contexts where local and imported knowledge frameworks intersect and collide, anxieties arise out of a paradoxical knowledge of too much, and consequent "not knowing" (Whyte 1997; Last 1981). This is also true for my interlocutors. As evidenced by Beatrice's indecision over whom to believe on medical and musical matters, indigenous musical pedagogy and imported medical knowledge afford competing notions of how bodies and instruments work. Musicians sometimes struggle to manage conflicting and shifting sources of knowledge authority on musical subjects. This is made clear in a conversation I had with Maxime about the difficulty of discerning "the truth" about inguinal hernias:

> How to know whether [the rumors about hernias] are true or false? You must ask someone who knows, like a professor or a doctor. But their responses are not often the same. We must choose, and that is why we sometimes worry. . . . There is a proverb in Fongbé about tasting the sauces of others, not just the sauce of your mother. You must ask many people. Everyone. You must always search for different responses. But how do you choose?

As Maxime suggests, the task of navigating multiple knowledges is itself a source of anxiety. Yet the stories of William, Beatrice, Maxime, and Paulin also demonstrate how

[5] This observation is a counterpoint to the instrument stories I presented in Chapter Two, which demonstrated that an instrument's material affects how musicians conceive it. Yet the distinction made here is between an instrument's material and design and its manner of playing. While musicians recognize the *kpètè* and trumpet as different instruments with different places of origin made of different materials, they also perceive that both instruments are blown. It is this commonality in playing technique that lends similar pedagogies and beliefs around the two instruments.

musicians manage their anxieties around not knowing—namely, through pedagogy and discipline. Beatrice feels secure because she knows what foods to eat and how much (or little) air to blow. William, too, knows how to blow and thus how to ensure his genitals remain intact. Likewise, Paulin takes care to blow cautiously and advises others to do the same. This discipline of breath assuages musicians' anxieties of blowing, and abates fears of impotence and barrenness.

Mouthpieces, lips, and the dangers of breathing in

Accompanying musicians' unease about blowing out and the negative effect the exhalation of air might have on testicles or fertility is a complement concern for breathing in, and the possible ingestion of bacteria or poison through the instrument. David is a trumpet player in his late thirties and the leader of Fanfare St. Joseph in Cotonou. Like many experienced trumpet players I know, David wears a marker of his musical practice on his face. At the spot where his trumpet mouthpiece touches his mouth, his lips are tinted pink and white. David is self-conscious about this "discoloration," as he calls it. He dislikes that strangers can recognize him as a trumpet player just by looking at him, and says that women do not find it attractive. David asked fellow musicians and medical doctors about the cause of the discoloration but their responses were different and conflicting.

Abel, a trumpet player and university student in his twenties, also has this "discoloration." Abel thinks his lips changed colors because he did not receive a "proper education" in trumpet performance. He lamented that there are no music schools in Benin thus many people play brass instruments in "an incorrect manner." Abel then pointed to

my own lips, remarking that I learned to play brass instruments at a music school abroad and my lips are a solid color. Playing incorrectly can cause harm—"Brass instruments really do have consequences," he warned—yet local doctors do not know enough about brass instrument practice to offer appropriate advice or treatment. In the face of this frustration, and for lack of other resources, Abel improvises his own medicine. He makes a homemade lip balm out of palm oil and other ingredients and applies it to his lips prior to playing. Abel explained that the balm forms a material barrier that protects his lips from the strain of vibration and prevents the discoloration from spreading. The balm is thick, however, and obstructs his ability to play. Plus, he confessed, he is not sure if it is working.

Anxiety around lip color is a common experience among Beninese brass players. Most people refer to the mark as an injury (*une blessure*) or skin discoloration (*la décoloration*), and there are a multitude of explanations for its cause. Some say that blowing too hard, or blowing incorrectly, causes the discoloration. Others point to low quality mouthpieces, blaming the Chinese manufactured brands that are imported via Nigeria. Others still say the cause is imbibing too much alcohol, or eating too many sweet potatoes, or inhaling evil spirits. Around half of the brass players I questioned about the topic alleged that lip discoloration is a result of sorcery. Lips are injured when they touch an object that has been charged with sorcery, referred to in Benin as *gris-gris*.[6] In brass instrument performance, the instrument mouthpiece is the obvious conduit for gris-gris. If an enemy gets ahold of your mouthpiece, David said, they could put invisible poison

[6] My Beninese interlocutors use gris-gris as a broad category to refer to all matters of the occult, whether enacted through sorcery, fetishes, or witchcraft. For more on contemporary African usages of witchcraft, see Peter Geschiere's work, particularly *The Modernity of Witchcraft* (1997).

inside of it, or perform gris-gris. When you go to play your instrument, put your lips to your mouthpiece, and breathe in, that poison will enter your body through your mouth. David told me he knows people who have been poisoned, and even died, as a result of sharing their mouthpiece with an unknown adversary who took the opportunity to poison them.

To avoid falling victim to sorcery, David takes precautionary measures. For one, he ensures his instrument is always clean (Figure 5.4). Before performing, he likes to "purify" his trumpet with water, a practice reminiscent of Paulin and his *kpètè*. David also regularly 'purifies' his mouthpiece in boiling water, and washes his trumpet with special formulas to rid the interior of dirt, bacteria, fungus, and poison. He is known for his homemade cleaning formula composed of water, lemon, palm oil, and other secret ingredients, and he sells it to other brass players. Furthermore, David carries his mouthpiece on his person at all times and refuses to loan it to anyone, not even close friends. There is an overwhelming consensus amongst brass instrumentalists in Benin that mouthpieces are intensely private objects. Every Beninese brass player I know meticulously guards his or her mouthpiece from the reach of others, both to prevent their mouthpiece from being stolen and to protect themselves from witchcraft. Musicians also use prayer and material charms (which are sometimes attached to musical instruments) as safeguards against sorcery (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.4: David cleans his trumpet with a plastic water sachet during a performance by Fanfare St. Joseph at a funeral reception. Allada, 31 October 2015.



Figure 5.5: Yellow tassels from Celestial Church robes decorate and protect a trumpet owned by a Celestial musician. Cotonou, 11 March 2016.

Germs and mold

Motivating musicians' concerns for mouthpieces and lips are various potential dangers of breathing in. Germs, mold, and bacteria to which instruments can play host pose one such hazard. Celestin, a thirty-two year old trombone player from Ouidah, told me that apprehension around sharing mouthpieces is caused by a fear of microbes and bacteria exchanged via saliva. Sharing mouthpieces, or playing someone else's instrument, exposes you to germs from other people. Cleaning your mouthpiece with water does not guarantee sanitation, Celestin insisted, since well water is filled with viruses. Even the ubiquitous plastic sachets called "Pure Water" sold on the streets in West Africa have

been parodied by public health studies for being impure (Osei et al. 2013). In the face of these sanitary hurdles, many brass players purify their instruments with holy water and/or ritually wash their hands before playing, especially for church performances.

Brass players are also alert to mold and fungus. Southern Benin has a coastal, humid climate that sees extended rainy seasons and, during the dry seasons, extreme desert winds and sand storms. Brass players in this geography are well acquainted with dirt, moisture, and mold. Players routinely wipe off streaks of sand and sweat from their instruments following performances and clean them with water and solutions. Environmental conditions also pose frustrations for instrument maintenance. Extreme humidity and dryness encourage accelerated corrosion of instrument lacquer, deteriorating felt pads, and crumbling bits of cork, and complaints about decomposing or "spoiled" instruments (*gâté* in French, or *e glbé* in Fongbé) are frequently heard.[7] Musicians make no assumptions about the physical purity of their instruments.

Beninese brass players place a high premium on cleanliness, yet concerns for sanitation in musical practice, instrument maintenance, and hygienic etiquette are of course not unique to Benin. In the North American and European brass playing communities I have participated in, too, there is an established custom of not sharing mouthpieces so as to avoid germs. As a brass player, I am intimately familiar with the repellent green slime that grows in the tubing of a brass instrument and, with a particularly strong inhale through the mouthpiece, can dislodge and relocate, nauseatingly, to the back of your throat. There is a whole ecosystem of gunk and stuff

[7] The French verb *gâter*, to spoil, is a direct translation of the Fongbé term *gblé.* The word "spoiled" commonly used to describe all matters of deterioration, dysfunction, ineffectiveness, or otherwise "badness" of things and people. This organic metaphor appears in other West African ethnographies (e.g., Ferme 2001: 177).

that festers and grows inside musical instruments and that one breathes in. It is perhaps obvious that musicians worldwide take exacting notice of germs and bacteria, and fall victim to them.[8]

Infection and contagion

Anxiety around breathing in likewise feeds on social apprehension about infection and contagion. Abel told me that inhalation invites any number of infections: "Sure, there is pollution and bacteria in the air," he said, "but you can also catch cancer, AIDS, or Ebola." In a separate conversation, Beatrice added HIV and Hepatitis A and B to the list of airborne viruses. While most brass players I interviewed maintained that HIV is not airborne, Beatrice alleged it is possible, saying, "One doesn't know" (*On ne sait pas*), and it is therefore best to be prudent. She elaborated that one can also contract HIV from instrument mouthpieces, indicating that viral contaminates reside in saliva as well as air. For Abel and Beatrice, the anxiety of breathing in is indistinct. Inhalation (especially in the context of brass instrument performance) puts one at risk of bacteria, virus, and disease at the same time.

In addition to viral contagions, brass players share an ordinary concern for unclean air. Maxime often laments the poor air quality in urban Cotonou, which poses a challenge for brass musicians whose performances primarily take place outdoors. During long, arduous parades and ceremonies, Maxime described, one breathes actively and deeply, inviting a wealth of pollution, exhaust, and dust to enter one's body. The air on the streets has been "worked already," he said, and is replete with carbon dioxide and not

[8] I am reminded of an article in the BBC announcing the death of an elderly British bagpipe player who succumbed to a lung infection after decades of playing, and breathing with, a moldy bagpipe (BBC News 2016, citing King et al. 2016).

oxygen. Maxime called this “hot air,” dismissing its poor quality, and insisted that “cold air,” which is fresh and clean, is natural and more satisfying. Maxime further detailed that because brass players often breathe through their mouth in addition to their nose, they sometimes inhale the air inside of their instruments, recycling the hot air they exhaled only moments before. Breathing hot air is harmful for your health, he claimed, yet he has no choice but to perform outside in the heat and exhaust because he needs to earn money. In these circumstances, he sometimes covers his mouth with a gauze mask or piece of wax cloth to filter out dust and air pollutants (Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6: Maxime wears a mask over his mouth as he waits to perform for a Celestial Church Christmas concert at Sèmè beach. Sèmè Podji, 25 December 2017.
Photograph courtesy of Maxime Agbahoungba.

Abel, Beatrice, and Maxime's comments evince commonplace ideas about the ways that pathogens are exchanged. In interviews, brass players told me that viruses are spread through saliva, blood, semen, a cough, a sneeze, a handshake, shared objects, or intimate acts like kissing. Their comments also point to changing ideas about germs and

human-microbe relations.[9] Contagions explode through networks of physical contact, and spread and circulate through mediums like water, bodily fluids, and air. Whereas infected blood or water can be avoided, exposure to polluted or infected air is more difficult to control. Moreover, Maxime's remark underscores public understanding about air quality, notably the relative insecurity of air in an industrializing society.[10] In an urban cityscape rife with exhaust and scares of viral contagions, deep breathing invites and exaggerates exposure to polluted air and invisible microbes, and brass players are made to feel anxious. This anxiety of contagion is particularly powerful in a time of frightening viruses in West Africa.[11]

Witchcraft, rumor, and distrust

A third perceived danger of breathing in pertains to social distrust and the threat of the occult. In the community of brass players I work with, deception is ubiquitous. Bandleaders fabricate group finances so that they can hoard a larger share of the profits, and musicians are mendacious about performance opportunities and industry contacts when it gives them personal advantage. Musicians will also disparage one another out of envy or, remembering Apollinaire, meanness. Such duplicity is bred by social mistrust.[12] Expressions circulating in social media and public discourse during my fieldwork

[9] Recent details ideas and rumors in Africa about viruses. For example, Durham (2018) describes how AIDS rumors in Cameroon reflect and generate anxiety, and Fairhead (2016) writes about cultural explanations for the Ebola virus in Guinea.
[10] Relevant here is work on health in urban environments and states of precarity (e.g., Nieuwenhuis 2016; Bickerstaff and Walker 2003).
[11] The Ebola crisis in coastal West Africa during 2014 saw much confusion around the cause of Ebola and its paths of contagion (Richards 2016; Fairhead 2016). Although there were no reported cases of Ebola in Benin, public consciousness and alarm resulting from the crisis lingers.
[12] Ndolamb Ngokwey reasons, "[T]ension, conflict or envy is fair game in a cultural context Beninese themselves describe as being one of basic mistrust" (1994: 72-3, see also Nunn and Wantchekon 2011).

illustrate a local context of public suspicion: *la beninoiserie* (trickery of the kind that only a Beninese person would do) and *Benin voilà !* (a phrase denoting the unexpected surprise of a Beninese person's trick or broken promise). My interlocutors, too, speak frankly about their lack of trust in the Beninese. With an air of warning, Beatrice stated, "Here in Benin, one must take a position" (*Chez nous, il faut prendre une position*). For Beatrice, to take a position means to protect and guard oneself against the unknown, above all the trickery of other people. She is careful with whom she trusts, regularly prays at the Celestial Church of Christ, and carries protective amulets on her body. She recommended that I do the same.

A pervasive distrust of other musicians, coupled with a perceived danger of sorcery, makes for treacherous terrain. Prosper, a twenty-five year old trumpet player living outside of Cotonou, fell victim to sorcery in early 2015. Prosper claims that another brass player, whom was envious of his musical ability, poisoned his plate of food at the reception of a church concert. After eating, Prosper became terribly ill and his stomach swelled to a grotesque size. Thinking he was suffering from appendicitis, he went to a local medical clinic. The doctors told him his appendix was fine, however, and that he had in fact been poisoned. He later underwent two surgeries at Cotonou's major hospital to remove the poison from his stomach and intestine. Prosper now avoids eating at church events and refuses to share his mouthpiece, instrument, or personal belongings with other musicians. He also dislikes holding hands, kissing, and other forms of intimate contact. "People are jealous," he told me, "so you must protect yourself." Prosper's apprehension around food, mouths, and objects—all means by which germs are shared—is grounded in a pervasive suspicion of other people. Such protective behavior is typical

in a social context where fear of the occult and suspicion of intimate relations, particularly those whom are closest to you, are everyday concerns.

Suspicion of other people is amplified by regional phenomena like rumors and social panics.[13] Julien Bonhomme (2016, 2012), for example, has written extensively on rumors of killer mobile phone numbers, deadly alms, and "penis snatchers." Penis snatchers, Bonhomme explains, are "strangers are accused of stealing (or sometimes only shrinking) the genitals of other people during a public encounter, often just a simple handshake" (2012: 3). The 1990s and early 2000s saw widespread penis snatching rumors and social panics across West and Central Africa, many of which resulted in the public killing of accused persons, with a case reported in Benin most recently in 2006. Clearly my interlocutors' stories about blowing hernias and poisoned mouthpieces are not rumors of the kind Bonhomme discusses; they are persistent beliefs rather than sporadic rumors, and they do not incite violence. Yet it is notable that anxieties about playing brass instruments emerge alongside enduring rumors around the occult, and social panics around bodily risk and sexual organs in particular.

Fears of inhaling foreign substances through brass instruments are further aggravated by existent beliefs about the methods of sorcery. In Benin, as elsewhere in West and Central Africa, sorcery is always mediated (Bonhomme 2012; De Boeck 2005; Favret-Saada 1980). Gris-gris can be enacted through objects that are touched or handled, or sent through mediums that the body absorbs, such as food, water, or air. An exemplar is the controversy surrounding the illness of former Beninese President Nicéphore Soglo. During his presidential term in the 1990s, President Soglo fell gravely ill, inciting

[13] There is a rich literature on witchcraft, rumor, and social panics in Africa. See, for example, Mantz (2007) on panics of witchcraft in the Caribbean, Durham (2016) on AIDS rumors in Cameroon, and Stewart and Strathern (2004) for an overview of the subject.

widespread rumors about the cause of his affliction. Beninese scholar Ndolamb Ngokwey explains that popular rumor alleged the President "was victim of a local mystical gun known as *chakatou* which projects all kinds of metallic debris, thorns, pepper, and sand into the victim's body" (1994: 69). President Soglo, in an interview with *Radio France Internationale*, did not deny rumors of sorcery but rather encouraged them, saying, "We are in Africa and one needs to be prudent" (ibid.). The death of the widely revered Congolese musician Papa Wemba in April 2016, shrouded by mysterious rumors of a poisoned microphone, provides an example from outside of Benin.[14]

Witchcraft proliferates in southern Benin and my interlocutors are susceptible to its misfortune in multiple ways. As David described, mouthpieces are mediums for gris-gris, but so, too, are food and air. Gris-gris is often invisible and undetectable, making it harder to guard against. While acts of witchcraft can be directed at anyone, my interlocutors believe that they are at acute risk. Not only do brass instruments and mouthpieces proffer material for gris-gris' manifestation, but also the manner of breathing with these instruments increases the possibility of harm. Furthermore, as illustrated by Prosper's story, musicians of particular talent invite jealousy—a vice said to motivate sorcerers. Because gris-gris can instantiate in multiple places, ways, and times, musicians do not necessarily know what makes them vulnerable. This ambiguity about sorcery's source adds another layer of anxiety.

[14] Papa Wemba collapsed and died while performing on stage in Abidjan in April 2016, sparking rumors that a musical adversary had poisoned him. The leading rumor—reported on Congolese national television—was that a stagehand put poison inside Papa Wemba's microphone. Papa Wemba then went to sing, put his mouth to the microphone, inhaled the poison, and died.

Conceptualizing breathing bodies

My ethnography shows how brass players' sense of anxiety is embedded in, and even encouraged by, a local context rife with threats of contagion and infection, fears of the occult, social distrust, and rumors and social panics. I find congruence in the ideas that shaking the hand of a stranger may shrink a penis, blowing into a brass instrument may render one infertile, and vibrating lips inside an instrument mouthpiece may turn them different colors; all involve bodily contact with an unknown person or object and consequential harm to (sexual) organs. I also see parity in the examples of the mystical gun that shoots debris through the air, inhalation of poison through a microphone, and breathing in of mold, pollution, or poison through a brass instrument; all entail bodies absorbing toxins—be they spiritual or viral—through instruments and via the medium of air. Like this, the world of spirits and the world of bacteria are not so far apart: both are unseen, airborne, and require a fair amount of ritual to placate.

These parallels reveal an overarching theme of corporeal uncertainty and insecurity. My friends' shared sense of bodily risk seems to me most acute in the precarious nature of breathing. Breathing opens the boundaries of the body, exposing it to the outside and inviting things inside, making it porous and permeable. As Ingold puts it, "Breathing in and out, one alternately takes in the medium and surrenders to it" (2007a: S29). Breath itself is also precarious—it can carry contagion or pollution or gris-gris. Breath, like instruments and mouthpieces, carries the risk of infection yet, unlike them, cannot be purified or safeguarded. Breath is intensely private but public at the same time; one is forced to share it with other people.

The emphasis on breathing and blowing in my interlocutors' discourse encourages my explorative thoughts about breath. In what follows, I distill experiences of blowing and breathing into three insights into the relationship between breath and the body. Reasoning inductively, these are catered to the particular experience of my friends in Benin yet also aspire to the general. My intention is to consider "blowing out" and "breathing in" not as musical practices or anatomical realities but as theoretical precepts themselves. By sketching out these preliminary ideas I hope to carve out space for further creative theory about breath.

Breath relating bodies

The first notion is that of breath relating bodies. Brass instrument performance involves multiple bodies: a human body—its mouth, lungs, and various anatomies—working in conjunction with the body of a musical instrument. My dialogue with musicians suggests that breath puts these bodies into relationship. There is a first-order relation, so to speak, of breath supporting the vibration of lips inside of an instrument mouthpiece to produce sound. But there are higher relational orders, too: breath flows through internal and external bodily organs; breath infects human bodies with bacterial ones; breath moves between individuals and through materials and around space.

Brass players' comments draw attention to both the corporeal and metaphorical nature of the breath-body relationship. The substance of breath, the stuff of air, is a physical medium through which materials and forces can be transferred and exchanged. Breath, in its corporeal capacity, causes muscles to tear and genitalia to swell. And breath carries particles of poison or bacteria, and feeds these substances into the body through

the mouth. Present, too, in my interlocutors' musical vocabularies are metaphorical relationships. For example, it is "fast breath" that produces a high musical pitch, and "slow breath" that produces a low one. And it is "big breath" or air in large quantities that produces "round sound" and loud volumes, affords symbolic power, and can index physical strength and masculinity. Compounding the corporeal and metaphorical are relations between the physical and supernatural world, formed and sustained through breathing practices.

The relational character of breath prompts thinking about materiality and actor networks (e.g., Miller 2005; Latour 2005). In this actor-oriented frame, breath is agential. Breath carries things, brings bodies into contact, and can even decide one's fate. The brass instrument, too, is agential in that it works to both amplify and distribute breath. The instrument itself is not animate—it does not blow or breathe—but it does circulate; it takes organic materials in and it emits stuff. In this bi-directional process, the mouthpiece materializes as the instrument's opening and, extending the mechanical metaphor, the spit valve emerges as an exhaust system; it flushes out the undesirable stuff. In this conceptualization of breathing into and with brass instruments, breath connects, puts into contact, and interacts with bodies. Whether or not one accepts that breath is agential, breath is always relational.

Breath penetrating bodies

The second idea is that of breath penetrating bodies. Present, too, in my interlocutors' discourse was an overarching anxiety toward things entering and disrupting bodies. We can think back to how people explained contagion and the ways pathogens are

exchanged. Poisoning, too, happens through various modalities, but is always inhaled or ingested or imbibed. We can also remember President Soglo, whose body was pierced by the poisonous materials of an invisible gun. Indeed, Beninese scholar Ndolamb Ngokwey argues that the efficacy of *chakatou* depends on "a belief in the vulnerability of the unprotected body to the non-natural intrusion of natural objects" (1994: 68). And we can recall what Maxime said about breathing in polluted air. Maxime sees the brass instrument as an intensifier of breathing; when he plays he breathes in deeply, sucks in hard, inhales more of the dirty air. The atmosphere always enters one's body but, in musical performance, the instrument intensifies the risk.

The topic of bodily penetration evokes analogous examples in Africanist anthropology. Oft-discussed phenomena like spirit possession, eating, and cannibalism also involve bodies being penetrated. Luise White's (2000) writing on historical rumors and gossip in Tanzania, for example, relays stories of "colonial bloodsucking" that portray vampires who puncture bodies with teeth, infect blood, and eat flesh. White emphasizes the vulnerability of bodies, particularly to spiritual and occult forces, the violence of other people, and hegemonic cultural inscriptions. Barbara Browning's (1998) monograph on metaphors of contagion and infection, and the supposed penetrability of African bodies, provides another example. While these cases span geographical and temporal distances, I think there is analytical value to be had in making these associations. Noticing that ideas and rumors about penetration, both corporeal and spiritual, are long-standing on the African continent and in the diaspora gives depth (if not detail) to the idea of bodily penetration discussed here with regard to playing brass instruments in Benin. Moreover, thinking about penetration as a cross-cultural concept

points to productive conversations about metaphor in ethnographic writing and social theory.

The capacity of air to invade and enter is exaggerated by the porosity of bodies (see Engelmann 2015). If breath penetrates the body through the mouth and nose, it can also be said to penetrate—in its sounding form—through the ear, skin, or other surfaces. The notion of sounding breath invites contemplation of things like sonic intimacies and publics, sonic force, sound pollution, and even sonic contagion.[15] Universal experiences of sound as bodily threat—even sound as pain (Heller 2015)—create possibility for cross-cultural empathy. It is in the relation between breath and sound where my interlocutors' anxieties about blowing brass instruments may become more intelligible to cultural outsiders; where cross-disciplinary matters of embodied experience, musical performance, and affect come together; and where I see opportunity for creative research.[16]

Breath protecting bodies

In brass instrument performance, inhalation is how the outside world of visible and invisible powers comes to bear on the body: breath opens bodies, penetrates them, and makes them vulnerable. Yet breath also moves through binaries: it flows inside and outside, both enters and exits, both opens and closes. Musicians not only inhale but also exhale—more accurately, they blow. While the risks of blowing are at the root of rumors

[15] The topic of sonic threat recalls scholarship on sound, violence, and harm. See, for example, Daughtry (2015) on sound in wartime Iraq.

[16] Future engagement with this subject might imagine what other sorts of atmospheric things can penetrate bodies. Here I am thinking about intangible things that move through airy atmospheres: sound waves, light, radiation, temperature, vibration, pressure, and so on. In the context of musical performance, the materiality of sound is particularly relevant.

around hernias and infertility, we saw that my interlocutors adopt methods of blowing that thwart those risks. This prompts a third insight: the potential of breath to protect bodies.

Pondering bodies both opened and closed harks back to Africanist ethnographies on bodily (in)security. Recall Bonhomme (2016), White (2000), and Browning's (1998) work on corporeal vulnerability, in which bodies succumb to strangers, vampires, and infection. This scholarship also asks how people protect and secure their bodies against such threats (see Browning 1998: 192). Likewise, I suggest my interlocutors seek bodily protection in practices of bodily control. We can recall William wearing underwear that holds his testicles tight to his groin, David guarding and cleaning his mouthpiece, and Beatrice monitoring her diet. These are examples of protecting the body by means of controlling how the body moves, and what it ingests or touches. We might also consider William's breathing techniques, when he stands naked in front of a mirror and watches his diaphragm expand and his testicles contract, or Beatrice taking care to not blow too hard and strain the muscles in her belly, or Maxime's evasion of hot and dirty air. These are examples of protecting the body by means of training, monitoring, and controlling one's breath.

This discipline of breath is a means by which musicians manage, and sometimes mitigate, their anxieties. People are careful, attentive, and well practiced; people know how to blow. Yet the compulsory act of breathing frustrates attempts to control the body. Regardless of how well we blow out, as humans, we all breathe in our environments. We cannot escape the medium of air because breathing, as an opening act, is involuntary. Air's latent potential for harm means that to breathe—to be alive—necessarily involves

risk. Rather than feel secure, or even nourished, in our breathing, we sometimes feel anxious precisely because we *cannot* hold our breath.

Conclusion: Breathing anxiety

In the world of Beninese brass instrument practice, blowing and breathing can cause hernias, infertility, lip discoloration, and even death. Brass musicians grapple with competing sources of knowledge and uncertainty about possible bodily ramifications of their musical practice. In the face of these uncertainties, musicians take preventative measures: they hide their mouthpieces, purify their instruments, apply lip balm, carry amulets, refuse food, wear face masks, and practice good breathing. Musicians' bodily anxieties are also intimately related to distrust and disquietude circulating in their larger social worlds, thus linking the embodied with the social, the personal with the shared. William's fear of hernias evokes a regional backdrop of social panics around genitalia and virility; Beatrice's trepidation about blowing is built on a shared belief that breath, fertility, and femininity all collide in the belly; David's concern for cleanliness connects to a local context of hygiene, contagion, and public mistrust. And in these anxious experiences with brass instruments, my interlocutors are not alone: far from an idiosyncratic case, their descriptions resemble instances of corporeal control, social unease, and musical discipline from other parts of the world.

Above all, I argued that musicians' anxieties center on the bodily acts of blowing out and breathing in. In brass instrument performance these behaviors take particular forms: to blow out is to intentionally and forcefully expel air, while to breathe in is to involuntarily and necessarily risk the inhalation of poison or contaminates. Blowing, as a

musical skill, is practiced and perfected—as William said, "the breath is my job." Yet pervasive rumors unsettle even those who blow well. Benin's particular airy atmosphere further exacerbates anxieties. As we saw, musicians worry about inhaling gris-gris, pollution, and viruses; spirits and bacteria meet in the medium of air. In a context where blowing out and breathing in invite acute bodily harm, the feelings and practices described here make perfect sense.

Reasoning from my interlocutors' accounts of blowing and breathing, I conceived three empirical and metaphorical qualities of breath. Breath is relational: it carries things and brings bodies into contact. And breath penetrates: it enters and disrupts bodies, opens them and makes them vulnerable. Breathing practices can also be protective positions—attempts to close one's body to the outside, make it less penetrable, more protected. Yet such bodily positions do not provide full protection. When brass players' everyday sense of bodily security is predicated on controlling what enters and exits their body, the loss of bodily control affords a contrasting sense of unease and anxiety (see also Carel 2016: 117).

The observation that the precarious nature of breathing nurtures anxieties about bodily (in)security inclines me to consider breath as an operative entity by which anxieties circulate and generate. I am left with the sense that all kinds of things circulate with breath: not just bacteria or contagions, but also rumors, whispers, ideas, feeling, and affect (see Mitchell 2011). In this rendering, breath reflects affective states of being but also absorbs or takes on those qualities.[17] Breath is *affective*: it creates series of

[17] In her study of breathlessness, Havi Carel supports this proposition: "Breathing is deeply and intimately connected to, and reflective of, our state of mind, feelings, mood, and sense of well-being" (2016: 108).

relationships, conditions feelings and understandings, sets up intensities.[18] And breath is also *anxious*: it involves an awareness of and exposure to the outside, takes a protective position, and has an expectant quality. Like this, breath exceeds air's capacity to mediate and itself constitutes a shared structure of feeling (see Anderson 2014: 134-6). To breathe is to create meaning, to remake the world.[19] My interlocutors are not only breathing in and blowing into brass instruments, but also breathing anxiety.

To conclude, I propose that thinking about and through breath is a productive direction for comparative studies in anthropology. For one, breath affords the ethnographer a concrete analytic. As a bodily act, breath is seen, felt, and heard. It has a routine and a rhythm (Edensor 2010), and is marked and unpackable. This immediacy of breath in sensorial perception is efficacious for ethnography in a way that affect is not. Whereas affect can be loose and omnipresent—indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose it is unconscious—breath is tightly bound to bodily experience and environmental phenomena. Breath's ubiquity in human experience means it also has potential as a comparative lens for scholarship (see Hsu and Low 2007: S8). As demonstrated here, an ethnography of breath can attend to the register of the particular while gesturing toward cross-cultural continuities. Anxious or not, we all breathe.

[18] Affect has been characterized as a "bodily intensity" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) that passes from one body to another via social "transmission" (Brennan 2004).
[19] I am reminded of an affecting line by the protagonist in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*: "A sigh isn't just a sigh. We inhale the world and breathe out meaning. While we can. While we can" (1995: 54).

CONCLUSION

Ordinary Pleasures

If there is a dominant narrative in African Studies from the past twenty-five years, it is one of crisis. This narrative is as familiar in the wider world as it is in academia, though within the scholarly community it takes particular analytical forms: underdevelopment, precarity, uncertainty, absence, alienation, vulnerability, displacement, violence, failure, corruption, oppression, neoliberalism, stagnation, Afro-pessimism. Negatives like these saturate writing about post-Cold War sub-Saharan Africa. In *Global Shadows*, James Ferguson reflects: "When we hear about 'Africa' today, it is usually in urgent and troubled tones. It is never just Africa, but always the crisis in Africa, the problems of Africa, the failure of Africa, the moral challenge of Africa . . . Africa as (in Tony Blair's words) 'a scar on the conscience of the world'" (2006: 2). Achille Mbembe, too, regards "the crisis" as the "distinguishing feature of the immediate present" in Africa (2001: 143). On the opening page of *On the Postcolony,* he writes:

> [T]he African human experience constantly appears in the discourse of our times as an experience that can only be understood through a *negative interpretation.* Africa is never seen as possessing things and attributes properly part of "human nature." . . . It is this elementariness and primitiveness that makes Africa the world par excellence of all that is incomplete, mutilated, and unfinished, its history reduced to a series of setbacks of nature in its quest for humankind. (Mbembe 2001: 1, his emphasis)

And in the preface to *Hard Work, Hard Times*, an edited volume dedicated to the disavowal of Afro-pessimism, Simon Gikandi (2010) still duly acknowledges its prevalence:

> [F]igures of crisis cannot be wished away. . . . Not even dreams about hard work in Europe and America will suppress the power of pessimism about the place of the African subject in the new global order. Where the problems are real and

> palpable, where violence and death are constant reminders of why citizens cross boundaries in search of a better life in an imagined elsewhere, Afro-pessimism provides a much more compelling metalinguistic code than the stories of development and progress of an earlier generation. (Gikandi 2010: xiii)

These scholars confirm that an emphasis on crisis, instability, and hardship in Africa persists—and perhaps for good reason. These are real and pervasive experiences for people in struggling economies and nation-states. To recall Mbembe's glossing of life in Cameroon, "Life is nothing but permanent struggle" (2001: 157). Another reason that the trope of crisis proliferates, as Gikandi implies, is that hardship is interesting to write about. Darkness, struggle, and chaos make for gripping narratives in academia and elsewhere.

But in defaulting to "Africa in crisis" as the dominant narrative, scholars propagate the trope of hardship's inescapability and fail to appreciate telling counter examples. Gikandi argues this as well, saying, "[I]f we presuppose that the African condition is one of perpetual crises, our modes of analysis will not simply be trapped in the language of catastrophe but will tend to confirm its existence" (2010: xiii). By deploying a vocabulary of negatives, scholars "presuppose an insurmountable crisis" and propagate the Afro-pessimist agenda (ibid.). To borrow words from the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the problem with the crisis narrative is "the danger of a single story" (2009). By telling *the* definite story of Africa, then, we wield power over African persons' lives. And by telling a story that is incomplete, we deny African persons humanity; we reduce their lives to a one-dimensional experience "at the cost of an extraordinary impoverishment of reality" (Mbembe 2001: 17). Mbembe, Gikandi, and Adichie all contend that the single story of sub-Saharan Africa "as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness" (Adichie 2009) is a form of dispossession itself.

Pushing against this entrenched narrative, numerous scholars have called for the reappraisal and reclamation of African stories. Gikandi, for one, implores scholars "to separate the signs of crisis as explanatory models from the lived experience of African subjects who may find life hard but do not live in the enclosures of despair" (2010: xiv). Nigerian author Chinua Achebe also made a moving appeal. In a lecture given at Harvard University near the close of the twentieth century, Achebe expressed this hope for the twenty-first: "that it will see the first fruits of the balance of stories among the world's people" (2000: 79). Its primary task, Achebe urged, is to continue "the process of 're-storying' peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession" (ibid.).

Over the last ten years, Africanist ethnographers have met these calls. Adeline Masquelier (2013), Daniel Mains (2012), Charles Piot (2010), and Brad Weiss (2009) all tell stories of African youth who bide their time through economic crises and unemployment, and sustain hope and positive feelings for the future. The contributors to *Hard Work, Hard Times* (Makhulu et al. 2010) also offer compelling counterpoints to an all-consuming crisis. Stephen Jackson depicts individuals' survival strategies in the midst of the Congolese civil war, and productive forms of "getting by" (*se débrouiller*) that generate "creativity amid volatility" (2010: 63). Mike McGovern illustrates "young Ivorians' ability to carve out spaces of *jouissance* in the face of diminished opportunities and real precarity" (2010: 90). Yet these analyses of survival and seeking fun are still set within a framework of hardship, as the volume's title makes clear.

Some Africanist ethnographers have sought to redress the over-attention to hardship with increased attention to its antonym, pleasure. I am thinking especially of

ethnographic work on music making and artistic practices in sub-Saharan Africa. We can remember that Gavin Steingo (2016a) frames the South African music genre kwaito within an aesthetic of freedom. Nomi Dave's (2013) ongoing research on music in the Republic of Guinea focuses on the pleasures of authoritarian aesthetics. Hélène Neveu Kringelbach (2013) centers creativity and agency in her monograph on contemporary dance in urban Senegal.[1] And Chérie Rivers Ndaliko's (2016) study of a cultural center in the east of the DRC "humanizes a dire humanitarian disaster" by depicting youth's enjoyment and empowerment when they make art amidst violence. Together, these ethnographies put to rights a representation of Africa in which people's lives are as complex as they are three-dimensional, and experience in times of "crisis" holds both the bad and the good.

In this concluding chapter, I, too, attempt to balance the story. Thus far, the story I have told about Beninese fanfare is one of hardship and struggle. I described fatigue-inducing funeral processions in sweltering heat; sparse employment opportunities arranged by duplicitous middlemen; rickety, unreliable instruments held together by sandals and motor oil; and fears about brass playing's adverse effects on wombs, lips, and testicles. Altogether, my ethnography portrays amateur brass playing in this particular place as exhausting, frustrating, precarious, and even potentially dangerous. As my interlocutors' emphasized, fanfare is hard work. While purportedly negative experiences like these are certainly a large part of the story of Beninese fanfare, they are not the whole story. Indeed, when presenting my research at conferences, I have faced similar

[1] It is worth noting that Neveu Kringelbach's (2016) current research on international marriages focuses on love, happiness, and companionship.

calls for reappraisal. “If music making is so hard for your interlocutors,” people have asked, “why, ultimately, do they do it?”

My answer to this is: for pleasure. Beninese musicians find fulfillment, joy, and pleasure in the everyday experience of amateur music making. To illustrate, I offer portraits of two musicians I came to know well during my time in southern Benin. After telling their stories, I reflect on the place of pleasure in their lives. Specifically, I illuminate how my interlocutors’ pleasurable experiences in the present are tied to temporal imaginings of the future and past. I then propose an “ordinary pleasure” that permeates their experiences of pain, frustration, and uncertainty. My overarching aim is to portray one among many complex reasons why my interlocutors choose to play music. Following this essay about pleasure, I give a summative conclusion of the thesis.

I want to make a few clarifications before proceeding. First, I am not speaking about embodied or sexual pleasure but rather pleasure as an affective experience, as an analog to joy or happiness. This departs from more commonplace portrayals of corporeal pleasure in Africanist literature.[2] Second, by arguing for pleasure I am not placing it in polar opposition to hardship. I am not suggesting that the two are mutually exclusive, or that pleasure overcomes or puts the lie to hardship. Rather, I postulate that the two are entwined and sometimes experienced simultaneously. A third: To emphasize pleasure at the end of my thesis risks rendering it an afterthought. I assume that risk in order to include what I believe is an important part of the story. The reader may also wonder why I would dedicate only one chapter to pleasure and purported positives. To that I would respond, first, that this project is ongoing and I expect that pleasure will have a weightier

[2] Mbembe’s (2001) chapter on expressions of sexual pleasure and the grotesque body in Cameroon is a salient example. Bodily pleasure is also at the foreground of work on sexualities in Africa (e.g., Hendriks 2017; Spronk 2012).

place in my ethnography's future iterations; and, second, that while life is indeed three-dimensional and composite and marked with both pain and pleasure, life is not symmetrical.

Roger Avaligbé

Roger is a saxophonist, instrument repairman, and involuntary retiree living in Porto Novo. He is in his late fifties, and has one wife and four children. Roger was born in Pobè, a Yorùbá town near the border with Nigeria, and moved to Porto Novo to attend primary school. He lived for many years with his uncle, Segboton Cledjo, a retired musician and instrument repairman in the national military. Segboton taught Roger how to play the saxophone and, later, how to repair instruments. Upon completing high school (called *le baccalauréat* or *bac* in Benin) Roger remained in Porto Novo to pursue a career as a performing musician.

In the late 1990s, Roger founded Fanfare Adonaï Jazz, an ensemble that combines Western brass and woodwind instruments with indigenous percussion and vocals. Roger claims that Adonaï Jazz was the first ensemble in Benin to play local melodies and Vodun rhythms on brass instruments (though my other interlocutors would contest this). Adonaï Jazz recorded an album in the early 2000s, the proceeds of which were minimal.[3]

[3] As is common in Benin and elsewhere in West Africa, commercially produced CDs are quickly copied and sold on the informal markets. "*C'est la beninoiserie*," Roger lamented, invoking a local term that describes the type of mischief and deceit that only a Beninese person would do. Another reason for the album's failure is that there is meager demand for recorded instrumental music in Benin. As my friend Eric Yovogan, a former member of Gangbé Brass Band, put it: "Beninese do not appreciate instrumental music, only vocal music. If the song does not have lyrics and a vocal part then people will not know it." Traditional music styles typically include a lead vocalist, percussion instruments, and sometimes backing vocalists. My own interactions with Beninese listeners confirm that they put a high premium on lyrics and storytelling. Moreover,

Adonaï Jazz never did become famous, though they continue to play today for funerals and other communal gatherings (Figure 6.1). Roger led the group until about five years ago, when he was in a motorcycle accident that severely damaged his right arm. The accident left him with minimal function of his arm and chronic pain. Given the physical demands of saxophone playing, Roger was forced to let go of what he had hoped would be a profitable performance career. Although he no long plays saxophone in Adonaï Jazz, he accompanies the fanfare to gigs and takes a small cut of the profits. Now in effective retirement, he occasionally repairs musical instruments with the help of his fourteen year old son (Figure 6.2). Roger's instrument repair business is not very profitable, however, and he admitted that his wife, who sells beauty products at the local market, supports their household.



Figure 6.1: Fanfare Adonaï Jazz poses for a photo at a funeral performance. Roger stands second from the right in a pink shirt. Porto Novo, 6 February 2016.

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fanfare is widely regarded as a form of "street music" that is not appropriate for radio broadcasts or recreational listening.



Figure 6.2: Roger stands in his living room. His worktable is on the right.
Porto Novo, 5 November 2015.

Unemployed and professedly depressed, Roger spends his days hanging out with other idle men in his neighborhood. In the mornings, he lounges on his couch at home, and sometimes invites his friend Omer to come over and smoke cigarettes. They used to watch Roger's television before it broke; now they listen to the radio. If they have a bit of money to spend, they will go out to a local bar and order omelets and a Guinness, Roger's favorite. In the afternoons, Roger and Omer walk southward to the quarter Tokpota, where they meet their friend Leon, an artist and freelance tour guide, who lives in a long-abandoned, dilapidated public school building. Over the years, Leon transformed the school's courtyard into an informal cultural space. At one end is the "artist's corner," where Leon's sculptures and paintings are propped against the wall. At the other is a makeshift stage, where local amateur bands come to rehearse. For reasons

of its seclusion and good vibes, the courtyard has become the meeting place for the elder men in the neighborhood. Every afternoon, from around 2pm, Roger, Omer, Leon, and their friends gather in the shaded artist's corner. They sit on wooden benches, share cigarettes, drink *sodabi*,[4] smoke marijuana, play music, listen to the radio, paint, talk, and sleep (Figure 6.3). They hang out until dark, when some men go home to their wives and others, who sleep rough, put a straw mat or piece of cloth on the ground and lay down for the night.



Figure 6.3: Elder men play music in the school courtyard. Leon is seen playing the balafon, Omer playing the *alekele* drum, Sylvester clapping his hands, and Roger playing the saxophone. Porto Novo, 30 July 2016.

[4] *Sodabi* is a traditional alcohol made by distilling palm wine. It is an integral ingredient in Vodun practices, as well as religious and family ceremonies, and is widely consumed within households. *Sodabi* is sometimes steeped with herbs or spices for taste or medicinal purposes.

About three years ago, Roger, Omer, and Leon formed their collective into a makeshift musical ensemble. They call themselves *Nostalgie Musica de la Capitale* (Musical Nostalgia from the Capital), combining words from both French and Spanish. Roger described the ensemble as "an homage to our elders," noting that the phrase "from the capital" is borrowed from Benin's premiere national orchestra from the 1960s and 70s, Les Volcans de la Capitale. Nostalgie Musica mostly plays covers of songs by post-independence era West African dance bands and popular artists, including Benin's own Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou, Orchestre Black Santiago, Sagbohan Danialou, and Gnonnas Pedro; Nigeria's Fela Kuti; Ghana's King Sunny Ade; as well as Ivorian, Congolese, and Zimbabwean artists. "We play everything, everything! All of the greats!" Roger declared. The members of Nostalgie Musica enjoy recounting their own experiences playing in dance bands, particularly when they rubbed elbows with famous musicians. Omer, who plays bass in Nostalgie Musica, told me that he toured with Sagbohan Danialou's band in the 1990s. Roger, too, said he traveled to Niger and Cameroon with Adonaï Jazz, and once played at The Shrine, Fela Kuti's venue in Lagos. "Back in the day," he recalled, "Omer and me, we were big musicians."

Nostalgie Musica rehearses every Wednesday and Friday evening in the school courtyard. But, in three years, they have performed only a handful of gigs. Roger blames their lack of success on the youth, who not only produce electronic music that is unpalatable to elder musicians, but also take jobs away from them:

> All the new music today is all programmed, computer sounds. That is not real music. Real music is live music, which requires real work. Young musicians today, they cannot recreate their recordings live on stage because they have not really done the work themselves. But we know how to play live, to prepare and practice, and to work our bodies during the concerts.

Because recorded music is easily played on amplifiers, proprietors no longer hire live bands to "animate" their stages. Tut-tutting in disapproval, Roger said, "No one values live music anymore." This lamentable state of affairs is what Nostalgie Musica seeks to change. "We work to remember the past," Roger professed, "We want to valorize our culture." For Nostalgie Musica, valorization means preservation and remembrance: to keep alive the sounds of their most cherished artists. An illustrative moment is one of Nostalgie Musica's occasional performances at a wedding reception in Ouidah (Figure 6.4). Half way through a set of Gnonnas Pedro and Sagbohan Danialou covers, Omer announced into the microphone: "We are nostalgia! We praise the ancestors! Come and listen."



Figure 6.4: Nostalgie Musica de la Capitale performs at a wedding reception. Displayed behind the ensemble is a hand-painted banner that advertises "live concert" as well as the styles that they play: traditional, modern, traditional-modern, and jazz. Ouidah, 27 August 2016.

The last time I visited Roger, Nostalgie Musica was planning a Bob Marley themed concert in which Leon, the artist-in-residence, would create a piece of art on stage while the band played. The group did not yet have a contract for the show, but they were enthusiastic about the idea and seemed hopeful that someone would hire them. In the meantime, Roger said, they would "do like always" (*on fera comme toujours*). That is, spend long, lazy afternoons in their courtyard, in a daily rhythm of consumption, intoxication, music making, and passing time.

Geoffroy Whékpé

Geoffroy and I became friends at one of Voix des Anges Brass' Monday night rehearsals. I was new to the group and impressed with Geoffroy's timbre on the trombone—he had that warm, grainy sound many jazz players yearn for. I told him as much and he smiled, snapped his fingers in the typical Beninese way, and said, "We are together" (*On est ensemble*). At the time, Geoffroy was twenty-six years old and had big ambitions (Figure 6.5). He was enrolled at two universities—the University of Abomey-Calavi and IRGIB University Africa—for degrees in political science and marketing, respectively. But he was pessimistic about his prospects in Benin: "There is unemployment everywhere," he professed, "It's not good here." His future, he claimed, was in the outside: "I have a project to travel. To travel to America, to France. I do not want to stay in one place." He told me he wanted to be "a big musician" and "play in lots of countries" like the professionals in Gangbé. "That is my ambition. With some time…I am not scared." Although Geoffroy had never left Benin, he had taken to calling himself "an

adventurer."[5] He was convinced that his destiny was abroad, and his friends in Voix des Anges Brass shared his certainty. Beatrice once told me, "Geoffroy is a good trombonist. He works hard. He will exit."



Figure 6.5: Geoffroy poses with his trombone. Yenawa, 3 August 2016.

To realize his aspiration, Geoffroy prays and performs often. He explained that he honors God every time he plays the trombone and thus believes that God will deliver him success—"God will give me something, I am sure." During my fieldwork, Geoffroy was a member of two Christian ensembles: La Roche Céleste (The Celestial Rock), a gospel

[5] The figure of the adventurer has been explored elsewhere in Africanist literature (e.g., Sarró 2009; Bredeloup 2008; see also Simmel 1959). Sylvie Bredeloup describes sub-Saharan understandings of the adventurer as a voluntary migrant who seeks both danger and pleasure, and who is often likened to a Western cowboy. A fictional illustration is found in the comedic film *Le Retour d'un Aventurier* (The Return of an Adventurer) by Nigérien filmmaker Moustapha Alassane (1966). At the time, I did not ask whether Geoffroy was aware of these allusions, though my guess is that he is familiar with "the adventurer" as a local and/or regional archetype.

ensemble affiliated with the Celestial Church, and Voix des Anges Brass, the brass and percussion ensemble-cum-fanfare based in Akpapa. Neither ensemble collects much in monetary payment, but Geoffroy appreciates that they are both "serious," compose their own music, and "do jazz improvisations." Geoffroy told me he prefers to play in "orchestras" like La Roche Céleste over fanfares because they are "more professional" and enable him to "evolve in the domain [of music]." "If you want to have a career in music, you must not be too interested in fanfare," he stated, saying that he accepts fanfare gigs only when he "needs to find money or to pass the time."

Near the end of my fieldwork, at my final Monday rehearsal with Voix des Anges Brass, Geoffroy told me a secret. He said had been in conversations with a musician in Gangbé Brass Band, who knew a Beninese music manager, who knew a musician in Morocco, who knew a guy who owned a restaurant and needed brass players to play in his house band. "They really need brass players over there!" Geoffroy exclaimed, "And in Benin, we have the best brass players!" Geoffroy was enthralled and volunteered to go. The details were yet to be sorted: he didn't know in which city the restaurant was, when they needed him, how much they would pay him, or even what language people speak in Morocco. But this was his break. At last, he would travel.

Despite Geoffroy's excitement, I was suspicious. It sounded to me like Geoffroy risked entering into an exploitative contract verging on indentured servitude. I expressed worry, which he sharply dismissed. "No, no, this is serious," he said, "This is proper." He explained that he had consulted a visionary in the Celestial Church as well as a tradition diviner (*un boconon*) and both had assured him of a safe passage. He was going to travel to Mali by bus the following week and, once there, onward to Morocco. This was his

chance, he announced. He will get to learn music from foreigners, meet "the whites," and find a manager. Geoffroy insisted that I keep his journey a secret from the rest of the band members. He had not yet told them because he feared their jealousy. Geoffroy's hesitation to announce his trip perhaps also belied his confidence that it would pan out.

Fast forward one and half years and Geoffroy is still in Morocco. He plays trombone every Thursday through Sunday night in a jazz band at a restaurant called Le Blokk in Marrakech (Figure 6.6). We chat regularly on Facebook about his musical work. Geoffroy told me that he is remunerated in room and board. He sleeps on a couch in a small room above the restaurant with other members of the house band, all of them illegal immigrants. He eats meals early in the morning and late at night, when the restaurant is closed to customers. He earns neither income nor benefits—the only money he receives is through tips—and he has not yet saved enough for a return voyage home.[6] "Here in Morocco everything is going okay, as expected, but we manage (*mais on gère*)," he wrote to me on Facebook, "Adventure, huh, it's not easy."

Despite these challenges, Geoffroy remains optimistic about his future. He said that he enjoys learning English from the foreign passersby. He has lots of Moroccan friends now, too. More importantly, he is gaining musical skills: "My coming to Morocco is so I can have a lot of knowledge in music. It's good for one's musical career," he wrote. Yet, for the first time since I have known him, Geoffroy expressed interest in a second career: "But, in addition to music, I also have other dreams I would like realize… I would love to be an agricultural technician. And for that I must take a course." While it is unlikely Geoffroy could afford technical training in Morocco, he said that he "hopes in

[6] Geoffroy's experience of waiting in Morocco recalls a recent article by Dorte Thorsen (2017) about the experiences of sub-Saharan African migrants whose journeys to Europe stall in Rabat.

any case." Many white people come into the restaurant, he remarked, and he is certain that opportunities will arrive. The last time we spoke over WhatsApp, Geoffroy seemed cheerful. I asked him if he was happy and he responded, "Yeah, yeah, everything is fine. I am at ease." And when I asked about his plans for the future, he said, "I don't know yet, but I have faith that this will give something," later adding, "Never say never."



Figure 6.6: Geoffroy is seen on the left playing trombone at Restaurant Le Blokk. Marrakech, 29 July 2017. Photograph courtesy of Geoffroy Whékpé.

Ordinary pleasures

Reflecting on these musicians' stories, I want to present three observations. First, entwined in Roger and Geoffroy's experiences of pain, hardship, and precarity is that of pleasure. Roger struggles with depression stemming from his disability. His performance career did not pan out, and he is unemployed and financially struggling. But his everyday

life is not all doom and gloom; indeed, it is quite hedonistic.[7] Every afternoon he joins his friends in a courtyard, drinks *sodabi*, plays music, and dreams up fantastical concerts. He does not stay home, depressed and despondent, but rather passes his time in a way that he enjoys. Geoffroy, too, seeks pleasure in the face of precarity. He works in a restaurant as a subjugated musical laborer and he does not have money to return home. In the face of hardship and with no tangible paths for an exit, Geoffroy takes solace in faith and optimism. He is positive that his lucky break will come, and that sense of reassurance brings contentment. Geoffroy may not collect financial remuneration for his work but he does receive an affective payoff. My point here is that Roger and Geoffroy, like many other musicians I know in Benin, struggle and have discontents. Yet they also get by with their lives—*on se débrouille*—and, importantly, experience joy and pleasure.

Second, I suggest that the pleasure Roger and Geoffroy experience in playing music is tied to their temporal imagination.[8] Roger and the members of Nostalgie Musica long for the independence era glory days, when dance bands were *à la mode*, a burgeoning music industry made success seem possible, and their own musical futures still had promise. What was once a blossoming live music scene in southern Benin appears to be dwindling, and these aging musicians now long for the musical past that

[7] Such a lifestyle, of course, is not free. Roger pays for alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana mostly with money earned by his wife. And Roger's case is not unique. I know numerous minimally employed male musicians who live with female family members and depend on them for lodging, meals, and pocket money. This reflects a wider phenomenon of male adulthood—characterized in Benin by financial independence, a spouse, and children—stunted by unemployment (see Mains 2012, 2007 for an illustrative case in Ethiopia). It also points to an intriguing topic for future research on the gendered labor economy in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly that of female work subsidizing male pleasure.

[8] The relation between temporality and affective experience is examined in depth in Africanist ethnographies (e.g., Steingo 2016a; Piot 2010; Weiss 2009). Brad Weiss observes that Tanzanian youth dream of "fantastical futures" that in turn promote a "sense of possibility" and pleasurable thoughts and behaviors in the present (2009: 37, 235-37). Charles Piot similarly describes how "nostalgic longing" and "desires for a different future" encourage "exit strategies," such as playing the U.S. visa lottery, that in turn enable hope for a better life (2010: 20, 77).

escaped them. Roger perhaps also remembers the time before his accident, when he was healthy and able to provide for his family. Hanging out and playing music with Nostalgie Musica provides a space in which Roger can take pleasure in these memories, and bask in his nostalgic imaginings of a present that could have been. Similarly, Geoffroy's gig at the restaurant in Marrakech permits him to indulge in dreams about his future. Playing jazz in a foreign place, only a short trip away from Europe, engages an alternate temporality, that eventual future of fame and fortune. While my interlocutors' thoughts about the future and past are fantastical—in that they engage the excessive, utopian, and spectacular—they instantiate in ordinary affective experiences in the present. Roger indulges in nostalgia (and drugs) because it proffers pleasure. And Geoffroy's optimism for an extravagant future serves to soothe anxieties and support hope, rendering the precarious present more bearable. Like this, nostalgia and optimism are more than imaginative means by which to escape the present and its discontents. They are pragmatic means by which to enjoy the present, and people deploy them strategically.

My final thought is that my interlocutors' experience of pleasure is ordinary. In positing an "ordinary pleasure," I borrow from Kathleen Stewart's (2007) theory of ordinary affects. Stewart postulates an "ordinary world" that is "saturated with affect" (2007: 44). She details:

> The ordinary is a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life. Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and be affected that give everyday life the quality of continual motion of relations, scenes, contingences and emergences. They're things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like *some*thing. Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also

> the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life. They can be experienced as a pleasure and a shock, as an empty pause or a dragging undertow. . . . Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. (Stewart 2007: 1-3)

In the context of amateur music making in southern Benin, pleasure is one such ordinary affect. This ordinary pleasure is rooted in the mundane practices and knowledges of everyday life. It is mundane and familiar to most. It is recurring and routine. It is experienced in real time. It is both subjective and shared. Pleasure, much like anxiety, is an ordinary feeling in my interlocutors' everyday lives.

Attending to pleasure as an ordinary affect among many is crucial for a scholarship that seeks to redress the uneven representation of African lives. As we saw in Roger and Geoffroy's stories, positives and negatives are entwined in the same experience—they are part of the same reality. Pleasure, optimism, and joy are accessible at the same moment, in the same space, as pain, pessimism, and anxiety.[9] Both pleasure and its antonyms are everyday experiences. The thing that weds them is their ordinariness.

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For the amateur musicians that comprise southern Benin's fanfare ensembles, brass instruments are indices of the many forces—historical, material, affective, and so on—that inflect everyday life. In this thesis, I proffered analyses of the particular ways that these forces manifest. Across five chapters and a conclusion, I examined versions of

[9] As Steingo says of twenty-first century South Africa, it is "a place, a time, and a people marked by a heady mix of hellishness and joy, despair and possibility" (2016a: 214).

fanfare's history, the identities and meanings of metal objects, the sonic affordances and constraints of brass instruments, the value of fanfare performance as musical labor, the anxious experience of blowing into brass instruments, and the pleasure pursued through music making. Together, these chapters portrayed Beninese fanfare as complicated: it is a pillar of local funerals and a token of the West, a convener of ambiance and a source of anxiety, a driver of exhaustion and a cause for optimism, a labor activity and an ordinary pastime. By engaging with these tensions, I demonstrated that they emerge from musical instruments and players' conceptions thereof. While the above case studies postulated self-contained arguments, each served to further a central claim: that materials condition and complicate the experience of playing brass instruments, at least in this particular place.

By offering a material-focused ethnography of an amateur brass band practice, this thesis makes several contributions to music scholarship. Scholars before me have documented brass band cultures (e.g., Reily and Brucher 2013; Booth 2005; Flaes 2000), yet here I drew attention to local understandings of history and material, as well as recentered sound in the brass band literature. Crucially, I showed how playing brass instruments in a postcolonial place does not necessarily entail an explicit engagement with colonialism. My study also contributes to existing scholarship of and about popular music in contemporary African contexts. Like hip-hop (Eisenberg 2012), hiplife (Shipley 2013), jazz (Feld 2012), and kwaito (Steingo 2016a), fanfare is an urbanized, commoditized, and fairly new popular genre, and my attention to it here evinces a recent focus on popular music in the African present. But by also attending to amateurism, I created space to think about the everyday performance of popular genres by the general

public, as well as the ways that popular music has non-monetary value. Furthermore, I moved away from a focus on recorded popular music and associated media and instead toward live performance.

My analytical approach emphasized experiential registers of music making. I illustrated my interlocutors' affective and embodied engagements with their musical instruments, as well as their ideas, motivations, expectations, desires, and hopes. Importantly, I attended closely to the material conditions and contingency of musical practice: how material circumstance affects musical expression and creative choice, and how people craft meaningful musical practices amid the possibilities and constraints of materials themselves. My overarching aim was to demonstrate the complexity of musical experience in a postcolonial place. While I am certainly not the first to do so, I made efforts to resist folding my ethnography into readily available paradigms—e.g., resistance, ethics, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, or postcoloniality—that permeate other examples of Africanist music scholarship (e.g., Ndaliko 2016; Skinner 2015; Feld 2012; Turino 2000). Grand narratives undoubtedly have their place, but perhaps not amidst dusty fanfare processions in southern Benin.

Altogether, the ethnography presented here speaks to four themes. The first of these is material. Evident in the instrument stories above are materials' sonic inclinations: how instrument design and disrepair constrain musical ideals, and how different metals encourage particular pitches and timbres. Present, too, is the social and affective capacity of material: how ideas about brass instruments shape histories, erect styles, construct tastes, move bodies, induce anxieties, and proffer futures. The second theme is precarity. We saw how working musicians seek to earn a livelihood in an exploitative (musical)

economy and rationalize their hard work against diminishing financial returns. We also observed that musicians are troubled by competing knowledge frameworks, made anxious by ambiguous understandings of brass instruments, and manage an undercurrent of uncertainty in a social milieu rife with rumor and distrust. But musicians also "get by" in precarious circumstances and creatively navigate material constraints.

A third theme arising is that of the body, broadly conceived. Fanfare performance is a highly corporeal practice in which dance, movement, and gesture play central roles. My interlocutors' experience of fanfare is also predicated on the interaction of bodies, be they of persons or things; for example, the anxious experience of blowing into brass instruments is provoked both by human-instrument and human-human relations. Of particular salience is how bodily sensation connects to social experience—those ways musicians measure masculinity through bodily strength, assess work through bodily exertion, and judge insecurity through bodily threat. The fourth theme is entanglement. As we saw, the history of fanfare as my interlocutors know it evades linear narratives. Similarly, their experience of the genre is entangled within (at times contradictory) ideas of the past, imaginings of the outside, emotions in the present, and expectations for the future. Entanglement likewise extends to musical instruments; the many valences of materials collide in instruments, as do histories, traditions, and feelings. Both fanfare and its instruments are caught up in multiple historical and cultural trajectories, and entanglement emerged as a crosscutting concept that acknowledges these messy convergences.

These themes, as well as others, developed from an emic approach to the telling of ethnography. Throughout this thesis I foregrounded the stories of the musicians among

whom I lived, worked, and played. And in my analyses thereof, I aimed to prioritize their perspectives and take seriously what they say. My topical discussions mirrored my interlocutors' interest in material objects and resources, attention to bodily health and social reputation, and investment in hard work and the future, among other everyday concerns. With them, I paid attention to the corporeal registers of musical practice—to phenomena like breath, sweat, and fatigue—and attended to material and how people make sense of it. And I accented the quotidian motivations behind musical performance—the search for money, the passing of time, the pursuit of pleasure—and engaged with musicians' ambiguous thoughts and ordinary feelings. Above all, I was committed to portraying my interlocutors' lived reality that is rife with inequality, uncertainty, and anxiety, but also with pleasure and joy.

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