

## **Music, gesture, and meaning: Appreciating the transcultural intrigues (in)to stage directing of Kenyan choral music.**

### Abstract

Whereas choral conducting as gesture in the Western world is clearly defined, it is not the case in Kenya, and by extension Africa. It is the case because choral music is not inherently and African domain. Moreover, Kenya like many African countries exhibits numerous musical cultures with varied practices and unique demands that call for differentiated approaches to visual directing of performance. Importantly, the use of gesture to generate music meaning in African traditions differs from the Western ones. Currently, conductors who practice this style of choral music have been socialized in musical cultures, which substantially differ from Western-oriented presentational mannerisms. Whenever a choir appears on stage, it is always disturbing when questions of whether the conductor directed the choir appropriately, was overt, or lacked certain gesticulations are raised. This paper seeks to respond to this concern by analyzing the nature of choral music that is performed in Kenya. Among other factors, it will also demonstrate how gesture and other music traditions could be possible influences for conducting manifestations. Moreover, the paper will purpose to provide insight into how conducting as visual culture and/or gesture enhances music meaning and, therefore, the need to appreciate its diversified approach as well as practice, in the transculturally negotiated choral space. To answer the foregoing concerns, ethnographic approaches will be employed to interview choral conductors, observe performances as well as reference to published sources on African musical practice.

Key terms: Choral music, gesture, meaning.

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