Diverse Connections as a Model for the 21st Century Yared School of Music

Cynthia Tse Kimberlin

Ten factors define the Yared School of Music’s distinct identity and proffer reasons for its survival including historical references, geography, demography, and cultural environment. Also considered are the school’s mission and objectives, facilities, curriculum, and faculty and student-body makeup. A timeline forms the basis for examining the school’s impact from 1923-1966 and from 1967-2003.

Introduction

What connection did a Polish teacher-violinist in Ethiopia have with Bulgaria and Hungary? He and the teachers that followed after him brought personal and institutional friendships that resulted in enduring connections that reflect the history of the Yared School of Music whose original mandate was to educate future teachers and musicians within a formal educational setting. Today, local and international connections with the school are facilitated by advances in technology, access on a global scale to current trends and to a panoply of resources conveyed via the electronic medium. Yet the exigencies of conflict and war pose additional challenges in accommodating new contexts in which music is studied, taught, and practiced. Nevertheless, these events provide a template for examining the state of Ethiopian music in general and the Yared School of Music in particular (henceforth to be called Yared).

Background

A precursor to Yared was set in motion around 1882 (Ezra 1996) when Menelik II brought in a Russian educator [Witold] Milewski3 to Addis Ababa to teach Ethiopians students martial (marching) music (Ezra 2007:1; Falceto 2002:84). It was not until 1946 when plans for a secular4 institution began to coalesce. During this time the Ethiopian government under the auspices of the Emperor, decided music should be taught and presented within a formal learning environment situated in the capitol. Because Yared operated outside the academic establishment until 2000, its activities generally went unnoticed within the academic mainstream. Yet, upon closer examination, this seemingly modest institution has had an impact far beyond what one might expect.

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1 Also referred to as the Yared Music School.
2 Music Research Institute, POB70362, Point Richmond, CA USA 94807
3 His family may have emigrated from Poland.
4 Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church liturgy including music and dance were taught at religious institutions or music schools (e.g. zema and aq’aq’am) predating the Yared Music School by over four centuries as 16th manuscripts containing music notation have survived plus a few others from the 13th and 14th centuries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941-48</td>
<td>Mr. Alexander Kontorowicz (Poland) Violinist</td>
<td>Director with 3 piano instructors taught 40 part-time students accommodated in a house located near the Theological College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-55</td>
<td>Mr. Bernard D’Souza (India) Violinist</td>
<td>60 students enrolled. Instruments included 6 pianos and 25 violins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957-62</td>
<td></td>
<td>School moved to University compound and was restored, renovated, and opened as a teaching establishment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962-65</td>
<td>Mr. Nerses Nalbandian (Armenia) Violinist</td>
<td>While Acting Director, enrollment increased to 100 students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Mr. George Byrd (USA) Music Conductor</td>
<td>Advisor and UNESCO music expert obtained budget for operational expenses allotted by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and Fine Arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>*Ato Ašänafi Käbbädí (Ethiopia) Composer</td>
<td>Former assistant to George Byrd, was appointed school’s first permanent director. Secondary school 4-year curriculum was instituted and 25 full-time ninth grade students constituted the first group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-69</td>
<td>*Mr. Harald Hedding (Austria) Conductor</td>
<td>Committee comprised of individuals from various Ethiopian ministries and government related groups convened 7 times between Nov 13, 1967 and August 1968 to draw up objectives, curricula, rules and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-72</td>
<td>*Mr. Zeferino Mendes (India) Violinist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>*Mr. M. J. Michael (India) Violinist</td>
<td>Served as Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-76</td>
<td>*Ato Daniel Yohannes (Ethiopia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>*Ato Tekleyohannes Zike (Ethiopia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-91</td>
<td>*Ato Bekele Debere (Ethiopia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>*Ato Ezra Abate Yimam (Ethiopia) Pianist, composer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-96</td>
<td>*Ato Solomon Lulu Mitiku Composed music National Anthem (1992)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-Dec. 2006</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-present</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since 1949 African American George Byrd, now living in Munich, has conducted concerts in Europe and the U.S.A and directed over 80 Symphony orchestras. His pedagogical skills enabled European orchestras and new and emerging orchestras in Africa and South America to attain high levels of performance. (Byrd, 2006)

He also was Director of the Imperial Bodyguard band in 1970 (Falceto, 2002:168).

Ezra Abate asserts Michael’s initials are M. G. (2007) rather than M. J. as noted in the Yared Annual (1973:9).

Music for the national anthem "Whedefit Gesgeshi Woude Henate Ethiopia" ("March Forward, Dear Mother Ethiopia") was adopted in 1992. Lyrics were composed by Dereje Melaku Mengesha (Solomon 2000).
Methodology

Examples will highlight connections associated with particular events, adding to our understanding of the past in order to gain a better perspective about the future. Discussion will focus on ten factors that help define Yared’s distinct identity and will attempt to explain why it has survived in spite of political and cultural constraints imposed upon it and includes historical reference, geography, demography, and cultural environment. Also examined are the school’s mission and objectives, facilities, curriculum, and faculty and student-body makeup. Lacking a comprehensive database, a timeline was devised using published and unpublished written and oral sources that formed the basis with which to examine the impact the school made between 1923–1966 before it officially opened and 1967–2003 after the official opening. The timeline in Figure 1 lists name and tenure of each director plus other relevant data.

Genesis of a music school (1923-1966)

Four major factors influenced the creation of a school and the direction it took. First, the idea was launched in the early 1920s by Ethiopia’s political alliances with East European countries, later made evident by Ethiopians who studied abroad or invited as visiting scholars to teach, perform, and conduct research. Most notable included Ezra Abate to Bulgaria, Girma Yifrashewa to Bulgaria and Italy; Ašänafi Käbbädi⁹ and Şäggaye Däbalqe to Hungary. Others furthered their education in the USA such as Tesfaye Lemma at Indiana University, Ašänafi Käbbädi at New York and Wesleyan Universities, Daniel Wolde at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, and Seleshi Demessie while in the USA, realized new possibilities for his music. Between 1979 and 1987 students from the Fine Arts School also were sent to Eastern Europe and the former USSR and returned to contribute as artists and instructors (Taye 1991, Debre Hayq Ethiopian Art Gallery database).

Second, Ethiopia has provided sanctuary for those who have been persecuted. Dynamics of past and current political conflict and war has altered the geographical, political, and cultural landscape. Except for Italy’s 5-year occupation, Ethiopia remains Africa’s oldest independent nation and has long been a haven for refugees as early as 615 AD when the first Moslems, among them members of the Prophet Mohammed’s family, came to Aksum as refugees and settled in Negash. Thereafter, Mohammed warned his followers never to harm Ethiopians. (Razwy 1997). It was also a refuge for the Armenians and others during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Zenian 1994). According to Garbis Krajian⁹⁰, Ras Tefari, then Crown Prince, visited Jerusalem in 1923 where the Armenian Patriarch and Catholics of Jerusalem related the plight of the Armenian orphans, now young men, having been raised by the Patriarchate and the financial difficulty it incurred. The Crown Prince responded by taking 40 to Ethiopia recognizing a shared Oriental Orthodox heritage.¹¹ Krajian, the grandchild of one of these ‘Arba Laçočè’, survived the 1905-1915 Armenian genocide by the Turkish Ottoman Empire, escaped to Jerusalem, and was given sheltered at the Armenian Monastery.¹²

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⁹ Ašänafi is said to have met composer Zoltán Kodály while in Hungary.

¹⁰ From 1952-53 Krajian worked in Ethiopia in the recorded music trade distributing the first tape recorders to the band. He left for Canada in 1975 (Falceto 2002: 168).

¹¹ As early as 1512 an Armenian in Ethiopia, Mateos Armenawi’s first diplomatic mission was made on behalf of an Ethiopian Queen where he traveled to Portugal via India to seek help halting Ottoman expansion toward Ethiopia (Zenian 1994).

¹² The origin of urban popular music in Ethiopia incorporating Western instruments can be traced to the
These men happened to be members of a band directed by Kevork Nalbandian, whose musical skills so impressed the Crown Prince that upon arriving in Ethiopia, were commissioned in 1926 to compose music for Ethiopia’s National Anthem (1930-1974) “Teferi Marsh” (Ethiopia Hoy) with lyrics by Yoftahé Negusé.13 The anthem was first performed at Haylä Sōllese I’s coronation as Emperor on November 2, 1930 and played until 1974. The band performed at public events and for imperial occasions of state. And it was the Armenians and other Europeans14 who initially trained Ethiopia’s army, police and imperial bodyguard bands.

The contributions of these individuals paved the way for others to lend support developing modern music ensembles, supplying Western musical instruments used to play popular dance, martial, and art (concert) music. Conductor and composer Franz Zelwecker (1911-1998) who previously worked in broadcasting in Austria beginning in 1934, was invited to Ethiopia in 1950 and served until 1957 as music director at Emperor Haylä Sōllese’s court. During that period, he also founded the Ethiopian National Theatre (Haile Selassie I Theatre, n.d.)15 Two Armenians Kevork (1924-1949) and Nersès Nalbandian (1930s-1977) were major forces in developing and nurturing “modern"16 Ethiopian band and orchestral music (Yared Annual 1973, Ašänafi 1968).

Third, in 1941 a violinist from Poland, Alexander Kontorowicz,17 was invited to be the director of a music school that began auspiciously with 40 part-time pupils and 3 teachers in a house in Addis Abäba in the vicinity of the Theological College (Yared Annual 1973, Stolk 1995). In 1948 this school became known as the National School of Music under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Fine Art[s]. Its name changed from School to Institute in 1967, and recognizing its Ethiopian roots, changed again to the Yared School of Music in honor of Saint Yared. Born in Aksum (@496-571 E.C.), Yared is considered Ethiopia’s most famous ecclesiastical composer, poet and priest. The School now operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sport Affairs.

And fourth, concurrent with Yared’s development, was the founding of the Ethiopian Antiquities Administration in 1953. This parallel development marked the beginning of the government’s commitment to develop Ethiopia’s cultural sector where museums, theater houses, art school, and libraries18 were established. Driven by political

13 armeniapedia.org. One scholar asserts the actual lyrics used were not the same lyrics Yoftahé composed.
14 www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown/Haile.html (4/14/06)
15 National Theater [Theatre] website
16 The term “modern" coined by the Ethiopians gained prominence during the early and mid 20th century and refers to music that used or included Western instruments in their pursuit to study 20th century music trends.
17 A fellow schoolmate of Jascha Heifetz at Vilnius music school in Lithuania, Kontorowicz was Court Violinist and professor at the Royal Institute of Music and of the Music Department at King Fouad I University, Egypt (1934-1944) and General Director of Music and Court Violinist in Ethiopia (1944-1948).
18 The National Library known as the public library “Wemezekir” was established in 1944; the Addis Ababa University library System (formerly Haylä Sōllese I University library) commenced in 1950 with the emergence of the University College of Addis Abäba founded by Stanislav Chojanki; Rita Pankhurst was appointed the first University Librarian in 1964; and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies
expediency and cultural advocacy, changes in ideology and leadership reflected the manner in which these cultural institutions were established, structured, and administered. Although these changes took place within the authority of the particular ministry responsible, there seemed to be a lack of comprehensive long-range plans, leaving the cultural sector in a tenuous position, unable to articulate a coherent course of action in its respective areas. (SIDCA19 2003:9) This position is reflected in the oversight and jurisdictions responsible for music: Ministry of Education and Fine Arts (1941-); Ministry of Education under the jurisdiction of the Fine Arts Dept. (1967-1975); Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs under the Fine Arts Dept. (1976-1990) that sought to centralize cultural organizations; Addis Abāba Cultural and Sports Bureau (1991-1994); Addis Abāba Education Bureau (1994-1998); and Addis Ababa University (1999-present).

Yared School of Music (1967-2003)

Although Yared was in operation in 1966, it was officially inaugurated by the Emperor in 1967.20 Its mission was to train music teachers for secondary schools and teacher training institutes, train professional musicians, promote cultural exchanges, impart social prestige to the profession, and educate the public about the corpus of Ethiopian music and other forms of artistic expression. Its objectives were to offer music and academic subjects, nurture talented pupils, offer free lessons to gifted staff members and students attending government schools, have faculty and graduates serve as tutors to private pupils in music and ballet, promote sustainable music activities, and advocate research and preservation efforts. Students were required to study a primary instrument (the piano), a secondary instrument, and a traditional instrument, in addition to studies in western classical music theory, harmony, and solfege. (Yared Annual 1973) Even though most students did not own an instrument, they practiced at school on school-owned instruments (Burk 2004).21

The annual inter-school seminar and symposium offered a discussion forum focusing on research by Yared instructors on Ethiopian history how it relates to Ethiopian traditional music practices, and curriculum issues. Examples are Tibor Vadasy’s three essays on “Ethiopian Folk-Dance” (1970, 1971, 1973) and Ezra Abate’s analyses of the “Musical structure of Ethiopia”,22 “Musical Training in Africa - the Ethiopian Experience,” and “The difficulties of Developing Music Curriculum Materials” (Seifu 2003).

Yared hosted hundreds of concerts for students and the public. The students themselves presented two concerts annually for Christmas and graduation (Helen 2006:7). In addition, individuals such as composer Halim El-Dabh (Egypt/USA) contributed towards development of new music. He was invited by the Ethiopian government and Haylā Sóllese I University to create Orchestra Ethiopia (1963-64) and

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19 SIDCA refers to the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency.

20 According to Helen Afework the school complex was completed July 7, 1970 (2006:1). Between 1963 and 1975 other students studied and performed at the newly created Creative Arts Center at the University ‘Sōddstå Kilo’ campus where Halim El-Dabh was invited to create an Orchestra that included members of various ethnic groups reflecting urban Ethiopian society and the ideal of a multi-ethnic, yet unified culture (Kimberlin 2005: 192). Unlike Yared, Orchestra Ethiopia was established to create a new Pan-Ethiopian orchestra comprised of professional musicians.

21 Greg Burk, Berklee College [formerly School] of Music, Boston, USA gave music clinics and concerts in 2004 at Yared.

22 This is a revision of his earlier essay “Contextual Observation of Ethiopian Music.”
act as its first director. Orchestra Ethiopia became an indigenous Pan-Ethiopian ensemble trained by a composer in 20th Century trends in music (Kimberlin 2005:192). Commercial cassette recordings were promoted (Woube 1995, 2000,) eliciting a need for an official copyright policy.

In a related development, the University’s Theater Arts Department opened in 1978 to train future actors and playwrights. The department utilized others for their productions including students and faculty from Yared and members of Orchestra Ethiopia. Theater Arts graduates were employed by governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations, but like Yared, lacked equipment such as lighting and sound systems, and computers, (SIDCA 2003:19). This lack was symptomatic of the cultural sector that needed people with technical expertise and writers and editors for new publications (SIDCA 2003:11).

An important milestone occurred when Yared, the Addis Ababa Fine Art School, Addis Ababa University, and the Prime Minister’s Office of the FDRE reached a joint understanding and agreement in 1999 to establish a committee to study existing problems and recommend solutions. Thus, the office of the Prime Minister authorized Yared and the Addis Ababa Fine Arts School to be affiliated with and administered by Addis Ababa University, transferring jurisdiction from the Ministry of Youth and Culture to the Ministry of Education. This change enabled Yared to offer an academic program within a university structure, expand its student base, develop a 5-year degree level program and a world-wide center for African music studies by augmenting its international presence through its visiting teachers, scholars, and musicians program.

School facilities
Yared was initially located in 1946 at “Arat Kilo” in a house near the Theological College and YMCA, then relocated to the University compound, and in 1976 acquired its present location consisting of a 3-building 70-room complex (located near ‘Saddost Kilo’ on the left side of Russia Road). Block A houses the administration building, Block B the building for musical instruments, and Block C the concert hall, and departments of Church Music, Folk Music, and Creative Exercises. The Ethiopian government appointed the Directors and provided support. (Yared Annual 1973)

The enterprise finally got under way in 1967 when the Bulgarian government funded the new building as a gift to Ethiopia providing Yared with 14 upright pianos, a baby grand piano, a concert piano and other musical instruments, music books and recordings for the library, the initial instructors, concert hall, and other administrative and classroom resources (Yared Annual 1973). Recent donations to Yared in 2003 included a set of musical instruments and state-of-the art equipment donated by the Sheraton Addis Hotel and funds for instrument repair and maintenance and for improving faculty and staff skills (Seifu 2003).

Faculty
Although a comprehensive faculty list was unavailable to me, documentation was contained in the 1968 and 1973 Yared annual reports showing number of teachers, country of origin, course titles, and a list of new faculty members for 1968 and courses they taught. Countries represented include Ethiopia 5, India 3, USA Peace Corps volunteers 2, and 1 each from Italy, Greece, and Hungary. Faculty in 1973 included
from Ethiopia 14, Italy 3, India\textsuperscript{23} 2, and 1 each from Armenia, Greece, and the USA. Faculty photographs between 1974 and 1991 show virtually all Ethiopian teachers.

Although faculty backgrounds vary, Ezra Abate exemplifies the caliber of teachers. He was Director from 1993-1996. While a student at Yared, he credits his Bulgarian piano teacher Vassilieva for giving him a foundation for mastering the piano. Later as assistant piano teacher at Yared, he was offered a scholarship to attend the Plovdiv Music Academy in Bulgaria where he obtained his M.A majoring in Musical Pedagogy and minoring in Piano and Composition. After his seven-year stay in Bulgaria, Ezra resumed teaching at Yared. As a composer Ezra wrote 5 short piano pieces, 3 orchestral pieces employing 20th century harmony structures and depicting themes relevant to Ethiopia. Among Western composers he has performed the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Arnold Schoenberg, Fredric Chopin, and Yohann Sebastian Bach (Kimberlin 1999; Seiful 2003).

\textit{Students}

When Yared officially opened, successful completion of the 8\textsuperscript{th} grade was required for admission and later in 1980 the requirement was raised to the 10\textsuperscript{th} grade. During Emperor Hayl\textaelale's reign, the majority of students at Yared were native born in contrast to a highly diverse faculty. That changed between 1974 and 1991 when the government, under the DERG, instituted policies to hire Ethiopian teachers to teach Ethiopian students (Yared \textit{Graduation Magazine} 1989-90). Although statistics for student alumni were unavailable, five sources indicate that in 2003 Ezra states about 500 students graduated as classical musicians (Seiful 2003). In the \textit{Ethiopian Research Council} report dated October 31, 1995, Ašänäfi Käbbådå noted the National (Yared) School of Music graduated practically all performing musical and music educators of Ethiopia. Between 1967-2006 Yared distributed 535 diplomas: Diploma in Music and Diploma in Concert Maturity. Since Yared’s affiliation with Addis Ababa University through 2006, 24 Bachelor Degrees were awarded (Helen 2006:1). The 2007 Yared Web page on the official Addis Ababa University website showed student enrollment at 130.

\textit{Admission Requirements and Curriculum}

For the year 1973 (Yared \textit{Annual}) Figure 2 shows Yared’s admission and degrees offerings and Figure 3 outlines the curriculum.

\textsuperscript{23}India sent individuals to Ethiopia with technical skills that became part of an Indian business community. In 1937 after an attempt on Italian viceroy Graziani’s life, Italy retaliated and massacred Ethiopians. It was rumored the plot was conceived in Mohammed Ali’s shop, the principal Indian merchant. All Indians were expelled and after WWII, some returned as teachers employed by the government. Now Indians teach in secondary schools and several hundred Indian lecturers are employed at Ethiopian universities. Indian influences survive, e.g. the Amharic word for tobacco is “sura”, the name of Gujarati city from which it was brought. (Vasagar, 2005)
Admission requirements
Requirements stipulate the student (1) pass the 8th grade ministry exam and possess good health; (2) take the music aptitude test; and (3) participate in a 6-week orientation program to determine suitability for undertaking the program.

Degrees offerings
Most graduates teach but others obtain employment at Radio and Television Ethiopia, Orchestra Ethiopia, or study abroad for advanced training. Two degree programs are offered with a third in development. (1) The Diploma of Music is a 4-year program for those in grades 9-12. This degree allows the graduate to teach at any of the Ministry’s secondary schools in the country; (2) Diploma of Concert Maturity is the same as the 4-year program but the student must graduate with distinction plus take additional courses for two more years totaling six years beginning in grade 9; (3) Beginning in 2003 a 5-year Degree program is being developed, probably the equivalent of a university level Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and/or Bachelor of Music (B.M) having a strong academic component.

Art Music in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Ethiopia, and at Yared
Ethiopia’s bi-lateral relations with Europe played a part in the school’s core curriculum development when foreign and Ethiopian teachers provided music scores, books, and instruction on Europe’s art music traditions, while Ethiopian scholars and instructors contributed to developing the Ethiopian music curriculum component. Initially, teachers from Bulgaria and Hungary used features from their countries’ curricula like solfege, counterpoint, and harmony for teaching European art music, while the Ethiopians adapted existing European art music and Ethiopian aesthetics into contemporary art music compositions. Importing alien cultural elements and appropriating them by the processes of “Ethiopianization” (Levine 1974) took place by compiling a mental database of musical experiences to use. For Ethiopians, art music was a sign of modernity.

Surprisingly, art music by African composers has received little attention outside Africa and limited exposure within, despite comprising part of the formalized music school curriculum and performance practices. It also constituted an integral part of Ethiopia’s music history during the late 19th and 20th centuries and at the dawn of the 21st. With the exception of Girma Yifrashewa with his own web page and whose compositions are currently performed,24 it seems reasonable to ask why the art compositions of Säggaye Dëбалłe, Aš änafi Käbbädä, and Ezra Abate have not been performed lately and given their due.

The term ‘art music’ often referred to as ‘classical music’, strictly speaking, refers to music prevalent during a particular time and place in Europe, but in a broader sense connotes a subjective gestalt known as ‘classical music’.25 Whether called art or

24 www.girmathepiano.com
25 Classical music is an imprecise term, referring to (a) music produced in, or rooted in the traditions of, Western art, ecclesiastical and concert music, encompassing roughly 1000 to the present day or
classical music, its corollary in Africa could include, but is not limited to music of the court and royalty (määläkät), religious ritual (liturgical music of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church), and other music traditions of the educated and the literati (bagaiäna). For example, Buganda court music of Uganda was abolished in 1966 when king, Edward Mutesa II was forced to flee into exile by Ugandan Prime Minister Milton Obote. These events impacted Uganda’s royal xylophone music that was supposed to be performed only by court musicians. But this practice ceased to exist since there was no longer a royal court and the musicians no longer had the king as patron for whom the music was composed and performed. However, the music continued albeit in a new context for recreation, losing its original function but retaining aspects of the music itself.26

Ethiopia’s 1896 Adwa victory over Italy drew international attention. As a consequence some countries sent ambassadors to Ethiopia, including the tsar of Russia who sent one to meet Mënîlšk II and provided gifts of 40 brass instruments and a music teacher. This sentiment helped provide impetus to Ethiopia’s entrée into the practice of Western art music.27 By contrast, art music in Sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa in particular, and North Africa could be traced to the mid 19th century and earlier with the arrival of colonial administrations and religious intrusions and became a major component in the music schools. These efforts led to the emergence of the neo-African school of music and a subset known as neo-African art music (Euba 1987).

A number of these schools are found in Africa including the Achimota Secondary School’s Music School in Accra, Ghana that consistently graduates a steady stream of illustrious students, and the Cairo Conservatoire in Egypt, directed by the late Dr. Samha El-Kholy that has produced scholars, performers, and composers of note. But outside their own scholarly milieu, little is known about these and other music schools on the African continent due largely to the general inability of people to read music notation, unlike the fine arts and literature, which presume the reader can read and understand the language of the literary work (Euba 2005:84) or visualize the art object.

Ethiopia encounters additional problematic issues. For example, the West has touted West Africa as the ancestral homeland of African Americans which in turn has drawn promoters to attribute this search for an ‘authentic’ Africa by commercially exploiting pre-designated cultural areas at the expense of others (Fikru 2000). In academia with few exceptions, Ethiopia has been omitted from the ethnomusicological discourse of African music because it has been defined by scholars by what it is not: “not properly

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27 Mënîlšk II utilized these new resources for his royal music which led to the formation of the army band. Bands of this nature led to the development of ‘modern music’. Although the musicians played marching music in the European style (Eyre 2005), local musicians adapted and incorporated it with their own music idioms.
African, not sufficiently Middle Eastern, not mainstream Christian, and not postcolonial” (Shelemay 1996: 16-18).

**Final Comments and the Future of Yared**

Yet Yared’s tenacity and temerity has contributed to its survival by exploiting its environment and capitalizing on local and international connections. In return, reciprocities and collaborative efforts are demonstrated by the support and degree to which other institutions and organizations have become involved. Financial and/or in-kind support have come from the Ethiopian government, Addis Ababa University, UNESCO, the Ethiopian and expatriate community, and from international constituents.

Therefore, Yared does not operate in isolation. Ezra found the internet provided him not only valuable information and insights, but also gave him incentive to undertake the M.A. program in Curriculum and Instruction at AAU. Yared encourages talented graduates to continue studies abroad, many whom have the support of former Yared teachers in their home countries. And with University affiliation, Yared’s potential to increase student enrollment and expand the faculty base will insure long-term financial stability, allow academic development by adding advance university level courses, attract University caliber faculty to teach at Yared, and raise Yared’s visibility. In 1999 a revised curriculum was developed by a 7-member committee comprised of Ezra Abate (Convener), Solomon Lulu, Tekle Yohannes Zike, Getachew Gessi, Belay Chernet, Tadele Tilahun, and Fekadu Gurmesssa (AAU Yared Curriculum Report 2000).

The main objectives of the B.A. program in Music are: cultivate music performers; perpetuate, transmit, assimilate and acculturate various Ethiopian music cultures; train music teachers for educational institutions e.g. teacher training colleges and music institutions; train researchers to study Ethiopian music; and train music arrangers and organizers for cultural institutions. A future M.A. program in music will encompass performance, music education, and ethnomusicology. Also plans are being made to establish a music research center. (Ezra 2007)

Recently, under the aegis of UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Convention (IHC), the Norwegian Government through UNESCO-Norway Funds-in-Trust Cooperation in the field of Culture, funded a 4-year (2004-09) $345,388 project “Ethiopia: Traditional music, dance and instruments” to produce state-of-the-art resources in field recording, inventory-making, archiving, and training in ethnomusicology. Beginning in 2004, research was conducted where [Ethiopian and foreign] students joined European specialists already in the field, and the goal by 2009 is to have in place a trained generation of Ethiopians to carry on the mission of ICH. (*The Intangible Heritage Messenger*, 2006:1). Ethnomusicology courses are being taught in English and Amharic by Ethiopian scholars, and by outside consultants, administered by Addis Ababa University in cooperation with the Yared Music School. Most recently Kay Kaufman Shelemay developed two courses currently being taught as part of the new curriculum: an introduction to ethnomusicology and on ethnology (2007).

For Yared, the dichotomy between what is Western or Ethiopian is reconciled not only by preparing students to learn about the present state of music in the Western world, but also by ensuring that local musics are not alienated and marginalized but remain integral to the core curriculum. Individuals who never had opportunities to learn and study local traditions in a formal setting when they were children, now have the opportunity to do so at Yared as well as learn about the need to preserve indigenous musics while adapting to current times.
Many Ethiopians living outside their country return to Ethiopia to study music they heard as children, albeit in a formal educational setting. Ezra Abate’s “Kid’s Play” from his Five Short Piano Pieces (Kimberlin 1997:103-104) may be one example. Teachers like Ašänafi Käbbädä traveled widely imparting to students their knowledge and the tools to re-define and integrate materials using cross-cultural references and view music for its potential to adapt supported by available technologies. Ashenafi anticipated indigenous music within musical forms be accessible to audiences beyond his own cultural borders. Hence his compositions possess a strong element of pedagogy evident in his 1967 Fantasy for Aerophones: Ethiopian Washint & Japanese Shakuhachi composed while he was Director at Yared and written for Yared students to perform. Originally titled Minuet for Flutes and Pipes in the spirit of washints and embiltas, the instruments named in the two titles demonstrate the composition could be performed using Ethiopian, Japanese, and Western instruments. Each of the three parts is purposely written at a different level of difficulty, and the music itself is reminiscent of Johann Sebastian Bach’s contrapuntal style. (Kimberlin, 1997:105, 1999: 326). In addition, Erza’s compositions include Time, a Pop-Jazz-Orchestral suite in 1994, the five piano pieces previously mentioned, and three other pieces for orchestra that adopt 20th century harmony structures and depict themes focused on his Ethiopian identity (Kimberlin 1997; Seiful 2003). Few people know that a number of unpublished works include compositions by Solomon Lulu: 10 music dramas and operas, 3 symphonies, and songs and choral compositions (Solomon 2000). Thus, teaching methodologies and curriculum show processes reflecting social, aesthetic, and political preferences being adapted to specific needs. Traditional, pan-Ethiopian, art, and diaspora musics intersect in re-interpreting intercultural materials originating from different and/or similar traditions.

The mission statement and curriculum design are based on community needs, yet applicable to global events and economic forces. Aware social and political dynamics influence curriculum content, Yared recognizes the importance of bi-musicality, both as a political strategy and as part of the curriculum content. Although the influence and significance of Western education continues to play a role at Yared, the musics of greater Africa, the Middle East, and Asia may well play a larger role in the future as it did for Ašänafi Käbbädä. He discovered over forty years ago that Japanese music shared a common tonality, the low hira-joshi, with the Amhara ambassül qəññst, and from knowing this, he learned to play the Japanese koto, read its tablature notation, and incorporated the koto and shakuhachi in his orchestral and chamber compositions. In October 2006 fifty Chinese Peace Corps volunteers, with at least a bachelor’s degree, whose average age is 27 are serving in Ethiopia providing services including Chinese language classes and cultural development. (Hillenbrand 2007). Also, Kimberlin’s ongoing study outlines further possible music connections between East Asia and Ethiopia and Eritrea. (2005).28

Connections between Yared and other schools can have far reaching musical consequences. In 1972, while conducting a one-year field research study in Ethiopia, I was having a lesson at my home in Addis Ababa with my mäsingo teacher Alämâyähl Fántay, who taught at Yared. Two women on a US State Department tour knocked on

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my door as they were told to contact me. One was Rachel Eubanks, Director of the Eubanks Conservatory of Music and Arts in Los Angeles, California, USA. This was the first time I met Eubanks and learned about her conservatory, and it was the first time she heard about Yared.

During the early 1990s, I discovered Eubanks composed over 52 compositions of which one was based partly on her experiences in Ethiopia. Her 45-minute 4 movement Symphonic Requiem (1980) for orchestra and four solo voices employed special effects including use of small Tibetan and Indian bells and Ethiopian sistrum. The first movement employs pitch changes by microtonal increments played by the trombones, cellos, and basses; this device was derived from a practice used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Mass observed by her in 1972 (Eubanks, 1991). Source material for the Requiem include Gregorian plainsong, Ethiopian Orthodox Mass, African-American spirituals, and Tibetan Buddhist chant. Eubanks used the slow Tibetan chant to create a calm, solemn mood expressing the eternal sound of “aum,” the eternal, divine essence of man. The universality of this philosophy is the reason she combines western and eastern musical themes and instruments.

And lastly, Yared’s program will continue to evolve as demonstrated by: (1) Ethiopia’s fierce independence, aptly known by the rest of the world that responded with awe to Ethiopia’s victory at Adwa by sending ambassadors to form alliances with Ethiopia; (2) the influence from the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church school where aspects of oral and written teaching methodologies in music and dance were adapted and whose history long preceded the influx of foreign music teachers to Ethiopia; (3) the introduction of western art music facilitated by music scores alongside Ethiopian traditional, court music, and music of the literati in the form of the bāgāna and royal musicians employed by Haylä Səllese and Mənilk II; and (4) Yared’s impact outside Ethiopia such as its influence on two African American scholars, educators, and musicians George Byrd and Rachel Eubanks. Byrd was Director of Yared in 1965, a UNESCO Advisor who obtained a modest budget for Yared, and orchestral conductor and teacher for emerging orchestras in Africa. And Eubanks, inspired by her visit to Ethiopia, included Ethiopian elements in one of her major compositions.

Although Yared’s future is inextricably tied to Ethiopia’s interests and concerns, it has a choice about whether or not to preserve its traditional music heritage as part of historical documentation, or, embrace the traditional and meld it with 21st century trends in music, dance, and theater. In such a case, their creative synergy could prove reciprocal and synchronic, shaped by the politics of globalization. Yared’s choices will be central to its future vision, sustained over four decades, in validating with active engagement a program founded on local roots.

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