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Bigshots Band's 'Too Kε Adun': A Modern Ghanaian Dance Band Highlife Music

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Abstract



The superimposition of Western musical instruments on the conventional dance band highlife music has been the trend since its evolution around the 1950s. Despite Ghana's monumental traditional instrumental resources, the dance band highlife tradition has not been able to break away from the colonising force of Western instruments. *Too kε Adun* (goat & monkey), a highlife song by the Bigshots Band, however, is an exception to this trend. Traditional musical instruments such as *gyile* (xylophone), *atenteben* (bamboo flute), *ɲoɲo* (bell), *shakashaka* (rattle) and *tsoɲshi* drums (traditional palm drums) were featured prominently together with the Western instruments such as drum set, guitar, bass, keyboard synthesizers and horns in the song. This paper seeks to investigate the compositional resources and devices employed in Bigshots Band's highlife song, *too kε adun*, how they have been managed, and reasons for their inclusion in the body of work. The paper also

discusses the arranging techniques employed in the song in the context of dance band highlife music, and some background to the influences that have shaped the song. A descriptive analysis of the song using the emic approach reveals a communal music participation, a concept found in African traditional drum music, where composite patterns are heard in integration and not as isolated units. The song also exemplifies a phenomenon of a proportional cross-cultural music fertilisation.

Keywords: *Too kE Adun*, cross-cultural fertilisation, dance band, highlife.

Introduction

Dance band highlife, one of the distinct forms of Ghanaian highlife music declined partly due to the negative impact of new technology on live popular music, which also gave rise to computerised music that employs synthesisers and drum machine rather than live instruments. The live popular music scene collapsed as a result of political instability in Ghana around the late 1970s, coupled with a two-and-half years of night curfew around the early 1980s (Collins, 2001). For the past three decades, the *cheaply-made* computerised music has dominated the Ghanaian popular music scene.

Coffie (2012) in his seminal work on dance band highlife established certain facts prior to the decline around the early 1980s. He established the ever-present use of Western instruments (drum set, guitar, bass, keyboard, congas and horns), the usual common time metre, and the horns introduction, which is usually worked into the main body of the song without any break or change in tempo. Coffie also established the fact that the highlife rhythm is based on the percussion and also composers give priority to arrangement (that is the relationship between the various instrumental sections and voice) than the song, probably because a song could represent “any music” or “a simple melody”; but the musical style is determined by the arrangement.

According to Ampomah (2013), the conventional dance band highlife was gradually revived around the 1990s by bands such as the *Gold Nuggets*, *Western Diamonds* and *NAKOREX*. Other artistes and bands such as *C.K. Mann*, *Paapa Yankson*, *Jewel Ackah*, *Marriot International*, *Ozimzim* and *Megastar* were also instrumental in this regard. However, this gradual resurgence of the conventional dance band highlife was short lived due to the capital-intensive nature of running a dance band and also the continuous rise of computerised music such as *burger highlife* and *hiplife*.

Presently, it is quite unusual practice for the modern Ghanaian artistes and bands to compose and arrange in the dance band highlife style, let alone employ traditional instrumental resources in their songs. Some Ghanaian music pundits are quick to put the blame on the colonising force of Western musical cultures on the Ghanaian music scene. Nana Kobina Nketsia V (Chief of Essikado), in his keynote speech at a conference on *The Future of Highlife* in Cape Coast (28th – 29th May, 2009) lamented on the influx of foreign cultures, and that some highlife musicians are just copying from Western musicians, ultimately neglecting the rich compositional forms which emanate from our tradition. Collins (2001) in his presentation on making Ghanaian music exportable also posits that the lack of role model musicians that will encourage Ghanaian youth to utilise indigenous resources added to the problem. In not too distant past, there has been an advocacy for *tradition and innovation* by some Ghanaian music icons. For example, Ephraim Amu, a contemporary Ghanaian art music composer, according to the daughter Misonu Amu, argues that: “There is no harm in embracing good things of other cultures that have universal value, but by all means we should keep the best in our own” (Amu, 1988, p. x). Similarly, Dick Essilfie Bondze, a renowned music producer in a separate interview with John Collins also suggests: “I have a strong belief that provided we can present our music in a way palatable to non-Africans, we can also market our music abroad and make a breakthrough. The right presentation is the thing” (Collins, 1994, p. 259).

The dance band highlife, unlike the guitar band has not been able to decolonise itself from the Western influences in terms of instrumentation. There has been an attempt by bands such as *Ramblers*, *Osibisa*, *Bonze Konkoma*, *Wind Afrique* among others in the past to further indigenise the dance band highlife. However, the most successful is the Bigshots Band. Whiles the above-mentioned bands use indigenous instruments for decorative purposes, the Bigshots Band makes the indigenous instruments an integral part of their compositions.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate the compositional resources and devices employed in Bigshots Band’s highlife song, *too kɛ aduŋ*, how they have been managed, and reasons for their inclusion in the body of work.

A brief background to dance band highlife music

To understand the song under investigation, a brief background to dance band highlife music will be helpful to the discussion. Highlife according to Collins (1994) is Ghana’s most important home-grown dance music. It is a cross-cultural fertilisation of African traditional music with Western (that is European and American) influences. The term *highlife*, like jazz, has been an umbrella name for some musical forms in Ghana. Collins

(2004) outlines the three distinct forms of highlife and the musical influences assimilated and utilised from the West by African musicians. Firstly, there were the imported influence of foreign sailors that became *palm-wine guitar band highlife*; secondly, that of the colonial military brass band that became *adaha highlife*; thirdly that of the Christianised black elite dance orchestras, which became *dance-band highlife*. Note that the focus of this paper is on dance band highlife.

Coplan (1978) argues that both the guitar and dance band highlife traditions have coexisted and influence each other; however, each tradition has maintained a distinct identity. While the guitar band tradition preserves an identity of an African band in sound and appearance, the dance band tradition in other hand sounds and appears more Western. E.T. Mensah, the *King of Highlife Music*, once explained in an interview on the *Voice of America* (VOA) in 1981 that highlife is indigenous music played with Western instruments. The pioneers of the dance band highlife tradition such as E.T. Mensah, Kofi Ghanaba (Guy Warren) and King Bruce were influenced by swing music and jazz. Manuel (1988) observes that E.T. Mensah's Tempos band was smaller than most pre-war dance bands, patterned as they were after ballroom and swing era big bands. Collins (1987) posits that E.T. Mensah's Tempos dance band became a model for the highlife dance bands of the 1950s. The Tempos band consisted of tenor and alto saxophones, trombone, trumpet, trap drums, double bass, guitar and piano. Dosunmu (2010) notes that the dance band highlife is a cross-cultural fertilisation of West African recreational music(s) with elements of Western hymnody, sea shanties, big band jazz and Euro-American ballroom styles. Coffie (2012) concurs with Dosunmu by stating that the dance band highlife composers and arrangers use thematic materials from African sources, but the works are mainly Western in idiom and instrumentation. The Western idiomatic structure and instruments superimpose the African traditional elements.

About the Bigshots Band

The band was initially formed as a resident students' dance band of the Department of Music, School of Performing Arts, at the University of Ghana - Legon in February 2008. Not surprisingly, talented musicians were recruited from the various fields of academic studies at Legon, and until now the band mainly consists of university graduates who have made music performance their profession. Starting with this *academic touch*, and strongly tied to the university's Music Department, one of the main approaches of the band was to research into the great variety of Ghanaian folksongs, nursery rhymes, children rhythmic games (play songs) and re-arrange them in a modern dance band vein in order to musically make use of the rich traditional musical texture, *weave* it into a new modern Ghanaian and wider African popular music. They set out to create a blend that might bring Ghanaian music at long last to an international repute; and formulated

their ambitious goal as the band unanimously claims to *redefine our music*. Although they have not finished with what is easier said than done, the catchy and well-crafted compositions and arrangements give testimony to this ambition.

The band's repertoire ranges from songs that revive the *Afro-Jazz & Funk* feel of earlier Ghanaian popular music to *jazz-fusions* creatively interspersed with indigenous melodies. There is an Afro-Cuban legacy and Congo rumba *touches*, long favourites among musicians and audiences in West Africa, as well as *Down South* vibes, South African township jazz and *mbaqanga* quotes also vapourise. They draw on an immense musical heritage of Highlife greats, Ghana's and West Africa's *Soul, Funk, Highlife, Reggae*, and *Afrobeat* music(ians) which they creatively remould into something new. While they look across Africa's popular live music styles in the same way as to the Soul, Funk, Afro and Reggae sounds in Euro-American and Caribbean popular music, they take a new and in-depth look at the musical finesse and intricacies of their own traditional sources. Their urge for *trans-local sensations* in the musical blend, techniques and playfulness makes the Bigshots Band and its music exciting, *trans-African international*.

The band's creative and diverse take has been boosted over the last years by performing with a number of high profile musicians in Ghana, such as the late C.K. Mann, Ebo Taylor, the late Paapa Yankson, Pat Thomas, the late Jewel Ackah, Gyedu-Blay Ambolley, Lee Duodo, Kwabena Kwabena among others. This has also made the band's performance style stronger.

The band has already impressed international audiences inside and outside Ghana. The band's maiden album *Tu Na Me Nsa* (dig and let me scoop) was released in 2014 on the Popular African Record Label in Germany. The band toured Germany and the Netherlands in 2014 and performed at *Fete de la Musique* in Yaam, Berlin, and was also the surprise band at the 26th edition of *Hertme Afrika Festival* in Holland. The large 13-piece outfit boasts of two female vocalists/dancers and three horns men, a fully modern band set up blended with traditional musical instruments such as *gyile* (xylophone), *atenteben* (bamboo flute), *nyonyo* (bell), *shakashaka* (rattle) and *tsoyshi kpanlogo* drums (traditional palm drums).

About the song 'Too kɛ Aduŋ'

The song was composed in May 2014, first performed on June 21, 2014 at *Yaam* in Berlin, Germany. The second performance was on July 6, 2014 at the *Afrikafestival* in *Hertme*, the Netherlands, and recorded on October 2014 at the Drama Studio, University of Ghana. The song is textually and musically driven; the music complements the text and vice versa. The song also employs African traditional and Western musical resources in a proportional manner.

General layout of the song

Form	<i>Verse & Chorus/ Solo & Chorus Alternation/Strophic</i>
Key	<i>A Natural Minor</i>
Metre	<i>Simple Quadruple or Common Time</i>
Scale	<i>Heptatonic & Pentatonic</i>
Chords Scheme	<i>I – VI – VII – V – I (Am – FM – GM – Em – Am)</i>
Groove	<i>Funk & Highlife</i>
Song Genre	<i>Afro-fusion (Highlife, Afrobeat, Funk)</i>
Composer's Style	<i>Fun/Satire</i>

Instrumental resources

African Traditional

Gyile (Xylophone)

Atenteben (Local Bamboo Flute)

Tsoyshi (Local Palm Drums)

Shakashaka (Rattle)

Dojo (Bell)

Western

Drum Set

Keyboards

Guitar

Bass

Horns (Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Trombone, Tenor Sax)

Structural organisation of the song

The song employs strophic *verse & chorus* song form, which is a conventional popular music song structure. It is call & response (solo & chorus alternation) in nature.

The song begins with a sixteen-bar instrumental *build-up* and *warm-up*, where the various instrumental sections with the exception of the drum set and *tsoyshi* drums (local palm drums) enter in succession as follows: *nyoyo* (bell), *shakashaka* (rattle), bass, synthesizer, guitar, horns, *atenteben* (bamboo flute) and *gyile* (xylophone).

While the instrumental *build-up* helps the listener to assimilate individual instrumental patterns and how they are woven into the body of work, the instrumental *warm-up* creates suspense in the listener's ear as to what is going to happen next, and at the same time psych the dancer in a performance setting. The sixteen-bar instrumental build-up and warm-up is interactive in nature. For example, while the *nyoyo*, shakashaka, bass, keyboard, guitar and horns keep a steady rhythmic and melodic pattern respectively, the *gyile* and the *atenteben* improvise. The above instrumental interactions create the effect of call and response among the various instruments, particularly between the

bass and horns and also the *atenteben* and *gyile*. Since the song is not an instrumental music, the drum set rolls in bar 16 to end the interactions, brings everyone under control and gives prominence to the horns to express the introduction of the song, which is a conventional dance band highlife arranging practice. The horns introduction has two significant effects on the listener: firstly, catches the attention of the listener, and secondly, gives the listener a sense of beginning.

To transit from the introduction to the vocals, the composer introduces a *punch*, which also results in a short break so as to end the introduction and at the same time introduce the vocals. The vocals begin with an unusual recitation of *children rhythmic game*; which is also call and response in nature, in the form of rap, based on the instrumental background of the introduction. The use of *children rhythmic game* is an influence from Ghanaian children rhymes such as (*Kyekye kule, Me pe kwan ako, Kwaakwa Lobite* etc.). The introduction of the *children rhythmic game* changes the drum set and *nyonyo* patterns. The drum set changes from a *funky life* (funk/highlife fusion) to a *hiplife* (hip hop/highlife fusion) groove to reflect the current trend of Ghanaian popular music. The *nyonyo* on the other hand changes from *kpanlogo* to *gahu* timeline, a recreational dance music to avoid clash of rhythmic pattern with the drum set. The *hiplife* groove calls for a change in dance movement, and also intensifies the dance in a performance setting, while the rap creates suspense in the listener's ear as to when and what the lead vocal is going to sing. At this point, the usual practice is to introduce the vocal melody; however, the composer sustains and intensifies the suspense by restating the second half of the horns as interlude.

To resolve the above suspense, the composer eventually introduces the first verse of the vocal melody immediately after the short instrumental break (*punch*). The second verse of the song follows immediately after the first verse without any interlude. This is due to the relative shortness of the vocal melody. The distinction between the verse and chorus of the vocal melody is somewhat blurred due to the antiphonal nature of the song. The interaction between the lead vocal, backing vocals, horns and to some extent the bass explains the antiphonal nature of the song. The lead vocal begins in the form of a call; the bass follows immediately with a melodic phrase in the form of a quasi-response to the lead vocal, while the bass is about to end its melodic phrase, the horns also responds to the lead vocal. The composer intensifies the interaction with the introduction of the backing vocals as a response to the lead vocal at the same time a quasi-call to the horns, which also creates a contrapuntal effect. The contrapuntal effect of this section is attributed to the arranging technique the composer employs, which is *brass-vocal call and response*, one of the arranging techniques employed by dance band highlife arrangers of the 1960s.

The song follows popular music conventional song structure by introducing instrumental interlude, where the *gyile* and *atenteben* improvise respectively. The instrumental interlude apart from its decorative and contrasting qualities, it also gives rest to the vocals, and also room for dance showcase in a performance setting.

The horns melody is restated as interlude immediately after the *gyile* and *atenteben* solos to usher in the vocal melody once again. The horns interlude preceding the vocals in this section also reveals the use of another arranging technique by the composer, which is *single theme brass-vocal alternation*. The use of two different arranging techniques in this piece are an ample demonstration of the composer's knowledge and understanding in dance band highlife composition and arranging. The vocals repeat the call and response pattern with a variation till the song ends. The song ends abruptly, devoid of coda or fade.

Instrumental structures

Bass

The bass pattern is the foundation on which the entire melodies, both instrumental and vocal stand. It also determines or influences the pattern of the drum set by virtue of it being the first melodic instrument to begin the song. The bass makes use of motivic repetition and variation, coupled with an artistic manipulation of *polychords* or *extended chords* (Am7, Em11, Am9, Em11). See the illustration below.

Ill. 1.

The illustration shows two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Bass Guitar' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Bass'. Above the Bass Guitar staff, four chords are indicated: Am7, Em11, Am9, and Em11. The Bass Guitar staff shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes. The Bass staff shows a similar rhythmic pattern with some notes beamed together, illustrating the interlocking pattern mentioned in the text.

Note the interlocking pattern in the second beat of bars 3 and 5 respectively.

Horns (Brass) section

The horns feature prominently in this song despite its reinforcement and introduction roles. Technological advancement and rise of *techno pop* music such as *burger highlife*, *hip-life*, *twi pop* etc. have relegated the use of horns to the background in Ghanaian popular music; and therefore, it is quite usual to hear live horns featured prominently

Lead vocal: Too tee kpa-ta-shi e - yaa ta-wo dua-de Too tee kpa-ta-shi

Backing vocal: - - -

Trumpet: - - -

Lv.: e - yaa ta-wo dua-de ni - e naa dua de le

Bv.: - - - E-mi fu nie kɔŋ ma

Trpt.: - - -

Drum set

The drums employ two distinct drum patterns. There is an artistic display of funk drum pattern with highlife groove. The bass drum emphasizes the first and third beat, while the snare drum emphasizes the second and fourth beat to establish the basic funk drum pattern. What brings the highlife groove is the interplay between the hi-hat and the snare drum. The hi-hat plays the *kpanlogo* timeline (recreational dance music of the Ga people of Ghana), and also one of the timelines of highlife instead of keeping to the pulse or the regulative beat of the song.

See the illustration below.

III. 4.

Hi-Hat Cymbal

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

Resultant rhythm

The hi-hat, snare and bass drum produce a resultant rhythm or pattern, which distinguishes highlife groove from funk.

There is a change in the drum pattern when the vocal recitation of the *children rhythmic game* begins. The hi-hat now keeps to the pulse of the song, while the resultant rhythm

of the snare and bass drum produce the *kpanlogo* rhythm. See the illustration below.

The illustration shows three staves of musical notation for a drum set. The top staff is labeled 'Hi-Hat Cymbal' and shows a series of eighth notes. The middle staff is labeled 'Snare Drum' and shows a series of eighth notes with stems pointing down. The bottom staff is labeled 'Bass Drum' and shows a series of eighth notes with stems pointing up. To the right of these staves is a diagram titled 'Resultant rhythm' which shows a simplified representation of the combined rhythm using vertical lines and horizontal bars, with an arrow pointing to the right.

Guitar

In this song, all the instruments are restricted, that is to play a particular role but the guitar is given a *free range* to improvise and also fill the gaps between the horns and the vocals. To achieve the above purpose, the guitarist employs series of *licks*, which also heightens the instrumental interaction.

The guitar adds more grooves to the song right from the *build-up* and *warm-up*, where the guitarist uses a technique of muting the strings to produce a percussive sound with the aid of a guitar effect. The guitar changes from the muting technique to strumming immediately the horns introduction begins, producing a *wah wah* sound also with the aid of guitar effect. The guitar playing technique changes from strumming to West African two-finger plucking technique during the interaction between the vocals and horns. See the illustration below.

III. 6.

The illustration shows a single staff of musical notation for an electric guitar. The staff is labeled 'Electric Guitar' and shows a series of eighth notes in a 4/4 time signature, with stems pointing up and down.

The guitarist employs all these techniques for the purpose of decoration and recognition.

Keyboard (synthesizer)

The song employs two keyboards, *electric piano* and *warm pad*. While the warm pad adheres the rhythm (percussion), horns and vocal sections together with long and sustained notes, the electric piano fills the gaps that may exist between the rhythm and vocal sections, and also adds to the song groove with *chops*, a contemporary Ghanaian highlife keyboard playing technique. The two keyboards also provide the *vamp* with the help of the bass for the *gyile* and *atenteben* interlude.

Vocals

The vocals begin with a recitation in the form of *children rhythmic game*, which arouses listener's interest in the song. See the illustration below.

III. 8.

Lead vocal
Dan so man bəə la Dan so man bəə la Te ke tin ga

Backing vocal
Bfo do sɔɔŋ Bfo do sɔɔŋ A brɔfo

Lv.
Te ke tin ga Joe So lo Joe So lo

Bv.
toogbɛɛ A brɔfo too gbɛɛ Un cle me ti ti Un cle

The vocals, which is also the foreground and the most prominent of the song employs quite a number of resources and devices such as melody fragments, repetition, quasi-hocketing, antiphony, axial melody shape, imitation etc. See the illustration below.

III. 9.

Lead vocal
Too tee kpa-ta-shi e - yaa ta-wo dua-de Too tee kpa-ta-shi

Backing vocal

Lv.
e - yaa ta-wo dua-de ni - e naa dua de le

Bv.
E-mi fu nie kɔŋ ma

Creative process of *Too kɛ Aduŋ*

The most prominent features of the song are the bass and the vocals. The bass and the vocals serve as background and foreground of the song respectively. While the bass is the first creative idea of the composer, the vocals on the other hand become the last. The

creation of the song was guided by a principle of *creating a future hit song*, where every seven seconds of the song must catch the attention of the listener as suggested by Jay Frank, an American music industry executive. The first creative idea of the song started with a manipulation of chords on the bass by the composer who is also an experienced highlife bass player. The bass pattern is *funkylike*, and makes use of running notes and melodic fragments.

The bass pattern provides the chord structure and progression for the keyboard synthesizers and other melodic instruments, and also serves as the foundation on which the song stands. Now that the chords progression of the song has been established that is: (Am – FM – GM – Em – Am), the keyboards employ *arpeggios*, *block chords* and *chops*, a contemporary Ghanaian dance band highlife keyboard playing technique.

In an effort to maintain tradition, and at the same time embrace innovation, the composer employs a drum set pattern, which he termed as *funkylike*, a fusion of highlife and funk drum patterns. This is an artistic display of funk drum pattern with highlife groove. To advance the highlife groove, the composer employs the *tsoyshi* (local palm drums) to fill the gaps within the drum set pattern. With the bass, keyboards and drum patterns set in motion, the composer now explores a traditional folktale and *children rhythmic game* to create funny but catchy vocal rhythmic and melodic lines to complement the above pattern. Notice that the intention of the composer with regard to the text of this song is satirical, and to achieve optimal effect, he artistically employs recitation for the *children rhythmic game* and singing for the folktale, which were delivered in the form of call and response. The lead vocal does the call and the chorus responds. The rhythmic games, apart from its humour, it also arouses the interest of the listener.

There is a change in the drum pattern during the recitation of the children rhythmic games. To sound *hippy*, and also move more with current trends, the composer advances the funk groove with offbeat double *kicks* (bass drum), and also moves the interplay between the hi-hat and snare to the snare and *kick* to keep the highlife groove.

Employing the text of a folktale, the composer creates the vocal melody using melodic fragments in the form of inconclusive and conclusive statements. The first three melodic fragments in the solo or lead vocal sound inconclusive and also creates tension; however, the above tension is release with a conclusive melodic fragment in the chorus, which also suggests the use of *hocket technique*, a common practice in African traditional *gyile* (xylophone) music.

At this point, the composer realises that the text of the song is quite short and it may sound boring if it repeats. He therefore creates his own tale and set the text to the vocal

III. 11.

The image shows a musical score for four parts: Lead vocal, Trumpet, L.v., and Trpt. The lyrics are: Too tee kpa-ta - shi e - yaa ta - wo dua - de. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The frequent interaction between the horns and the vocals as illustrated above is what Coffie refers to as *brass-vocal call and response arranging technique*. The composer employs these two arranging techniques for the purpose of variation and heightening the horns and vocal interactions. It is also worth noting that apart from the interaction between the horns and the vocals, there are some forms of interactions occurring among the various instrumental sections, which creates a polyphonic effect in the song. The interactive nature of the song suggests an influence of African traditional drum music concept on the composer, where composite patterns are heard in integration and not as isolated units.

Song text

Translation

First Verse

Too tee kpaataashi

Goat went to the kitchen

Eyaa tawo duade

In search of cassava

Ni enaa duade lɛ

But when it could not find cassava

Emli fu ni ekɔŋ ma

It became upset and took a bite of corn dough

Second Verse

Aduŋ tee ŋmɔ mli

Monkey went to the farm

Eyaa tawo akwadu

In search of banana

Ni enaa akwadu lɛ

But when it could not find banana

Ekɛ eduna tso ŋmɛ

It cracked a palm kernel with its buttocks

The text of the song is delivered in the *Ga* language of the *Ga* people of Ghana. It is quite common to hear tales or stories about the *cat and mouse, bush rat and lion, tortoise and bird* etc. in Ghanaian popular parlance. However, story on goat and monkey is quite unusual, and the title alone creates some kind of suspense and a state of uncertainty. An examination of the text reveals a situational irony where both the goat and monkey settled on something that they are not noted for. For example, while the goat is noted for eating cassava, the monkey on the other hand is noted for eating bananas. However, in the song text, both the goat and monkey settle with corn dough and palm kernel respectively, which is quite unusual. The meaning of the song text is not connotative (suggestive) according to the composer; however, the composer leaves it to the discretion of the listener. Even though the composer claims the song text is not suggestive, the moral lesson of the song text suggests two things: firstly, it encourages people to look for alternative means of solving a problem or achieving a particular thing. Secondly, it may also suggest that people should keep searching for what they want no matter the challenge. This, however, may be the reason why the composer leaves the theme of the song text to the discretion of the listener.

Conclusion

The conventional dance band highlife songs mostly employ Western idiomatic structure and instrumentation; but borrow thematic materials from African sources. In other words, the Western elements superimpose the African elements. This is evident in the works of dance band highlife greats such as E.T. Mensah, King Bruce, Jerry Hansen, Ebo Taylor, Stan Plange among others. Also, the drum set and bell usually keep one rhythmic pattern throughout the song.

The analytical findings of the song, *too kɛ aduŋ* reveal a proportional cross-cultural fertilisation of African traditional and Western musical resources. While the percussive nature of the African traditional instruments (for example *nyɔno, tsoŋshi, shakashaka, gyile*) intensify the groove (rhythmic feel) of the composition, the Western instruments (for example horns, keyboards, guitar) on the other hand decorate the melodic rhythm and vertical sonority. This, somehow, makes the song appealing to both the young and old, locally and internationally, and also suggests a way forward to making Ghanaian music exportable. The song is relatively simple, however, the use of different drum patterns and timelines makes it quite complex. The interactive nature of the song can be looked at as a communal music participation, a concept in African traditional drum music, where composite patterns are heard in integration and not as isolated units. The song employs multiple *hooks* (that which catches the listener's attention), and this is evident in the bass, guitar, horns, vocals and even to some extent the drum set patterns. The artistic blend of two arranging techniques in dance band highlife music (i.e. single

theme brass and vocal alternation and brass-vocal call and response), coupled with the above-mentioned characteristic traits can be considered as a modern Ghanaian dance band highlife music.

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About the author

Mark Millas Coffie is a composer, arranger, vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, researcher and lecturer in popular music at the Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba. He was the preferred choice as bassist for quite a number of prominent musicians in Ghana, most notably Ebo Taylor, Bob Pinodo and Cindy Thompson. The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. State Department voted him Africa's *Best Young Musician* in 2010. He is presently the director of the Bigshots Band.

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