



Speculative Analysis of Rhythmic Patterning in Two Zimbabwean Instrumental Genres; and its Relation to Harmony

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This paper speculatively examines structural complexities in the rhythmic patterning of the music of the *mbira dza vadzimu* and the *matepe* of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Through a close investigation of the songs *Nyamaropa* and *Ngozi Yemarura*, the paper will define and describe formal aspects of their rhythmic systems. The literature on the *matepe* is barely existent, while most existing accounts of *mbira* music limit their analytic findings to general observations. The analyses focus on the particular details of these songs, with emphasis on the cross-penetrating symmetries and near-symmetries of the rhythmic patterning, especially as they articulate to aspects of the harmonic patterning in these musics. Of particular interest are the transformations (transpositions, augmentations, inversions, retrogrades, retrograde inversions, and so on) operating within various concurrently unfolding time-spans in the music. While the analyses are grounded in “Western” theory, they are informed by current political predicaments pertaining to Africa. Resisting the tendency to keep the African aboriginal in a state of excluded cultural conformity (by valuing indigenous contexts at the expense of musical contents) the analyses will thus be followed by brief speculations on the socio-political value of writing African music theory in global modernity.