

# On Dance-Musicking and Collaborative Musicality in Formal and Non-Formal Music and Dance-Music Arts Education

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**Abstract:** The processes of creating and practicing music and dance-music in many communities are as important as their results. When we draw on out-of-class experiences to aid in-class teaching sessions, we highlight core aspects of non-formal knowledge such as co-existence, collaborative musicality, as well as the communal spirit of Ubuntu (Kibirige, 2020; Mabingo, 2020a; Østern, 2017) embedded in such interactive artistic processes. The processes of musicking and dance-musicking engage the practitioner’s sensibilities in that artistic moment of “doing” (Berkowitz, 2010; Sloboda, 1988). Such moments never exist in isolation, but rather in a convergence of sonic and bodily artistic interactions. This collaborative (micro) intersection has received meagre attention in the academic field of arts education. In this article, I present dance-musicking and collaborative musicality as skill development pedagogical and interactive artistic mechanisms of engagement that allow for holistic arts teaching and learning. I draw on John Baily’s (2001) understanding of “learning through doing,” Christopher Small’s (1998) conceptualisation of “musicking” and triangulate these with Mantle Hood’s (1960) engagement with the notion of *musicality*. The article asks how the dance-musicking process and notion of collaborative musicality, both as pedagogical mechanisms, enhance holistic music and dance-music arts teaching and learning in both formal and non-formal contexts. In so doing, the article discusses how, by way of dance-musicking and collaborative musicality, the formal and non-formal knowledge bases complement each other, although rarely presented as such in arts education.

**Keywords:** musicking, dance-musicking, collaborative musicality, formal and non-formal teaching and learning, arts education

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## Introduction and article premise

A music or dance-music practitioner's ability to artistically interact and adapt to playing among other able musicians in a given context or environment can be said to relate to the concept of musicianship (Azzara & Grunow, 2010). Indeed, musicianship can be achieved through training, interaction, or even artistic association with a community of able music or dance-music practitioners, instructors, in both formal and non-formal confines. What is striking is that we often do not think about how individuals in a musicking and dance-musicking process, whether teachers, students, or community practitioners, collaboratively contribute to the development of each other's state of being musical (musicality) (Hallam, 2006; Hood, 1960). This article discusses dance-musicking and collaborative musicality as practically experienced in formal and non-formal music and dance-music teaching and learning.

The formal and non-formal teaching and learning contexts referred to here are a vast premise. I delimit this discussion to a classroom setting as a formal setting, and any other musical or dance-music event or interaction within a community outside a formal classroom as a non-formal setting. More specifically, I relate the formal setting to institutionalised teaching and learning of music and dance-music, where the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination is strictly structured, prescribed as well as nationalised through curriculum development and implementation efforts. On this front, I draw on my engagements and experiences as both a former secondary school music and dance teacher, and a lecturer in the same at higher education institutional level.

I relate the non-formal setting to the non-formally institutionalised community, or communal processes of teaching and learning music and dance-music (Folkestad, 2006; Wallerstedt & Lindgren, 2016). These processes also follow a structure, even though they are most frequently achieved unconsciously. The training here is through interactive communal music and dance-music social events and engagements. Here, music and dance-music knowledge and musical craftsmanship are acquired through continuous interactions as well as artistic and social-cultural association with a community of able music and dance-music practitioners, instructors, and community specialists. Lifelong learning undergirds

this process. As a community music and dance-music practitioner, musician, and music craftsman, I am a beneficiary of this system and knowledge acquisition process. While the discussion oscillates between the above-mentioned formal and non-formal knowledge bases, and that there are tensions between them, the tensions are not the main focus of this article. Rather, the focus is on their collaborative, interdependent, and coexistential nature, and how these benefit the teaching and learning processes in both knowledge systems.

The term *dance-musicking* borrows some aspects from music educator David Elliot's (1995) term *musicing*. According to Elliot, *musicing* connotes music-making, which, according to him, includes performing, composing, listening, and improvising. These connotations are also present in Christopher Small's (1998) conceptualisation of the term *musicking*. However, Small's conceptualisation deliberately combines music or sound with social relations. This opens the concept to a wide range of application and usage, as he asserts that "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small, 1998, p. 9).

It is, however, important to note that there are inherent dynamics in the conceptualisation and usage of these terms depending on the context and environment of music engagement (formal or non-formal), as well as on the scholar's cultural and artistic background and orientation. In non-formal contexts, for example, music enactment is not only for performative purposes where the *performer-audience* orientation is a given. There is a different perception in some local communities where the music-making processes invoke free and non-prescriptive (not necessarily performative) social-artistic interaction. Dance-musicking partly invokes such interaction. Further, other than presenting musicking as a dominant activity over dancing, it presents both as practically inseparable, collaborative, and equally important if one is to talk of a holistic representation of a social-artistic phenomenon. Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2015) writes about this interrelationship in her article, "*Music as dance and dance as music: Interdependence and dialogue in Baganda Baakisimba performance,*" in which she highlights this

equitable back-and-forth artistic interrelational interaction between the drummers and dancers.

Dance-musicking goes beyond performative contexts, and “taking part in any capacity,” which capacity seems to point at some form of artistic or performative separation of roles in the music-making process. It encompasses the understanding that in certain communities of musicians and dance-musicians, for example in Eastern Africa, the process of musicking is one of dancing and that of dancing is one of musicking. In many instances, this process is non-prescriptive. Dance-musicking therefore connotes non-prescriptive and equitably coexistential engagement with music (with and) for dancing, before and during dancing. It is grounded in both artistic and non-artistic/non-performative processes of making music with or through the enaction of dance movements inherent in many dance and music traditions and genres in many communities around the world such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the word *Ngoma* used in several Kenyan communities, combines both dancing and musicking activities, but it is a name of a dance tradition. Among the Baganda of south-central Uganda, the same word literary means *drum* (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2005). Similarly, among the Acholi communities of northern Uganda, and in the *Lamokowang* music, dance, and dance-music tradition in particular, the process of musicking is the process of dancing; the opposite is also true (Kibirige, 2020a).

By nature, musicking and dance-musicking, or dance-musical experience and interaction, are collaborative at all levels of engagement (Blacking & Nettl, 1995; Nettl, 1974). I use the term collaboration to refer to being in alliance with another to produce a result. On an artistic and performative level, it closely relates to Christopher Small’s (1998) understanding and conceptualisation of performing “relationships” (1998, p. 13) in the musicking process. As discussed in this article, the alliance may be found in both material and non-material aspects of the musicking and dance-musicking processes. Collaboration in the context of social-artistic interaction takes on different forms and exists at different levels of musical engagement (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2015; Nketia, 1954, 1974). Although collaborative musicality, as conceptualised and applied here, relates to the *act* of musicking in artistic contexts, it goes beyond *acting*

in these relationships to living in them as musical moments of interaction. For practitioners, especially teachers and students, it is on the combination of these forms of collaboration that we most strongly depend in our teaching and learning processes, respectively. In this discussion, I will not only refer to rhythmic, motivic, and melodic forms of collaboration on a micro level of musicking and dance-musicking, but I will also refer to collaboration on a macro level in what I have called the *teacher-student-community triangulation* of collaborative musicality, drawing on both material and non-material aspects of the musicking and dance-musicking processes.

I take into consideration the complexities of musicality as a term, or even of defining music itself (Honing, 2018; Honing, et al., 2015; Honing & Ploeger, 2012). In rather simple terms, Mantle Hood (1960) considers musicality to be one's "natural aptitude for music" (p. 55). His discussion of the term comes in the context of a double orientation, where a student learns another music culture, after which situation the student faces an artistic challenge of bi-musicality. Drawing on Mantle Hood's considerations, I use the term musicality to refer to either one's sensibility to music or one's state of being musical. This can be in the way they perceive music or musical activity, or their ability to adapt, play, reproduce, or interact with a music phenomenon in any circumstance or environment in which they find themselves (Blacking, 1973).

A practitioner's musicality, as well as their ability to belong, artistically interact, and adapt to playing among other musicians in a given context and environment (musicianship) can, among other things, be influenced by and depend on their explicit and implicit understanding and awareness of the collaborative nature of music and dance. One's musicality can be observed, heard, or felt (for practitioners) through one's artistic action, reaction, interaction, or expression of such interaction, which could be rhythmic, melodic, bodily, or harmonic (Howes & Classen, 2013). Aspects such as a practitioner's phrasal or vocal embellishment, rhythmic punctuation, tonal quality may play a part in expressing their musicality (and overall musicianship, for that matter). These artistic actions, reactions, and interactions are always collaborative. This collaboration can be practitioner-to-practitioner; practitioner-to-own instrument; one musical note

to another (harmonic or otherwise); one musical phrase to another; or bodily movement expressive phrase-to-musical phrase. As such, a practitioner's musicality and musicianship are grounded in their practical and conceptually artistic collaboration in addition to their ability to collaborate implicitly or explicitly at any level of artistic interaction in a given cultural context.

The concepts of dance-musicking and collaborative musicality presented in this article cut across the wide field of arts education. The underlying goal of this discussion is to bring to the fore an understanding that the practical social-artistic activation of these concepts, as understood in the contexts they are presented, contribute to holistic teaching and learning in both formal and non-formal contexts. Situating their complementary nature in arts education and practice strengthens both contexts and allows for self-regeneration of knowledge in these contexts (Kibirige, 2020a, 2023).

## Theoretical and methodological framework

The conceptual framework of this article engages broad interactions among teacher, student, and community, in which contextualised bodily actions and their pedagogical functions propel collaboratively interactive reactions. The core conceptualisation of dance-musicking is based on an equitable collaborative interplay between music and dance. Collaborative musicality in practical arts education can be achieved through creative artistic engagement, in which a teacher and student have a common ground of interaction—for instance, musicking and dancing where teacher and student can participate freely without any form of oppression, and with the common goal of learning. Paolo Freire's theory of critical pedagogy and dialogue education informs this idea (Freire, 1970, 2020). Freire argues that learners have the potential to critically think about and interact with their educational situation and should therefore be empowered to actively participate in ongoing dialogue rather than being empty buckets waiting to be filled by their teachers. In our case, the dialogue is the processes of musicking and dance-musicking (Benson, 2003; Berliner, 1994; Pike, 1974).

To expand this Freirean school of thought, it is important to understand, and not underestimate the notion of community. Considering the classroom of students as a community, it is apparent that learners are not only interacting with their teacher but also with their own fellow learners in the process of musicking and dance-musicking, both consciously and unconsciously. Therefore, the artistic action, reaction, and interaction process is developed through an interactive triangulation of the teacher, individual learner, and community in which this interaction is happening in space and time. This triangulation directly relates to the larger community where both parties come from. Therefore, the result, which is the teaching and learning, are achieved collaboratively and “co-existentially.”

While expounding on Paulo Freire’s notion of a common ground, and by extension, the idea of community, a micro and macro engagement with the theory of *Ubuntu* concretely cements the core understanding of dance-musicking and collaborative musicality in teaching and learning contexts. The *Ubuntu* philosophy connotes co-existence, which has long been perceived mainly on macro human (or community) interaction rather than on a micro level of artistic interaction. *Ubuntu* activates harmonious co-existence through human agency and interaction—interaction that is, for the purpose of this discussion, undertaken through rhythmic bodily, sonic, and body-sonic action and reaction on a micro level. Dance-musicking is a clear and succinct process of activating *Ubuntu* as its conception is at the core of human micro-rhythmic interactions, onto which the manifestation of rhythmic co-existence, for example, unfolds in both formal and non-formal contexts.

*Ubuntu* is based on the idea that we can only understand an individual musician through, with, or in relation to other musicians. It supports the notion that no human comes into the world fully formed, for we would already know how to think, walk, speak, or behave as human beings without learning how to do these things from others. It therefore promotes the belief that we need other human beings in order to be human (Hailey, 2008; Renaud et al., 2015). The discussion in this article is therefore anchored in the core understanding, and practical actualisation, of the theory of *Ubuntu*, in which the ideas of community, co-existence (artistic and otherwise), and operating within

a common ground of musicking and dance-musicking are key. This conceptualisation articulates *Ubuntu's* practical linkage to and extension of Freire's theory of critical pedagogy, all of which underpin the notions of dance-musicking and collaborative musicality. It is in this theoretical constellation that the teacher-student-community triangulation for holistic teaching and learning of music and dance-music is conceptualised.

This discussion draws on ethnographic research among culturally diverse Ugandan communities. In particular, it draws on fieldwork and continuous practical community music and dance-music engagements among the Acholi communities in Kitgum district of northern Uganda (2017–2023). Drawing on this continuous research engagement, series of formal music, dance, and dance-music teaching at the Department of Performing Arts and Film at Makerere University (2020–2023), and the Institute of Music at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (2016–2023). This body of material and formal/non-formal educational interaction include community musicking and dance-musicking sessions, lecture- demonstration workshops, as well as community practitioners' musical/dance-music engagement with music and dance students. It also draws on a number of practical participant observations and open-end interview interactions with practitioners and students, focussing on their reflections on musicking and dance-musicking as pedagogical processes. The discussion taps into an underlying personal autoethnographic agency permeating from the author's musical interactions and experiences, oscillating between formal and non-formal musical and dance-music knowledge systems.

Dance-musicking and collaborative musicality can be argued to be skill developing and pedagogical processes through which community members and practitioners, teachers, and students engage in learning through *doing* as a methodological approach. John Bailey's (2001) musical learning experiences with the Afghan *Dutar* and *Rubab* between 1973 and 1977 upholds this conceptualisation—learning through/by *doing*. Although Bailey's learning was focussed on the idea of performance, it embeds notion of artistically interactive collaboration pointing to the process of *doing*. Within this approach, and through the different lecture



demonstrations and workshops, the instructor artistically engages their students through active embodiment of music and dance-music where learning is achieved through mirroring and repetitive music and dance-music engagements.

While Freire's theory of critical pedagogy and dialogue education brings us to an understanding of the collaboration that unfolds between student and teacher, the *Ubuntu* philosophy extends this to an understanding of the collaborative and co-existential complexity and interplay between an individual practitioner and the communality practitioners among which the music and dance-music interaction is experienced. This co-existence and collaboration directly feed into the core understanding and conceptualisation of the ideas of dance-musicking and collaborative musicality—concepts and awareness which, as this article asserts, contribute to achieving a more holistic music and dance-music arts teaching and learning process in both formal and non-formal contexts.

## **Dance-musicking and collaborative musicality in the formal and non-formal contexts**

Dance-musicking and collaborative musicality vibrantly exist in both formal and non-formal teaching contexts or settings. However, they have not been given particular and concise scholarly attention, and articulation. This state of affairs is partly attributed to the structural, cultural, and institutional settings of the current education systems as well as the various ways of understanding what music and dance are (Wilf, 2014).

## **Community music and dance-music interactions**

Community musical and dance-musical interactions find particular relevance and reverence among the indigenous communities of Africa where, for instance, the processes of dancing and musicking more often taken to be one and the same. A practitioner's ability to collaboratively merge the musical and bodily aspects of an enactment depends on their social-artistic, cultural, or educational orientation with in such a tradition. A foot stamp during a dance engagement, for example, is not just a dance

movement, but also a sonic action, reaction, or interaction that enhances the function of that music, dance, and dance-music enactment of that tradition on the event at which it is enacted. That same foot stamp, given the environment and context of the event, may raise dust as a reaction, which also becomes part of the formulation of the communal vibe that effects the general essence of the dancing and dance-musicking (Reybrouck, 2015). During my childhood, I used to participate in communal functions such as traditional wedding and twin ritual ceremonies, at which musicking, dancing, and dance-musicking played a communally important role. On such events, we laid semi-dry grass (*essubi*) on the ground where the ceremony was to take place. The primary purpose was to control the dust that could raise when the dancing broke out. It was also for people to sit on before they broke loose into communal musicking and dancing. However, when dancers and musicians danced and played, the non-prescriptive sound of this grass played a particularly collaborative role of enhancing the musical vibe of the musicians and dancers, as we played and danced. This in turn built and maintained the general vibe of the whole event. The audible sound from the musicking, and the visible bodily action of dancing did not exist in isolation from the sound of the grass on the ground as we pounded and glided on it. The communal vibe of the event was and always is a collaborative combination of all elements that are part of this holistic interaction.

On a performative level, and as a music and dance performer, I regularly perform as an instrumentalist, playing traditional percussive and melodic instruments such as the *Embuutu* (main drum) and the *Engalabi* (a long cylindrical syncopative drum) as part of the *Baakisimba* dance and music tradition. What is striking is that for an *Engalabi* player in this tradition, all the designated musical phrases, and those that come as intuitive syncopation, come easily when the player is able to embody or dance the movement patterns they are playing/sounding. When one is playing this instrument, they are dancing inside and collaborating with all the musical instruments being played around them. This may include the sound that all the surrounding dancing bodies produce, some of which are usually amplified by ankle bells. In this rather complex constellation, an *engalabi* player is whole only in the existence of other musicians and

dancers, with collaboration at all levels of musical and dance interaction (rhythmic, melodic, inter-practitioner). One practitioner's musicality is therefore not only developed, effected by, or dependent on their individual existence in that space and time, but in collaboration with his/her fellow musicians' and dancers' music and dance engagements and in action, reaction to or interaction with all that surrounds them (material or non-material).

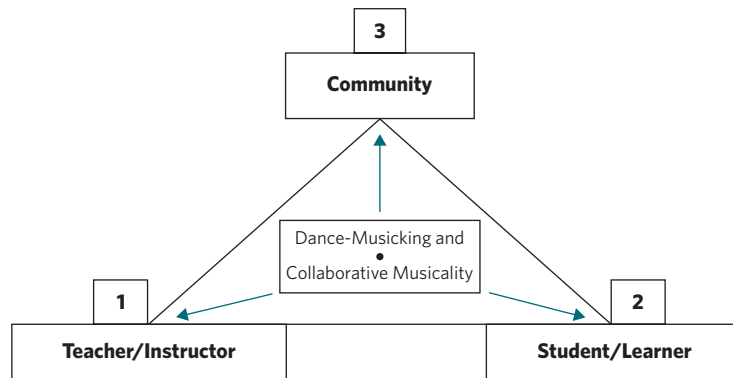
Within a community setting, collaborative musicality, and the concept of dance-musicking take precedence in mass dancing and musicking, when the boundaries of performer and audience are broken—a phenomenon common in local communities all over the world. In this setting, we play, sing, and dance at a level at which everybody participating is immersed into a communal vibe in which an individual practitioner's contribution is less recognised artistically but becomes a part of the collaborative mass.

## Classroom musical and dance-musical interaction

Similarly, in the formal settings, collaboration comes even at the very micro levels of teaching engagements; yet such micro engagements are rarely paid attention to. For example, musical rhythm is often developed and maintained through bodily collaborative gesticulation. More so, the action of playing a melody itself on a given instrument, whether for demonstration or articulation, is always a bodily action to which students usually react through methods such as leading and following. In my formal dance instruction sessions, for example, I almost always use live musical “accompaniment,” not only to “accompany” the dancing, but also to achieve a precise and collaborative articulation of the dance phenomenon. In such settings and artistic constellations, the musicking becomes a co-teacher as well as a tool for effective instruction (also see Mabingo, 2020b). The collaboration here is not only at the level of sound and movement, or musician and dancer: It goes further to the detail of what exactly I am playing as part of dance instruction. The sounded musical and rhythmic patterns and phrases articulate or point to what I could not say in words at that particular moment of dancing. The students then explicitly or implicitly react to or counteract the music.

## Collaborative musicality – the teacher-student-community triangulation

Processes of musicking and dance-musicking, whether in formal or non-formal contexts, unfold in relation to three general collaborative ends in which perception, interpretation, artistic manipulation, and many other connotations to the music and dance-music learning situation are apparent. These include a) the teacher/instructor/elder practitioner; b) the student/learner/young practitioner; and c) the prevailing community. Each of the three collaborative ends feed into and out of each other. What we are able to hear and see in a music and dance-music teaching situation is the result of a collaboratively complex action, reaction, and interaction.



**Figure 1.** A Teacher-Student-Community Triangulation

Figure 1 is a scheme illustrating the three collaborative angles in a music and dance-music teaching/learning context. The collaboration can be looked at from a micro perspective, where one can observe the building blocks of the processes, including the micro elements of rhythm, rhyme, and time with all connections to them, as well as the micro sonic, rhythmic, and motivic behaviours, actions, and gesticulations which pertain to individual practitioners (Agawu, 1995; James, 1999; Jones, 1954). It can also be looked at from a macro perspective, where one can consider the actions, reactions, and interactions that result from the micro artistic actions.

Considering the first angle of the triangulation, and in a practical music and (or) dance class session, the teacher's verbal or corporeal instructive

actions will be collaboratively influenced by their training, their surrounding environment and community, their cultural or social-cultural orientation, as well as their intentionality (Schiavio et al., 2017; Schroeder, 2018). Simply put, the collaborative nature of practitioners'/teachers' instructions is evidenced by the fact that they will most certainly involve both sound and bodily gesticulation (Anttila, 2013; Østern, 2013).

The second angle of the triangulation is the student or learner who responds/reacts either implicitly or explicitly to these instructions. The response or reactions of the student/learner, whether artistic or non-artistic, will most certainly be collaboratively influenced in the same ways those of the instructor/teacher are influenced.

The third angle, the community, which, as previously explained, influences both student/learner and teacher/instructor can be observed on two levels. One level is that of the immediate community—the reachable and influential surroundings that the student, teacher, or practitioner is in at that pedagogical moment. This can be the student's class or classroom environment, or a music, dance, or dance-music event in a given non-formal setting. The second level is that of the wider community where the instructor/teacher, and student/learner comes from. This will most certainly come with particular cultural or social-cultural traits that will influence their way of reacting to a given musical phenomenon, thereby influencing their sensibility to music, dance movement, and their state of being musical. This triangulation, with all its connections, including those very personal and individual traits in a given environment, creates a complex web of collaborative interplay that shapes, directs, and invokes particular artistic sensibilities in the musicking and dance-musicking moment/process.

This triangulation points to any practical and collaborative music and dance-music learning corelation that develops or enhances one's musicality in any given moment of music and dance-music interaction. However, while illustrating this triangulation, and given the confines and limitations of this article, I will focus on a) the interpersonal and community collaborative relations; b) the collaborative material elements; and c) the collaborative non-material compositional elements in a musicking or dance-musicking moment.

## Collaborative musicality – the interpersonal and community relations

Our immediate environments as well as our upbringing within the wider community always have something to do with how we approach life and how we react to situations. Artistic action and interaction most definitely depend on our social and cultural backgrounds. Music and dance do not only relate to skill but also to an inherent impulse that relates to sound and bodily movement; and it is present in every human being. Our interpersonal interactions and community relations sometimes activate or suppress this inherent impulse. Activated or suppressed, we have in one way or another encountered musical phenomena in the course of our lives, although at different levels of engagement. It may be singing in the kitchen while cooking, it may be singing in the bathroom, in a street jam or festival, or as part of our education. In a teaching-learning situation, our learning is a back-and-forth interaction between current and previous related knowledge and interpersonal experiences as well as a continuous collaborative interaction with and between our auditory and visual senses—a process that helps us make sense of and learn (from) what is put in front of us.

Awareness as well as reference to interpersonal and community relations and interactions in the case of East Africa, and Africa in general, has existed for many centuries. Community musicking, dancing, and dance-musicking processes especially in more rural communities, for example, have existed more in equal balance and integrated with people's way of life, where their functions are more often achieved through “living” in such moments rather than only “performing” in them. Open academic discourse, research, and practice are key to interrelated and combined knowledge transfer systems. This approach can be effective if/when we pay particular attention to the simple and daily human actions that involve sound and movement, for instance, those actions that we become very used to and barely give a thought, such as breathing, blinking, walking, and talking, among others. There is immense bodily collaboration in such simple and (taken-to-be) natural sonic and motivic phenomena. Artistically put, human actions use the aspects of rhythm, rhyme, and time not only as structuring mechanism, but also as relational

(co)existences. From a communitarian viewpoint, being together in space and time is not only about bodily presence. It is also about the very subtle and sometimes salient, and silent aspects of life that we share, such as the air we breathe and the and light we see. These unite us and influence our interpersonal actions, reactions, interactions, as well as inter-relations. At a community music or dance event, for example, the sonic vibration created is a summation of both the visible and the invisible. For instance, an elder, who may not have the physical ability to stand up to dance like a youth, does his/her dancing and dance-musicking internally. In a situation where such a person stands up to music or dance, even if it is through making one small motivic pattern or sound, embeds a genuine sonic or motivic sensibility from a deep place connected to their inherent musicality. But how does this sensibility come to be? It is through interpersonal artistic relations that are activated through musicking and dance-musicking processes in that space and at that time or moment of artistic interaction. This activation directly draws on their larger communal knowledge and experiences – cumulative knowledge from their life encounters (also see Angelo, 2015). At a community music and dance event, there exists an open perception that breaks the barrier between our life experiences connected to our ability to react to and interact either sonically or motivically with the present environment and artistic actions. We merge these to create a *cumulative now* in the processes of interactive knowledge dissemination.

This situation holds true in an interactive music and dance-music learning situation, for example in a classroom, as it contributes to what music educationist Angelo (2016) referred to as “the music educator’s expertise and mandate.” We depend on this complex teacher-student-community triangulation to engage our state of being musical. This is what one could call “engaging each other to complement each other’s learning” (also see Mabingo et al., 2020). This is the argument indigenous scholar Njoki Wane (2005) articulates when she refers to the African systems of thought, in which she explains their ontological position when stating the following:

To understand reality is to weave a holistic view of society, that is to accept the need for harmonious co-existence between nature, culture, and society [...] the epistemological position asserts that there are differing

ways of viewing reality. In the African context, knowledge is seen as cumulative and (is formed) from our everyday experiences (pp. 27–28).

Wane’s argument here puts emphasis on the students’ and teachers’ accumulated knowledge through their actions and life interactions over time. The relevant themes such as co-existence that are either explicit or implicit in the teacher-student-community triangulation call for coherence and equity between the formal and non-formal forms of musical and dance-music engagement rather than presenting one as superior to the other. As such, scholars should aim at achieving a middle ground, which not only strengthens both systems but also brings formalised academia close to the same communities it is supposed to serve.

### **Collaborative musicality - the material elements**

Material and objects related to dancing and dance-musicking have received comparatively little attention in music and dance research. There is a need to dwell more on the metaphors that exist in material “things” related to the processes of musicking and dancing and therefore related to the people involved in these processes. There has been a considerable effort to understand material culture in relation to its bearers (Kuchler & Forty, 2001; Tillet, 1999); but even so, less attention has been paid to how practitioners relate to and collaborate with such material elements, especially in relation to music and dance. For instance, archeological theorist Tilley has stated that “things create people as much as people create them” (1999, p. 17). Tilley contends that material things are metaphorical as carriers of meaning and as tools of non-verbal interaction and communication.

In many instances when academic discussions on music and dance are developed, we tend to mainly turn our thoughts to dancing and musicking. It is also common that dance scholars usually turn their thoughts to body movements (dance), while musicians turn to sound (music). In the more contemporary situations where dancers use recorded music, it is even more common that although they are aware that music is playing and they do consider it, the usual center of concentration is their body. Teachers ought to be aware of the co-existence of both (music and dance) when thinking of ideas in preparation for a teaching session.



Music and dance cultures involve so much more than only visible dance movement patterns and audible music and dance-music. For example, in the *Lamokowang* tradition, the practitioner's dancing and dance-musicking present complex webs of relations, interrelations, and co-existences of visible and invisible material elements. Co-existences and correlations in this tradition do not stop at the movement and sonic level; neither do they stop at the bonds that practitioners create with each other by sharing a sound, movement, and space in their artistic interaction process. They do not stop at the relations that the practitioner/teacher initiates and maintains with all other living bodies in the place where the enactment takes place. Further, they exhibit strong collaborative bonds of coexistences with the material elements they do use. In *Lamokowang* musicking and dance-musicking, it is understood and visually clear that the practitioners have a strong bond between themselves and their musical and dance-musical calabashes (*Awal*) as instruments.

As is with the *Awal* as an instrument, so it is with many other material elements in the *Lamokowang* tradition. Understanding this collaborative bond is to understand that there is a web of complex coexisting relations that go even beyond the dancing and dance-musicking; in other words, this interplay formulates a deep-seated relevance to and within the community. Therefore, when a practitioner or teacher talks of an artistic moment in which their students/learners get to play or dance to their satisfaction, this practitioner or teacher is also referring to the students' ability to artistically harness a number of collaborative elements and their web of relations to that artistic phenomenon being interacted with.

Simply put, practical understanding of a music phenomenon, or just a moment of it, entails a form of artistic absorption into the flow of its collaborative existence along with the energy and vibration in the process of *doing*. This may go beyond the mundane and cross a threshold to traverse a realm where the practitioner/teacher/student becomes one with the flow or becomes the flow itself in relation to the surrounding environment. They are then not only able to understand the relations and alliances that exist in totality but are also able to disassemble and explicate them. Through understanding the co-existences and deep interrelations, one is able to draw on and use the metaphorical symbolisms that are in

such musical and movement patterns that may relate to the material elements of that musical and (or) dance-music phenomenon. Awareness and understanding of the material alliances in the moment of musical and dance-musical action elevates one's sensibilities to the prevailing artistic phenomenon, as well as one's state of being musical, which enhances the musical and dance-musical teaching and learning process.

## Collaborative musicality – the non-material compositional elements

The realm of the non-material is another collaborative aspect that not only invokes collaborative musicality but also enhances a holistic music and dance-music teaching and learning experience; that is, if it is understood.

In the discussion of the collaborativeness of the non-material elements in a given musicking and dance-musicking situation, I use a short extract of a repetitive millet harvest song of the Acholi people of northern Uganda entitled *Bel Akuri Wa (The Millet of our Akuri)*. The analysis and continuous interaction with this music and dance-music phenomenon form part of my continuous research engagement with my doctoral research material, informants, and the numerous dancing communities and groups located in the northern region of Uganda.

In this song, community members sonically and motivically interact with two local birds known as *Akuri* and *Lamele*. The birds enjoy eating the farmer's millet. However only one of the birds, the *Akuri*, can be eaten by the farmer. The melody highlights the farmer's dislike of the other bird, the *Lamele*, to eat the farmer's millet, because the *Lamele* itself cannot be eaten by the farmer. They sing that *Akuri* "as their bird." In the musical interaction, the practitioners sound the voice of the *Akuri* bird (*Dduu dduu*), the bird that they prefer to eat their millet. The dance movements for this song imitate the walking styles of both birds.

*Bel Akuri Wa – The Millet of Our Bird Akuri*

*Lamele Camo Bel Akuri Wa – Lamele has eaten the millet of our Akuri.*

I am aware of the complexities of using a Western music notation system to represent an African community musicking process, for there are

a number of aspects that it does not explicitly capture (Kibirige, 2020b; Shanangurai and Maguraushe, 2019; Shelemay, 2010; Stone, 2008). This excerpt mainly represents the aspects discussed in this article. The cultural-specific sound bending executed by the *lado wer* (soloist), *lugam wer* (choristers), and the *rigirigi* has been represented by the following symbol: √

*J* = 120

The vocal and instrumental sound bends are effected by gliding from the previous to the next pitch between or towards which the sign is placed. The bend is enacted with a deep empathic sense of humour

The score consists of several staves: Lado wer (vocal), Lugam wer (vocal), Rigirigi (instrumental), Pitimbi (instrumental), Laitimbi (instrumental), and Mimbil (instrumental). The lyrics are: "Yee - bel a - ku - ri wa La-me-le ca mo bel a - ku - ri wa La-me-le yee bel a - ku - ri wa Ah Duu Duu La-me-le ca mo bel a - ku - ri wa Duu Duu La-me-le yee Ah". The Mimbil part includes the instruction: "The Mimbil does not necessarily have follow any rhythmic or time regulation or convention, but played with a deep sense of anticipation and unregulated rhythmic humour".

**Figure 2.** Bel Akuri Wa Musicking and Dance-Musicking

Notation by the Author

In this excerpt, the *Lado wer* makes his statement in anticipation that another practitioner will support it or form a counter sonic argument to it. Such an argument can be a subtle movement, sound, or counteracting melody. One can observe that the *Lado wer* formulates the call in the first and second counts, and in response, the *Lugam wer* ((may be referred to as chorister(s) in Western compositional and performance contexts) support the call collaboratively picking their response from the last half-beat of measure two. He not only affirmatively responds but also emphatically reiterates the main subject *Lamele Camo Bel Akuri Wa* in measures three

and four. With this support and formation of collaborative alliance, the *Lado wer*, restates/repeats the statement with even further confidence. However, this time there is an overlap starting from the second half of the second beat in the second measure. As may be observed, at the end of the *Lado wer's* phrase in the second measure, they execute a voice/tonal bend which denotes strong emotional connotations. The melodic overlap here does not only accentuate the cordiality of the alliance exercised here but also intones an understanding of the *Lado wer's* situation in that moment. It is indeed this understanding that is indicated in the respondent (*Lugam wer*) section between the first and second beats of measure three.

The sound and rhythms of the *Firimbi* (whistle) as well as the *Rigirigi* (tube fiddle), although different, keep on momentarily converging in affirmation of the statements and dialogue between ends. They play constantly and contrastingly throughout, while the *Rigirigi* and the *Lutinobul* provide a baseline, or drone, onto which other dance/music collaborative dialogues continuously lie. However, even by doing so, they both keep on contributing to the dialogue independently. The *Lutinobul* provides rhythmically intriguing patterns that do not only draw on what other practitioners contribute in the dialogue but also build on them to develop its own contribution to this collaborative artistic discourse. While the *Lado wer* make that long call at the very beginning of the first measure, the *Lutinobul* maintains the momentum in support of the statement (the call), an action that variates the material in measures one and two. The *Lutinobul* player keeps developing this material in measures three and four, but still keeps a portion of it to identify himself even when the rest make entrance into the initial statement in measure three.

The *Lutinobul* maintains its identity with a three eighth note beat pattern in every last beat of the measure; but sometimes, as may be observed in measure five, new rhythmic material is formulated which further collaboratively complements the rest of the sonic engagement (especially the *Lado wer* and the *Rigirigi* in the same measure).



**Figure 3.** A Three Eighth Note Beat Pattern

The *Lutinobul* continues to add to the ongoing dialogue that foments the vibe and directs the sound energy to its functional end (s). This *Lutinobul* pattern complements the female dancers' movements in the very moment when they absorb their last beat of each measure, as may be observed in Figure 43 below.

**Figure 4.** Labala-Lutinobul Collaborative Dialogue

Notation by Author

In Figure 4, one can observe two “melo-rhythmic” lines running parallel to each other, one pitched, the other not. In the performative or teaching-learning context, and in the repetition of the three eighth note beat pattern, the *Lutinobul* audibly completes the females’ silenced and absorbed sections. While the females’ feet are silent at this particular point in time, their upper body continues to execute a silent but visible pulsation. So, even if their feet do not move at this moment, their other body parts perform the “visible silence.” At this moment, although varied, the female practitioners develop their feeling not only from the *Lutinobul*’s sounding of their feet silence but also in collaboration with this silence in the continuation of their pulsation amidst other bodily and sonic collaborations.

The musicking and dancing do not only co-exist and collaborate in this context but are also part and parcel of the process of making meaning. Musicking is because dancing is, and the opposite is also true. Indeed, the internal co-existences, relations and interrelations in the dancing structure, positions, movement flow, sonic and bodily rhythmic enhance the practitioner’s musicality in both formal and non-formal teaching and learning of this type of song.

## Pedagogical reflections and conclusion

Existence, in as far as music and dance-music enactment is concerned, is in the co-existence of phenomena, for there is no physical sound that can be produced without bodily, physical, or material (matter) movement. Sound (music) and bodily action/movement (dance) exist in collaboration with other realities (material and non-material). The concept of dance-musicking and its ontological domains have this collaborative existence at their core. This understanding is at the center of what forms sound and bodily action as we know, see, and feel them.

For instance, when a drum is hit on its membrane, the combination of the force exerted on that type of membrane and the material used to hit the membrane form the nature and form of the vibration that we hear as sound. However, on the way through the distance between the source of this sound, or in other words the point of the action (of hitting the drum membrane) and our ears, this sound encounters hits/reflects/or even penetrates matter or material existences that shape it, absorb part of it, or even give it direction, and tonality (Gaver, 1993; Brooks et al., 2014). By the time we are able to hear this sound, and before we even generate an interpretation, perception, let alone engage with it artistically, it has gone through different forms of encounters and transformations with other existences. What we interpret and engage with as sound is already a combination of many other forms of matter right from its source (Gershon, 2013, 2018). This is the same process that happens with phenomena that we come to see as bodily movement (dance). By the time it comes into our sight, and before we get to perceive and interpret what we see and how we see it, it has gone through different forms of encounters with other existences that form, shape, and direct it.

On the level of an individual practitioner's inherent engagement with sound (music) and movement (dance) and taking into consideration when and how they manifest within us through our sensorial abilities, the manifestation is collaborative. This is how we instantly determine our artistic actions, reactions to, and interactions with such music (sound) and bodily movement (dance). These action-based engagements are then shaped and determined by or within the contexts and environments we ourselves are in as practitioners. Therefore, in this sense, our musical or

dance-music actions, reactions, and interactions are collaborative right from the micro process of sound creation, formation, and manifestation.

The conceptualisation and usage of the terms dance-musicking and collaborative musicality underscore the need for practitioners, teachers, and students not to practically conceptualise music and dance phenomena in isolation from one another. On the contrary, awareness of this practical collaborative merger enhances one's collaborative musicality through informed practical engagement with the micro processes through which music and dance-music phenomena are incubated, formed, and perceived by a practitioner, learner, teacher, or audience member in a performative context.

I have argued for the awareness and understanding of the teacher-student-community triangulation to activate practitioners', teachers', and students' sensibilities in the artistic moments of *doing*. I have expounded on the analogy that this *doing* never exists in isolation, but rather in a convergence of sonic and bodily artistic interactions. It is within this conceptualisation that dance-musicking and collaborative musicality are situated. The discussion has presented these concepts not only as skill developing pedagogical processes but also as interactive artistic engagement processes that allow for holistic arts teaching as well as music and dance-music knowledge self-regeneration in arts (music, dance, and dance-music) education contexts.

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