

**Rhythmic Diversity and Creativity in Music Composition: An Artistic
Research Perspective on Embodied Pedagogical Approaches in
Percussion**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the profound influence of rhythm as a foundational element in music composition and its potential as a primary driver for generating innovative compositional ideas. Through the lens of artistic research methodologies, the study delves into diverse rhythmic techniques such as syncopation, and polyrhythms, highlighting their capacity to inspire creativity and shape the structural, mood, and energetic aspects of musical works.

Significantly, the thesis underscores the importance of rhythmic patterns, rhythmic motifs, micro rhythm variations, cross-rhythms, and dynamic interplays, revealing how these elements can transform music composition. It also examines the interplay between rhythm and melody from the perspectives of percussionists, composers, and music teachers, providing a multidimensional understanding of rhythm's role across various musical genres.

This research is enriched with a secondary focus on embodied pedagogical approaches that facilitate the absorption and exploration of rhythm. It discusses how vocalized percussion methods and other innovative teaching techniques can be integrated to develop compelling musical ideas and enhance the educational experience.

Through a comparative analysis of interview responses and field studies, the study offers insights into the application of rhythmic techniques across different cultural contexts, emphasizing the transformative potential of rhythm in both music education and composition. The conclusion integrates these findings with theoretical perspectives, advocating for a pedagogically enriched approach that embraces the diversity of rhythmic expression within global musical traditions.

Keywords

artistic research, creativity, diversity in music, embodied pedagogical approach, music composition, rhythm, percussion, language of rhythm, african diaspora, decolonisation

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1 Introduction: Exploring rhythmic diversity and depths of creativity

My study seeks to understand the connection between rhythm and melody through the lens of percussionists, composers, and music teachers. Musical composition encompasses a myriad of interrelated elements that contribute to the creation of a coherent and expressive piece of music. Among these elements, rhythm occupies a central position, serving as a pillar that defines the structure, expression, and overall aesthetic of the composition. This paper aims to provide an analysis of the role of rhythm in musical composition, examining its interaction with other musical elements and its implications for the listener's and learners' experience. Studies in the field of Senegalese tama (talking drum) and keyboard, the bodhran, and bugarabu will provide insight to answering these questions within their cultural contexts. Notably, all of these percussions feature melodic approaches and thus share an integral common factor. This aspect inspired my research and resulted in outcomes that can also serve musicians who don't identify as percussionists. This study sheds light on the melodic potential of these instruments and their implications for music composition and pedagogy.

This study was conducted as artistic research in music. As a musician engaged in artistic research, I see it as an approach that blends my creative practice with scholarly inquiry to delve into music's essential position (see Varto J. & Tikkanen, P. (2018)). It's about more than just performing or composing; it's a method of exploration and discovery. Through artistic research, I used experimentation, performance, composition, instrument building and sonic exploration to investigate questions about music, aesthetics, culture, and society. For me, artistic research means that my musical creations themselves become a form of research output. Each work serves as a vehicle to convey insights and perspectives about music. Alongside this creative output, I also engage in reflection and critical analysis of my process, drawing on methodologies from both the arts and humanities to deepen my understanding and contribute to the broader discourse on music's role in our world.

1.1. Context of the study

Creative composition is pivotal in the evolution of music, serving as a bridge between tradition and innovation. It enables composers and musicians to express unique artistic visions, adapt cultural heritage to contemporary contexts, and respond to the dynamic needs of society. By fostering creativity in composition, this research underscores the transformative potential of music as a tool for cultural expression and societal change, aiming

to inspire future generations of musicians to explore and expand the boundaries of musical expression through rhythm.

My research is rooted in the context of embodied pedagogy, drawing from my academic and practical experiences in global music. Having engaged in diverse musical traditions through studies in Cuban and Celtic music, as well as electronic music, my approach integrates a broad spectrum of rhythmic knowledge. This includes a profound engagement with African traditionalism and the diaspora of West African rhythms, allowing for a culturally informed perspective.

1.2 Research aim and questions

The overarching aim of my research is to investigate the relation between rhythm and melody from a percussionist's, composer's, and music teachers' point of view. In today's global world, it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity of musical traditions and to appreciate their rhythms, and to adapt our music-making and teaching accordingly.

The research questions that will address this aim are:

1. How can rhythm be used as the fundamental source to generate new compositional ideas?
2. How can embodied pedagogical approaches be used to absorb rhythm as a starting point for new compositional ideas and co-creation processes?

These questions will be analyzed and answered by this written thesis and my final exam concert. In this context, the word *fundamental* refers to rhythm being an essential and foundational element that significantly influences and shapes the structure and development of musical compositions. The word *absorb* refers to the process of fully understanding and integrating rhythm into one's creative practices. It involves deeply engaging with rhythmic concepts so they become a natural part of the way composers and collaborators generate and develop new musical ideas. It also refers to internalizing and embodying rhythm to the extent that it influences and enhances the creative output, allowing artists to instinctively use rhythmic elements as foundational components of their compositions and collaborative projects. For defining the term *embodied* in the context of my research, Tim Ingold's approach is relevant. It involves active engagement with the environment, where learning and

understanding emerge through direct sensory experiences and practical involvement. He challenges traditional separations between mind and body, and organism and environment, proposing that knowledge is not just held but lived and experienced. Ingold's perspective emphasizes that the mind extends into the world, and skills develop through continuous interaction with our surroundings, fundamentally uniting perception, action, and the material context.

1.3 Structure of the written work

The thesis is organized into six main chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) outlines the study's context, aims, and methodological approach. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) examines existing research on rhythm and melody, focusing on interdisciplinary studies that intersect music theory, cognitive science, and cultural studies. In chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework), the conceptual foundations for understanding rhythm from both a technical and cultural perspective are established. Chapter 4 (Methodology) details the research design, including data collection methods and analytical approaches. Chapter 5 (Findings) presents the results of the empirical research, discussing how rhythmic diversity influences musical creativity across different cultures. The final chapter 6 (Discussion and Conclusion), integrates the findings with the theoretical framework, discussing implications for music composition and education, and suggesting directions for future research.

2 Literature review

This literature review explores studies that underscore the complex relationship, between rhythm, cultural expression, and educational practices within diverse musical traditions. This selection reflects a focus on scholarly works that integrate ethnographic insight with musical analysis, providing a spectrum of interdisciplinary research that intersects music theory, cognitive science, and cultural studies. Inclusion criteria for the literature in this review were prioritizing studies that offer profound insights into the dynamics of rhythmic innovation and its pedagogical implications, as well as those that illustrate the adaptation of traditional musical forms in the context of contemporary global influences. Excluded were studies with a narrow ethnomusicological focus lacking broader theoretical or applied implications, ensuring that the reviewed literature contributes directly to a holistic understanding of rhythm's role in musical composition and education across cultures.

2.1 Rhythmic Richness and Virtuosity in Jola Solo Drumming: An Analysis of Bugarabu Music

This is a summary of David Font-Navarrete's dissertation "*Bugarabu: Musical process, virtuosity, and creativity in Jola solo drumming*" (2011) on the complex nature of bugarabu drumming. He explores its creativity and virtuosity, using skeletal themes, variations, and technical skill to demonstrate its musical depth. Font-Navarrete compares bugarabu to various musical genres, from European plainchant to African traditions like Manding kora and Ewe music, highlighting its openness and demanding virtuosity. Bugarabu, from the West African Jola people of the Senegambia region, is a unique solo tradition involving a drummer playing multiple drums, wooden clappers, and songs. Font-Navarrete emphasizes the necessary specialization, technique, stamina, and creativity, positioning bugarabu as a virtuosic tradition. His analysis includes archival research and observations that detail bugarabu's distinctive features. (Font-Navarrete, 2011.) The research begins with a historical review of the Jola people and surveys their music genres, detailing the structures, dance forms, instruments, rhythmic patterns, and drumming techniques specific to bugarabu. It examines the kinetic aspects of bugarabu drumming, offering insights into its complex rhythmic structure. The study explores how a solo bugarabu drummer mimics an ensemble, investigating microrhythms and bimanual coordination. Font-Navarrete discusses broader themes of creativity, identity, and musical perception, highlighting music's ability to engage with human perception on multiple levels. He focuses on how individual drummers simulate ensemble dynamics through drum pitches, rhythmic motifs, and call-and-response patterns, illustrating how these elements enhance social interaction during performances. Font-Navarrete (2011, p. 250–287) takes a systematic approach to the formal and aesthetic aspects of bugarabu drumming, advocating for a deep understanding based on its musical and cultural contexts. He explores the perception and cognition challenges in bugarabu drumming, drawing parallels to the phenomenon of multistable perception seen in diverse cultural settings. Incorporating insights from Monson (2007) on multistable musical patterns and Swinnen and Wenderoth's (2004) research on bimanual coordination, he enriches the discussion on motor control and musical perception. Kubik's foundational study (1962) further illuminates the connection between kinetic patterns and sounds, providing insights into rhythmic coordination. Font-Navarrete's work on multistable perception in music reveals the intricate relationship between movement, sound, and cognition in complex rhythmic and melodic execution. He advocates for further research into the neural mechanisms underlying

multistable perception and its implications for music pedagogy and performance, offering deep insights into the nuanced musicality of bugarabu drumming and its global relevance.

2.2 Enhancing embodied learning in Dalcroze-inspired music education

Embodied learning in music education, particularly within the framework of Dalcroze pedagogy, has garnered significant attention due to its multifaceted approach to integrating sensory experiences, active engagement, and social interaction (Juntunen, 2020). Juntunen looks into various scholarly works to explore practical suggestions and theoretical underpinnings for enhancing embodied learning in Dalcroze-inspired music education. Dalcroze pedagogy emphasizes the integration of movement with music education to foster holistic development, recognizing the inherent connection between music and the body (Juntunen, 2020). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of incorporating movement into music education in enhancing rhythmic abilities, synchronization, and melodic discrimination, while also promoting social integration and joyful experiences among learners of all ages. Drawing on the phenomenology of embodied learning, practical strategies for enriching Dalcroze-inspired music education include promoting multisensory experiences, fostering awareness of the body's role in music-making, and balancing intellectual and bodily activities (Juntunen, 2020). By implementing these strategies, educators can create dynamic learning environments where students actively engage with music through movement, develop a deeper understanding of musical concepts, and cultivate self-expression.

2.3 Progressive Traditionalism in African Music

The dynamics of traditional and popular music within the Edo culture of Nigeria exemplify the concept of "progressive traditionalism", which highlights how music incorporates innovations while maintaining its traditional essence (Emielu, 2020). Through ethnographic study, Emielu illustrates how Edo dance bands blend indigenous traditions with external influences in a progressive manner, enriching their cultural heritage. This challenges the conventional view of African traditional music as static and unchanging, emphasizing the fluidity of music categorization and the continuous negotiation between tradition and modernity. Additionally, Emielu examines the dynamic evolution of traditional music in different cultural contexts, such as among the Edo people of Nigeria, to understand how musical practices adapt to contemporary realities while preserving their cultural essence.

Similarly, Senegalese drumming traditions exhibit a dynamic evolution, with rhythms transitioning from representations of speech to vehicles for creativity, demonstrating how musical practices adapt to new contexts while retaining elements of cultural history (Tang, 2008).

2.4 Understanding the Sabar Drum Language

Winter's (2014) study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between linguistic and musical elements within Senegalese drumming traditions, particularly focusing on the Sabar drum played by griots. Unlike other African drumming traditions primarily serving as speech surrogates, Sabar rhythms display language-like grammar rules and are perceived as meaningful texts by the players. Griots exhibit a strong intuition regarding the correspondence between spoken expressions and Sabar rhythms, enabling them to construct a lexicon of rhythmic forms and meanings. Sabar rhythms exhibit structural relations with spoken language beyond mere musicality, reflecting nuanced systems where hand strokes, stick strokes, and their combinations serve as minimal rhythmic units or phonemes.

Exploring Winter's findings further unveils the vast possibilities of rhythm as a source for compositional ideas. The intricate grammar and structural relations found within Senegalese drumming traditions offer a wealth of inspiration for composers seeking to innovate and push the boundaries of musical expression.

2.5 Enhancing Rhythmic Communication: Steve Forman's Option for Precise Terminology of rhythm

Understanding and discussing rhythm with precision is crucial in the field of music education and performance. Forman's insights into rhythmic terminology highlight the common challenges and propose a structured approach to overcome these through a consistent and precise use of language. (Forman, 2022)

(1) The challenge of rhythmic language. Forman identifies a constitutive issue in how musicians and educators discuss rhythm. The default language for rhythm has traditionally been written notation, which is inherently static and two-dimensional. This representation starkly contrasts with the dynamic, multidimensional nature of rhythm as it occurs in real time. This disparity often leads to misunderstandings and inefficiencies in both learning and communicating rhythmic concepts.

(2)The need for precise terminology. Rhythm, as experienced in everyday life and performance, demands a language that aligns with its real-time execution. The typical reliance on notation based vocabulary alone is insufficient for expressing the infinite possibilities of rhythmic articulation. Additionally, learning rhythm through the approach of individual pieces is time-consuming and often leaves gaps in a musician's overall rhythmic competence. A precise and universally applicable vocabulary would streamline the learning process, allowing for quicker and broader understanding. In the competitive landscape of professional music, the ability to quickly grasp and adapt to diverse rhythmic structures is invaluable. Precise terminology equips musicians with the tools to efficiently decode and execute complex rhythms from various musical traditions.

To address these challenges, Forman proposes a set of terms that are consistent and precise (see the figure below), intended to be universally applicable across different musical styles and cultures. The terminology offers a framework that enhances how musicians understand and communicate rhythmic structures. This standardized rhythmic language provides clear, consistent definitions that remain useful across various musical contexts, thus fostering better mutual understanding among musicians. More than an academic tool, this terminology is a practical asset in music education and practice, aiding musicians in articulating rhythmic ideas clearly and effectively during rehearsals and performances.

Replacing the language of traditional written notation with this standardized language, musicians can bypass common communication barriers, leading to quicker learning and enhanced performance skills. This method democratizes music education, making it more accessible and streamlined, and prepares musicians for the challenges of a global and diverse musical landscape. Forman's pulse-relational terminology also sets the stage for future educational strategies and discussions in rhythm, promoting a more integrated and precise approach to exploring musical rhythm.

Pulse Relational Terms (Unit I)

- beat** a single or particular incidence of rhythmic pulse music or poetry,
- bit(s)** units of subdivision. when written, "bit" is usually abbreviated as "bt". For example, 4bt group, 6bt resolution, etc.
- coherence** n. the capability or degree to which components, elements, or processes in a rhythm system can be perceived independently. The coherence of a rhythm system is a subjective condition dependent on many factors including the density and complexity of the system, relative tempo, and the experience and perceptive skills of the listener.
- group(s)** strings of consecutive similar bits. Groups are perceived when streams of bits, pulses, or other subdivision units vary in regular recurring patterns. The number of bits in a group determine the bit-value of the group. Most people can intuitively recognize the characteristic patterns of subdivision of recurring music periods. We sense regular pulse streams, and recurring groups. Most people will "resonate", and physically respond to this stimulus; in the presence of musical pulse people automatically tap their feet, nod, or clap to the beat. This seems to be a universal trait around the world. People begin to exhibit this behaviour at a very early stage of development.
- group type** groups fall into three basic types, or *categories*:
- binary** a group evenly divisible by 2.
 - ternary** a group evenly divisible by 3.
 - odd.** any group larger than 3 not evenly divisible by a whole number.
Odd groups larger than 3 are usually resolved into compound patterns of binary and ternary subgroups.
- inertia** *adj.* (as applied to rhythm) a relative tendency of a rhythms system or structure to continue in its existing state of rest or uniform motion.
- intention** n. (as applied to rhythm) the performers aim, plan, and musical destination.
- momentum** *adj.* (as applied to rhythm) the relative degree or amount of motion or progression is perceptible in a rhythm structure or system component.
- period** a specific amount of time.
- periodic** recurring, repeating, recycling.
- pulse** n. singular: A pulse is one of a series of regularly recurring, precisely equivalent ["undifferentiated"] stimuli; a beat as we actually perceive, sense or feel it. Plural: a pattern, series or "stream" of perceptible pulses continuing at a consistent rate.
- rate(s)** n. the absolute speed, or tempo of pulses, bits, or recurring groups in real time.
- resolution** n. periodic resolution: the type and/or quantity of subdivisions of a specific period.

agenda

Pulse relational terms as proposed by Steve Forman in Unit 1 of PRT (2022, p.6–7)

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Scaling of attention by John Vervaeke

In his series of online lectures professor John Vervaeke explores into the complexities of attention in cognitive science. He proposes that attention is not merely a passive filter of sensory information but a dynamic, self-organizing process that highlights certain aspects of our environment or thoughts, making them more prominent in our consciousness. This optimization process, transforming hearing into active listening, exemplifies how attention structures our experience of the world. Vervaeke does not discuss music in his studies, but in the findings section of this study I will be applying some of his ideas that could facilitate our approach to learning complex musical concepts like polyrhythms.

Vervaeke introduces two pivotal axes along which our attention operates: the in-out and up-down dimensions. The in-out axis describes how attention can either project outwards, engaging with the world through our mental constructs, or turn inwards, reflecting on our inner thoughts and sensations. The up-down axis, meanwhile, deals with our ability to simultaneously perceive an organized whole and its constituent elements. This is evident in reading, where our recognition of a word (the whole) is dependent on our perception of individual letters (the elements). This dual focus allows us to zoom out to grasp broader concepts or zoom in to understand detailed features. Although these axes can be conceptualized separately, they function synergistically, weaving together a thorough weave of our attentional landscape. (Vervaeke)

3.2 Rhythmic dynamics and education: insights from pulse-relational theory

The theoretical framework of PhD Steve Forman's Pulse-Relational Theory (PRT) course module, as articulated across four units, presents a multidimensional and psychophysical approach to the study and application of rhythm in musical performance. This framework emphasizes the integration of sensory experiences, structured practice, and precise communication within musical performances, catering to a holistic understanding and execution of rhythmic complexities (Forman, 2022).

Forman emphasizes the following key factors crucial for mastering rhythm in musical education and performance.

- **Holistic Approach to Rhythm:** Emphasizes the psychophysical nature of rhythm as a phenomenon that must be felt and experienced, advocating for a practice that integrates kinetic engagement and neural feedback.
- **Structural Complexity:** Treats rhythm as a multi-dimensional structure similar to architectural forms, moving beyond traditional linear representations to include depth, verticality, and horizontality in rhythmic understanding.
- **Language of Rhythm:** Promotes a standardized language for rhythm that bridges the gap between traditional notation and the dynamic, real-time experience of rhythmic patterns, facilitating clearer communication and understanding.
- **Practical Engagement:** Prioritizes hands-on engagement through walking routines, vocal articulations, and group performances that align internal rhythmic perceptions with external musical expressions.
- **Continuous Learning and Assessment:** Focuses on continuous engagement and practical application rather than traditional testing methods, assessing students through their ability to apply rhythmic concepts in real-world settings.

Forman's PRT module effectively prepares students for the dynamic and complex nature of contemporary musical performance, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle sophisticated rhythmic structures. This approach not only enhances their musical abilities but also ensures they are well-prepared for the challenges of professional music environments. Through a structured curriculum, the PRT module stands as a significant contribution to rhythmic studies, offering a profound educational experience that emphasizes the psychophysical, structural, and practical aspects of rhythm (Forman, 2022).

3.3 Tim Ingold's Perspective on Sound, Music, and Perception

Tim Ingold's insights profoundly challenge traditional views on the sensory experience of sound and music, advocating for an immersive approach that transcends auditory perceptions alone. His book "Thinking Through the Cello" (2020) positions the cello not just as an instrument, but as a medium that engages with the world, suggesting that music involves the entire body and influences its surroundings.

Ingold critiques the conventional notion of "soundscapes" in his 2021 work, arguing that segregating sound into distinct categories simplifies and diminishes our true sensory

engagement. He advocates for an active listening experience, where our entire body acts as an "extended ear," echoing John Cage's philosophy of experiencing sounds as they naturally occur. He introduces the concept of 'ensoundment,' proposing that we are enveloped by sound similarly to how we are by air, encouraging a form of listening that is both embodied and environmental. This idea challenges the isolation of sound as mere background noise and promotes a deeper interaction with the sonic environment.

Ingold's theories urge educators, musicians, and researchers to rethink how music is taught and appreciated, emphasizing the need to develop sensitivity to the sonic environment beyond technical skills. His work enriches our understanding of sound and music, integrating cultural, environmental, and phenomenological dimensions to foster a more engaged and nuanced interaction with the world.

4 Research design

This chapter outlines the diverse methods used in this study, each uniquely contributing to addressing the research questions. Artistic research provides a reflective and experimental perspective, interviews offer deep personal insights, fieldwork brings empirical grounding and cultural context, and seminars facilitate engagement with contemporary music education and composition practices. These methods collectively establish a robust framework for exploring rhythmic diversity and creativity in music composition. To further enrich the study, various multimedia components are integrated, enhancing the documentation and providing a thorough dataset that supports textual analysis and ensures a thorough presentation of findings. This study utilizes an artistic research methodology to delve into the impact of rhythm on music composition and the effectiveness of embodied teaching methods. It combines practical experimentation with a theoretical framework to examine how rhythmic techniques—such as syncopation, polyrhythms, metric modulation, and microrhythms—can invigorate creative processes and shape musical compositions. Next, I will present the generation of diverse data sets, produced between 2007 and 2024 and utilised in this study.

4.1 Data generation

Experimentation, collaboration, and performance. Practical experimentation with different rhythmic patterns and their integration into compositions provided firsthand insights into the

creative processes. This was complemented by performances that tested these rhythmic explorations in real-world settings and resulted in the final exam concert pieces.

Sonic Exploration and instrument making. Investigating the effects of various sound textures and rhythmic structures helped to understand their impact on music composition and listener perception. As an instrument maker I have strived to make drums that produce a clear tone, with less interfering harmonics, and that have a wide tuning range.

Field Work. Cultural Immersion during field trips to regions known for their rich musical traditions (e.g., Senegal, Scotland, Cuba, Mali, Burkina Faso) allowed for an immersive experience, providing a deeper understanding of how rhythm is perceived and used in different cultural settings. Observation and participation directly with musical practices in these areas offered insights into traditional and contemporary rhythmic practices, enhancing the study's depth.

Seminar Participation and Academic exchange. Participation in Tamburi Mundi seminars and workshops provided a platform for exchanging ideas with other scholars and practitioners. These interactions were instrumental in refining the research approach and integrating academic theories with artistic practice.

Study exchange in Glasgow during master's studies. My six-month study period at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's traditional music department and frequently playing in Glasgows pub sessions provided an understanding of the foundational concepts and styles of Celtic music, particularly its versatile use of rhythm. The focus was on adapting the tama to accompany Celtic tunes, exploring the interplay between the bodhrán and tama, and orchestrating tama parts to enrich these tunes in their traditional context. Collaborating with the local band “Yokit” offered a platform for rearranging traditional tunes and experimenting with the tama, the DX7 marimba (see appendices), and electronic beats and resulted in a concert in the Eden festival 2022.

Author's Videos. Videos captured during the research process display the practical application of rhythmic techniques across different musical settings and show interactions between the

author and local musicians. Their purpose is to provide visual evidence of rhythm and melody integration as observed and practiced in various cultural contexts, facilitating a deeper understanding of the artistic research outputs.

Photos from Field Trips. Photographs taken during fieldwork document the environments, instruments, and people involved, capturing moments of learning, performance, and interaction. They are used to visually document and support the narrative of the fieldwork, offering a pictorial context to the textual descriptions and findings of the research.

Diaries from Field Trips. Detailed notes and reflections written by the author during field trips, documenting observations, thoughts, and experiences. They will not be as they are but provide a personal and chronological account of the fieldwork, offering insights into the research process, the challenges encountered, and the evolving understanding of the study's focus.

Own Transcriptions of Sabar, Tama, and Djembe Detailed transcriptions of rhythms and patterns played on Sabar, Tama, and Djembe, created by the author through observation and participation. Their purpose is to offer a scholarly resource that encapsulates the rhythmic complexity and melodic potential of these instruments, serving as a reference for analysis and discussion within the thesis.

Interviews with percussionists, composers, and music teachers enriched the study with diverse professional insights on the use of rhythm in music. The interviewees were selected for their well-known expertise in melodic approaches to percussion, and secondarily to represent diverse musical traditions and working environments. (read more from the Ethics section of this study) These discussions revealed practical and theoretical aspects of rhythm as used across different music genres and cultural contexts. The interview questions were designed to provide insights to both research questions.

The participants of the interviews were:

- **Glen Velez** (born 1949) is a four-time Grammy winning American percussionist, vocalist, and composer, specializing in frame drums from around the world.

- **Abdissa "Mamba" Assefa** (born 1973) is a Finnish, Ethiopian-born percussionist and drummer. He is one of the most popular percussionists in Finland.
- **Martin O'Neill**, a world renowned bodhrán player, has pushed the boundaries of bodhrán playing and teaching with his unique style.
- **Antonio Alemanno** (IT) is a professionally trained multi-instrumentalist (double bass, cello, oud, charango, frame drums, analog synthesizers and electronics) and composer.
- **Yamar Thiam** (born 1962) is a Senegalese tama player who has an international career and once played in the band *Super Etoile de Dakar* founded by Africa's most famous musician Youssou N'Dour. Over the decades, Thiam has added his own creative contributions to the tradition.

The interview consisted of the following five questions:

1. How do you use rhythm as a fundamental source for generating new compositional ideas?
2. Can your instrument play a melody? How would you describe melodic playing on your instrument?
3. Is your instrument used in social contexts, if so, how would you describe them?
4. Do you use embodied or vocalized methods in your teaching? (If so, why is this important to you?)
5. Is there anything further you would like to add?

The participants were proposed to use a minimum time of 20 minutes to reflect on the questions, and they were asked to write their answers in an email.

4.3 Data analysis

In this study, the integration and comparison of interview responses, field trip experiences, and theoretical frameworks are crucial for answering the research questions and deepening the understanding of the role of rhythm in musical composition and education. In the findings section, the description of the artistic process and the research methodology are woven together. This interplay between descriptive and investigative elements is typical to artistic

research, where practical creation and theoretical exploration enrich one another. (Varto J. & Tikkanen, P. (2018))

Comparison of Interview Responses with Glen Velez's Insights. The responses from interviews conducted with various percussionists, composers, and music teachers will be directly compared to those of Glen Velez, a renowned frame drummer whose techniques and philosophies provide a significant benchmark in the study of rhythm as source for compositional ideas. This comparison aims to identify common themes, divergent practices, and unique insights across different cultural and musical contexts. By juxtaposing these interviews with Velez's detailed approach to drumming and teaching, the research can highlight specific practices that contribute to innovative rhythmic composition and pedagogy.

Integration of Field Trip Experiences The author's personal experiences and observations from field trips, including interactions with local musicians and participation in musical sessions, provide contextual depth to the study. These experiences will be analyzed alongside interview data to provide a real-world application of theoretical concepts. The purpose is to ground the theoretical discussions in practical examples and to demonstrate how rhythmic practices are applied in diverse cultural settings. This integration helps in illustrating the dynamic nature of rhythm in music composition and its pedagogical implications.

Application of John Vervaeke's Theory to Studying Polyrythm John Vervaeke's cognitive theories on attention and relevance realization will be applied to the study of polyrhythms. This theoretical framework will guide the analysis of how musicians manage complex rhythmic structures and maintain cognitive and perceptual coherence amid multiple simultaneous rhythms. Vervaeke's theory offers a lens to examine the cognitive processes involved in understanding and performing polyrhythms, providing insights into how musicians perceive, integrate, and innovate using rhythmic patterns. Applying this theory will enhance the understanding of the pedagogical strategies that can be used to teach these complex rhythms effectively.

4.4 Researcher position

Embarking on an exploration that weaves together the textures of music, culture, and pedagogy, this study emerges from an association of musical proficiency and academic

inquiry. It draws upon an extensive engagement with a diverse range of musical instruments and their traditions, including an array of traditional African percussion instruments such as the djembe, dundun, sabar, and talking drum, but also drum set, electronic production, bodhrán, and frame drums, alongside hybrid approaches to percussion. My studies in this varied musical landscape not only illuminate the study's breadth but also mark the beginning of a deeper investigation into pedagogical roles anticipated to gain prominence in my future projects. The journey through these musical realms is ongoing, representing a continuous pursuit of knowledge that strives to go beyond mere technical skill. (see Emielu, 2020)

Central to this research is a dedication to pluralism, aiming to navigate the cultural intersections and the shared musical legacies that exist in a world where colonial histories and global exchanges create a dynamic interplay of influences. (see Carter-Ényì. & al., 2021)

This exploration is not limited to my study of African music; it is an introspective journey that acknowledges the complexity of musical evolution, recognizing African receptivity to cultural influences as a significant force in creating a diverse musical narrative.

The foundation of this research is built on extensive fieldwork and cultural immersion. I have proficiency in French and supplemental skills in Wolof and Spanish, significant time has been spent in countries like Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Cuba, not just to learn the music but to understand each society's relationship with its musical traditions. These experiences challenge the Western myth of the solitary, heroic composer with a quill, instead revealing the inherently social nature of music-making in the African diaspora, where community, togetherness, and the collective way of life are central. Having said that, while traveling in distant regions and reflecting from my own cultural perspective, I might have missed many important things. I have also noticed that in Senegal and Burkina Faso communication in French does not always result in creating enough trust to delve into the source of information. Also, the colonial language may not have the words and expressions to communicate certain cultural intricacies.

This study also intends to examine the conceptual divergences between Western individualism and the African ethos of community within the context of collaborative music-making (Emielu, 2018). The mindset of a polyrhythmic drummer, as articulated by Peñalosa, emphasizes the importance of maintaining one's pattern amidst a variety of external influences (other musicians playing cross-rhythm patterns). An interesting question is whether the principles of polyrhythmic drumming, which require the harmonious integration of different rhythms, could serve as metaphors for human interaction. Could they act as a

source for broader social and philosophical discussions, eventually suggesting a paradigm for navigating the complexities of cultural identity and pedagogical strategies in a diverse world?

Central to my narrative is an acknowledgment of the invaluable lessons imparted by my griot teachers, whose generosity in sharing their musical heritage has been instrumental in shaping my understanding and appreciation of these rich musical traditions. As I navigate the delicate balance between being an insider and an outsider in the study of music originating from Africa, I continuously reflect on my role and responsibility in representing these traditions with integrity and respect.

In synthesizing these diverse threads, my research aspires to contribute to a broader understanding of music not just as a form of artistic expression, but as a vibrant, living dialogue that transcends cultural boundaries and challenges our perceptions of identity, community, and education in a globalized world.

4.5 Ethics

The findings chapter incorporates information gathered from free-form discussions, laying a background for designing and executing the research interviews. The responses from the research interviews will be systematically compared to each other to highlight common themes and distinctive insights. During the research methods course, I was introduced to ethical guidelines essential for conducting responsible research. My commitment to adhering

to the 2023 Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) guidelines and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) shaped the ethical conduct of this study. These guidelines emphasize good research practices and a responsible research culture, ensuring the protection and respect of participant rights throughout the study.

All informants provided signed consent before participating, with detailed explanations of the study's scope, the use of data collected, and their rights under GDPR, ensuring informed and voluntary participation. Participants were also given the choice to remain anonymous, but all of them agreed to participate in the interview as an expert/artist/composer, and the information to be published including their name. The study followed GDPR guidelines, by collecting only the data necessary for achieving the research objectives. All personal data are planned to be securely stored and then destroyed following a 6-month retention period, unless further retention is justified for historical, scientific, or statistical purposes.

Clear communication was a priority throughout the study, detailing its purpose and the roles of participants, with an emphasis on the voluntary nature of participation and the option to withdraw at any time. The interview transcriptions, while not published, have been crucial deriving insights for this study, respecting the confidentiality of responses and facilitating the dissemination of learned knowledge. All video and image content in the study features individuals who provided consent for their use, ensuring ethical handling of visual data. My commitment is high when it comes to research integrity and precision in academic work. I believe that through these ethical practices contributed positively to the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings.

5 Findings: The integral role of rhythm in music creation

5.1 Artistic approach - I wanted to become a melodic drummer

To begin the chapter of findings, I will briefly cover the possibilities of drums (membranophones) as melodic instruments. Drums are typically associated with rhythm rather than melody (see chapter: “Rhythm or melody”), but skilled percussionists can create melodic elements using drums. This is often achieved through techniques such as tuning

drums to specific pitches, using different drum sizes and materials to produce varying tones, and employing techniques like rimshots, cross-sticking, and pitch bending.

In certain musical traditions, drums can indeed play melodic phrases as well as rhythmic patterns. Throughout my percussion studies, I have had a chance to learn some of them and those will be covered in more detail below. Additionally, some contemporary percussionists and composers experiment with additional methods to extract melodic qualities from drums, incorporating elements like mallet percussion, electronic effects, and extended playing techniques. While drums may not naturally produce the same kind of sustained, pitch-based melodies as instruments like the piano or violin, they can still contribute to the melodic content of a piece through inventive playing techniques and creative arrangements. Drums can indeed play melodic elements in various musical traditions, showcasing their versatility beyond mere rhythm.

Here are some examples briefly explained:

- **Talking Drums (West Africa):** In West African music, talking drums such as the Senegalese Tama, Yoruba Dundun and the Bata drums are used to mimic the rhythm and tonal patterns of speech. (sources) By varying the tension of the drumheads, skilled drummers can produce different pitches and combine them into melodies.
- **Latin Percussion (Latin America):** In Latin American music, percussion instruments like congas, bongos, and timbales are used not only for rhythm but also to contribute melodic elements. Skilled percussionists can produce distinct pitches by striking different areas of the drums or by tuning them to specific intervals.
- **Frame drums** (instrument family, different traditions throughout the world:
Frame drums are capable of playing melodies, although they are primarily known for their rhythmic capabilities. Frame drums, which include instruments like the tambourine, pandeiro, bodhrán, and tar, typically consist of a circular frame with a stretched membrane. While they are often used to produce rhythmic patterns and accompaniments, skilled percussionists can also use techniques to create melodic content on frame drums. This is often done by striking different areas of the skin, using different finger techniques, and pressing the skin with the other hand while playing with the other.
- **Bugarabu** (See literature review and field trip sections)
- **Djembe** The djembe's sound has a brief sustain, which may challenge an untrained listener to detect a melody. Yet, in the hands of an expert player, the djembe can emit clearly different pitches that are recognizable as distinct tones. For example in the

Mande tradition, some solo djembe phrases are highly advanced and could be viewed as melodic sequences.

- **Dundun** is a set of three bass drums that accompany the djembe. Played with a stick using open or muffled strokes, each of them can produce two clear pitches. The set is occasionally constructed and tuned to harmonious pitches.

In each of these traditions, drums play a significant role in conveying melodic content alongside their rhythmic functions, showcasing the rich diversity and creative potential of percussion instruments.

5.2 Implementation of the research process: research interviews

Analyzing and investigating the interview responses from Abdissa Assefa, Antonio Alemanno, Martin O'Neill, Glen Velez and Yamar Thiam reveals distinct perspectives on rhythm, melody, social context, teaching methods, and personal insights into their musical instruments and practices.

Rhythm as a Source for Compositional Ideas. Abdissa Assefa views rhythm as a structural element that can inspire chord changes, bass lines, and fundamental harmonies, indicating a fluid connection between rhythm and melody. Antonio Alemanno emphasizes rhythm's role in shaping musical ideas across various instruments, including double bass, oud, and drum machines. He highlights the inspiration drawn from specific playing techniques and the application of polyrhythms and polymeters. Martin O'Neill draws inspiration from other instruments, especially the bass, and vocalises rhythms to develop grooves on the bodhrán. He mimics drum set voicings, showing an approach that blends rhythmic and tonal creativity. Yamar Thiam implicitly suggests that rhythm is an inherent part of his musical identity, learned and developed through family and community. His focus on the talking drum emphasizes the communicative power of rhythm.

Melodic Capability of Instruments. Assefa discusses the melodic potential of percussion instruments, including balafons, log drums, and congas, illustrating a broad melodic scope within the percussion domain. Alemanno highlights the melodic versatility of his instruments, especially the double bass with its bowing and pizzicato techniques, emphasizing rhythm as the foundation for melodic development. O'Neill acknowledges the bodhrán's limited melodic

capabilities but points out its ability to produce pitch and simple counter-melodies, focusing on its traditional role. Thiam Discusses his description of the talking drum's capacity to "talk" suggests a unique approach to melody, rooted in linguistic mimicry and storytelling.

Social Contexts. Assefa notes the traditional social roles of percussion in religious occasions, gatherings, and celebrations, emphasizing the communal aspect of music. Alemanno expresses a deep connection between music and dance, indicating an active role in various dance practices and highlighting the interactive performance aspect. O'Neill identifies the bodhrán as a social instrument prevalent in gatherings, adaptable to solo or ensemble settings, showcasing its versatility. Thiam reflects on the talking drum's role in community communication and social events, highlighting its historical and cultural significance in Senegal.

Teaching Methods. Assefa does not focus on teaching or specific methods, indicating a more performance-oriented career. Alemanno endorses embodied and vocalized methods, inspired by figures like Glen Velez, stressing the importance of a holistic approach to learning that integrates body, voice, and rhythm. O'Neill uses vocalisation of rhythms in teaching, a method that enhances understanding and retention of rhythmic patterns, showing a practical approach to education. Thiam does not mention formal teaching methods, but his narrative suggests a traditional, experiential learning process within the family and community context.

Personal Insights and Additional Thoughts. Assefa emphasizes the importance of tuning percussion instruments to the song's key, highlighting a nuanced approach to recording and performance. Alemanno advocates for body-voice-rhythm-centered approaches in music education, lamenting the underuse of such methods in European culture. O'Neill discusses the individuality in bodhrán playing styles and his contribution to creating a standardized notation system, reflecting on the instrument's diversity. Thiam shares his journey from a traditional drumming family in Senegal to developing a unique style influenced by European musical encounters, showcasing a blend of cultural influences.

In summary, each musician brings a unique perspective on the integration of rhythm, melody, and social context in their musical practices, reflecting diverse backgrounds and approaches. While Assefa and Alemanno focus more on the technical and compositional aspects, O'Neill and Thiam offer insights into the cultural and communal significance of their

instruments. Alemanno and O'Neill specifically mention teaching methods, highlighting the role of embodied learning. Thiam's narrative stands out for its emphasis on the cultural and communicative role of the talking drum in Senegal.

Glen Velez: Synchronizing Mind and Music. In the 2022 Tamburi Mundi workshop "Our internal world: experiences we have while playing", percussionist Glen Velez explored the profound connection between internal experiences and musical expression, focusing on frame drumming. He highlighted how vocalizing drum rhythms enhances musical engagement, allowing for a deeper, intuitive interaction with the music that extends beyond auditory sensations to involve the whole body. Velez discussed the therapeutic aspects of this holistic engagement, emphasizing how it transforms music playing into a healing and emotionally enriching activity. He also addressed the psychological challenges musicians face, such as the internal critic, advocating for a mindset focused on rhythmic and bodily synchronization to foster positive thinking and continuous personal growth. His philosophy underscores music as a dynamic journey of discovery, emphasizing the deep interplay between physical motion and mental perception in crafting a richer musical experience.

1) Using Rhythm as a Fundamental Source for Compositional Ideas

Velez describes an intricate process of generating musical ideas that start with improvisation on the frame drum. He then vocalizes the rhythms, focusing separately on his right and left hands, which he says provides an "inner view" of the rhythm. This method reveals the composite rhythm's underlying structure, leading to new musical ideas. The specific rhythms and upbeats he vocalizes are not merely sounds but are tools for deeper musical exploration and understanding. This process highlights how Velez uses rhythm as a seed for creativity, dissecting and reassembling it through vocalization to explore its potential fully.

2) Melodic Capabilities of His Instrument

Velez expands the traditional notion of melody beyond sequences of notes to include the distinct sounds produced by different drumming techniques. He identifies three primary sounds and discusses how varying finger techniques on the frame drum produce different overtones, enriching the instrument's melodic texture. His concept of melody encompasses

the generation of "inner melodies" that arise from the composite sounds of the drum, indicating a holistic approach to understanding and utilizing the instrument's capabilities.

3) Social Contexts of the Instrument

Velez talks about the frame drum's use in both historical and contemporary settings, emphasizing its role in group and ceremonial contexts. He draws from ancient traditions and reimagines them for modern use, developing ensemble pieces that incorporate interactive elements like cueing and vocalizations. This approach reflects a deep respect for the drum's historical significance while actively adapting its use to contemporary musical practices.

4) Embodied and Vocalized Methods in Teaching

Velez heavily incorporates vocalization and body movement in his teaching, inspired by South Indian drumming traditions. He finds that these methods help synchronize the body and mind with rhythmic patterns, enhancing the learning experience. By involving the entire body through stepping and vocalizing, he creates a more immersive and engaging way to teach rhythm, which also taps into natural human movements and the biological rhythms of the body, like the heartbeat.

Velez also explores the philosophical aspects of his methods, discussing how different parts of the body experience and express rhythm and time. He believes that engaging the lower body through stepping helps stabilize the rhythm perception, drawing on everyday activities like walking to anchor his students' rhythmic understanding. The use of voice in his practice not only aids in teaching rhythms but also helps focus and direct energy within the body, promoting a kind of holistic well-being. Glen Velez's responses illustrate a unique blend of musical technique, teaching methodology, and philosophical insight. His approach is deeply holistic, integrating sound, body, and mind to explore and express musical ideas. By vocalizing rhythms and engaging the body in his playing and teaching, he fosters a deep connection with the music that transcends traditional methods, making his practices both innovative and deeply rooted in ancient traditions.

Adding Glen Velez's interview and workshop content provides a rich layer to our discussion, as it introduces unique perspectives on the use of rhythm and vocalization in musical composition and performance. Velez, like the others, integrates deep cultural and personal experiences into his musical practices, especially emphasizing the use of vocal

techniques and bodily engagement in learning and performing music. Let's analyze and compare his responses with those of Abdissa Assefa, Antonio Alemanno, Martin O'Neill, and Yamar Thiam.

5.3 Answers on research question 1 : How can rhythm be used as the fundamental source to generate new compositional ideas?

Rhythm as a Source for Compositional Ideas. Glen Velez uses improvisation on the frame drum as a springboard for vocalizing rhythms, which helps him dissect and understand the rhythm's intricate components. He highlights how vocalization helps reveal hidden aspects of rhythm, aiding in the creation of new musical ideas. Like Velez, Antonio Alemanno and Abdissa Assefa use rhythm as a foundational element, exploring its potential to generate compositional structures and melodies. Martin O'Neill focuses more on traditional rhythms and drumkit rhythms to develop grooves, while Yamar Thiam relies on the inherent rhythmic language of the talking drum.

Melodic Capability of Instruments. Velez views the frame drum as a melodic instrument, emphasizing its capability to produce different overtones and sounds, which he considers melodic elements. He uses vocal techniques to internalize and explore these melodic qualities. Assefa and Alemanno also discuss the melodic capabilities of their instruments, exploring how different playing techniques and tuning can evoke melodic responses. O'Neill sees limited melodic capabilities in his instrument but actively utilizes what is available to create complementary melodies.

Social Contexts. Velez describes the frame drum's role in both ancient and contemporary group contexts, particularly in ceremonial and ritualistic settings. He emphasizes reimagining these ancient roles to fit modern contexts, bridging a historical gap. This connects with Thiam's emphasis on the talking drum's communicative role in social and ceremonial contexts in Senegal. Assefa and Alemanno mention the use of their instruments in communal and interactive settings, underscoring the social dimension of music-making.

5.4 Answers on research question 2: How can embodied pedagogical approaches be used to absorb rhythm as a starting point for new compositional ideas and co-creation processes?

Teaching Methods Velez heavily incorporates vocalized and embodied methods in his teaching, inspired by South Indian drumming practices. He believes that vocalization and body movements (such as clapping and stepping) profoundly enhance learning by engaging multiple senses. Similarly, Alemanno values embodied methods, drawing inspiration from various rhythmic-centered practices to engage students more holistically. O'Neill uses vocalization to facilitate rhythm learning, and Assefa, though not much focused on teaching, recognizes the potential of his approach when he does teach.

Personal Insights and Philosophical Approaches Velez provides a detailed philosophical exposition on how rhythm and body movement are experienced and perceived. He discusses the use of voice and body as tools to connect with rhythm and internal emotional states, offering a deeply introspective view of the physical and mental aspects of musical performance. Thiam reflects on cultural influences and personal innovation in his musical practice. Alemanno and O'Neill also share personal insights into their musical evolution and the unique applications of their instruments.

Incorporating Glen Velez's interview enriches the dialogue about the interplay between rhythm, melody, body, and culture in music. Each artist, though using different instruments and coming from diverse backgrounds, shows a profound connection between their musical practices and broader cultural and personal contexts. This analysis highlights the universality and diversity of music as an expressive art form, deeply intertwined with individual creativity and cultural heritage.

5.5 Polyrhythms and attention

In this section I will look at possibilities on using Vervaeke's idea of scaling attention in the context of music education. By applying Vervaeke's insights to polyrhythmic learning, we can appreciate the necessity of flexibly shifting our attention not just between different rhythmic lines but also between understanding the polyrhythm as a cohesive entity and its rhythmic components. This nuanced approach to attention could enhance our ability to internalize and master the complexities of polyrhythms, offering a pathway to deeper musical understanding and expression.

When learning complex rhythms like polyrhythms or highly syncopated patterns, learners often find themselves stuck, focusing too narrowly on a specific part of the rhythm.

This rigid viewpoint results from a monorhythmic mindset, heavily influenced by prolonged exposure to music where the first beat is predominantly emphasized, such as in Western pop. While there's nothing inherently wrong with this listening style for certain types of music, it's not the most conducive approach for listening and mastering polyrhythmic or syncopated pieces.

To overcome this challenge, learners must break away from this restrictive framing and retrain their listening habits, a process easier said than done. De-automatizing involves bringing previously unconscious habits into conscious awareness, recognizing that prioritizing the first beat isn't always the optimal strategy for all music types. The next step involves narrowing the focus to dissect the rhythm into its constituent parts, starting with individual rhythmic lines and breaking them down further into single notes or beats at a slow pace, learning and performing them sequentially. This meticulous process is repeated for each rhythmic line.

Gradually, attention is expanded to incorporate listening to other parts while performing a learned line, employing peripheral listening rather than intense, focused attention. This softer focus allows for a simultaneous awareness of the rhythm's broader context and its details, like observing both the water's surface and the depths below without concentrating exclusively on either. If attention remains overly fixated on details (scaling down), one risks getting lost in the minutiae, such as the texture of individual sounds. Conversely, endlessly broadening focus (scaling up) can lead to playing out of time due to a lack of structure. Thus, optimizing attention involves finding a balance between detailed focus and broader awareness, essential for accurately performing complex rhythms.

To effectively learn polyrhythmic music, it's crucial to develop both the ability to focus on specific details (scaling down) and the ability to see the bigger picture (scaling up). Then, learners should practice moving smoothly between these two approaches. This method, involves these skills working together in tension, encouraging learners to constantly adjust and find the most suitable level of focus for engaging with polyrhythmic music dynamically.

5.6 Findings from the artistic research process

Field trip experiences Since 2003, my focus has been on studying various West African percussion traditions, including the sabar and talking drum of Senegal, as well as the djembe and dunduns within the Manding and balafon contexts. These instruments and their

traditional uses provided a rich foundation for understanding the inherent educational and co-creative potentials within these musical forms. Previous research expeditions to Senegal (2007, 2012, 2017, 2020), Mali (2010), and Burkina Faso (2009) laid an understanding, which was further refined during the recent visits to Abene and Dakar in 2023. In this description I will primarily focus on my latest field trip experiences. The field trip primarily aimed to culturally immerse in the Jola bugarabu tradition, explore the utilization of rhythm as a core element in fostering new compositional ideas, pedagogical methods, and collaborative creative processes.

Bugarabu, a set of three to four goblet-shaped drums, is a distinctive musical tradition of the Jola people, predominantly found in the Casamance region of southern Senegal. This tradition is marked by its unique approach where a single player produces a complex layering of rhythms using multiple drums of varying pitches, accompanied by wooden clappers and traditional songs. This solo performance style is notably rare in West African music traditions, which are typically characterized by ensemble playing. The polyrhythmic and melodic nature of bugarabu drumming, coupled with its cultural significance, underscores its place as a virtuoso tradition. (Font-Navarrete, 2011)

The technique required to play bugarabu involves a blend of stamina, specialized strokes, and a high degree of hand independence. Similarities can be found in the playing styles of the congas and djembe but bugarabu is specific with distinctive rhythmic patterns(the ropes), and very specific strokes. The field trip included practical learning sessions on the bugarabu, complemented by interviews with local musicians. This immersive experience not only enriched the understanding of Jola's musical culture but also provided comparative insights into the role of rhythm in music composition and education across different West African traditions.

The integration of field observations, hands-on learning, and comparative analysis contributed to a broader comprehension of how rhythmic elements function as essential building blocks for compositional ideas, and even music education and creative co-production.

Keyboard lessons with Ibou Mbaye Ibou Mbaye is a respected keyboard player from Dakar. He has performed, arranged for, and recorded with many top ten Senegalese artists, including Alioune Mbaye Nder, Vivianne and Momo Dieng just to name a few. His instrument called “marimba” is actually a keyboard pattern performed with specific marimba-like sound on a DX7 keyboard. I met him in 2020 after his amazing live performance with Momo Dieng in

the Vogue night club in Dakar. He agreed to give me keyboard lessons during which we also discussed his personal evolution with the instrument. His background a drumkit player, moving to sabar and eventually shifting to keyboard, significantly shaped his playing style. "The mballax marimba keyboard can be seen as an arrangement or combination pattern of the sabar drums on the keyboard, almost every note the keyboard pattern can be identified as a sabar pattern" (Ibou Mbaye, personal communication, 2020). My observations during live performances in mballax band context support this. If the keyboard player or claviste is skilled enough he can variate the patterns, and discuss with the sabar drums in their musical language, as an equally important actor. I have also seen the keyboard performed with only sabar drums and the Bakk partitions in unison with the sabar. Ibou's special approach to the keyboard not only incorporates the syncopated polyrhythmic patterns of the sabar but also harmonic structures and sounds. The mbalax "marimba" gives a very fascinating view not only to the complex combination patterns of the sabar rhythm but also allows for an articulate impression of a melodic line or riff.

The language of composition In the context of electronic music, the terms "composition" and "production" reflect distinct yet overlapping aspects of musical creation. "Composition" involves the theoretical design and structuring of musical elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm. It's a foundational process that establishes the musical ideas and motifs, which can be purely electronic or incorporate traditional instruments. The term "Production," particularly in electronic music, refers to the technical execution of these ideas, encompassing sound design, audio engineering, mixing, and mastering. It involves manipulating sound textures, layering effects, and enhancing the acoustic qualities of the music to achieve a polished final product. Production can significantly alter the expressive qualities of a composition, making it more impactful or nuanced.

The rationale for employing specific vocabulary tailored to electronic and other non-classical music styles arises because classical music terminology often does not encapsulate the nuances and techniques specific to these genres. Classical terminology is steeped in a tradition that emphasizes acoustic instrumentation and formal structure, which might not adequately describe the creative processes in genres that rely heavily on digital manipulation and have different structural paradigms. Thus, using terms and concepts that resonate more with the practices of contemporary genres ensures clarity and relevance in discussions about modern music-making. This approach not only enhances understanding but also respects the unique artistic and technical aspects of various musical styles outside the classical sphere.

Option for language in culturally diverse settings In global music studies, where culturally diverse settings are the norm, the need for an appropriate and adaptable language to communicate musical ideas is crucial. These settings often involve transcultural ensembles, where musicians bring varied musical vocabularies, practices, and expectations. The challenge lies in bridging these differences without diluting the unique cultural elements each musician contributes. Standard classical music terminology may fall short in these contexts, as it might not encompass the full range of musical expressions found in global music styles.

Given these challenges, teaching Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software as a standard tool for global music students becomes an effective strategy. DAWs enable students to create audio demos, which can serve as dynamic, auditory representations of musical ideas. This approach shifts the emphasis from relying solely on traditional notation or verbal descriptions to using the music itself as the primary means of communication. Audio demos can illustrate complex musical concepts like rhythm, texture, and dynamics in a way that is immediately accessible and experiential, regardless of the listener's musical background. Moreover, using DAWs in global music education facilitates a hands-on understanding of music production, allowing students to experiment with and integrate different sounds and styles seamlessly. This capability is particularly valuable in transcultural ensembles, where the fusion of diverse musical elements is often the foundation of creative collaboration. By enabling students to produce and share comprehensive musical ideas through DAWs, educators can foster a more inclusive and innovative learning environment that respects and utilizes the full spectrum of global musical diversity.

Priority on rhythm or melody: the cultural hierarchies The chicken egg problem - which one was first melody or rhythm? The debate over the primacy of rhythm or melody in music composition is an age-old question, often likened to the chicken and egg dilemma—uncertain which came first. While this question may lack a definitive answer, it underscores the profound interdependence of rhythm and melody in music creation. In exploring this issue, it is essential to consider the cultural hierarchies that have historically shaped perceptions of rhythm, harmony, and melody, particularly in Western classical and church music traditions.

Throughout history, Western classical and church music have privileged melody and harmony, often relegating rhythm to a secondary role. This cultural hierarchy has been deeply ingrained in European aesthetics, influencing perceptions of musical value and significance. As a result, rhythm has historically been undervalued and overlooked in comparison to

melody and harmony, with compositions often emphasizing intricate melodic lines and harmonious progressions over rhythmic complexity.

This hierarchical view of rhythm, harmony, and melody has had far-reaching implications for music education and pedagogy. While there has been a growing recognition of the importance of rhythm in recent years, many music teachers still struggle to incorporate rhythm into their teaching practices effectively. This may stem from a lack of training or resources devoted to rhythm education, as well as entrenched cultural biases that prioritize melody and harmony.

Critically examining these cultural hierarchies reveals the need for a paradigm shift in music education, one that recognizes the equal importance of rhythm alongside melody and harmony. By embracing rhythm as a fundamental element of music composition, educators can foster a more inclusive and holistic approach to musical learning. This shift requires not only acknowledging the historical biases that have marginalized rhythm but also actively working to address them through inclusive and balanced music curricula.

The debate over rhythm versus melody underscores the complex interplay of cultural, historical, and pedagogical factors that shape perceptions of musical value. While Western classical and church music traditions have historically privileged melody and harmony, there is a growing recognition of the importance of rhythm in contemporary music education. By critically examining these cultural hierarchies and advocating for a more inclusive approach to music pedagogy, educators can help empower students to explore the rich and diverse rhythmic tapestry of music.

5.7 Exploring the research questions through artistic work: reflections on the final exam concert 16th May 2024

This chapter aims to describe my final concert concept and to analyse the pieces and thoughts behind them. I see the concert as a collage of different approaches to the research questions, as every piece tries to answer one of them in some way.

The hat and the pockets

In his final master's exam concert percussionist Ossi Raippalinna explores rhythm as a source for compositional ideas.

The theme is represented through examples inspired by musical traditions like the Senegalese sabar, djembe, talking drum, frame drums, Scottish bodhran, and electronic beats. These genres share a common factor, a melodic approaches to percussion playing.

Ossi's musical journey has also involved improvisation and co-creation, and they have become the core of Ossi's music-making. The show features collaborations between students from the Global Music department and guest artist colleagues.

For Ossi, the title of the concert, or "to pull from the hat" represents unexpected musical creativity achieved by improvisation and musical flow state. The pocket refers to owning the musical creation and making it groove together.

Final Exam Concert flyer

"Solvent" The piece is an exploration of improvised music-making. The improvised collaboration with guitar player Juho Tuomainen started during a course called "Cross-Genre Improvisation Ensemble", led by Sergio Castrillón. In solvent Melisa Yildirim plays the Kamancha, adding textures from their cultural heritage. The only instruction given to the performers was to reflect on the research questions. The piece intends to represent a genuine musical encounter, between three musicians from different backgrounds. As a tama player in this piece, I am exploring the capacities and extended techniques of the instrument, playing melodic and harmonic textures, experimenting with long notes, and reacting to musical impulses through the body.

"Raaputa sitä" A piece I composed for four idiophones: the Finnish washboard, the West African karinyang, the Cuban guiro and the Colombian guacharaca. The piece is inspired by the rhythmic character of Finnish language. A Finnish sentence was a starting point for each rhythmic phrase performed on the guiros.

"Un color distinto" The name of the piece refers to the experience one can have when traveling very far from home. Can a drum play a melody? How does it sound when a string instrument mimics drum patterns? The piece emerged from the collaboration between Nicolas Castañeda and Ossi Raippalinna as they discovered a similar clave structure between

the Senegalese Mbalax and Colombian Pajarillo styles. Both genres also feature fast and intense 12/8 rhythms, polyrhythmic textures, and strong interaction between the soloist and dancer. The piece highlights Nicolas' Llanera harp in a soloistic role accompanied by mbalax marimba performed on a DX7 keyboard, which Ossi approaches as a melodic version of sabar accompaniment. The ensemble is reinforced with bass player Ndioba Gueye and percussionist Tero Rantanen.

“Tama solo - Sundiata Keita learns to walk” Every nation has their stories and every instrument has its traditional repertoire of music. “Sundiata Keita was the first ruler of the Mali Empire from 1235 to 1255. Storytellers across West Africa have recited the Epic of Sundiata for more than seven hundred years. The early years of Sundiata's life were not easy. By the age of seven, the young prince still had not learned to walk, much to the amusement of Naré Maghan's first wife, Sassouma Bérété. Sassouma harasses Sogolon for her son's disability, bringing her to tears. Seeing his mother upset, Sundiata resolves to walk.” In this piece Ossi performs a tama solo based on the story. Ossi learned the piece from his teacher, a tama griot, Baba Kouyate in 2010.

“Old man's world” Some elder statesmen in positions of authority appear to lack wise judgment. This song captures the collective yearning for tranquility in a turbulent world. It serves as a plea to a higher power, praying for divine intervention to bring an end to global conflicts and suffering. Inspired by the ongoing strife in war-torn countries and the historical struggles faced by Africans during the era of slavery, the artist Tossy Mboup calls on humanity to embrace peace and cease hostilities. The artist not only aims to inspire change through music but also to remind us of our shared responsibility to foster a harmonious world for future generations. The piece is a collaboration between Ossi and Tossy Mboup. In this piece Ossi takes a different approach to melodic percussion playing as his djembe sound is electronically modified to follow the chord progression of the tune.

“Superdrone” This piece features an introduction with frame drums. The piece explores using vocalisation of drum phrases as a compositional method, as all the phrases for this piece were created during a long walk in fast tempo. The introduction is inspired by textures from sufi rhythms that travelled from Persia to many regions, including Senegal. The spiritual life of the Sufi has influenced Senegalese music in many ways. Music and dancing are

integral parts of spiritual ceremonies in traditional animism across West Africa, and in many regions the sufi way of islam has blended into these traditions. This piece is a study on combining acoustic percussion sound and electronic production methods.

“On the waves” The ambiance of the piece is inspired by the sensation of floating in the ocean. Ocean is constantly on the move, bigger waves carry smaller waves and together they form a chaotic network of influences and interplay. Contribution with Nicolas Castañeda resulted in an approach inspired by minimal music. The rhythmic elements of the piece evolved from a process of practicing Steve Formans walking exercise, particularly one for absorbing a 5 against 3 polyrhythm. ”

“Aratax” The master sabar player Ndongo Diop from Senegal was one of Ossi's important teachers and one of the few authors of traditional drum poetry *Bakk* and *Tassu*. Ndongo Diop's original composition Aratax formed a starting point for this piece. Based on the tones he plays on tama in a video in 2012, Ossi composed a mballax marimba accompaniment, with corresponding chords. During the Global choirs ”Drums do remember project” Ossi arranged the piece for a choir setting, and the vocalised drum part of Aratax was performed by the choir. A new approach is now taken as a melodic version of the drum part was composed and arranged for the guitar by Juho Tuomainen and Ossi Raippalinna. (see description of previous artistic research, appendice 8.3 “The drums do remember”, and 8.2 “The Development of Marimba Sound in Mbalax Music”)

Chief o O'Neill: A set of celtic tunes This number is a study into playing a bassline with the bodhran, a concept developed and taught to Ossi by Martin O'Neill. By performing this piece Ossi wants to pay attention to Martin's specific approach to melodic drumming that he developed over a period of thirty years. The set consists of A hornpipe “Chief o O'Neill”, a jig “Apples in the winter” and a reel “L'affertys”.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to elucidate the intricate roles of rhythm in music composition and the potential of embodied pedagogical approaches. By integrating artistic research methods with interviews, fieldwork, and Tamburi mundi seminars, the research provided a multi-

dimensional exploration of rhythmic innovation and compositional ideas. The findings revealed that rhythm is not only foundational in structuring music but also a *dynamic force* that influences creative outcomes and pedagogical processes.

The research questions focused on the exploration of rhythm as a source for new compositional ideas and the integration of embodied pedagogical approaches. The main findings in relation to the questions of this study are as follows

1) *Rhythm as a Source for Compositional Ideas*: The study confirmed that rhythm may serve as a catalyst in the creative process, supporting the generation of innovative musical ideas. This aligns with the observations that rhythmic patterns, syncopation, and polyrhythms facilitate new ways of musical expression and composition.

2) *Embodied Pedagogical Approaches*: The research demonstrated that embodied approaches holistically deepen the understanding and application of rhythm. These methods not only enhance the learning experience but also foster a more intuitive and physical connection to musical elements.

The study contributes to new knowledge-construction by demonstrating how diverse rhythmic elements can be integrated into music education and composition to foster creative practices. It highlights the significance of rhythmic diversity and its potential to enhance musical expression and pedagogy. The research underscores the importance of considering cultural, cognitive, and theoretical aspects when teaching and creating music. The importance of this work lies in its potential to influence music composition and education practices. During the research, I underwent a substantial personal learning process. A key breakthrough was learning to play melodic textures on the tama, experimenting with it beyond its conventional role. This led me to approach the bodhran from a similar standpoint, and to more precisely tune my drums and refine my stroking techniques to produce clearer tones. Learning to play the piano and studying free accompaniment deepened my understanding of how percussion can be integrated into orchestral settings, and how keyboard can be approached as percussion. I understood that instruments like the tama, bodhran, frame drums, and djembe can thanks to their vast range (ambitus), act as full-spectrum instruments across various musical genres. Embodied methods have enhanced my understanding of complex rhythmic structures, improved communication with colleagues, enabled efficient internalization and memorization of long melodic phrases, and introduced new creative approaches to my music-making.

Viewing African rhythms through the lens of melody has shifted my perspective. Could we perhaps shift the discourse from “African rhythm” to “African melody”? It's important to recognize that Africa, with its rich diversity of percussion traditions, merits more specific descriptors than broad terms like "West African" or "Senegalese." Adopting a habit of precise language can help people better understand and appreciate these venerable musical traditions that have influenced so many world-known genres. The fusion of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic approaches heralds the music of the future. By demonstrating the meaningfulness of rhythm as a source of compositional ideas and embodied learning, the

study advocates for these approaches to be incorporated into curricula and artistic practices, potentially enriching the educational landscape and broadening the expressive capabilities of composers and students alike.

6.1 Avenues for Future Research

Several melodic percussion traditions were left out of the scope of this study. Further study on the melodic capabilities of Indian tabla could uncover new compositional techniques by exploring their rhythmic and melodic patterns. Researching how steel pans from Trinidad and Tobago are tuned and played in ensembles should illuminate their role in creating harmonized melodies. Investigating Japanese Taiko drums for their potential melodic expressions might expand understanding of their rhythmic versatility. Such research would enhance our appreciation of these instruments' musical potential.

Research could be conducted on the integration of rhythmic immersion with technological environments, such as digital audio workstations, learning games, and virtual reality, to examine how these platforms might enhance creative processes and learning.

While my focus is not primarily theoretical, I recognize the substantial potential for further research into theoretical aspects of embodiment. This approach could deepen our understanding of how musicians physically and emotionally connect with their instruments and music. Investigating embodied experiences across different cultural contexts and musical practices could offer invaluable insights into the universal and diverse ways musicians engage with sound and performance. This area of study promises to enrich our appreciation and knowledge of music as a deeply integrated human activity.

6.2 Research proposal: Rhythmic Embodiment in Percussion

This research proposal seeks to explore the embodiment of cognition in rhythmic concepts within percussion, drawing from Lakoff and Johnson's insights on embodied cognition (1999). The study aims to delve into how rhythms are physically and cognitively conceptualized through activities such as pulse and breathing, which are integral to percussion performance. The methodology combines empirical studies with cognitive scientists using neural imaging and motion capture to analyze the physiological effects of rhythm on performers. It also incorporates phenomenological research to gather subjective

experiences from percussionists, enhancing our understanding of the embodied experience of rhythm across different cultures.

"Embodied Realism" asserts that our understanding and cognition are fundamentally shaped by our physical bodies and sensory experiences, challenging traditional views of abstract reasoning (Lakoff & Johnson(1999). By applying theories of embodied realism, this research will challenge traditional cognitive assumptions about rhythm, proposing that understanding rhythm is *inherently* linked to bodily processes. The findings could revolutionize rhythmic education, suggesting more intuitive teaching methods that align with natural cognitive and physiological processes. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary approach aims to redefine how rhythm is understood and taught, highlighting its potential for broader educational and therapeutic applications. This could pave the way for future studies into other musical elements and their embodied cognitive foundations, potentially transforming practices across musical cultures.

6.3 Concluding Statement

In conclusion, this study reaffirms rhythm's pivotal role in music and education, highlighting its power to bridge cultural narratives and foster innovative musical expressions. The findings advocate for broader recognition of rhythmic studies within academic and practical music domains, suggesting a transformative potential for pedagogical practices and artistic creations. Approaching traditional drum patterns as melodic phrases can change our appreciation of them.

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8 Appendices

8.1 A copy of interview consent form:

CONSENT FORM FOR AN INTERVIEW

This form confirms that I give consent for my participation in an interview for the master project by Ossi Raippalinna as part of their master's degree in Global Music, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki.

The central focus of the master project is on how can rhythm be used as the fundamental source to generate new compositional ideas. The project also studies how can embodied pedagogical approaches be used to absorb rhythm as a starting point for new compositional ideas and co-creation processes.

The interview will be done by e-mail and the questions are listed below. Information given during the interview will be treated confidentially and it will not be used for any other purpose than the research concerned, and potential presentations or articles related to it. Parts of the interview may be quoted anonymously within the research. The interviewee's anonymity will be protected, and the research data will be stored securely after the research has been completed. Upon completion of the project, the recordings and the codes of the interviewees will be destroyed. Transcripts of the interview will be stored securely for up to five years and thereafter destroyed or filed into an archive. The researcher is committed to following the responsible conduct of research by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity and the Code of Conduct of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

The interviewer has informed me on the issues above and I agree to participate in the interview and study voluntarily. I can withdraw my consent at any given time by contacting the researcher, Ossi Raippalinna, but the data collected up to the withdrawal may be utilized in the research. In case I have any questions concerning this interview or the research, I can also contact Ossi Raippalinna at ossi.raippalinna@uniarts.fi or phone +358407438906

Interview questions:

1. How do you use rhythm as a fundamental source for generating new compositional ideas?
2. Can your instrument play a melody? How would you describe melodic playing on your instrument?
3. Is your instrument used in social contexts, if so, how would you describe them?
4. Do you use embodied or vocalized methods in your teaching? (If so, why is this important to you?)
5. Is there anything further you would like to add?

The researcher has provided me with sufficient information on the research and the use of personal data and I have had a chance to ask for details on any issues.

() I want to participate in the interview as an expert/artist/composer, and I want the information to be published including my name.

() I want to participate in the artistic research project anonymously.

Place and Date

Interviewee Name and Signature

8.2 The Development of Marimba Sound in Mbalax Music

The development of adding a synth sound to mbalax music and creating sound patches for the DX7 keyboard is another important line of development. Jerry Kovarsky interviewed Jean-Philippe Rykiel and he describes his input to the first steps of playing the keyboard in mbalax music:

His programming chops continued to develop to the point that he usually brought mostly custom sounds to the sessions he was on. He later learned that the DX7 sounds that he created and used on a session for African musician Youssou N'Dour during the breakdown in the 1985 song "Nelson Mandela" led to the modernization of a style of Senegalese music called Mbalax. For decades, African musicians have used the DX7 loaded with Rykiel's kora, balafon, and marimba sounds to perform with. Habib Faye, the bass player and musical director of the band, told Jean-Philippe: "And you have a good share of responsibility in this because if today we talk about Senegalese music, it is thanks to you, your sounds, and the creative work we have done together.

The subject is further discussed during a phone call with Jean-Philippe Rykiel and Habib Faye, which is transcribed on his website (accessed 12.4.2024, translated by the author).

In the interview, Jean-Philippe, also known by his nickname Ryks, speaks with Senegalese musician Habib about the evolution of the marimba sound in Senegalese music, particularly within the genre of Mbalax. Habib recounts an essential moment during a Touré Kunda concert in 1984 when musician Loy Ehrlich played a marimba sound on a keyboard, sparking widespread interest. This event marked the beginning of the integration of this distinct sound into Mbalax music. Habib also mentions the role of his brother Adama in developing rhythmic styles on keyboards, which influenced Habib's own musical style. The discussion highlights the marimba sound's transformation from a novelty in specific pieces to a foundational element in the repertoire of many Senegalese bands, with particular emphasis on its rhythmic integration and its impact on the audience and other musicians.

The integration of the marimba sound into Mbalax music represents a significant evolution in the genre's soundscape. Initially introduced by Loy Ehrlich during a 1984 concert, the sound was quickly adopted and adapted by Habib and other local musicians. Unlike the traditional balafon, the marimba sound from the keyboard had a more metallic tone, which made it stand out and captured the curiosity of the audience and musicians alike.

The marimba sound was not just a mere addition; it represented a fusion of traditional Senegalese music with contemporary electronic music elements. The DX7 synthesizer,

through which this sound was primarily produced, became a staple in Senegalese music production. This adaptation by Habib and his subsequent collaboration with Loy Ehrlich led to a broader experimentation with synthetic sounds in Mbalax music.

This sound became a signature during performances, especially noted during breaks for percussion solos, adding a new layer of interaction between electronic and traditional percussive elements. The rhythmic patterns played on the marimba sound mimicked and complemented the traditional drum patterns, creating a new musical dialogue within the genre. Moreover, the influence extended beyond individual artists to shape the sound of entire bands like Lemzo Diamono, where Moustapha Faye, another key figure and Habib's brother, further popularized this sound. This led to a new identity within the musical community, where keyboard players started to be recognized specifically as marimbists, highlighting the marimba sound's importance and uniqueness in the Senegalese musical landscape.

My further research and discussions with accomplished marimbists in Dakar in 2020s suggest that, the tweaking of the DX7 patches that started in the 1980s has not stopped but is a process that still continues. For example, Ibou Mbaye and Moussa Ngom use a set of their own patches and layer them in different combinations to achieve certain types of attack, decay, sustain, and frequency response. He explains that some of the sounds were created to match and mimic the sounds of sabar, with a very short sustain, and a huge bass. The fastest tunes would often be performed with such sounds, as the dense patterns would result in saturation with a longer sound. The dynamic range of the sabar is very wide, and they produce very different timbre depending on the playing intensity. In my opinion that is also taken into account in Ibou Mbayes sounds for the DX7, the more velocity the note has the higher the distortion and cracking the sound gets. This character is often used when accenting with the sabar phrases. (Personal communication, Ibou Mbaye, Moussa Ngom)

In his interview Jean-Philippe Rykiel discusses his intentions and goals with the synthesizers:

We had fun finding sounds that matched well, and that really expanded the possibilities. That's what I like about synthesizers, and I've been playing them for 40 years now. Synthesizers have, for me, two goals: One is to create never-heard sounds. And the other is when they can be used to go beyond the physical capabilities of the instruments they have sampled.”

What started with adding a synthesized balafon track to the mbalax tunes has over the course of 4 decades evolved towards imitating the sabar, bugarabu and tama sounds on the keyboard. One could argue that this has led to the birth of a new senegalese instrument. My observations in Dakar 2023 and the “marimba” gigs I got with the Senegalese sabar players based in Finland suggest the DX7 “marimba” is now a prominent part of the sabar culture, and is almost always present in the local Tannibers, accompanying the sabar and tama and often featuring a principal role in the show.

8.3. The drums do remember: Global Choir and Senegalese sabar poets

From message to the melody In Senegalese culture, poems have a direct connection to drumming and dancing. Senegalese drums called sabar and tama can imitate language to such a level, that in ancient times they were used to communicate precisely between long distances. The West African griots, the storytellers, and keepers of oral tradition made it possible. In modern society, thanks to their deep understanding of cultural heritage, the griots have an important role as educators and advocates of good values. Their art passes these messages through poems performed on sabar rhythms (Tassu), which are then transformed into drum breaks that follow the rhythm and intonation of the poem (Bakk). The bakk can be danced to, and as a result is a unique form of art that combines all these elements into a cheerful show that is known to be one of the foundations of rap music.

Hommage to a departed master drummer Master sabar player Ndongo Diop was one of the few authors of both Bakk and Tassu. His work deserves to be passed on to future generations and educational material featuring his work will be published in the concert. All the drummers in the ensemble (Yamar Thiam, Yirim Gueye and Gana Diop, and Ossi Raippalinna) had a close relationship with him during different stages of his career.

Global choir With singers from diverse cultures, Global Choir provides an experimental platform for co-creative and collaborative work, using voice as vehicle for transcultural processes. In this concert, with Ossi Raippalinna’s guidance, the choir has taken the challenge to seek and create a new way to express traditional drum stories through choral instrument. Being inspired by Senegalese griots, who perform and constantly renew their tradition, making it to a living artform, from past to present. The choir will also perform conductor Rajala’s arrangements to Senegalese griot songs.

May 19th 2023, Musiikkitalo Black box

Performers: Global Choir, Yamar Thiam, Ossi Raippalinna, Ibrahima Mbaye, Mbacke Sene Niang