Styles of Transcription in Ethnomusicology

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by

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Abstract

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Transcription has to do with the writing of musical sounds. In the field of ethnomusicology, transcription has long been considered as an important skill which should lead the ethnomusicologist toward the analysis of folk music, non-Western art music and contemporary music in oral tradition. The objectives behind a musical analysis will determine the style of transcription to be applied.

The objective of this work is to evaluate what has already been said about the various styles of transcription that have been applied in ethnomusicology. This evaluation takes place within a wider context that may vary from the philosophical, sociological, historical, and technical point of view. Apart from this, the work attempts to provide a practical aspect by applying two styles of transcription to a genre of Maltese folk singing called *għana* (pronounced: 'ana').

The first chapter provides a brief historical survey of ethnomusicological transcription spanning from the earliest efforts of European missionaries in Eastern countries to recent attempts in computerized transcriptions. This chapter also attempts to introduce the reader to a number of terms frequently used in the ethno-transcription debate. The second chapter focuses on aurally made transcriptions in Western notation. This chapter examines the advantages and the limitations of both the aural tech-

nique and Western notation when applied to Western and non-Western oral musical traditions. The third chapter evaluates the advantages and the disadvantages of three notation systems which have been proposed and used as an alternative to Western staff notation; these are: the cipher notation system (as applied in Javanese gamelan studies); hand and electronic graph notations; together with indigenous notation systems. The fourth chapter attempts to combine, as far as is possible, a transcription with the ethnographic data elicited during the musical performance under investigation. The fifth chapter seeks to examine the limitations and advantages of collaborating in the process of transcription and analysis with a performer unfamiliar with the written aspect of music and with the academic enquiry in general.

To
Tania and Claire

Contents

Preface

Ethnomusicology is the branch of musicology in which special emphasis is given to the study of music in its cultural context - the anthropology of music. For the ethnomusicologist, the analysis of a musical sound should take place within the dimension of cultural complexity. To arrive at an empirical study of music in its cultural context the ethnomusicologist has access to the world's music. The ethnomusicologist's sources may vary considerably: from written to oral music; from Western music to non-Western musical traditions and from art to folk music. Ethnomusicology is a broad discipline which incorporates a whole variety of academic musical interests. This wide range of interests brought a considerable innovation in ethnomusicological analytical methods. An important stage in musical analysis, as applied in ethnomusicology, is *transcription* - the subject of our concern.

The term *transcription*, as used in this work, only refers to the ethnomusicologist's task to reduce sound from recordings to visual form. This work excludes *transnotation* which refers to the process by which music in one system of notation is translated into another system. In ethnomusicology the term *transcription* is sometimes used for *transnotation*. The word *style*, used in the title, leaves space for the distinction between: the technique of transcription and the system of notation. For example, one can do a transcription aurally using different systems of notation. Throughout this work I paid attention to make as clear as possible this distinction.

This work consists of five chapters. The first chapter seeks to present a short survey of the role of transcription in the history of ethnomusicology. This first chapter also attempts to define a couple of terms commonly used in the ethno-transcription debate. The second chapter concentrates on ethnomusicological transcription made aurally in Western staff notation. This chapter does not treat the subject merely on a

technical basis but it attempts to evaluate cultural and/or sociological implications behind a transcription made aurally in Western notation. The third chapter focuses on alternative systems of notation for Western notation which have been, and are still, used in ethnomusicology for transcription purposes. Chapter four evaluates the importance of the ethnography of musical performance for transcription and how the ethnographic and the analytical musical data could cooperate to show how a musical structure may be affected, and sometimes even determined, by non-musical processes. The last chapter attempts to evaluate the advantages and the limitations that the transcriber finds himself in when collaborating with a performer unfamiliar with the writtten aspect of music and with the academic enquiry in general.

I would like to thank several people for their help in preparing this study. I would like to thank the Maltese *għana* singer Mr. Frans Baldacchino (known as *Il-Budaj*) for his sincere collaboration in the development of the fifth chapter. Thanks also go to Dr. Jonathan P. Stock for his most helpful suggestions. Another person whom I would like to acknowledge is Prof. Tang Yating, from the Music Research Institute at the Shanghai Music Conservatory and at the time visiting professor at the University of Durham, for the frequent discussions we had about the subject treated in this work. I would like to thank Mr. Charlon Gouder, Mr. Michael Ciantar and Fr. Gwann Abela for their technical assistance. For proof reading work thanks are due to Mr. Tonio Farrugia. In particular I would like to thank my wife Tania and my little daughter Claire, to whom this work is being dedicated, for their support. Finally, warmest thanks go to my tutor, Prof. Robert C. Provine for his interest, enthusiasm and guidance throughout the supervision of this work.

Chapter 1

The History of Ethnomusicological Transcription: a Short Survey

The aim of this chapter is to present a brief historical survey of ethnomusicological transcription. This survey should serve as a frame of reference for the other chapters. Apart from this, the survey attempts to demonstrate three important aspects in the history of transcription. Firstly, it seeks to show the important role that transcription has played throughout the history of ethnomusicology. Secondly, it shows how the history of transcription moved 'from the human to the mechanical' (Nettl 1983:76). Thirdly, the survey attempts to define a number of important concepts and issues that have characterized the ethno-transcription debate over the years. A more elaborate discussion of these issues and concepts is found in the subsequent chapters.

From the earliest ethnomusicological efforts made by explorers, missionaries and merchants in the eighteenth-century, till recent attempts in computerized transcriptions, one of the aims has always been that of putting sound to paper. In ethnomusicology, transcription is one of the main important processes through which the ethnomusicologist can analyse a musical sound:

> Only with difficulty can transcription be separated from description and analysis of music, techniques that normally both precede and follow it. It is often regarded as the central and most difficult task of the ethnomusicologist, competence in which distinguishes him from other kinds of scholars (Nettl 1983:66).

Charles Seeger (1886-1979) distinguished between two kinds of music writing: *prescriptive* and *descriptive*. *Prescriptive* music writing refers to music written to be performed, while *descriptive* music writing refers to music written to be analyzed. He

referred to *prescriptive* music writing as 'blueprints of how a specific piece of music shall be made to sound' and *descriptive* as 'reports of how a specific performance of any music actually did sound' (C.Seeger 1958:184). The primary objective of transcription in ethnomusicology is to serve as a *descriptive* type of music writing through which the analysis of a musical sound becomes possible. As a living discipline, ethnomusicology had to adapt itself to new approaches, techniques and methods over the years. As will be seen in the following sections these new methods, approaches and techniques had a direct impact on the general methodology of transcription.

The Re-Evaluation of Western Musical Concepts and Tools

The earliest 'amateur interest in non-Western music dates back to the voyages of discovery' (Myers 1992:3). Frank Harrison's book *Time, Place and Music* presents the reader with situations wherein European explorers and missionaries jot down, in Western musical notation, the music they heard (1973:163). The description below, quoted from Harrison's book, was written by Jean-Baptist du Halde (1674-1743) in his book *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (Paris, 1735). Du Halde was a French Jesuit missionary in China. Until late in the eighteenth-century Du Halde's book was the main source of information on China for Europeans (ibid.:161). The following quotation sheds light on the earliest recorded appreciation of Western staff notation by non-Western musicians:

> In the mean time P. Pereira took his Pocket Book ... , and pricked down all the Tune, while the Musicians were playing ... ; and when they had made an End, repeated it as perfectly as if he had practised it long before, without missing one Note. This so surprized the Emperor [of China], that he could scarcely believe it. He bestowed great Commendations on the Justness, Harmony and Facility of the *European* Music; But above all admired the Missionary had in so short a time learned an Air which had given him and his Musicians no small Trouble; and that by help of certain Characters he was become so thoroughly Master of it, that it was not possible for him to forget it [sic] (ibid.:163).

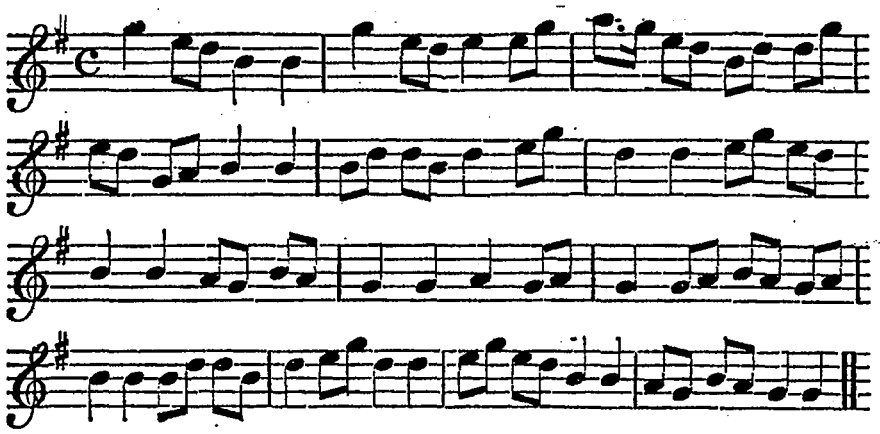

Figure 1.1 A transcription of a Chinese tune found in Du Halde's book (1735) (from Engel 1864: 129)

Figure 1.1 shows a transcription in Western notation of a Chinese air taken from Du Halde's book. For these explorers and missionaries the writing down in the field of 'exotic' music, in Western notation, seemed to be another achievement in their attempt to discover 'exotic' culture.

Some of the early publications of non-European musical transcriptions were accompanied by observations and comments regarding both the nature of music, as a phenomenon, as well as with comments concerning the particular musical tradition under investigation. Jean de Léry, for instance, in his *Historie d'un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil* (1585) published the first transcriptions of Brazilian Indian songs together with some observations about the manner of dancing. Another example is the *Dictionnaire de musique* (1771) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). In this publication one finds a transcription of the Swiss melody *ranz des raches*, as well as transcriptions of a Persian air, a Chinese air (reproduced from Du Halde 1735) and a primitive Canadian song. From these transcriptions Rousseau drew two important conclusions (A. Seeger 1992:95). The first concerned the possible universality of musical rules: 'We shall find in these pieces a conformity of modulation with our music, which must make one admire the excellence and universality of our rules' (ibid.). The second conclusion emphasized the fact that the effect music has on people is not limited to the physical effects of the sounds:

> We shall seek in vain to find in this air any energetic accents capable of producing such astonishing effects. These effects, which are void in regard to strangers, come alone from custom, reflections, and a thousand circumstances ... (ibid.)

The latter comment anticipated that which was essentially to be known as the ethnography of music.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the interest in 'exotic' music gave an impetus to the transcription of a number of pieces of Chinese, Arab, Indian and Japanese music. During his 27 years in China, for instance, the French missionary Joseph Amiot (1718-93) 'made it part of his mission to collect as much information on [Chinese music] as he could possibly obtain' (Engel 1864:143). Apart from observing and describing various Chinese instruments and performances, he consulted a large number of old Chinese treatises on the science and history of Chinese music. A list of these treatises is given in his well-known book *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois tant anciens que modernes* (Paris, 1779) (ibid.). Amiot's book also includes a transcription of a Confucian hymn (see Figure 1.2). Other efforts in the same direction include those of Guillaume-André Villoteau (e.g. 1809) and Raphael Kiesewetter for Arab music (e.g. 1842); William Jones (e.g. 1792) and Charles Russell Day (e.g. 1891) for Indian music; and Francis Taylor Piggott for Japanese music (e.g. 1893). These first cross-cultural musical initiatives demanded a re-evaluation of the exclusively European musical concepts and tools.

Villoteau (1759-1839) was one of the early transcribers who noticed that Western tonometric standards, when applied to non-Western music, will lead to misleading results. He 'had his prejudice when he first set foot on Egypt's shore. But, while studying with a native music teacher, he soon realised that correct intonation was not a monopoly of western man ... Villoteau came to understand that oriental music, though basically different from ours, was neither less near to truth nor inferior; it had its own

scientific foundation and must therefore be judged according to laws of its own' (Sachs 1962:10). One of the main issues in transcription began to emerge. An ethnomusicological transcriptlon should be as close as possible to the musical sound as perceived by the members of the particular musical culture under investigation and by those in possession of an extensive and deep knowledge of the cultural traits that identify that same culture - the *insiders*. This concept continued to be one of the main concepts

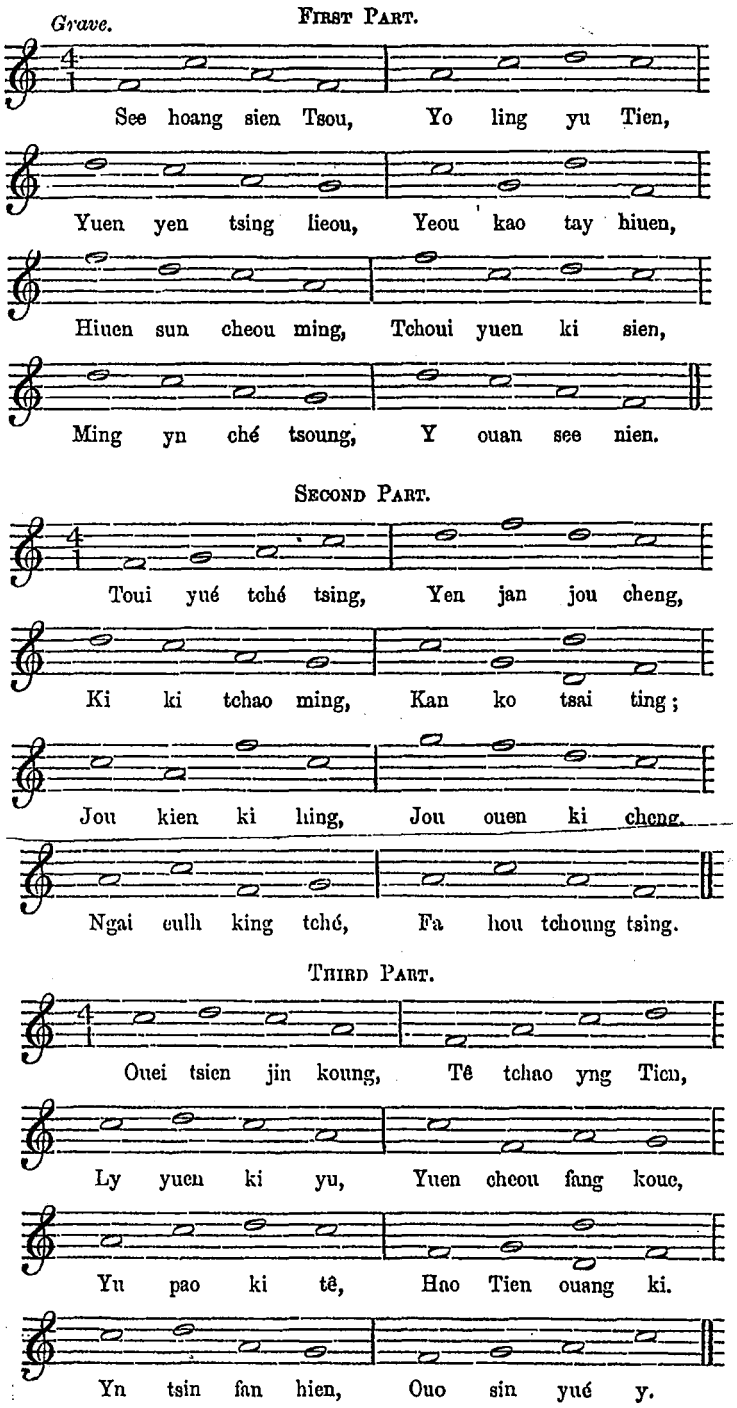

Figure 1.2 Amiot's transcription of a Confucian hymn (1779) (from Engel 1864:145-6)

throughout the history of ethnomusicological analysis. Ethnomusicologists like Blacking (1970:1), for example, believed that 'maximum objectivity' can only be reached if the music under investigation is understood in the contexts of the musical tradition to which it belongs. For the purpose of the present survey, one may consider the *outsider* as the one who might either lack the above cultural knowledge or opts to keep apart, for various political and cultural reasons, from the complete cultural set-up of the musical community whose music he would be investigating. Such consideration may also incorporate, for instance, the Western ethnomusicologist who might be an *outsider* to the musical tradition of a subcultural group within his own society (for a comprehensive discussion of the insider-outsider dichotomy see Nettl 1983:258-69).

Another criticism towards the imposition of European musical standards on non-European music has been brought forward by the German musicologist Carl Engel (1818-82). When Engel referred to the transcriptions of Hindustani music carried out by European musicians, he remarked that:

> ... the largest collections of native melodies ... were written down by European musicians who lived in that city as organists and professors of music. In some instances ... [these] collectors considered anything which appeared defective to the unaccustomed European ear as accidental mistakes of the performers, and that they may, therefore, have taken the liberty of making alterations which they deemed improvements when committing the music to paper (1864:134).

European scholars like Engel did understand the importance of transcribing music as it exists in the real world of cultural diversity rather than as apprehended by the Western music scholar with all his ethnocentricity and biases.

James Davies approached the tonometric problem for Maori songs through 'the assistance of a graduated monochord' (Grey 1855:325).[1] Through these tonometric studies Davies was convinced that Maori scales were non-diatonic. To demonstrate

this he devised signs which helped him to indicate quarter-tones (see Figure 1.3). Although he 'timed the airs', he found that 'there was neither metre nor rhythm of any marked character discernible in them' (Grey 1855:327).

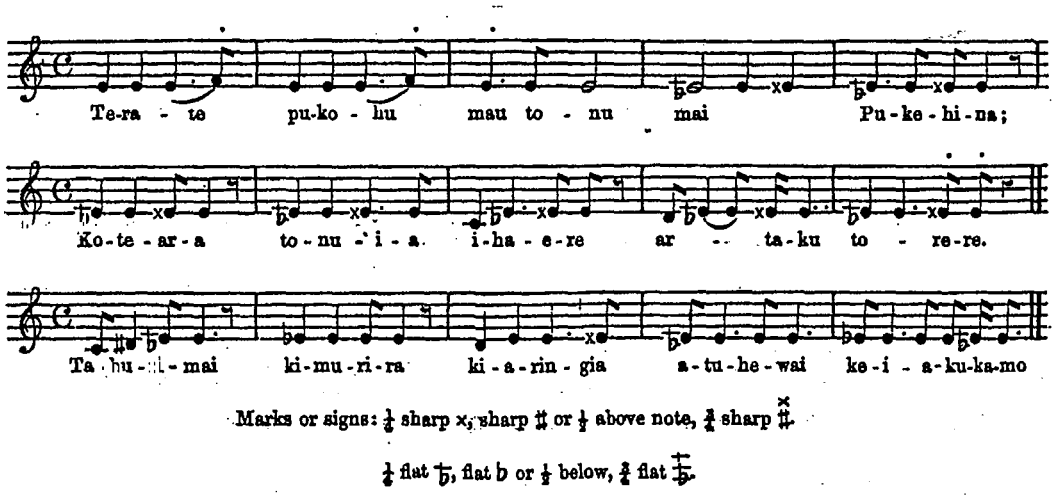

Figure 1.3 A transcription of a Maori song by Davies (1855) (from Grey 1855: 329)

At the end of the nineteenth-century, various scholars insisted that Western musical concepts and tools, when applied to cross-cultural musical studies, would result in a misleading and unsatisfactory foundation for musical understanding (Ellingson 1992a:117). This idea was strongly supported, among others, by Wallaschek. He remarked that: 'This seems to be the fate of all "natural" music which happens to be reduced to writing in the modern notation; all the most important peculiarities are immediately lost' (1893/R1970:25). This assertion had its echo in the middle of the twentieth century through Charles Seeger:

> First, we single out what appear to us to be structures in the other music that resemble structures familiar to us in the notation of the Occidental art and write these down, ignoring everything else for which we have no symbols. Second, we expect the resulting notation to be read by people who *do not carry the tradition of the other music* [my italics]. The result, as read, can only be a conglomeration of structures part European, part non-European, connected by a movement 100% European (1958:186-7).

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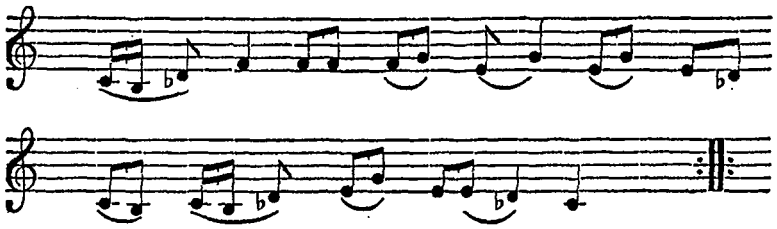

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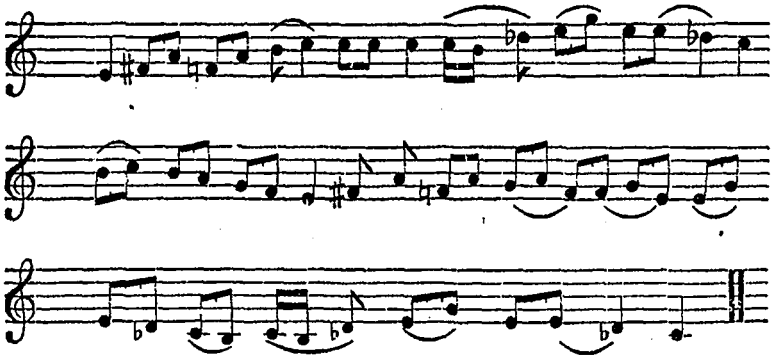

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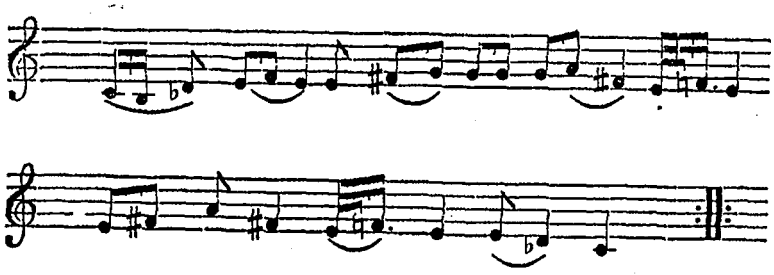

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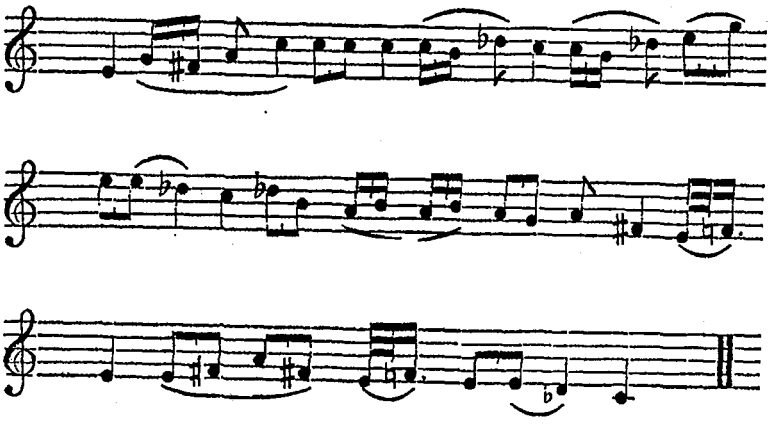


Figure 1.4 Two transcribed rágas by Tagore (1884) (from Tagore 1884:114-5)

A major intellectual figure in cross-cultural music studies, who had a strong influence on both Ellis and Hornbostel and Abraham, was the Indian scholar Sir Sourindro Mohun Tagore (1840-1914). In an 1884 publication Tagore attempted to show the main characteristic features of Hindu music by transcribing and explaining a number of Indian *rágas* (see Figure 1.4, for example). He showed his preoccupation about the tendency of European musicians of imposing 'their rules' on the 'intricacies' of the Indian musical system (Tagore 1884:116-7).

In the late nineteenth century, cross-cultural studies in music were influenced by the methodologies and achievements already applied and achieved in the fields of anthropology, psychology and philology. These fields of study proposed new perspectives and methods in transcriptional techniques, especially through the works of Franz Boas (1858-1942), Carl Stumpf (1848-1936) and Alexander J. Ellis (1814-1890).

As an anthropologist and philologist who had a great impact on American academic training in anthropology (Ellingson 1992a:118 and Robins 1967:207-8), Boas stressed the importance of music in the study of non-Western cultures. With the advent of the gramophone, Boas urged his students to collect music along with other ethnological data (DeVale 1980:823). Most of Boas's transcriptions were published in the period 1887-1900; among these publications one finds: *The Central Eskimo* and *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians* (both 1888). In *The Central Eskimo*, for example, one finds a collection of twenty-three Eskimo songs together with some analytical notes. Boas transcribed these songs in Western notation. In some of these transcriptions he omitted the bars and used accents to indicate rhythm.

In Halle, the German philosopher and psychologist Carl Stumpf (1886) transcribed a number of Bella Coola Indian melodies by working with one singer at a time. He notated these melodies by working with informants who were willing to repeat a song many times, for in order to make the transcription as accurate as possible he had

to cope with the fact that each rendition might be slightly different from the others. In these transcriptions, Stumpf included some modifying diacritical signs like the **X** for a microtonal pitch raising and the **O** for lowering (see Figure 1.5).

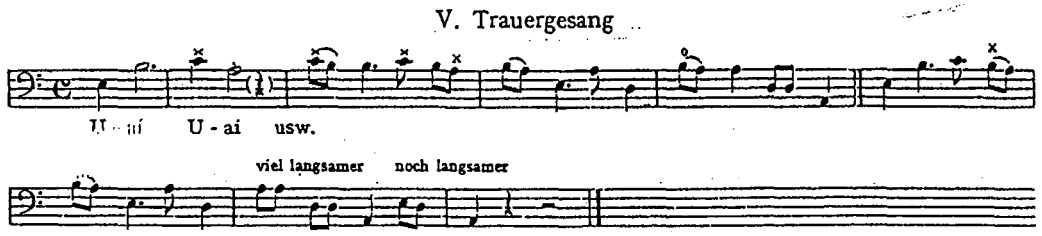


Figure 1.5 A Bellakula-Indian song transcribed by Stumpf (1886) (from Stumpf 1922:94)

Close to Stumpf's transcriptional attempts one can mention Ellis's study *On The Musical Scales Of Various Nations* (1885). In this classic study, Ellis produced mathematically precise descriptions of some non-Western scales such as the 5-tone Javanese *sléndro* and the 7-tone Thai scales, along with others from Europe, Africa, Oceania and parts of Asia. To arrive at these empirical descriptions he developed the cents system which provided him with precise intervallic measurements. In Ellis's cents system, an octave is equal to 1,200 cents; that makes a semitone equal to 100 cents. At the end of this work Ellis concluded that: 'the Musical Scale is not one, not "natural", nor even founded necessarily on the laws of the constitution of musical sound ... but very diverse, very artificial, and very capricious' (1885:526). Ellis devised the cent system to rely on mathematical evidence rather than on aural skills.[2] Such a scientific tonometric method had to be given a new dimension in later years through fieldwork experiences and theories derived from them.

The Phonograph

A major development which has had a tremendous impact on ethnomusicological transcription was the invention of sound recording in 1877. 'For the first time people

had the ability to preserve, transport and reproduce at a specific time and place sounds that were originally produced elsewhere' (Malm 1992:350). The phonograph became one of the most important tools in the early documentation of sound for research purposes. It used wax cylinders and could both record and play back on the same machine.

In 1878 Felix von Luschan, who at the time was the director of the Museum für Volkerkunde of Berlin, predicted the importance of the phonograph for ethnological and linguistic research (Leydi 1991:17). In a chapter dedicated to the use of the phonograph, von Luschan (1908) stressed the utility of the phonograph and provided a practical guide for its use in fieldwork.[3] The phonograph became an indispensable recording device through which music could be recorded in the field and then transcribed in the office. The first music scholar who utilized the phonograph for transcription purposes was Benjamin Ives Gilman (1852-1933).

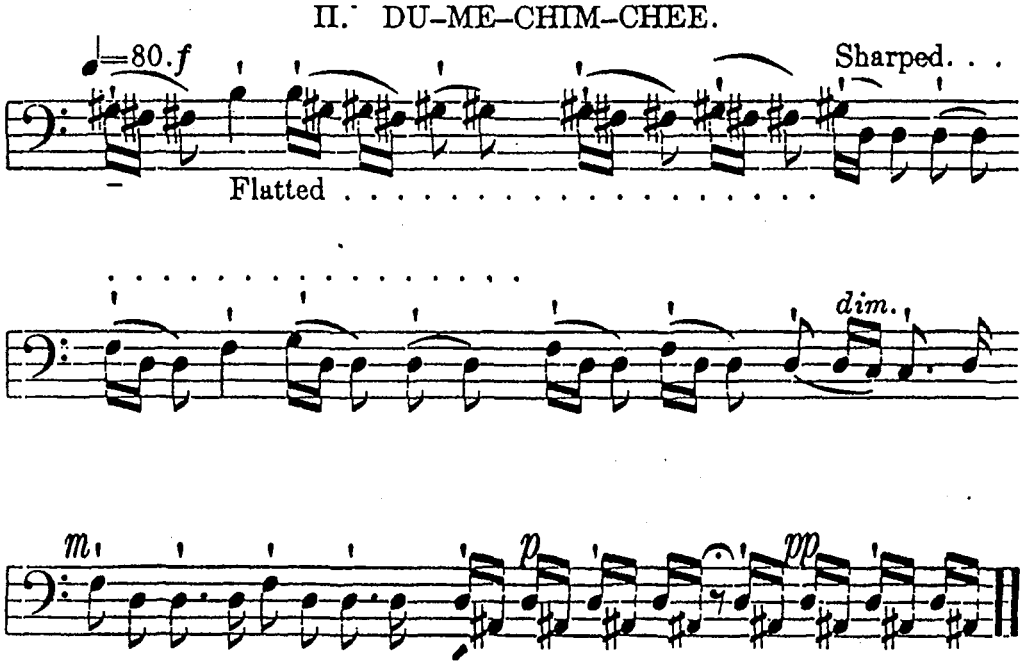


Figure 1.6 A transcription of a Zuni melody by Gilman (1891) (from Gilman 1891:71)

Gilman (1891:73-74) remarked that in his 'studies of Zuni melodies the phonograph has for the first time lent its aid to investigations into primitive music'. Gilman transcribed the Zuni melodies in Western staff notation. He omitted bar-lines and indicated microtonal deviations (see Figure 1.6). In a 1908 article, published in the *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology* (vol.5) under the title of *Hopi Songs*, Gilman applied graph notation for the transcription of the said songs.

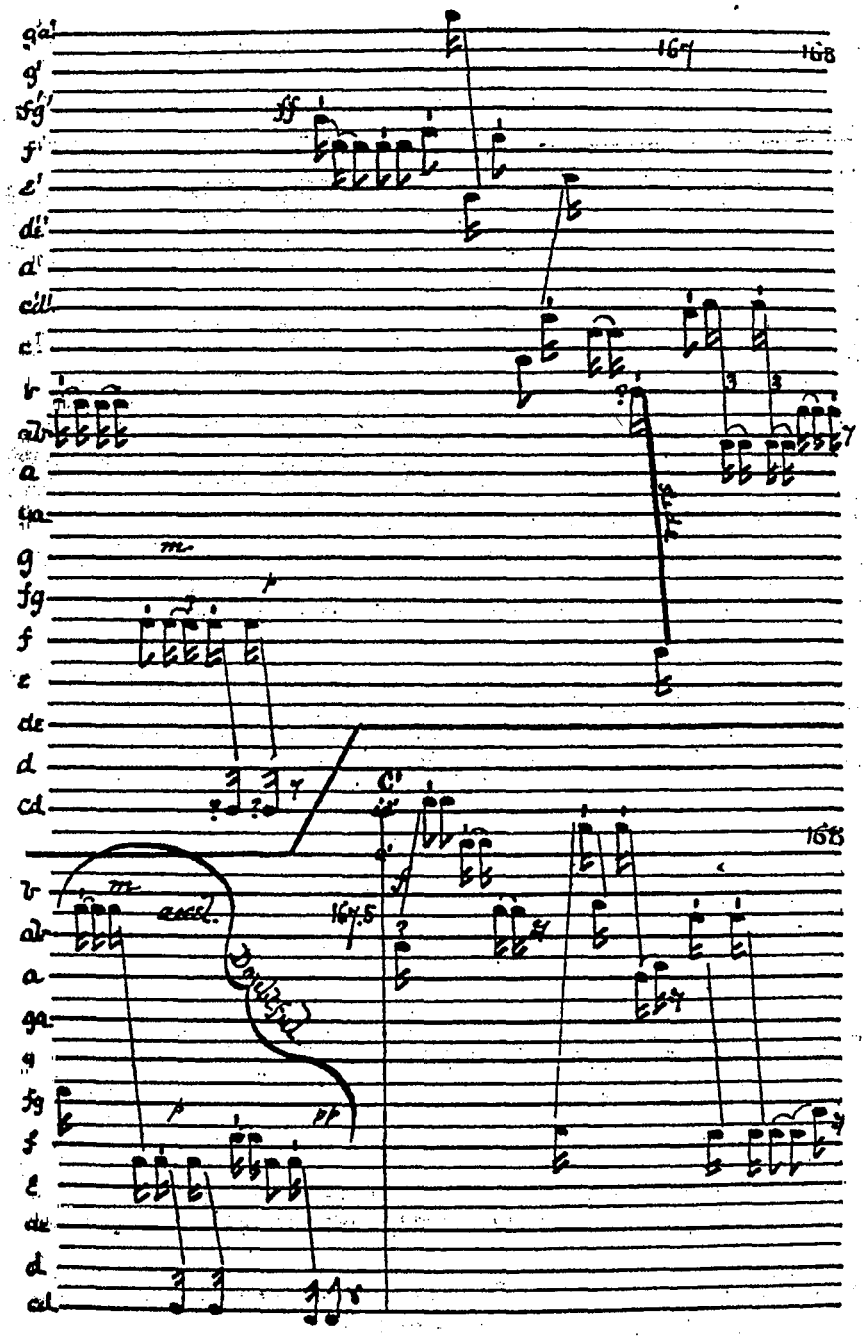


Figure 1.7 Gilman's graphic transcription of a *Hopi* song (1908) (from Ellingson 1992a:124)

These transcriptions show notes spread on an expanded 'staff' of 45 lines with equidistant quarter-tones and with the addition of various diacritical symbols (see Figure 1.7). While supporting Gilman's idea of the most truthful representation of sound, a new proposed technique of transcription was prepared by Abraham and Hornbostel (1909-1910/*R*1994). They considered their proposed technique as less complex than the one proposed by Gilman.

Inspired by the 'scientific objectivity' phenomenon of the time (Abraham and Hornbostel 1975:185) and the philological development, twenty years earlier, through Ellis's International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Hornbostel and Abraham tried to create 'a musical IPA ... for the standardized representation of musical sounds in comparative musicology' (Ellingson 1992a:126). Their suggested method, known as the Hornbostel's paradigm, concentrated mainly on establishing standard methods of objectively stating on paper what happens in one sound, for the purpose of providing a way to describe and analyse (ibid.). The proposed standardization suggested the use of old conventional symbols, like for instance, the use of mensural symbols for the indication of passages which would be difficult to follow in polyphonic pieces; as well as the use of new diacritical signs, for the indication of different types of tremolos (guttural, palatal or bilabial tremolos, for example) (Abraham and Hornbostel *R*1994:434).

In 1900 Stumpf used the phonograph to make six recordings of the Siamese court orchestra in Berlin. These six cylinders are considered to be the first nucleus of recordings of that which, in 1905, had to be officially recognized as the Berlin Phonogramm-Archive. The phonograph brought a scientific approach in the technique of transcription, as Bartók (1881-1945) asserted:

> The amateur work of old was replaced by scientific research. Even if the first collectors had intended to, they could not have produced satisfactory results from the scientific viewpoint, for they lacked the most essential of the instruments-the phonograph (1976:10).

Bartók transcribed his first Hungarian folk song in 1904 and in 1905 began collaboration with Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967); from 1906, Bartók used the phonograph (See Figure 1.8) to transcribe folk songs from Hungary, Rumania and Transylvania (Myers 1992:4-5).

Figure 1.8 Béla Bartók transcribing from a phonograph (from Myers 1992:2)

Phonetic and *Phonemic* Transcriptions

In the period 1930-50 a number of scholars, among them Béla Bartók, George Herzog and Frances Densmore, greatly influenced the development of detailed, descriptive transcription (Nettl 1983:73). Bartók's transcriptions of Eastern European folk songs present an extended model of European notation through complex modifications. At times his transcriptions grew so complex in minute elaborations (see Figure 1.9, for example) that he had to add a simpler form of transcription, beneath the complex one, in order to clarify the melodic line. In Bartók's words: 'the peasant's singing style is full of peculiarities, often very characteristic and worthy of recording with precision' (1967:59).

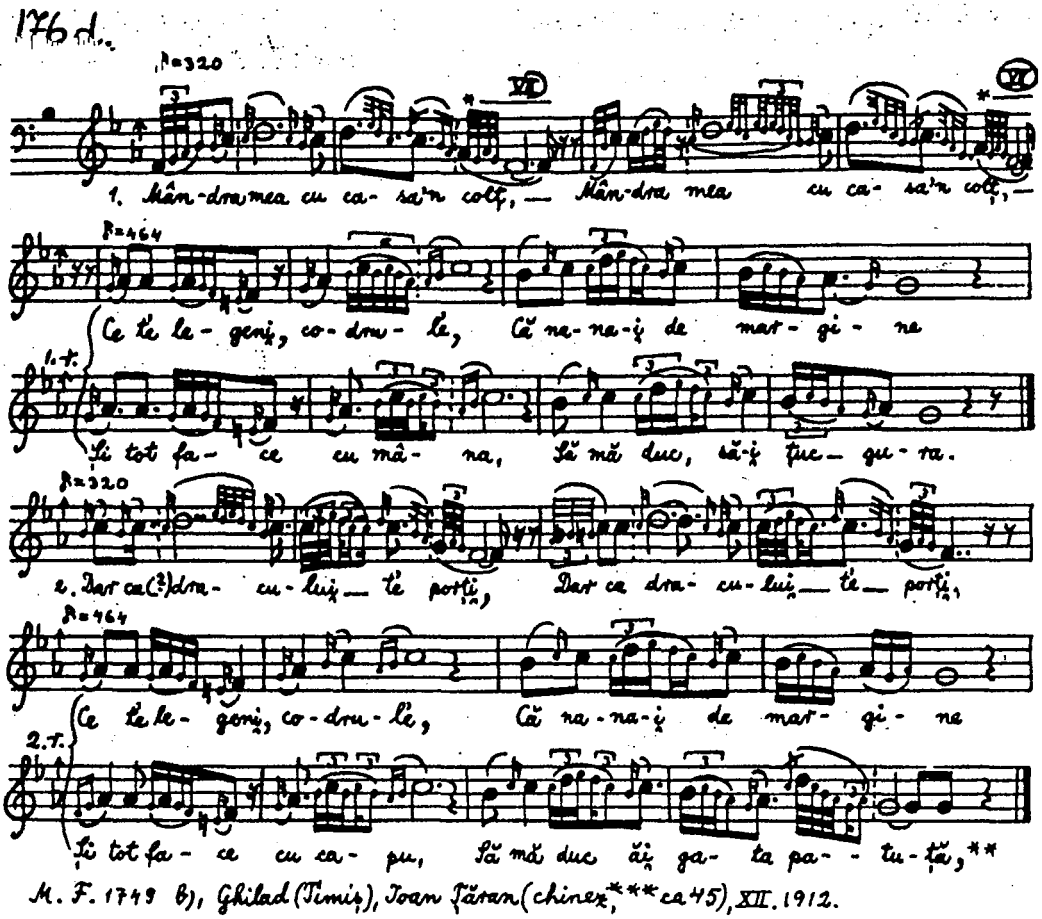


Figure 1.9 A Rumanian folk song transcribed by Béla Bartók (from Bartók 1967:274)

Herzog's transcriptions show that he did a good deal of analytical work before he proceeded with the transcriptions. His transcriptions emphasised rhythm and structure (e.g. 1936) with a number of diacritical signs to reach his aims. While Bartók wanted to preserve everything he heard 'moving doggedly through the song from the first note to the last, measure by measure', Herzog used transcriptions to discover a style unknown to him (Nettl 1983:73).

In her numerous transcriptions of American Indian melodies, Frances Densmore (e.g. 1913) showed that her approach was different from that of Bartók and Herzog. While Bartók and Herzog used special modificatory signs as a way of avoiding the constraints of Western musical thought, Densmore seems rather to have used the tran-

scription process as a way of associating Indian music with the Western. Through frequent changes of meter, Densmore could elaborate on the complexity of Indian rhythms when compared with the Western (ibid.). The level of detail in the transcriptional approaches as proposed by the above scholars brought up the distinction between *phonetic* and *phonemic* transcriptions.

The terms *phonetic* and *phonemic* were borrowed from linguistics to distinguish between 'the actual sounds produced' (phonetic) and the organization of 'the actual sounds into a system with a limited number of significantly distinctive units' (phonemic) (ibid.:72). Within a musical notation one usually finds a balance of phonetic and phonemic elements - it is not exclusively one or the other. While the transcriptions of Bartók, Herzog and Densmore can clearly be classified as *phonetic* , they vary in the extent of the *phonemic* component (ibid.:72-3).

Another classical distinction in the ethnomusicological transcription debate is between '*objective*' and *subjective* transcriptions. Some transcribers preferred the use of mechanical devices as an aid to the transcription process, or even to produce transcriptions, due to the 'objective' representation of musical sound by same devices.

Mechanical Devices in Ethnomusicology

The advancements in technology had a great impetus on the analytical devices used in ethnomusicology. These devices proposed a scientific approach in the analysis of sound. 'Hornbostel's Reisetonometer was a whistle with a slide which was graduated in terms of cycles' (Nettl 1964:113). Jaap Kunst advocated the utility of the monochord for the purposes of transcription. The monochord was a 'stretched steel string over a board ... calibrated to vibration rates, and a movable block of wood used for stopping the string'. In both technologies the scholar had to 'judge the identity of simultaneous or successive pitches' (ibid). Besides these tonometric inventions, we

can also mention: Helmholtz's set of brass resonators, Ellis's battery of tuning forks and Appun's Tonometer. By this time, tonometric accuracy became more dependent on visual methods, especially, through the use of the oscilloscope, the stroboscope and the electronic counter (Sachs 1962:20). Apart from these tonometric devices, new devices were developed to mechanically record the musical sound in a form of graph notation.

In a 1928 publication entitled *Phonophotography in Folk Music: American Negro Songs in New Notation*, Milton Metfessel published a number of transcriptions in graph form. He photographed the oscillations of a stroboscope and superimposed a graph against the photograph. His technique had few followers until in the 1940s when melographic devices began to be developed in various countries (Nettl 1983:76). These melographs were devised to provide transcriptions in forms of graph registrations. They reflect a scientific attempt at 'objectively' notating a musical sound which falls outside the musical tradition of the transcriber. Apart from this, these devices seemed to be very useful to enquire into those aspects of musical style which cannot be investigated in the normal aural technique.

In the 1950s Olav Gurvin and K. Dahlback, from the Norwegian Folk Music Institute, contributed towards the development and the applicability of the melograph. In Jerusalem, Dalia Cohen and Ruth Torgovnik Katz (1960) built their own device for graphic notation in order to enable them 'follow changes that occur even in a tenth of a second or less' (ibid.: 67).

The most widely used device is the Seeger Model C melograph. The first model version of this melograph was developed in the 1950s at the University of California at Los Angeles by Charles Seeger. The melograph has the facility of producing simultaneously three graphs registering pitch, amplitude and spectrum (Cohen 1980:128). From

the graph it is 'possible to measure each of the components - pitch, interval, loudness and duration - and study their interrelation' (ibid.).

These electronic transcriptions were greeted with scepticism by some ethnomusicologists. List (1963:194-5), for instance, noticed that 'electronic devices are ... not always accurate' and that in certain directions these devices are 'more limited than the ear'. For an evaluation regarding electronic transcriptions the reader should refer to the second section of chapter 3.

The SEM 1963 Symposium on Transcription

One of the most important publications in the history of transcription appeared in 1964 (Symposium 1964) as a result of a symposium, on the same subject, held in 1963 by the Society for Ethnomusicology. Four scholars: Robert Garfias, Mieczyslaw Kolinski, George List and Willard Rhodes were provided with a recording of a San (Bushman) song to transcribe. The vocal melody was accompanied on a musical bow. A comparison of these four transcriptions revealed a strong element of subjectivity (see Figure 1.10). The transcribers had, in effect, listened to different elements in the music provided, as can be seen from their transcriptions.

Garfias (G) transcribed the fundamental of the bow part in standard notation and 'in even rhythmic value' (Symposium 1964:233). He transcribed the vocal part in a form of melographic transcription in order 'to show pattern and to highlight the duration of each pitch and type of entrance' (ibid.). Kolinski (K) and Rhodes (R) transcribed both the tones and the overtones of the accompaniment part, while List (L) included only the overtones. The symposium showed that there is no one definite form of transcription not even for the same piece of music. The process of transcription depends on what the transcriber listens to and understands by that particular music. Apart from this, the symposium can be considered as the first attempt at what can be referred to as 'collaborative transcription projects' (Ellingson 1992a:135).

A collaborative transcription project has been adopted, for example, by George List (1974). List was interested 'in the degree of concurrence or divergence that occurs when more than one individual transcribes the same recorded performance' (1974:353). A number of transcribers were asked to transcribe the same music, and then points of concurrence and divergence which occured in the transcriptions were evaluated. The transcribed recordings were: a Rumanian carol, and a Yiddish and a Thai lullaby. In his conclusion List remarked that: 'transcriptions made by ear in notated form are sufficiently accurate, sufficiently reliable to provide a valid basis for analysis and comparative studies of ... pitch and duration' (ibid.: 375-6).

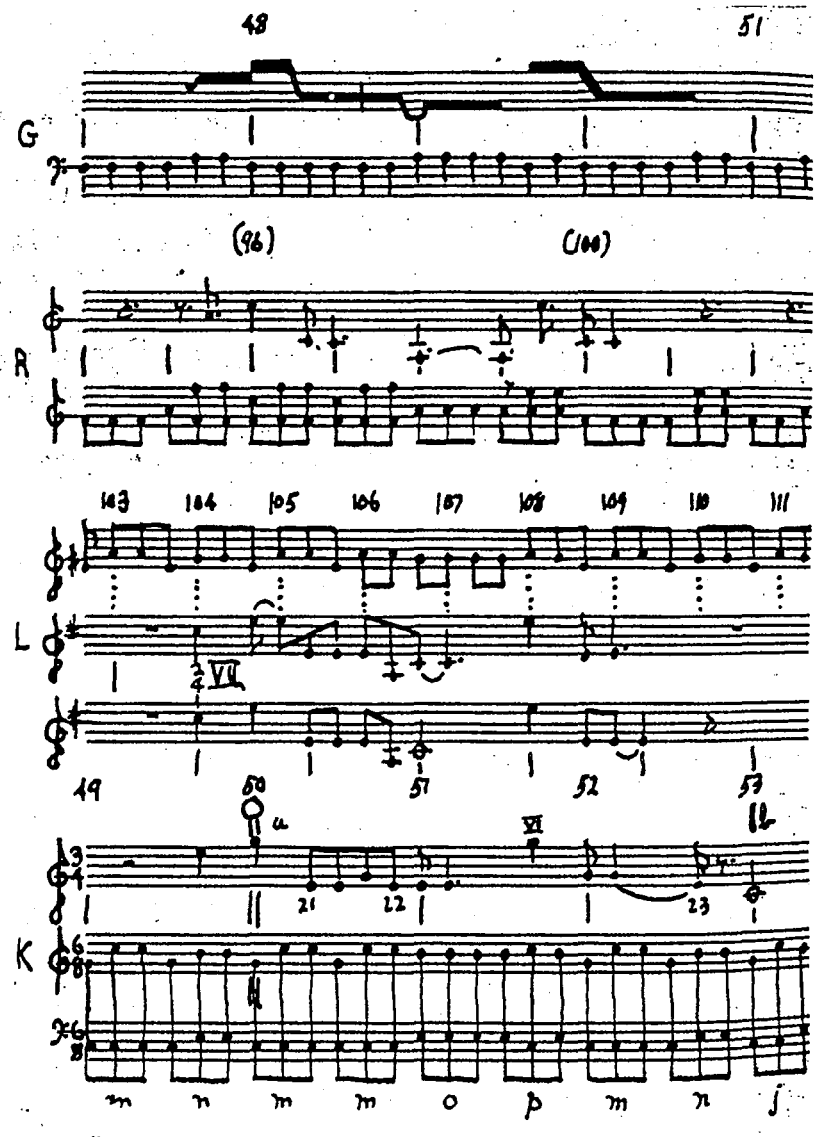


Figure 1.10 A comparison of four transcriptions, by four ethnomusicologists, of a San (Bushman) song with musical bow accompaniment (1964) (from Symposium 1964)

In certain cases these collaborative transcription projects were applied to minimize the degree of subjectivity in the process of transcription. This approach, for example, has been applied in a 1969 publication called *Shingi-Shingon Shomyo Shusei/ Buddhist Chant of Shingi-Shingon* (Tokyo). A Japanese group led by Koizumi Fumio devised a complex methodology to design a form of composite transcription. This kind of transcription was synthesized from twelve different transcriptions of the same song made by three different transcribers (Ellingson 1992a:137). In a scientific discipline as ethnomusicology the subjective element in transcription is regarded as detrimental to an objective and scientific analytical approach.

Javanese and African Musical Studies

Other forms of alternative notation systems for transcription have also been proposed and applied especially for Javanese and African ethnomusicological studies. The cipher notation system, for example, became a widely used form of notation among Javanese specialists. Instead of notes, the cipher notation utilizes a combination of numbers and signs. The system is used by Indonesian gamelan musicians for the transmission and teaching of gamelan compositions. (Gamelan music is a traditional form of Indonesian music). This system provides an opportunity for Javanese specialists to fluently transcribe gamelan music. A thorough evaluation of the *Kepatihan* (as it is known in Java) cipher system is presented in the first section of chapter 3.

African ethnomusicology also began to generate other innovative forms of transcriptions. In most cases these innovations developed in attempts to analyze the complexity of African drum ensemble music. One of the most distinct attempts in this direction was the development of a notation system known as the Time Unit Box System (TUBS). 'The system began to be developed in 1962 by Philip Harland for teaching purposes with the UCLA African Group' (Koetting 1970:125). It was, then, experimentally developed into a system of notation by James Koetting. The TUBS is a form of box graph notation. The symbols within the boxes stand for different handstrokes

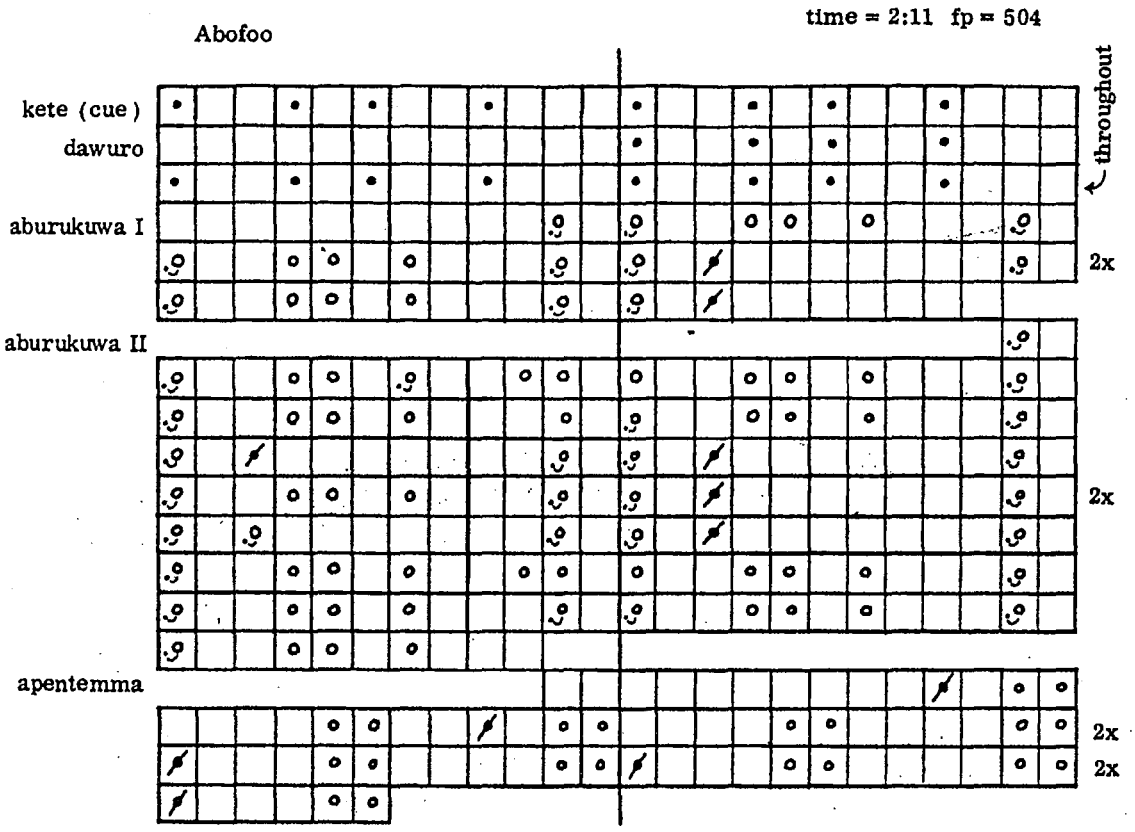


Figure 1.11 A musical piece of African drumming transcribed in TUBS (1970) (from Koeting 1970:140)

which one finds within the complexity of African drumming. The system adopts the referent as a minimal unit of organization (see Figure 1.11, for example).

Another innovative system of notation was designed by Pantaleoni (1972). Pantaleoni's system has been contrived for transcribing *sogo* drum playing in South-eastern Ghana. It consists of a depictive kind of notation showing the various handstrokes that produce different qualities of sound in *sogo* drumming (see Figure 1.12). Other forms of innovative transcriptions were and are still being developed as to meet particular exigencies that arise from time to time in ethno-analysis.

To recapitulate, in this brief historical survey I have pointed out the importance that transcription always had throughout the history of ethnomusicology. The survey focuses on the fact that the core problem of transcription lies in the transcriber himself. If the transcriber happens to be an outsider to the musical tradition under his investiga-

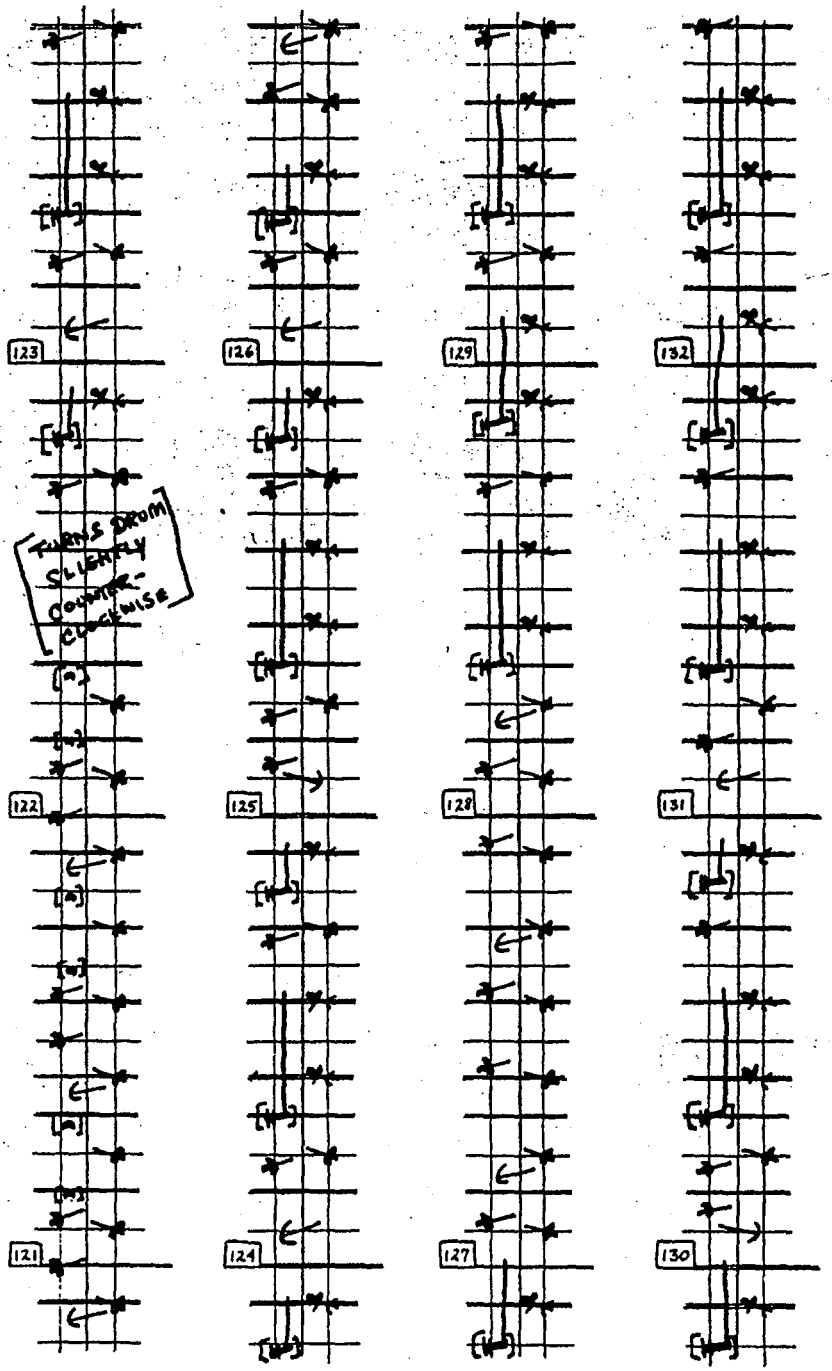


Figure 1.12 Pantaleoni's system of notation for *sogo* drum playing (1972) (from Pantaleoni 1972:34)

tion, then he will not be able to transcribe the musical sound of that particular tradition as understood and intended by its members.

The mechanical phase of transcription, while contributing towards the analysis of certain aspects which are not normally enquired about through the normal aural technique, failed to resolve a number of issues which constitute the transcription debate. The most distinct issue is between 'objective' and subjective transcriptions. The

next two chapters will attempt to show that the 'objectivity' which is normally associated with electronic transcriptions should be taken with reservation.

The history of transcription has been determined and characterized by a whole series of attempts, paradigms, developments and innovations. All these can be considered as the historical components of transcription, emerging from a never-ending debate of issues and concepts. Such a debate should serve as a continuous stimulus for the transcriber to adopt a reflective approach towards his 'most difficult task'.

Notes

[1] Cohen remarked that:

> The monochord had many shortcomings: it could only measure pitch; it relied on the keenness of the ear of the researcher; only one note could be measured at a time; it was impossible to examine variations within a note, for the pitch was related to a single point in time; rapid notes could not be isolated; and the work was very slow (1980:129).

[2] Ellis was said to be tone-deaf (Sachs 1962:12).

[3] This chapter was published in *Anleitung für ethnographische Beobachtung und Sammlungen in Afrika und Ozeanien* (chap."Musik"), Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin 1908 (Leydi 1991:255). The phonograph was officially launched by Thomas Edison a year before the publication of Felix von Luschan's chapter.

Chapter 2

Aural Transcription Using Western Staff Notation

Transcribing by ear and hand has always been the main approach to transcription used by most ethnomusicologists. In the 'early history of ethnomusicology, transcriptions were made by ear in the field, but this method has long been eschewed because of its unreliability. Not only does song usually go too fast for the transcriber, but if repetitions are demanded, it is likely that variations may occur to such an extent that the transcriber receives a mottled version of the singer's efforts' (Merriam 1964:57). Through the development of recording devices, it became possible for the ethnomusicologist to make a permanent record of a musical sound and to bring it back to the laboratory, where much more precise transcription could be carried out (ibid.).

The transcriber's dependence on aurality had to be complemented by some form of notation system. Among these systems of notation one can mention: the Western staff notation, number notation and the various indigenous notation systems. But it seems that the combination of aural transcription in Western staff notation has always been the most widespread method of transcription among ethnomusicologists.

In the present writer's opinion the preference of some ethnomusicologists to transcribe aurally is not only determined by technical factors. There are other political and cultural factors which in themselves exert a subtle pressure on the transcriber to opt for a certain technique and not another. This may also apply to the use of the Western staff notation for transcription purposes. At this stage we might ask two important questions which may better explain the above opinion. What are the hidden implications behind an aurally made transcription in Western staff notation? What does such transcription reflect on the transcriber himself?

This perspective can shed new or, at least, different light on the ethnomusicologist himself, as a scholar whose function is being continually determined by the seekers and holders of political and economic power; therefore, his decisions are neither neutral nor free.[1] This approach allows for Blum's contention that 'any ethnomusicologist, like any of his informants, has lived through a specific "learning process",' during which he was subject to 'particular social constrains'(1975:208-9) and which, according to Gourlay, leads 'to adoption of one course of action, one set of interests, or one theory in preference to another'(1978:1).

This chapter is divided in four main sections. The first section attempts to generate some ideas about aural skill as considered in Western art music. The second section attempts to evaluate the hidden implications behind a transcription in Western staff notation. This section also concentrates on the fact that the writing down of musical sound is 'a major value in Western musical thought' (Nettl 1984:35). In the third section one finds some of the main issues raised by leading ethnomusicologists (List, Hood, Nettl and others) about an aurally made transcription in Western notation. The fourth sections seeks to show the sympathetic rapport that had always existed between words and Western notation, and how this rapport may help the transcriber to conceptualize the structure of a genre of vocal music which had never been intended to be put on paper.

Aural Transcription in Perspective

The act of aurally transcribing a piece of music, which falls outside the transcriber's musical culture, does not only mean the acquisition of a skill; it implies other factors which might not be technical. In other words, we will be speaking of two aspects. On the one hand, we will be referring to what is purely technical and on the other hand to what is culturally or socially imposed in a subtle way. Sometimes these two aspects intertwine with each other.

First of all, any transcription is evidence that the transcriber has actually listened to the music transcribed. In itself this might be considered as an attempt, on part of the transcriber, to widen his musical boundaries which have been politically, socially and culturally determined by the West over the years. In this way, he would be associated with that group of music scholars, called ethnomusicologists, who from the very beginning of their discipline have adopted new approaches to the study of music; the music of the whole world became their frame of reference. An ethnomusicological transcription is in itself a reflection of this cultural and academic expansion.

An aurally made transcription may manifest the transcriber's 'aural proficiency'. Hood (1982:54) speaks of 'the student's dictation muscles', while List (1963:196) refers to the 'properly oriented and trained ear'. Aural skill is a highly valued musical quality in Western art music. Thus, the applicability of aural proficiency in ethnomusicological transcription maintains a link with one of the most important skills in Western art music, considered to be a professional requisite. For instance, Hood puts ear-training in the first place: 'The training of ears, eyes, hands and voice and fluency gained in these skills assure a real comprehension of theoretical studies, which in turn prepares the way for the professional' (1960:55).

At this point we might ask whether the aural training which one receives during his Western musical training is sufficient to meet the pecularities of ethnic and non-Western music. For instance, when referring to the Western obsession with the perfect pitch, Hood has argued that:

> The most difficult conditioned prejudice to overcome among Western musicians is the sense of perfect pitch . Such an individual must come to realize that in the world of microtonal inflections his sense of pitch is actually imperfect (ibid.:56).

The above quotation shows that what in Western art music is referred to as 'aural proficiency', when applied to ethnomusicological transcription becomes an 'approxi-

mate aural profiency'. Is it completely right, thus, for one to say that an aurally made transcription is a good indicator of one's 'aural proficiency'? Or a more of the transcriber's 'approximate aural proficiency'? The latter seems to be the more realistic.

An aurally made transcription served the ethnomusicologist as a good means by which he could project himself not merely as a scholar but also as an artist. In Western art music, aural ability is considered as the fulcrum on which the art of music is supported. This means that, the more aurally trained one is the more artistic one is considered. The critical distinction between knowledge *about* music and knowledge *of* music could be minimised by something which in itself is both artistic and scholarly. In the case of ethnomusicology an aurally made transcription seemed to fulfill this exigency. On the above distinction and its implications, Nketia writes:

> Until recently it was not only the music public who seemed somewhat dubious about the scope, method and aim of the disciplines of musicology and ethnomusicology, but also musicians who believe in knowledge *of* music and its practical skills rather than knowledge *about* music. For some time I could not fully appreciate why some Western composers like Henry Cowell who studied non-Western music and even published recordings of the music should state explicitly that they were not musicologists or ethnomusicologists. I wondered whether this was just a matter of professional choice or merely a feeling that to be an artist was more challenging and desirable (certainly in the eyes of the public) than to be a scholar in the field of music (1985:4).

The ethnomusicologist's transcriptions began to take on the dimension of musical compositions. What's in a composition if not the reproduction of sound? The composer reproduces inspired sounds, deeply embedded in his innermost emotions. On the other hand, the transcriber reproduces sounds having their starting point in the experiences of others. In this sense, it seems that the only difference is the *means* and not the *end*. Here, one might as well ask whether the big question associated with electronically made transcriptions was only on technical basis or for the lack of artistic activity implied in the method.

Behind a Transcription in Western Staff Notation

What are the hidden messages behind a transcription in Western staff notation? What other socio-cultural connotations does it imply? What about non-Western ethnomusicologists transcribing in Western staff notation? My point of departure is that - Western staff notation fulfills subtle decisions taken by the *economic base* of society. These decisions are passed on to the *superstructure* (other institutions of society: government, education, religion and so on) to be implemented. Orthodox Marxism holds that 'base determines superstructure' - that is, economic relationships dictate the form and content of all other aspects of life (Gibson 1986:6). This may explain Charles Seeger's contention when saying that: 'music is the result of intentional interaction, of processes of decision making in society' (1969:235). Herndon has recalled Seeger's assertion in this way: 'Music does not occur within a vacuum; it lives within a set of values which shape and control it almost totally' (Herndon and McLeod 1981:88).

A transcription in Western notation may be considered as a re-affirmation of something which the transcriber believes in. One can look at the transcriber as one who firmly believes in the 'perfection' and the 'flexibility' of the system. Therefore, his transcriptions in Western notation are in themselves another re-affirmation of this conviction. Such conviction may be the result of a widespread mode of reasoning regarding Western notation.

One of the arguments in favour of Western notation, which has been brought forward, is that this system facilitates talking *about* music. In other words, it can be an efficient, but not necessarily an adequate, means by which analysis can be communicated. Even if a transcriber decides to spend a number of years studying a native notation system, in order to keep with 'his Hipkinatic oath' (Hood 1982:93) and presents his transcriptions in the most authentic way, it will still be necessary for the transcriber to include a full explanation of the system used to safeguard the scope and the utility of

his analysis, and to facilitate talking *about* music (see Chapter 3 for a seminal discussion). Such a transcriptional approach makes things more complex.

At this stage one might ask whether the widespread communicable consensus behind Western notation leads towards a 'justified' recognition of the system as a 'universal' system of notation. What are the forces that are pushing this system of notation towards a pseudo-universal dimension? Rastall (1983:6) has argued that Western notation is 'an all-purpose notation'. On the other hand, Nettl insisted that 'it is a system that is good for pitch, moderately good for prescribing rhythm, poor for much else' (1984:36).

It is a fact that Western staff notation is an accepted system of notation even among non-Western ethnomusicologists. In China, for instance, Chinese ethnomusicologists transcribe folk and traditional Chinese music in Western notation. In this context we are speaking of a country with a long tradition in the development of various systems of notation - a tradition that goes back to (and beyond) the Dunhuang Caves tablatures consisting of Chinese characters indicating pitch, rhythm and fingering for the pipa lute. As one Chinese ethnomusicologist remarked to me: 'One of the advantages of Western notation is its popularity worldwide'.[2] We also read of music being transnotated into Western staff notation from gradually decaying systems of notation for that music to be preserved as, for example, in the case of Thai classical music (see, for example, Duriyanga 1972).

Non-Western musicians consider Western notation as effective and efficient enough to preserve decaying musical traditions. When Nettl, for instance, referred to the impact of Western notation on the Persian *radif* he quoted Iranian musicians saying that: 'The coming of Western notation is the best thing that could have happened for the preservation of our traditional music' (1985:65). Nettl tried to find the real reason

behind the respect that Iranian musicians had for Western notation. He found the following:

> ... the most fundamental reason for the use of notation is its presence in the Western system, the need to feel that one must be just as skilled, as intelligent, as much in control of materials for the Persian music as for the Western. Even musicians who can't read music sometimes sit behind empty music stands. Of all things, notation may best show us that music can be more important as symbol than as a system of sounds (ibid.:66).

A quite similar thing in this regard happened to Tunisian art music repertory called the *ma'luf*. The entire repertory 'was converted from an oral into a written tradition during the 20th century, using Western staff notation' (Davis 1992:85). One of the purposes for these transcriptions was 'to define an essentially unitary tradition in which superficial deviations had occured over the centuries as an inevitable result of oral transmission' (ibid.:110). Although these transcriptions were never intended to be definitive performing versions, they still had to face the induced subtle politics of Western staff notation:

> Ben 'Aljiya [who in 1958 was appointed by the Tunisian government as the leader of the Radio *ma'luf* ensemble] aimed to distinguish his elite Radio ensemble from the Rashidiyya by introducing new "professional" standards of performance, which he acknowledged were inspired by Western orchestral models. He prepared separate parts for each type of instrument, and insisted on absolute adherence to the written score, subject only to expressive nuances which he himself introduced in rehearsals. Ben 'Aljiya's scores introduce contrasts of timbre and register between various instruments and voices, and between pizzicato and arco strings; they synchronise bowings and they include details of tempo, dynamics and phrasing. Unlike al-Mahdi [the former leader of the Rashidiyya] who led from within the ensemble, playing 'ud or nai, Ben 'Aljiya consistently conducted from the front with a baton, maintaining that this was a necessary move in order to establish the leader of the instrumental section as leader of the entire ensemble. (ibid.:96)

Opinions, Reactions and Counter-Reactions

Various opinions and reactions exist regarding the use of aurally made transcriptions in Western notation. My concern here is to present some of these reactions, and when possible or necessary, finding supporting or counter-reactions.

Nettl considered the problem of culture to be the fundamental problem in an aurally made transcription in Western notation:

> Transcribing music by hand and ear ... is hindered by the situation in which the transcriber is a native of one musical culture trying to write down the music of another culture, a transcriber using a notation system devised for one culture and foreign to the styles in others (1964:102).

The main drawback with a transcriber outsider to the musical culture in question is that he tries to fit into his own musical system another system which in itself is foreign to him. However, 'slight deviations from pitch, hardly audible to Western ears used to the tempered scale, [and which] might be essential distinctions in another music' might be left unnoticed (ibid.).

Different scholars have argued that our perceptions are limited due to what is culturally imposed on us. List, for instance, remarked that: 'Our perceptions are limited. We cannot over-step the thresholds of audibility or feeling nor can we react to frequencies outside a certain gamut. Past this what is music is determined by the culture, not by the harmonic series' (1963:196). Charles Seeger explained that what is left out from our ethnocentric listening is knowledge of the phenomenon that happens between the uniquely structured notes: 'For to this aural tradition is customarily left most of the knowledge of "what happens between the notes"-i.e., between the links in the chain and the comparatively stable levels in the stream' (1958:186).

Herndon departed from the definition of culture to evaluate the problem of cul-

ture as it effects a researcher outsider to the musical tradition under investigation: 'Culture is often defined as learned, cumulative behaviour' (1974:249). According to Herndon, 'if we view music as a part of culture, then music must also be learned, cumulative behaviour' (ibid.). Herndon proposed the understanding of the learning process, considering it 'of vital-importance to any approach to a model of music' (ibid.). Through this approach an understanding of the way music is learned and taught can shed light on the principal organization of the sound as perceived by the members of the culture in question. What is passed during the learning process is a package of skills and theory which the musical culture in question considers as vital for the transmission of its musical culture.

Jairazbhoy addressed the problem of aural perception not just on cultural basis but even on physiological considerations: 'It is clear ... that once this auditory information reaches the brain, it is processed in some extremely complex manner, involving factors such as memory and conditioning' (1977:266). Jairazbhoy referred to the faculty of any individual to select what he wants to "hear" (ibid.:267). Radocy and Boyle attributed this physiological faculty of selectivity to the learning process that takes place in every individual. For instance, when they referred to pitch perception they remarked that : 'The pitch perception of a complex tone need not be a unitary sensation. Individuals can learn to "hear out" some of the partials in a complex tone when the frequency separation exceeds the critical band width' (1979:23). What one listens to is conditioned and determined by various interrelated factors of physiological, psychological and cultural nature. No human musical activity is solely the result of wilful individual interaction with music (see Baumann 1992 for a comprehensive discussion). 'We hear what we want to hear, or, rather, what our programming allows us to hear' (Gourlay 1978:16). Gaston insists that:

> To each musical experience is brought the sum of an individual's attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, conditionings in terms of time and place in which he

has lived. To each response, also, he brings his own physiological needs, unique neurological and endocrinological systems with their distinctive attributes. He brings, in all of this, his total entity as a unique individual (1957:26).

Even after considering all this psychological, physiological and cultural complexity in the process of sound perception, Jairazhboy concluded that:

... an automatic transcription should not be thought of as replacement for aural transcription ... The primary value of automatic transcriptions would be to throw light on what we do *not* "hear" (my italics), what we change in the process of "hearing", or what we take for granted. They can also provide an insight into some of the extremely subtle elements of music which we cannot readily distinguish aurally, but which might nevertheless influence our perception of the music on a subconscious plane. They can provide us with acoustical standards against which we could compare the effects of auditory and cultural responses. There is little doubt that automatic transcriptions, with their detailed, external view of music, will eventually help us to understand some of the psychological and cultural processes of man. However, when the subject of study is concerned with the psychological or communicational aspects of music within a culture, aural transcriptions by a trained ethnomusicologist who has steeped himself in that culture may well be far more meaningful (1977:267).

When Rahn speaks of aural perception he makes the point that for the same piece of music 'one can expect different listeners' (1983:201). But for Rahn, a transcription can be acceptable if it does not contradict the observables: 'As long as a transcription does not *contradict* the observables, it can be considered at least acceptable and might contribute to the best interpretation' (ibid.).

Many things have been said about Western staff notation and its applicability in transcription. The main criticism lies in the fact that 'its use ... is fraught with difficul-

ties which stem from its being a Western-biased and prescriptive notation system' (May 1978:110). According to May, the system 'was devised to suggest to a musician how to perform a work within Western conventions rather than to describe exactly how a work was done'. Therefore most 'of the symbols in this system have multiple meanings dependent, for instance, on the performance conventions at the time the piece was written or on other information gained from outside of the notational system' (ibid.). Singer amplified on this by remarking that:

> The limitations of our Western musical notation must be taken into consideration, particularly when attempting a detailed transcription. Western musical notation was devised for prescriptive, not descriptive purposes and is inadequate for indication of amplitude, tonal quality, vocal production, quality of sustained tones, movement between tones, pitch modification, or performance practices (1978:113).

Hood (1982:89) insisted that 'every aspect of Western notation represents a corresponding chronic problem in cross-cultural transcription'. He considered the rigidity of the twelve fixed pitches within the octave as the most fundamental deficiency of Western notation when applied to non-Western music transcription (ibid.:86).

Hopkins considered a transcription in Western staff notation as a comparative exercise: "Every time we transcribe a piece of ethnic music into our notational system, we compare it with our music' (1964:312). According to Hopkins, this comparison is made possible because 'our most familiar notation ... has a unique value for comparative purposes in transcription, since it holds hidden meanings for us' (ibid.:312-3).

At this stage of the discussion one might as well mention an important advantage of Western notation when applied to ethno-transcriptions - the communicative aspect of the system itself. In this regard Widdess asserts that:

> Written musical notation, in a form that can be widely applied and widely understood, will ... presumably continue to be an essential tool by which to

communicate ideas about music that cannot be effectively or economically expressed in words alone (1994:59).

Establishing and Reaching the Aims

Western staff notation 'was exclusively a vocal notation' (Rastall 1983:5). The Middle Ages witnessed the development of the plainsong having a smoothly flowing, undulating line, often following the rhythm of the text. Some chants have only one note for each text syllable ("syllabic chant"); others have more than one note and sometimes extended groups, to each syllable ("melismatic chant"). Throughout the years, text and music supported each other towards the consolidation of their respective arts. Therefore, it seemed that the natural vocation of Western staff notation was to work in a very fluent and sympathetic way with text throughout the history of Western music.

The purpose of this section is to apply Western staff notation to investigate interpretative features in the Koranic chanting of Shaikh 'Abdu' l-Basit 'Abdu' s-Samid. The recording was produced in France by the *Club Du Disque Arabe* 1992. At the time of this research, the second volume, containing that part of the Koran from the beginning of *Surat Yusuf* to verse 32 and parts from *Suratu l-Ahzab*, were available to the author. The study is based on limited material and restricted to *Surat Yusuf*. The recording is the performance of one chanter who represents one tradition, the Egyptian Koran chanting, and so does not permit a wide generalization about the entire tradition of this kind of chanting. The transcriptions included in this section attempt to show how syllables may lead the transcriber to conceptualize a musical structure which falls outside the researcher's musical culture. The notation in these transcriptions only approximates the total sound. The examples in this section are included in the accompanying tape.

The transcriptions include a number of diacritical signs (see Appendix) to reach my goals. These transcriptions were done aurally. The music was transferred from Compact Disk (that is, from digital) to 16 inch reel tape (to analog) to have the possi-

bility of reducing the music to half its speed.[3] When possible 'ornamentation' is presented with the notes for each individual pitch.[4] 'Ornamentation' has been presented as such, to keep with the concept that, 'ornamentaion' in Arab music 'is not an adjunct to a particular tune or to specific tones of that tune. It is itself the melodic substance of the improvisation' (Al-Faruqi 1978:20).[5] About 'ornamentation', as it is presented in Arab art aesthetics, Al-Farouqi writes:

> Rather than taking nature itself or natural phenomena as his theme - or as his vehicle for expression and then decorating them with beautifying addendum, the Arab artist has made his goal that of expressing himself through the manifestation of abstract and stylized motifs. From these he creates compositions conveying a sense of never-ending design. Even when he utilizes figural motifs, they are treated in ways which deny their individuality, their personality or their naturalness. Ornamentation for the Arab artist, therefore, is not an addendum, a superfluous or extractable element in his art. It is the very material from which his infinite patterns are made (ibid.:18).

Each example is embodied within a particular submode (*jins*) with its own particular intervallic structure. These submodes are closely identified with modes derived or evolving from various Arab *maqamat* (sing. *maqam*). The identification of these submodes with modes of the *maqam* involves considerable adjustments in pitch. Microtones are left out from the examples because it is not the aim of the present analysis to establish the identification of these submodes.[6] But a common tendency, in all examples, is for the reciter to flatten certain pitches.

In the Islamic world the Koran is considered as the book of revelations. 'As a Word from God, the Koran is the foundation of the Muslim's life' and 'it provides for him the way to fulfillment in the world beyond and to happiness in the present one' (As-Said 1975:11). For the Muslims, the Koran 'is the constitution revealed by Allah to regulate and govern human life' considered as the guide which should regulate the personal and the social behaviour of mankind:

> Light should ... be thrown on it from two angles. The first is the angle of education: this shows how the [Koran], at the levels of the individual, the family, the community and the nation, leads man to achieve the highest degree of moral and spiritual nobility possible in this life. The other angle is that of the practical code which regulates human life in its noblest form and in all its spheres political, economic, social, intellectual and moral ... (Qutb 1979:xii)

The Muslim believes that these revelations were supernaturally received by the Prophet Muhammad, in circumstances of a trance-like nature, over a considerable numbers of years (c.610-632 A.D). 'It is uncertain whether the whole of the text was committed to writing during the Prophet's lifetime; he himself is said to have been illiterate, and merely to have 'recited' the words he heard out of heaven' (Arberry 1964:ix).

The Koran is divided into 114 *surahs* (or chapters) with each *surah* having a number of *ayyahs* or verses 'made up of that typically Near Eastern variety of rhymed prose called *saj*' (Al-Faruqi 1974:262).[7] The *surahs* vary in the number of *ayyahs* with *surah* 2 as the longest, 286 *ayyahs*, decreasing in size to the final *surah* having only 6 verses. The *ayyahs* are sometimes no longer than one word or a few initial letters whose significance is still not known. Other *ayyahs* contain many lines of varying lengths. Not only do the *surahs* later in the book have fewer *ayyahs*, but the number of lines in the *ayyahs* is usually less in the shorter *surahs* closer to the end of the Koran (ibid.:262-3).

In the Islamic world, the Koran is recited in the original Arabic and chanted in the mosque by clergy and Koran readers during the five daily prayer times. The chanting of the Koran 'is also an appreciated addition to any festive or solemn occasion: a holiday gathering, a birth, circumcision, betrothal or wedding party, a funeral. It can form a part of any public meeting of Muslims. Any place - mosque, public meeting place or home - is suitable, providing it meets the requirements of cleanliness and quiet' (ibid.:311-2).

The chanting (*tilawa*) or recitation (*tajwid*), can be considered as moving 'between stylized speech and artistic singing, developed from imitation of the chanting of religious texts by other Near Eastern religions at the time of Mohammed; he apparently enjoyed the mellifluous recitation of the Koran' (Neubauer 1980:342). The tradition says that the Prophet himself encouraged the chanting of the Koran: 'Embellish the Koran with your voices', while another tradition declares: 'he who does not recite the Koran melodiously is not one of us' (As-Said 1975:56). There are no regulations for chanting the Koran except that it must not be based on secular melodies and that the text should be clearly comprehended. When referring to the secular element in Koran chanting Wegner writes that:

> The genesis of the [Koran] up to its present form provides eloquent testimony to the growing sensitivity of the Muslims for the problem of transmission. But which reputation can we expect to be granted by orthodox Muslims to the musicalization (*talhin*) of the [Koran] recitation? For them, musical elements which force their way into the reading (*qira'a*) of the [Koran] signify first and foremost an element of danger. In the first place, if the manner of performance is all too melismatic and the structure of the text becomes blurred, there will be a loss of linguistic information; the language in which the revelation is couched loses just that unequivocality so long struggled for in the history of the [Koran]. A further point to be emphasized is that the believer runs the risk of having his interest aroused all too quickly by the purely musical or aesthetic attractions of the recitation, rather than by its religious content (1986:62).

Nelson quoted Shaykh Mahmud Khalil il-Husari (a prominent reciter) as saying that: 'reciting with melodies is permissible, "except for the singing [i.e., when it becomes like singing] and abuse of it which results in listeners following the melody and not the meaning" '(1982:44).

The Koranic chant unfolds very slowly. It is characterized by notes held for a long time with vocalizations on a vowel or consonant. Throughout these vocalizations the *Moqri* (reciter) could pass from one region of a mode *(maqam)* to another some-

times with a change in register of an octave or more. A mastering in the principles of the *maqamat* is a requisite for skilful chanting.[8] In this way the reciter stimulates the attention of the listeners and he will be able 'to touch a wider group of listeners' (Nelson 1982:45).

A very similar overall musical structure is present throughout the examples. The transcriptions show a linear melodic movement which in itself adds more comprehensibility to the text. Within a number of *ayyahs*, as the transcriptions show, the melody moved gradually to the high register (an octave higher and sometimes even more) with some occasional shifts to the low register in certain *ayyahs* (compare Example 2.1 with Example 2.2). Technically this can be attributed to the chanter's vocal warming up. Each of the pieces (except for Examples 2.3 and 2.4) is divided into sections made up of either a complete *ayyah* or part of it. The chanter creates long and sustained phrases which come to an end either due to physiological reasons or to follow textual stop signs, called *waqf*.

In his commentary to the Koran, Ali (1946:xx) defines three types of diacritical signs in the Koran. First, there are those marks which show 'the variations in the systems of *Qiraat* ['readings'] . The most important of these is what is known as the *Mu'anaqa* represented by three dots (∴) placed before or after a word or expression, and above other punctuation marks if any. 'A word or expression so marked can be construed as going either with the words or expressions preceding it or with those following it' (ibid.). The second kind of signs referred to as "marginal marks" having the purpose of 'showing division into sections or paragraphs' (ibid.). Thirdly, there are the "ordinary" diacritical signs. Most important of all is a big **O** to denote the end of a verse and the beginning of another. There is also the *la* (لا) indicating a warning not to stop. The *lazim* (م), shows that a stop is absolutely necessary, otherwise the sense is spoilt. The *jaiz* (ج) indicates an optional stop, but a continuation does not spoil the sense. The *mutlaq* (ط) denotes a full stop, that is, the end of a sentence, but not the end

of an argument, as in the case of a paragraph or section (ع). Wegner (1986:60) mentions another two *waqf* signs found in the Koran. The صلے sign shows that a pause is permitted, but direct continuation is to be preferred. The قلے sign shows that a pause is permitted and to be preferred to a direct continuation.

The first verse of *Surat Yusuf*, for example, is divided into two sections with an intermediary *qaf* sign (قف) serving as a caesurae after the pronounciation of the words *Alif Lam Ra* (see Example 2.1). An example of the optional *waqf* ج (*jaiz*) appears in *ayyah* 24 (see Example 2.5). The average duration of these caesuraes is from eight to twelve seconds in which the chanter can give rest to his voice and breath. The chanter manipulates all the possibile vocal timbres to stimulate the attention of the listeners. Nasal, bilabial and glottal sounds are commonly used throughout the chanting. In most cases, where the text includes the direct speech, s-Samid makes use of the falsetto as in *ayyah* 21 (see Example 2.4) starting from the second syllable "*ki*" of the word "*akirimy*" till the second syllable "*sa*" of the word عسى *asayi*. A similar function of the falsetto is found in the second direct speech of *ayyah* 26 (see Example 2.6) starting on the word "*kana*".

Textual repetition is a common feature in this kind of chanting. The reciter has the possibility to repeat an already chanted line or a whole verse. This repetitive element is referred to by Al-Faruqi as "backtracking" and described it in the following way:

> Aside from a few actually prohibited or obligatory *waqfat*, the *qari'* is free to make his own decisions as to phrase length. He may also elect to chant continuously forward, or at times to "backtrack" in order to repeat lines, a whole *ayyah*, or even a series of consecutive *ayyahs* already recited ... Despite the generous use of skips backward, the opposite practice of forward leaps is never found (1974:302).

Pacholczyk referred to this "backtracking" as textual "overlapping". Pacholczyk explained this "overlapping" in the following way: 'The occasional overlapping of the text in the subsequent phrase occurs only when the meaning of the verse would be distorted by a rest, taken because of physiological rather than other reasons' (as quoted from Wegner 1986:67).

For example, in *ayyah* 10 (see Example 2.2) the reciter stopped on the third syllable ("*ra*") of the fourteenth word ("*'s-Sayyarati*") of an *ayyah* consisting of seventeen words.[9] After an echoing silence of around twelve seconds (which was not indicated by a *waqf*) repeated from the fourth word ("*La*") finishing on the last word of the *ayyah* ("*Faɛiliyn*").[10] This "backtracking" involved some symmetrical features very common in Arab literature:

> ... in conformance with its abstract quality, *qira'a* [Koranic chanting] evidences a disinterest in particular words or phrases which might be emphasized for their programmatic or mood-portrayal quality. Instead, there is an emphasis on the various literary repetition and symmetry devices common to the [Koran] and to Islamic and Semitic poetic prose as a whole (Al Faruqi 1974:303).

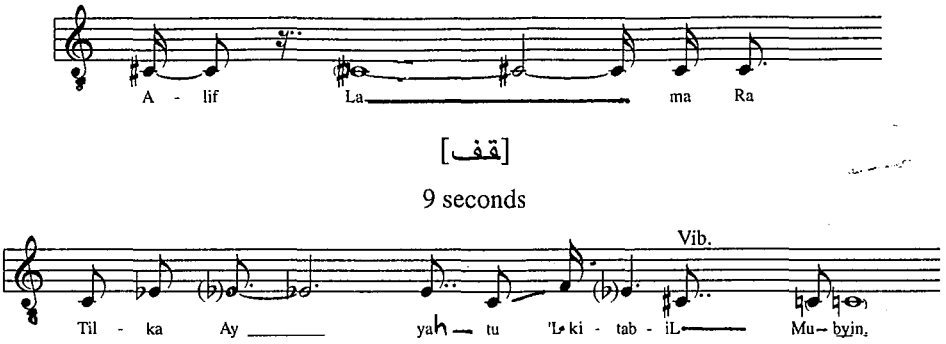
The "backtracking", as developed in *ayyah* 10 (Example 2.2), suggests a résumé of what has been already said in the previous section, with a reiterated tonal and a quasi-reiterated rhythmical pattern on the first opening three figures of the second section.[11] The last three words of the verse ("*In Kuntum Fa ɛliyn*") were introduced by a portamento of a fifth, with "*in*" meeting the central tone F. It is also worth saying that the last syllable "*ti*" of the fourteenth word "*Sayyarati*", was left out by s-Samid in his chanting of the first section, and it only appeared in the second section before the preposition "*In*".

From the transcriptions one can also notice the frequent use of syllables with an intervening rest in between. These rest have an approximate duration represented in

the transcriptions by rests varying from eighth to sixteenth rests. For example, in *ayyah* 21 (Example 2.4) the word "*Misra*" is divided into two syllables ("*Mis-ra"*) with an intervening dotted-eighth rest. In the same verse, we find that in between the first syllable ("*Sh*") and the second syllable ("*ta*") of the word *'Shtarahu* there is a sixteenth rest. The same happens in the word *Akirimiy* in the same verse (*ayyah* 21) with an eighth rest in between the first syllable "*A*" and the adjacent syllable "*ki*". One can also find similar examples in *ayyah* 10 (Example 2.2). In the word "*Jubbi*" (excluding the article "*Al-*") for example, the two syllables ("*Jub-bi*") are separated by a dotted-eighth rest. This is repeated later in the second section of the same *ayyah* with an eighth rest, instead of a dotted-eighth rest, in between the syllables. The same kind of repetition can be noted in the word "*Baghdu*", of the same *ayyah*. In the first section, of *ayyah* 10, the two syllables ("*Bagh-du*") have an eighth rest in between. In most of the above cases the rests were the result of breath taking in the course of the chanting.

The text is enriched with short and long vowels which add more euphony to the text. The transcriptions show moments of inconsistency between the chanted and the written text. There are those passages in which s-Samid added some vowels of his own which are not in the text. An example of this added vocalization is in *ayyah* 10 (Example 2.2) with the added vowel "*i*" (in square brackets) before the word "*La*". Another example of inconsistency, between the written text and the chanted one, can be noticed in *ayyah* 21 (Example 2.4); the written text reads: "*ع asayi An Yayyahnufaع ana*", while the chanter pronounced: "*asayi Au 'faع ana*" replacing the first three syllables of "*Yayyahnufaع ana*" by the "embellished" vocalization "*Au*". The anticipation of certain syllables, or fragments of them, is also a common feature in S-Samid's chanting. In *ayyah* 16 (Example 2.3), the long vowel "*y*" anticipated the first syllable ("*ya*") of the word "*Yabikun*". *Ayyah* 21 (Example 2.4) shows how the letter "*th*"(in square brackets), on the sixteenth note G, anticipated the following syllable "*thu*". A similar example is in *ayyah* 24 (Example 2.5) in which the "*Ha*" (in square brackets) anticipated the syllable "*Ham*" in the word *Hammat*.

Ayyah 1



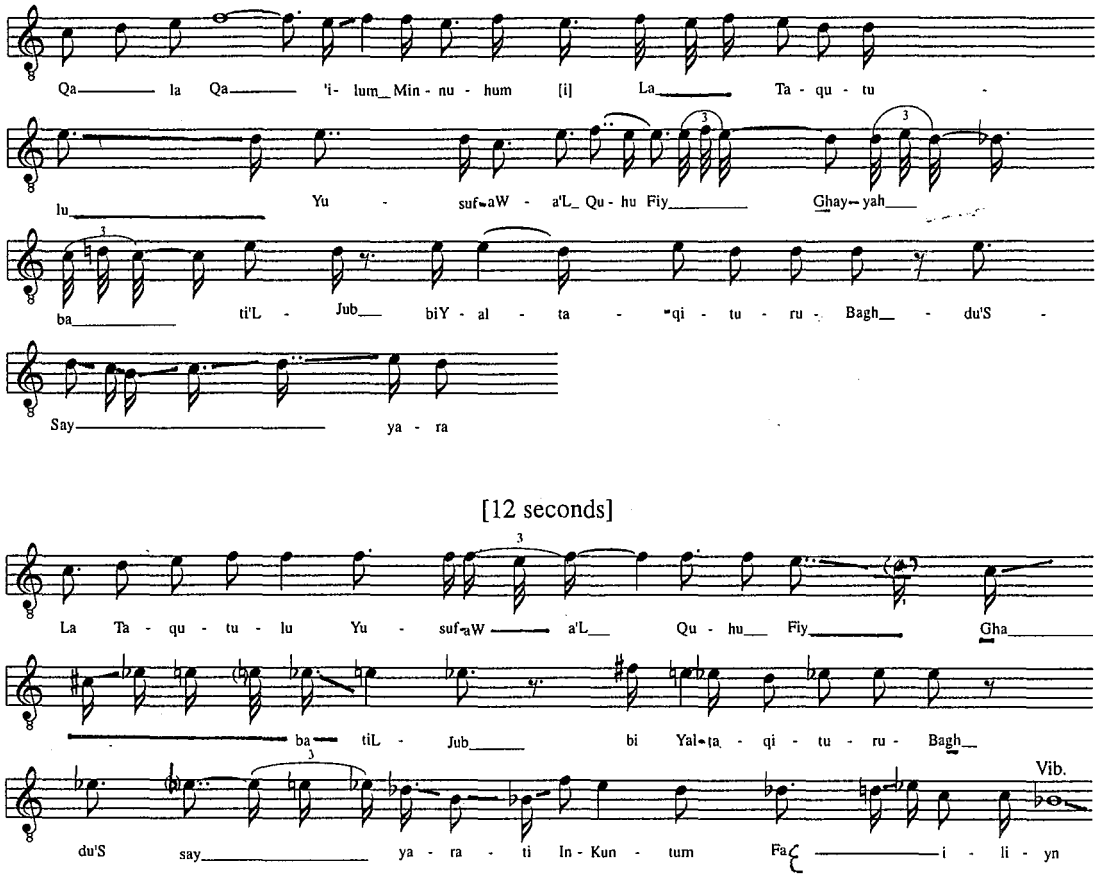
Text:

Alif Lama Ra (قف)
Tilka Ayyahtu 'L-Kitabi 'L-Mubiyn

Translation:
A.L.R. These are
The Symbols (or Verses)
Of the Perspicuous Book.

Example 2.1

***Ayyah* 10**



Text:

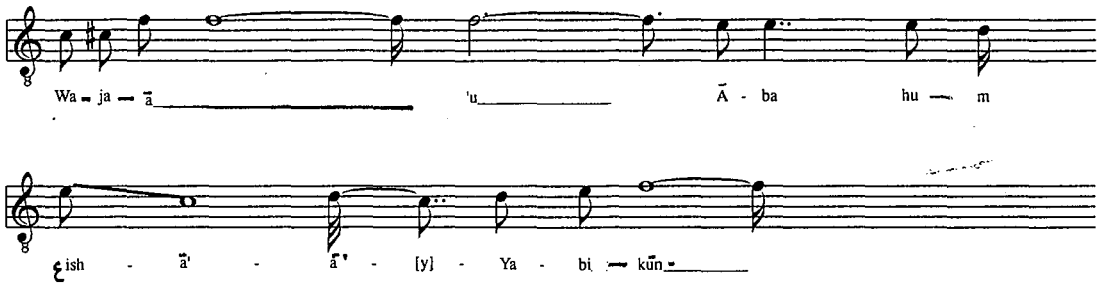
Qala Qa'ilum Minuhum La Taqutulu Yusufa
Wa 'L-Quhu Fiy Ghayyahbati 'L-Jubbi Yaltaqituru Baghdu
'S-Sayyarati In Kuntum Faع iliyn

Translation:

Said one of them: "Slay not
Joseph, but if ye must
Do something, throw him down
To the bottom of the well:
He will be picked up
By some caravan of travellers."

Example 2.2

Ayyah **16**



Text:

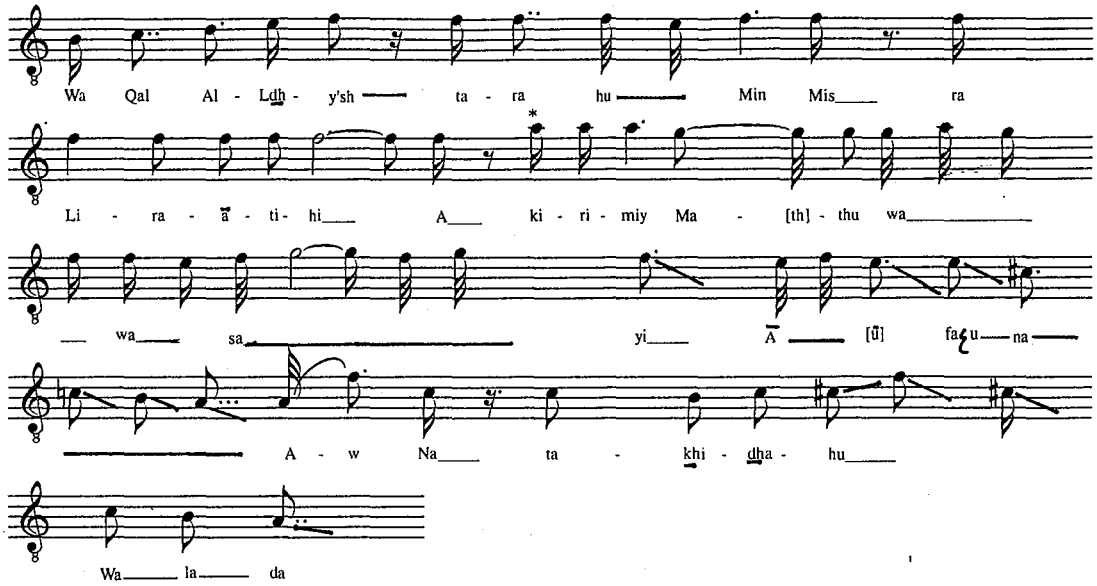
Wa Jaā' u Ābāhum
ʕishā' Yabikūn

Translation:

Then they came
To their father
In the early part
Of the night,
Weeping

Example 2.3

Ayyah 21



Text:

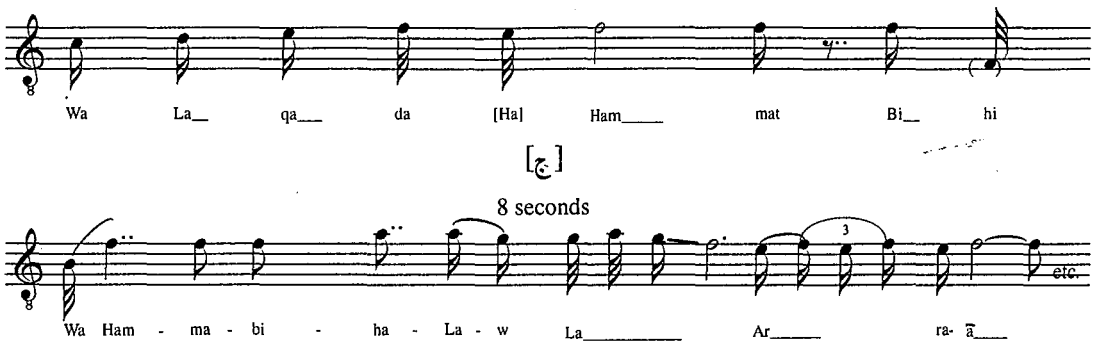
Wa Qal Al-Ldhiy 'Shtarahu Min Misra
Limratihi Akirimiy
Mathubihu ʿasayi An Yayyahnufaʿana Aw Natakhidhahu Walada

Translation:

The man in Egypt
Who bought him, said
To his wife: "Make his stay
(Among us) honourable:
Maybe he will bring us
Much good, or we shall
Adopt him as a son."

Example 2.4

Ayyah 24



Text:

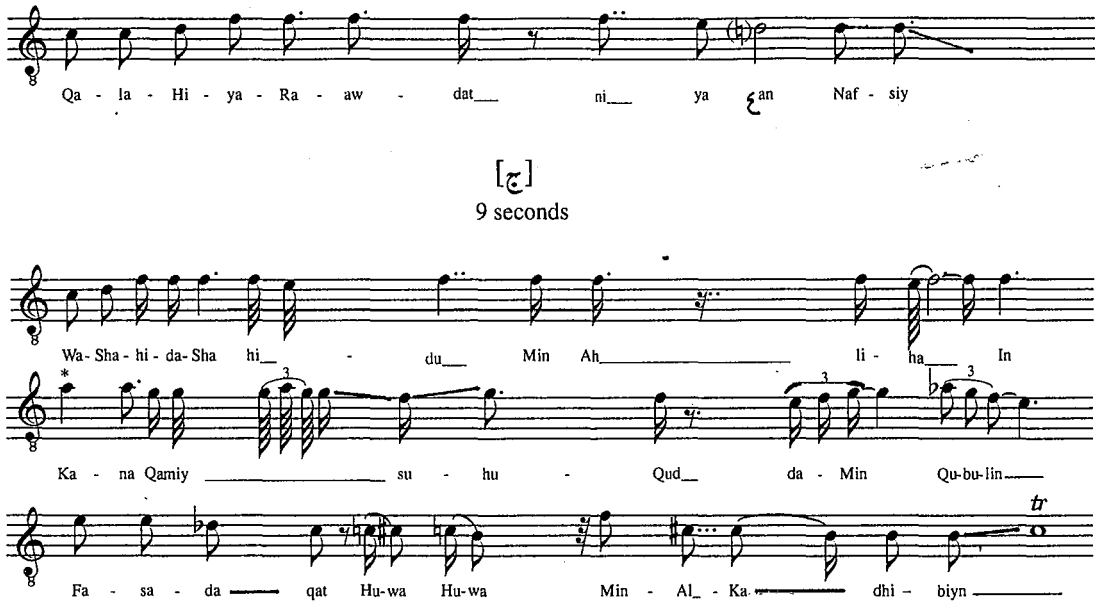
Wa Laqada Hammat Bihi (ج)Wa Hamma Biha
Law La Arra...(etc.)

Translation:

And (with passion) did she
Desire him, and he would
Have Desire her, but that
....(etc.)

Example 2.5

Ayyah 26



Text:

Qala Hija Raawdatniy ع an Nafsiy
Wa Shahida Shahidu Min Ahliha (ج)
In Kana Qamiysuhu Qudda Min Qubulin
Fasadaqat
Wa Huwa Min Al-Kadhibiyn

Translation:

He said: "It was she
That sought to seduce me-
From my (true) self." And one
Of her household saw (this)
And bore witness, (thus):-
"If it be that his shirt
Is rent from the front, then
Is her tale true,
And he is a liar !

Example 2.6

Through the above transcriptions, aurally made in Western notation, it was possible to reveal some points of interest in the relationship between text and music as featured in s-Samid's Koran chanting. The syllables were clearly distributed, points of inconsistency and syllabic peculiarities revealed and symmetrical features noticed. An aurally made transcription in Western notation is, in this case, a useful ethnomusicological tool to communicate and generate ideas similar to those discussed in this section even when applied to non-Western music.

To summarize, in the first section the focus was on aural ability as considered in Western art music. For the West, aural ability is a highly valued skill considered as a professional requisite. The application of this vital skill through the making of ethnomusicological transcriptions revealed the transcriber not only as a scholar in the field of music, but also as a scholar who actively applies one of the vital and appreciated skills in Western art music.

In the second section it has been argued that one of the advantages of a transcription in Western notation lies in the fact that it facilitates *talking* about music and that it has a widespread communicative value. It is a system very appreciated even by non-Western musicians and scholars. Apart from what seems to be merely technical, Western notation was also seen as the carrier of various cultural and political implications.

The third section evaluated the application of aural skill, as it is seen and taught in the West, for transcription purposes. It has been said that in the world of musical diversity our aural perception is limited. We are programmed to react to a certain gamut. Such programming is determined by the values imposed upon us by Western culture and these values condition us fundamentally. This same section evaluated the applicability of Western staff notation for ethnomusicological transcriptions. It has been emphasized that Western staff notation was devised to meet the exigencies of

Western music and therefore it was never intended to cater for the pecularities of non-Western music.

Through a number of Koranic chant transcriptions the present writer showed how the transcriber may conceptualize a non-Western vocal musical structure by manipulating one of the innate qualities of Western staff notation. The text of the transcribed chants helped the present transcriber to construct an approximate musical structure of the chants; this made possible the communication of ideas.

Notes

[1] This is a question inspired by the Frankfurt School of critical theorists, a group of writers (among them the musicologist Theodor Adorno) associated with the Institute of Social Research founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt.

[2] The mentioned Chinese ethnomusicologist is Prof. Tang Yating, a fellow visitor at the University of Durham from the Shanghai conservatory.

[3] I should like to express my gratitude to Mr.Ron Berry for his technical advice.

[4] See also Ellingson 1992b:159.

[5] See also Pacholczyk 1974: 33-41.

[6] For a more detailed discussion of this subject see Al-Faruqi 1974.

[7] The Koran was not actually compiled as a single unified text during the lifetime of the Prophet. According to the tradition, the Prophet used to pass these revelations on to his companions. What these companions 'wrote down appears to have remained fragmentary, waiting to be assembled by late hands' (As-Said 1975:19). An effort towards the compilation of these textual fragments was made during the reign of the third caliph Uthman (644-56) (Arberry 1964:ix). A panel of editors directed by Zaid ibn Thabit undertook the responsibility to gather together all the written fragments of the Koran and to compile a complete, continuous text. The compilation was not chronologically or rationally coherent. The main reason behind this was to place the *surahs* (chapters) in a diminishing order of their length, with the exception of the first *surah*, called 'The Opening' (ibid.). According to Daywood (1974:10-11) scholars agreed that a strict chronological arrangement is impossible without dissecting some of the chapters into scattered verses, owing to the inclusion of revelations spoken in Medina in chapters begun several years earlier in Mecca.

[8] 'It is common for a reciter who is building a reputation and is encouraged to audition for the Radio to make an effort to master the principles of the *maqamat* before applying for audition, for he knows that musical skill is required of the Radio reciter. A Radio reciter automatically commands prestige and higher fees: the term, *izaʕi* (one who broadcasts) after his name signals a certain standard of competence. Therefore, since a certain level of musical skill is required of the broadcast reciter, the Radio policy functions to shape the tastes of the listeners by giving the more competently musical recitation high status' (Nelson 1982:45).

[9] The translation of the Arabic text is reproduced from Ali 1946. The phonetic transcript is of the present writer.

[10] Each new word in the phonetic text, and the musical transcriptions, begins with a capital letter.

[11] The only difference is in the first dotted eighth note of the second section.

Chapter 3

Alternative Forms of Musical Notations for Transcription

In the preceding chapters, we traced some of the main positive and negative arguments concerning the use of Western staff notation for ethnomusicological transcription. One of the main arguments against the applicability of this notation focused on the fact that the Western staff notation evolved in accordance with the musical needs of the West and excludes from its nature the musical peculiarities of non-Western music; 'it was developed to accommodate European musical structure' (Becker 1980a:13-4). On the other hand, it was also noticed that a transcription in Western notation is a good means by which ideas about music can be widely communicated and generated. More than for anything else, a transcription in Western notation facilitates the process of communication between the researcher and his reader. What makes the system so communicable is the wide disseminated consensus behind its symbolic significance. Both for the Western and the non-Western music scholar, the Western notation system holds within itself a communicative power. This communicative power is so strong that even the most minute detailed transcription in Western notation would still render it, more or less, communicative. This is very similar to what sometimes happens in language. A mispelled word, for instance, can still remain meaningful for the person who reads it. What renders it meaningful is the familiarity of the reader with the consensus behind the symbolic organization of the written language itself.

To a certain extent, a transcription in Western staff notation provides an opportunity for the different categories of music scholars 'to identify the reality that [a] transcription "speaks"' (Nattiez 1990:73). Nevertheless, this communicative value of Western notation did not restrain certain ethnomusicologists from applying other forms of notations. As we will see in this chapter, these notational divergencies emerged in

response to the nature of the subject studied, as Blacking puts it:

> Analytical tools cannot be borrowed freely and used as short cuts to greater achievements in ethnomusicological research as can electronic devices such as the tape recorder: they must emerge from the nature of the subject studied (quoted from Feld 1974: 211).

This chapter is divided into three main sections. Each section concentrates on one of the following categories of alternative notations: the cipher (or number) notation system as used by Javanese specialists; graph notations ("hand" and "electronic" graph transcriptions); and indigenous notation systems. Except for the last section, the evaluation of these alternative notations will take place within the framework of various ethnomusicological studies that did utilize these notations for transcription. The last section will develop around the Hipkins Solution (that is, the application of indigenous notation systems for transcription) as described and proposed by Mantle Hood. The main question that will lead the evaluation of these sections is: what can the above alternative systems of notation offer to the transcriber that is not possible to be offered through Western staff notation? This question coincides with Cole's assertion that:

> A good ethnomusicologist ... uses notation to select, to differentiate, to reach an understanding of the principles of organization, establishing the difference between significant and insignificant. He aims, in his notation, to follow the structure of the language of the music he is transcribing (1974:105).

The Cipher Notation System in Javanese Gamelan Studies

Since the cipher notation system is mostly used by ethnomusicologists specialized in Javanese gamelan music, this section is only concerned with this scholarship. The cipher notation is also a popular form of prescriptive notation in China and Japan.[1] These two cultures are not included in the discussion.

This section is divided into three parts. The first part provides a brief introduction to the Javanese gamelan ensemble as a general background for the discussion which follows. The second part focuses on the main features of the *Kepatihan* cipher notation (as it is known in Java) and its historical links with Europe. The third part concentrates on the application of the system for descriptive purposes concerning current theories of *gamelan gendhing* (that is, a piece of music or composition for gamelan).

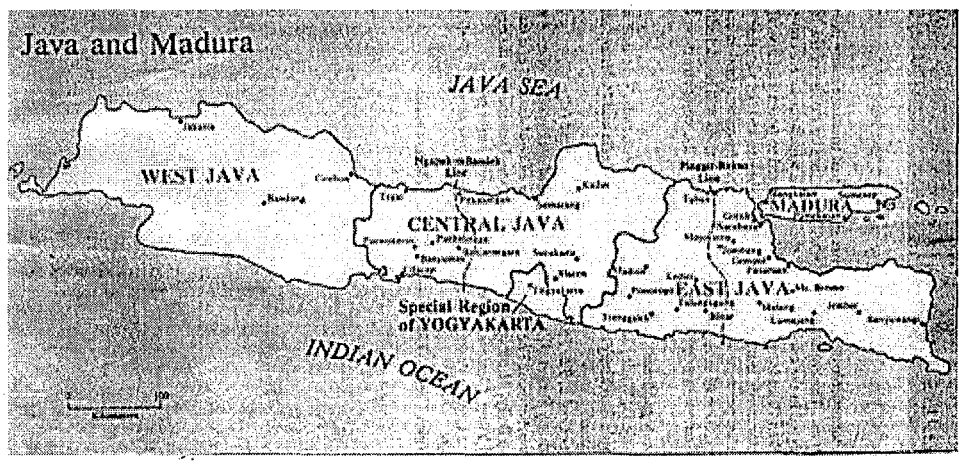


Figure 3.1 The Island of Java
(from Sutton 1991:25)

One of Indonesia's oldest living cultures and that shared by the majority of its population is that of central Java, an area covering a little more than a third of the island of Java (see Figure 3.1). The court cities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta are generally considered as the heartland of central Javanese culture, where the mastery of Javanese language and accompanying social behaviour is seen to be the most 'correct'. It is here in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, in the area of the eighth-century Mataram kingdom, that the courtly arts of dance, poetry, gamelan, and *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre) developed as distinctive central Javanese arts, but are now known generally without any qualifying term as merely 'Javanese' (Lindsay 1991:1).

The name 'gamelan' is a 'generic term for a Javanese musical ensemble of gongs and metal xylophones. A gamelan may consist of only a few gongs kept in a special room, rarely taken out, struck only a few times and returned. A gamelan may consist of twenty-five instruments, including fiddles, flutes, and zithers, and may be played almost daily' (Becker 1980a:1) (see Figure 3.2). There are two tuning systems which characterize a gamelan set: the *sléndro* and the *pélog* system. Generally a set of Central Javanese gamelan is characterized by either the *sléndro* or the *pélog* tuning system.[2] When a complete set of gamelan incorporates both tuning systems, every instrumental type within the set would be represented by a pair of instruments, one of the pair for the *sléndro* tuning system, the other for the *pélog* system. The *sléndro* tuning system consists of a total of five tones per octave, while the *pélog* system is composed of seven tones per octave (see Figure 3.3).[3] This tuning distinction is also reflected in the repertoire of the gamelan in general. Most of the gamelan repertoire utilizes either one of the above tuning systems.[4]

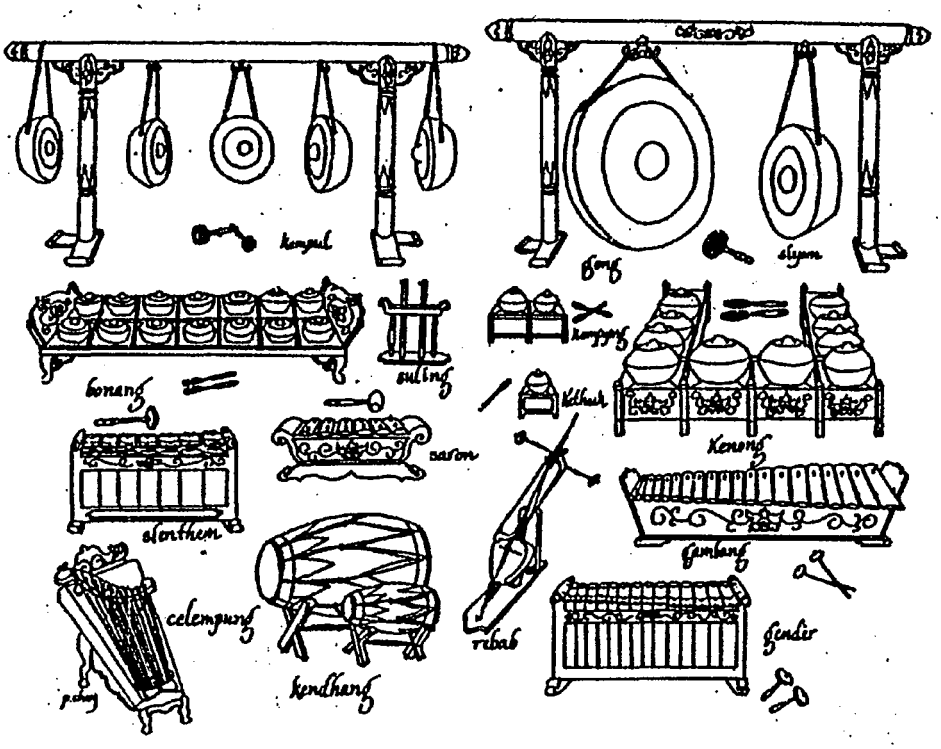


Figure 3.2 A Central Javanese Gamelan Ensemble (from Sutton 1982:297)

SLÉNDRO

Name	Barang	Gulu	Dhadha	Lima	Nem	Barang
Cipher	1	2	3	5	6	i
Pitch	267	307	349	407	465	538
Interval	242	222	266	231	252	

PÉLOG

Name	Bem	Gulu	Dhadha	Pelog	Lima	Nem	Barang	Bem
Cipher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	i
Pitch	294	308	338	407	434	467	505	597
Interval	81	161	321	111	127	136	289	

Figure 3.3 Pitches and Intervals in the Gamelan of the National Radio Station (Radio Republik Indonesia) Surakarta (from Sutton 1982:29)

The two tuning systems provide no basis for a standard concept of tuning, that is, with pitches corresponding to a fixed number of vibrations per second as in Western music. This is also true for the intervallic distance between any sequence of pitches; the concept varies from what we, in Western music, consider as the fixed interval. Thus, while each individual set of instruments, *pélog* or *sléndro*, is carefully tuned within the set, no two sets of instruments would have exactly the same tuning. This means that the intervallic structure of each gamelan differs in some respect from the intervallic structure of every other gamelan.

Before the introduction of the cipher notation system in Java, the palaces and princely houses of Yogyakarta and Surakarta had developed three systems of notation. These early notation systems for gamelan were: the *nut ranté* ("chain" notation) of Surakarta, and the *paku alaman* and the *nut andha* ("ladder" notation) systems of Yogyakarta. The *nut ranté* (see Figure 3.4a) and the *paku alaman* consist of horizontal staves with dots or numbers (in Javanese characters) to represent pitch levels. The *nut andha* (see Figure 3.4b) consists of a combination of vertical and horizontal lines to indicate both pitch levels and rhythmic pulses. These systems of notation were modelled after the Western staff notation which had been already introduced in Java to aid elementary school teachers in the teaching of Javanese songs. The use of these notation systems declined by the late 19th century when they were replaced by the cipher

notation system (Sumarsam 1991:247-9). As a consequence of this, the cipher notation found an already laid European foundation that could facilitate its understanding and dissemination among the Javanese gamelan musicians.

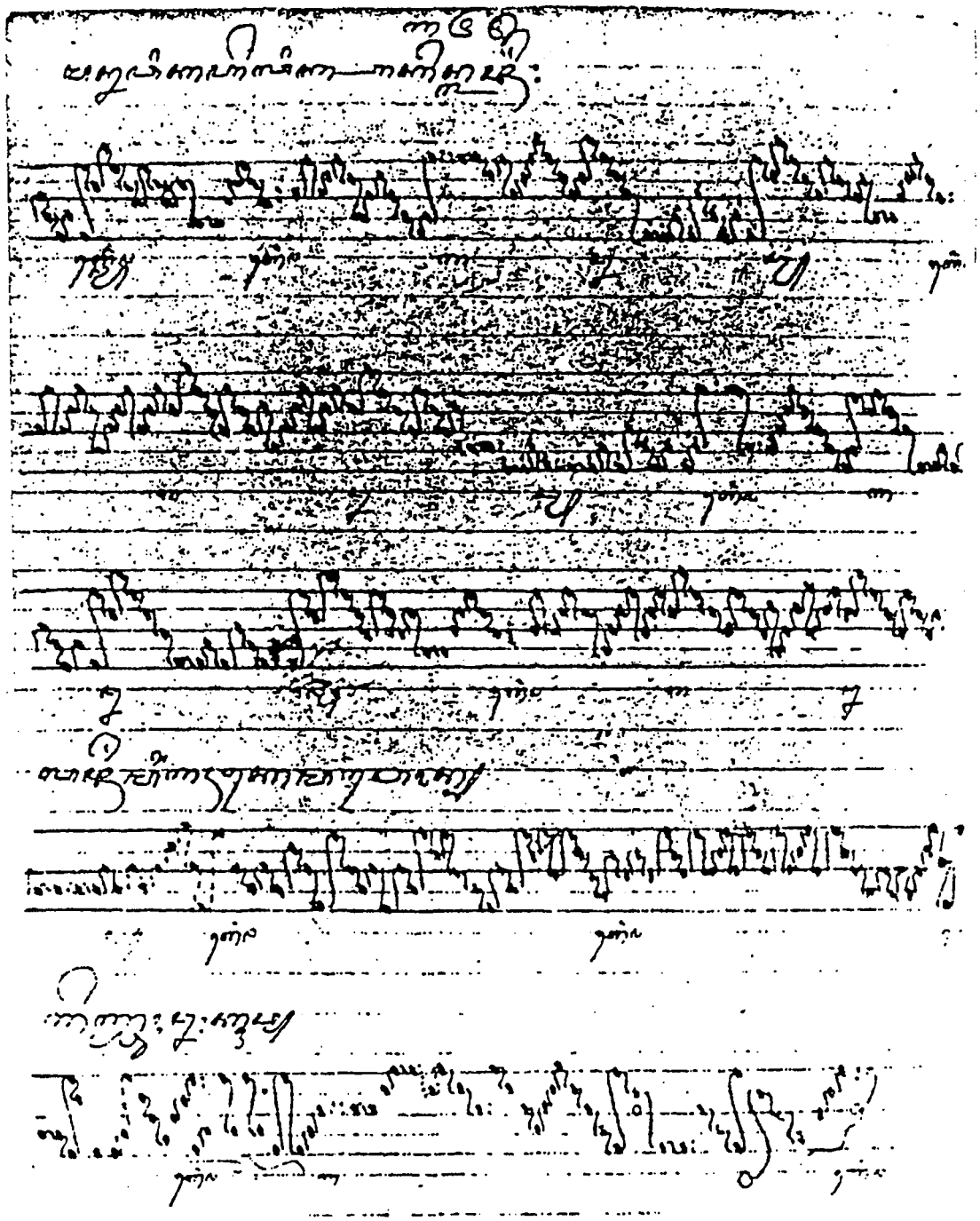


Figure 3.4a The *nut ranté*
(from Sumarsam 1991:250)

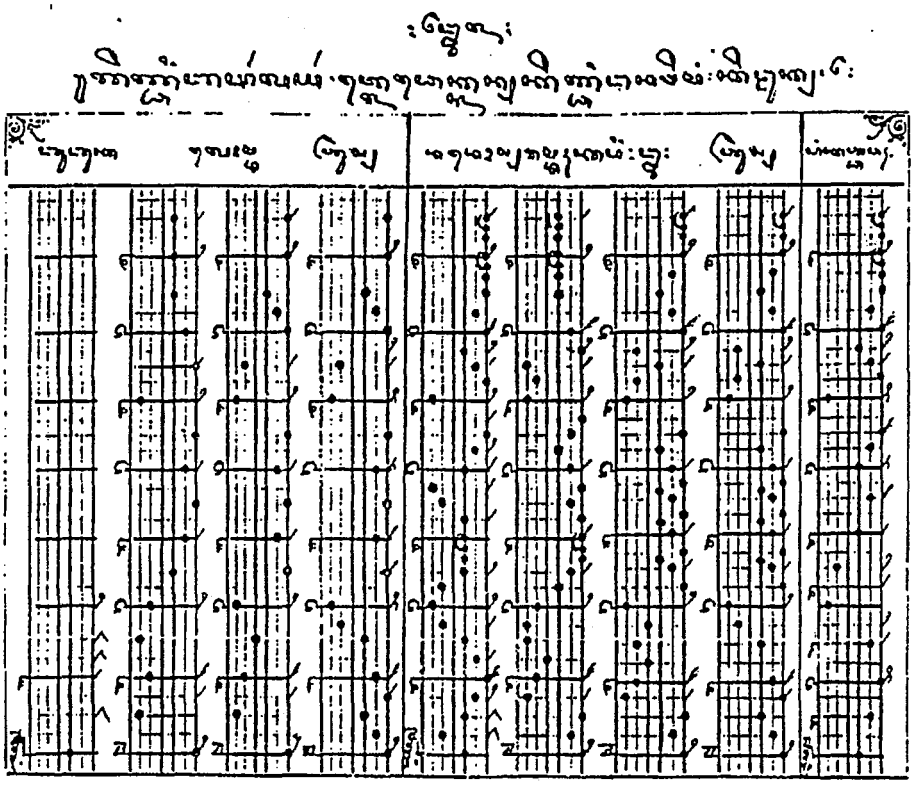


Figure 3.4b The *nut andha*
(from Sumarsam 1991: 251)

The cipher notation system was originally proposed by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) in 1742.[5] It was proposed in his *Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique* ("Project Concerning New Symbols for Music") and presented to the Paris Academy of Sciences, for its approbation, on the 22nd August 1742 (Albert Cohen 1981:72). In the introduction to the *Projet*, Rousseau specified the aims and the objectives of his system in the following way: 'The present scheme seeks to make musical notation more convenient to set down, easier to understand, and much less diffuse' (1982:8-9). He also wrote that:

> To appreciate my proposal one must consider two principal aims ... The first must be the means of expressing all the possible musical pitches; and the other, the means of expressing all the different time-values (for sounds as well as their equivalent silences) which together make up the varieties of rhythm ... As music is but a series of sounds produced either simultaneously or successively, it is only necessary to express all these sounds in a

> manner which relates each note to a certain fundamental - provided that this fundamental can be expressed precisely and the relationship can be easily perceived (ibid.).

After considering the proposal, the Academy awarded him a diplomatically-worded certificate of commendation. In its report the board of evaluation, which was specifically appointed by the Academy to evaluate Rousseau's proposal, remarked that Rousseau's *Projet* was not original. The report referred to a Franciscan monk called Souhaitty (*b c*1650) as the originator of a similar scheme of numerals to assist in the training of choristers.[6] The evaluating board 'observed that while Rousseau's own cipher-notation was not purely plagiaristic and might advantageously serve a singer in the early stages of his training, an instrumentalist would lose far more than he gained by its use' (ibid.:2-3). The French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) remarked to Rousseau that 'the absence of a pictorial element in his cipher-notation deprived an instrumentalist of a valuable property of staff notation - its capacity to show at a glance the "shape" of a phrase' (ibid.).

The cipher-notation proposed by Rousseau was then developed in France by Emile J.M.Chevé (1804-64) into a method for the teaching of sight-reading. The Galin-Paris-Chevé Method, as it is known, spread to many parts of continental Europe where it was introduced in the Netherlands in the late 19th century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Dutch music teachers introduced the cipher system in Indonesia (Sumarsam 1991:254). Becker (1980a:14,17) refers to a nobleman, named Radén Mas Tumenggung Wreksadiningrat, who lived in the royal residence known as the Kepatihan (from where the name of the notation is derived) in Surakarta, as the person who worked out a system of numbering the keys of the gamelan instruments. This facilitated the learning and teaching of the gamelan as we will see later in this section.

In the *Kepatihan* cipher system the pitch degrees of the *sléndro* tuning system are indicated by the numerals 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, while in the *pélog* by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and

7. Each cipher within each tuning system has a traditional name (see Figure 3.3). The ciphers are grouped into units of four ciphers with each group, or formula, called *gatra* (see Figure 3.5). The spacing between each *gatra* makes the notation more convenient to read. As we will see below, the *gatra* grouping has also a structural meaning. A subscript dot indicates an octave lower, while a superscript dot shows an octave higher. A dot after a cipher indicates a sustained tone. Occasionally, a small zero is employed to indicate a rest, or in the case of a melodic line to indicate a place to breathe. The horizontal lines above the ciphers indicate a subdivision of the beat: one line for double subdivision (equivalent to eighth-notes) and two for quadruple subdivision (equivalent to sixteenth-notes). All instrumental or vocal melodic parts can be notated in this system.

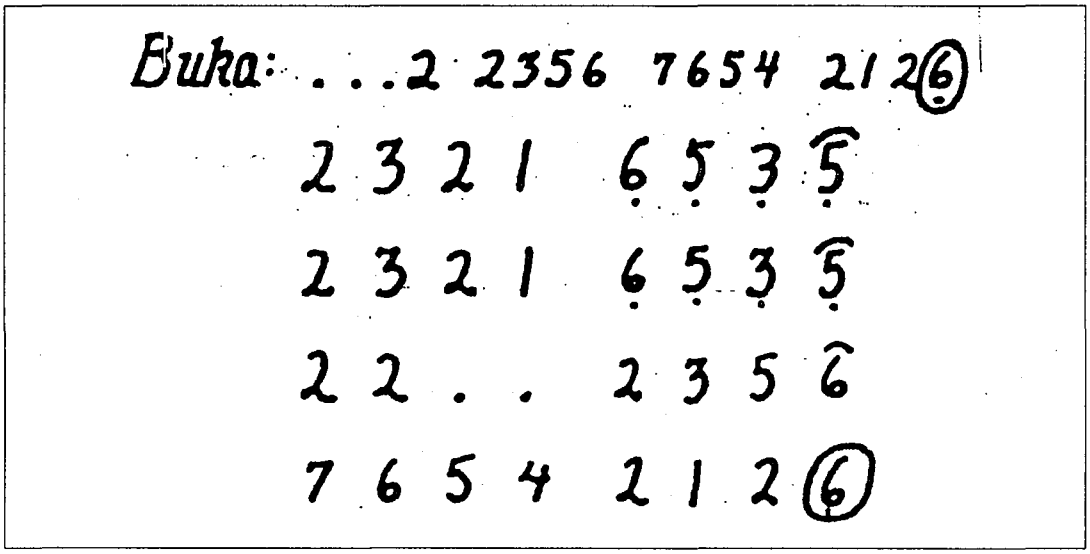


Figure 3.5 An extract from *Ladrang Gléyong*, Pélog Pathet Nem (Becker 1980a:18)

The most frequently notated part by Javanese musicians, and the one used in performance, is the instrumental melody called *balungan* (that is, skeletal melodic outline). The *balungan* is normally played on metallophones having a limited range of an octave in *pélog* and slightly more than an octave (depending on the region) in *sléndro*.

This skeletal melodic outline more than any other, except for the vocal in some pieces, constrains or even determines the other parts of the *gendhing* and is the best identifier which distinguishes one *gendhing* from another. Through this notation one can also indicate the formal structure of the *gendhing*. The formal structure defines itself through a recurring pattern of punctuation sounded on certain gong instruments (Sutton 1991:xix). The sounding of these instruments can be registered in this notation by either letter abbreviations or shapes. For example, the sounding of the *gong ageng* (the largest gong in a gamelan ensemble) can be notated either by the letter G or by putting a circle round the cipher. The stroke of a *kenong* (large kettle gong suspended horizontally) can be either represented by a small arch above the cipher, or by the letter N. In Javanese ethnomusicological studies the abbreviated letter form is the most popular. From various transcriptions of gamelan music one can notice that the cipher notation system provides an opportunity for the Javanese specialist to 'free' himself, and therefore his reader, from the Western musical concept of the fixed pitch. As Ellingson puts it:

> The new standard [i.e. the cipher notation] had the advantage for Java specialists of not suggesting fixed, rigid pitch and interval relationships, so that readers could 'hear' the transcriptions in terms of whatever unique gamelan tunings they knew (1992a:138).

Kartomi, on the other hand, made the following remarks regarding the use of the *Kepatihan* cipher notation:

> The Javanese cipher (number) and checkered scripts, while sufficient for notating outlines of vocal melodies and nuclear themes of *gamelan* works to initiate performers into a knowledge of new works or simply to aid their memory, do not allow one to make a detailed transcription of rhythmic, melodic, ornamental and intonational aspects of an actual performance, which usually differs from all other performances of the one work (1973:71).

In her observations Kartomi does not mention what, for Ellingson, seemed to be the main advantage of the system. The *Kepatihan* notation system is only sufficient to notate melodic outlines; on the other, through this notation system, one cannot achieve a detailed rendition of the rhythmic, melodic and intonational aspect of a piece of music.[7]

Within the formulaic organization of a *gamelan gendhing* the *gatra* is considered as the smallest formula, made up of four-note unit. The *gatra* constitutes the *balungan*, that is, the melodic abstraction played by instruments of the *saron* family (Sumarsam 1991:318). The importance of the *gatra* has been stressed in a number of gamelan studies. Becker (1980a:84), for example, started off from the analysis of the *gatra* as a basis to her inquiry of the *pathet* (the modal system of gamelan). The analytical process involved the transformation of a number of *gatra*s into melodic contour graphs (see Figure 3.6). Each box within a contour graph stands for a pitch degree of the *saron*. In itself such a process shows the flexibility of the cipher notation for analytical purposes. In the above example the cipher notation system did simplify and made possible the transferable analytical method as employed by Becker. In this context, the possibilities that a system of notation provides for transferable purposes, in similar ethnomusicological analysis, is worth considering.

A similar approach has been repeated by the Beckers (1983) in order to formulate a grammar for the gamelan genre *Srepegan*. In their attempt to investigate the coherant principles that operate within the *Srepegan* the Beckers relied on linguistic models that, as in the above example, required the transformation of a number of *gatra* cipher-transcriptions into contour-graphs (ibid.:40). The process revealed what arrangements of *gatras* are possible in the genre *Srepegan*. In other words, 'what makes a *srepegan* a *srepegan*' and 'what constraints does it follow' (ibid.:33).[8]

A comparative cipher-transcription of three "surface melodies" of a piece of gamelan music called *Ketawang Puspawarna* has been designed by Vetter (1981:203).

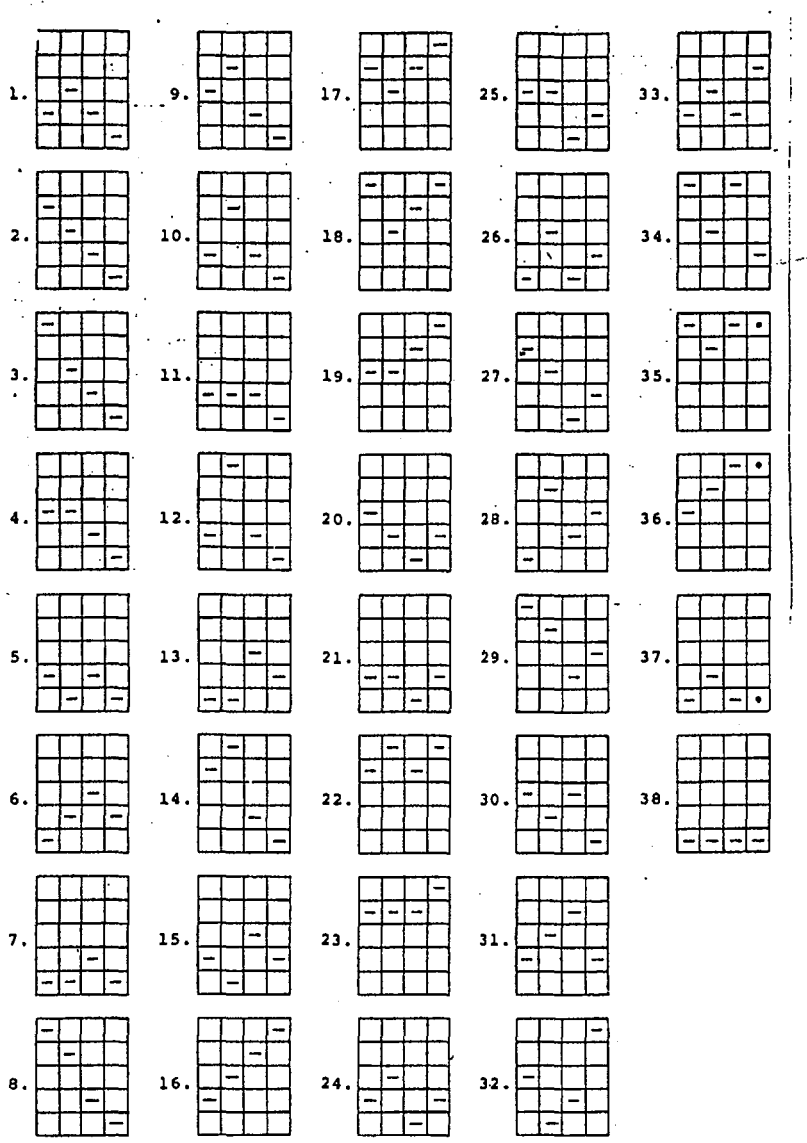


Figure 3.6 Gatra Contour Graphs
(from Becker 1980a:84)

The "surface melodies" were transcribed from three different performances played by three different groups of musicians (see Figure 3.7). The schematic representation of the three surface melodies provided among other things, a clear identification between tones 'sounded only on the even-numbered beats of the structural cycle', in one performance, and those tones sounded 'on nearly every beat of the structure' in another performance of the same piece of music (ibid.:202).

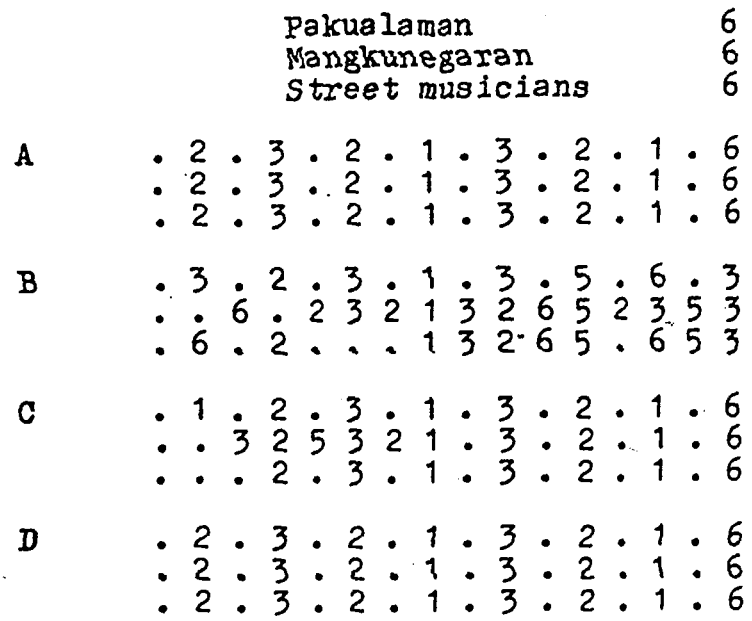


Figure 3.7 Vetter's schematic representation for the comparison of three *Puspawarma* surface melodies (from Vetter 1981:203)

In an inter-disciplinary kind of study, the Beckers (1981) designed modified forms of cipher-transcriptions. The objective behind these modified forms of cipher-transcriptions was to illustrate the underlying concept that link together the multiple cycles of gamelan music with the Javanese system of calendrical cycles (ibid.:208). The transcriptions were designed in forms of cycles with each cycle representing a *gongan*. Each *gongan* was taken from three different gamelan *gendhings*. The transcriptions were then inserted into one another to provide a comparative visual display of the relative length of each *gongan* (see Figure 3.8).[9] Modified transcriptions like the ones designed by the Beckers, suggest an interesting model of transcription through which ethnomusicological ideas can be shared and communicated with scholars coming from other disciplines, who might be unfamiliar with the 'written language' of music. This is a task which should be seriously considered and developed by ethnomusicologists in order to make their discipline more accessible to other scholars.

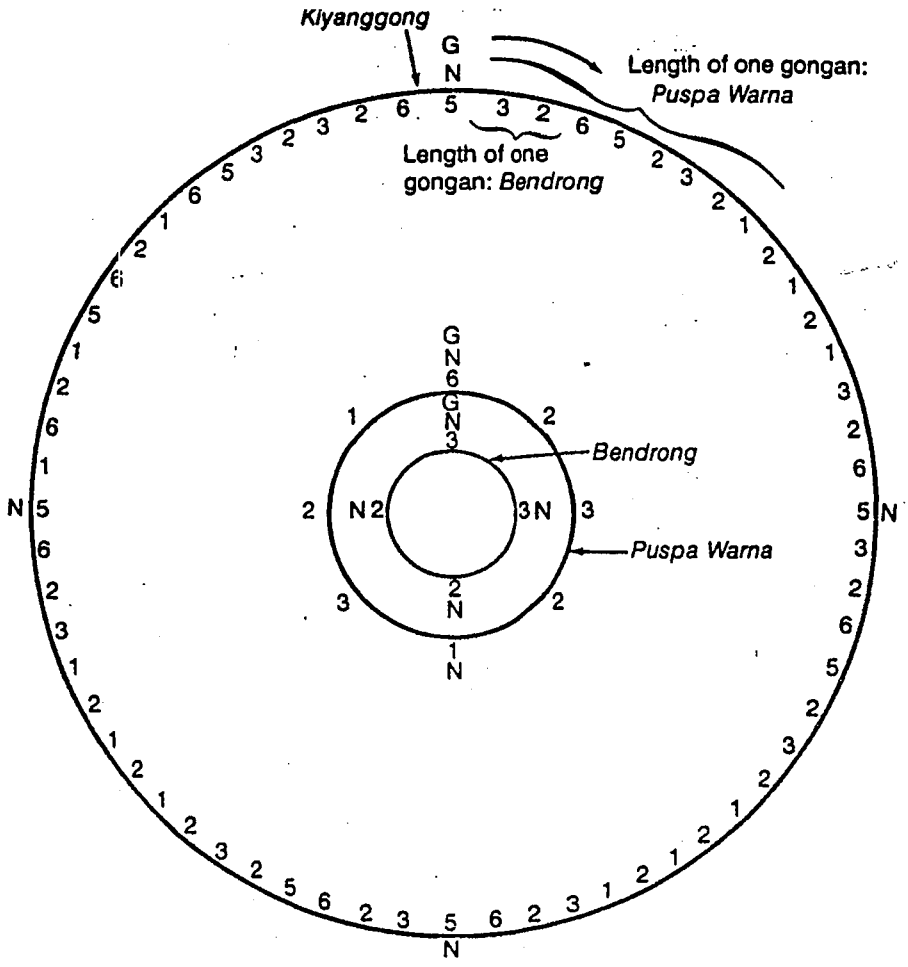


Figure 3.8 The Beckers' modified forms of cipher transcriptions (from the Beckers 1981:214)

In the second chapter we referred to Herndons's emphasis on the understanding of the learning process through which the analyst can understand the principal organization of the sound in question. The cipher-notation as used in Java has as one of its principal aims, the efficient and effective teaching and learning of the gamelan; itself the main component of the Javanese learning process. This is an advantage that the system provides to the Javanese specialist. It can help him to understand better the modern learning process of the gamelan. Such an understanding can only be developed by an active participation of the ethnomusicologist himself in the learning process. The melodic formulas of a *gendhing*, written down on blackboards and jotted

down on notebooks by gamelan students, specify what should be memorized about that particular *gendhing*; they formulate a general view of the content:

> ... the student memorizes formulas, or the content of the piece ... these written formulas assume a greater significance and aura of sanctity than the classroom notes of a Western student. It seems inevitable that the written parts of the venerated teacher will assume such authority as to stifle the student's own impulses toward the re-creation of formulas. It is likely that what is now intended as suggestions for variation possibilities will in time, because of the repeatability of written formulas, become prescribed methods of procedure ... (Becker 1980a:22).

Before the introduction of any notation in Java, gamelan students used to learn a *gendhing* by repeating the performance of a teacher. In itself this method was very time consuming and what was being transmited was a 'method or process from a teacher, not full content' (Becker 1980a:21). Through the *Kepatihan* notation system one is able to apprehend, to a certain extent, both the content and the learning process.

A system of notation which also included the number as one of its components was proposed by James Reid (1977). He proposed a universal notation for transcription made up of two components: the number and the graph. He also claimed that the cipher-notation 'is not [a] culture-bound' type of notation (ibid.:415). Gutzwiller (1979:103) opposed Reid's proposed system of notation on the basis that one cannot get rid of ethnocentricity by a mere "declaration". The ethnocentric problem has its roots in the ethnocentric knowledge that we acquired over the years: 'it cannot be eliminated at all since to get completely rid of it we would have to get rid of all ethnocentrically acquired knowledge, and that means *all* knowledge' (ibid.). In todays's ethnomusicological discourse it is an anachronism to speak in terms of a universal notation system for transcription. Perhaps it will be much better to speak in terms of a notation system having an *image of universalism*. This makes sense if one evaluates a system of notation on aesthetical criteria rather than on what is practically possible to be achieved through its application.

The cipher notation was originated by Rousseau in the Enlightenment. This was a period in which Descartes, for instance, had invoked the example of China, in his *Discours de la méthode* (1637), to prove that social habits varied (Hampson 1987:27). It was a time when 'voyagers of discovery led to an impressive knowledge of coast-lines' (ibid.:21). Universalism was one of the main components that determined the general philosophical trend of the Enlightenment. In his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), the German philosopher and political commentator Jürgen Habermas has argued that: 'The Enlightenment ... contained the potential of emancipating individuals from restrictive particularism in order to be able to act ... as "human beings", linked to other humans by a common search for universal values ... ' (Outram 1995:11). This universal value, as advanced by Enlightenment philosophy, might be one of the subtle elements that has characterised the cipher notation system. In this context, a system of notation may also reflect the philosophy of the time in which it has evolved; 'the nature of a notation is conditioned by the social context in which it has been developed' (Bent 1980:334). At this stage of the discussion one may also assert that it was this universal value, embodied within the system, that made possible the introduction and acceptance of the cipher notation system in China, Indonesia and Japan.

Graph Transcriptions

One of the main disadvantages that is frequently mentioned in the transcription debate is that the Western notation is a one pitch-one symbol type of notation. The system 'can only represent music as a series of seperate sound events, with the fixed-pitch tone as the significant unit' (Cole 1974:107). Cole, for instance, refered to two particular cases in which this one pitch-one symbol character presents an obstacle in the representation of a single sound-event:

> Bártok's detailed notation makes no distinction, for instance, between a narrow trill (alternation of two notes) and a wide vibrato (a single fluctuating tone). Yet there is a wide conceptual difference between the two, and a

> notation that renders both impartially is linguistically unhelpful. A more extreme example would be the notation of the wavering plucked notes of the Indian sitar player. The transcriber into conventional notation would have no choice but to represent the sound as a series of distinct sound-events, whereas a truer notation would record a single sound-event (ibid.).

A graph notation is an alternative form of notation that may be applied to compensate for the one pitch-one symbol character of Western staff notation.

For convenience in this section, graphs are classified into: (a) "hand" graphs and (b) "electronic" graphs. The first part of this section will concentrate on "hand" graph transcriptions and their contribution towards the analysis of melodic contour. The latter part concentrates on the use of "electronic" transcriptions and their applicability to investigate in those areas of ethno-analysis not normally investigated through a "hand-written" musical notation. Among these areas of analysis one can mention the analysis of timbre and vibrato.

A. Hand Graphs

Charles Seeger (1958) provided a detailed evaluation of the advantages that graphs have over notes. He stressed the potential accuracy of graphs even when manually designed through normal aural techniques. Nettl (1964:120-1) suggested that an 'exact measurement of tempo, rhythm, and pitch can be more easily approached if the transcriber can cast aside the concept of the articulated note as the main point of order.' He proposed the application of a graph which, according to him, 'does not depend on dividing units into halves as does Western rhythmic notation'. Following this statement, Nettl included a "hand" graph representation of a *Nootka* Song based on a transcription of the same song, in Western staff notation (see Figure 3.9). The graph was designed on a pitch-time matrix, with each square on the horizontal axis equivalent to an eighth-note and a vertical pitch-axis conforming with the Western concept of pitch. This approach contradicts what has just been said above. Nevertheless, in principle,

both Seeger and Nettl agree that graphs can help the transcriber to indicate the phenomenon between the notes, or in Seeger's words to show 'what happens between the notes' (1958:193).

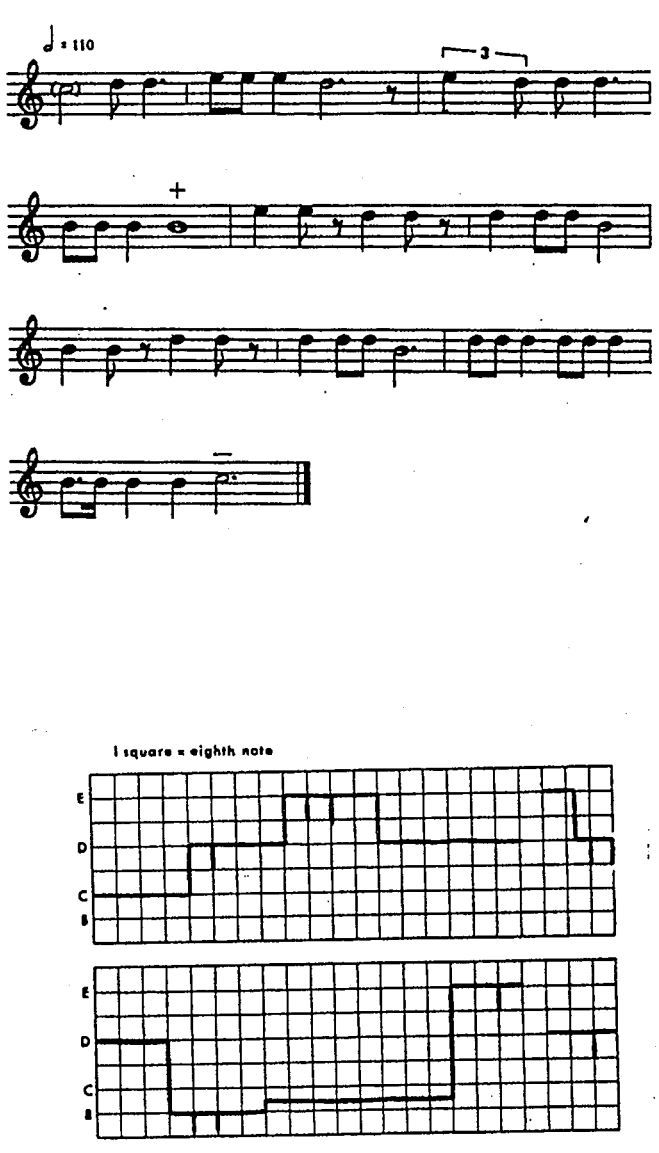


Figure 3.9 Nettl's "hand graph" transcription based on a *Nootka* Song transcribed in Western staff notation.
(from Nettl 1964:118,129)

One of the most important analytical enquiries in the musical style of a culture is that of melodic contour. Among the earliest efforts in this direction one can mention Hornbostel's hypothesis of the general direction of melodic movement in European and non-European music. Hornbostel attributed a basically ascending melodic trend to

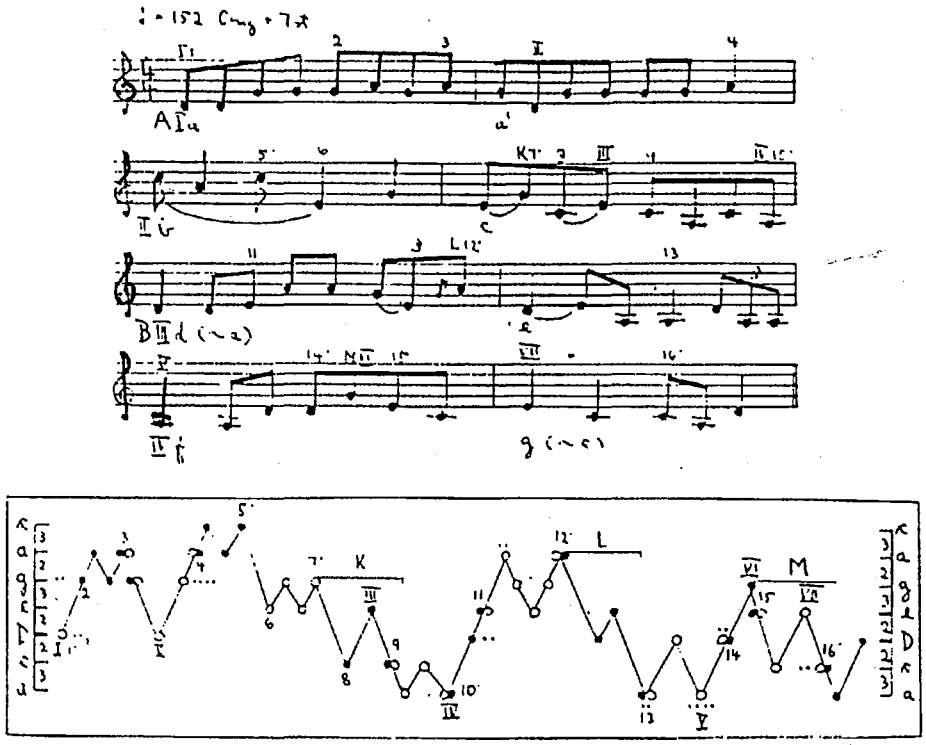


Figure 3.10 Kolinski's melodic movement graph based on a *Dahomean* Song (from Adams 1976:187)

European music and a general descending melodic movement to non-European music (Kolinski 1957:3). Hornbostel's thesis was then contested by Kolinski (1965a,b). In order to challenge Hornbostel's contention, Kolinski (1965b) devised methods for the comparative analysis of melodic movement. According to Kolinski : 'it is essential that the methods of analysis employed should be applicable both to culture-specific and to cross-cultural investigations' (1977:77).[10] With this objective in mind and with the aim of analyzing melodic *movement* and classifying its components, Kolinski (1965b) applied a graphical approach (see Figure 3.10, as an example). Among the components represented in Kolinski's graphs one finds tone reiterations, indicated by small dots, with the number of dots equaling the number of tones comprised in a reiteration. In the following quotation, Kolinski proposes the elimination of the proportional time values from the representation of a melodic movement, in order for that diagram to say something more than a transcription in Western staff notation:

> a fruitful and exhaustive analysis of melody is not possible unless the fundamental structural elements of melodic movement and their merging into larger configurations have been established. [Some analytical approaches originate] from the erroneous assumption that melody can be equated to a sum of ascending and descending tone steps, and does not realize that a melody represents a more or less richly organized whole. Having this in mind, some scholars represent the melodic line by individual diagrams which reproduce the up and down of the melodic progression without leaving out of account the proportions of the time values; but in fact one does not learn much more from such diagrams than from the musical notation itself which reflects to a certain extent the melodic contour (1965b:96).

A different kind of matrix has been devised by Ellingson (1979:142) to show points of convergence and divergence in the melodic contours of three Tibetan chant phrases taken from a chant called *Sku Bzhi Bdag Nyid* (see Figure 3.11). The vertical axis of the graph consists of a selected ± 0-cent level, while the horizontal axis presents the concept of time in terms of syllables. Except for the introductory part of verse 1, Ellingson's graph showed that the above phrases suggest 'variations of a single melodic pattern' (ibid.:142-3). As a point of clarification about the 'reliability' of the method employed, Ellingson remarked that:

> This graph is inadequate in two respects: its calibration is not fine enough for accurate differentiation of closely-adjacent cents measurement, and it does not show a sufficient number of melodic repetions to yield significant comparisons (ibid.:143).

The first observation, mentioned above, sheds light on the importance of the matrix as the main source through which information is communicated. In this regards, Adams (1976:185) observed that the matrix on which a graph transcription is plotted affects the amount and kind of information retrieved. At this stage one may also add that the matrix of a graph transcription may reveal a lot of things about the transcriber's 'complex-whole' approach towards his transcription. The second remark reminds us of Densmore's ([1918] 1992) use of melodic contour graphs to arrive at empirically five definable types of melodic contours for a large corpus of Teton Sioux songs.[11]

Figure 3.11 Ellingson's hand graph transcription of three Tibetan chant phrases (from Ellingson 1974:142)

After comparing 234 graphical plots of Teton Sioux melodic patterns, Densmore (1992:53) identified five classes of melodic 'outlines' (see Figure 3.12). The objective

behind these 'outlines' was to represent the most frequent melodic trend of 234 songs. Her approach towards what should and should not be included in the graphs suggests a reductive type of analysis, explained by Densmore herself in the following way:

> Since the sole purpose of these plots is to show the trend of the melodies, it seems permissable to omit from the representation, not only the unaccented tones occuring in the melody, but also a distinction between whole tones and semitones in progressions, and a distinction between double and triple time in measure-lengths. It is obviously desirable that the graphic representation be as simple as possible, the more detailed observation of the melodies being contained in mathematical and descriptive analysis (ibid.).

The graphs contributed to the description of five classes of contour types: melodies with a descending trend and no ascending intervals (Class A); melodies having a horizontal progression, followed by a descent to the final tone (Class B); melodies showing repetition of the lowest tone, usually the keynote (Class C); melodies characterized by frequent short ascent and descent repetitions (Class D); and melodies having an ascending contour as their first progression (Class E) (ibid.:52-4).

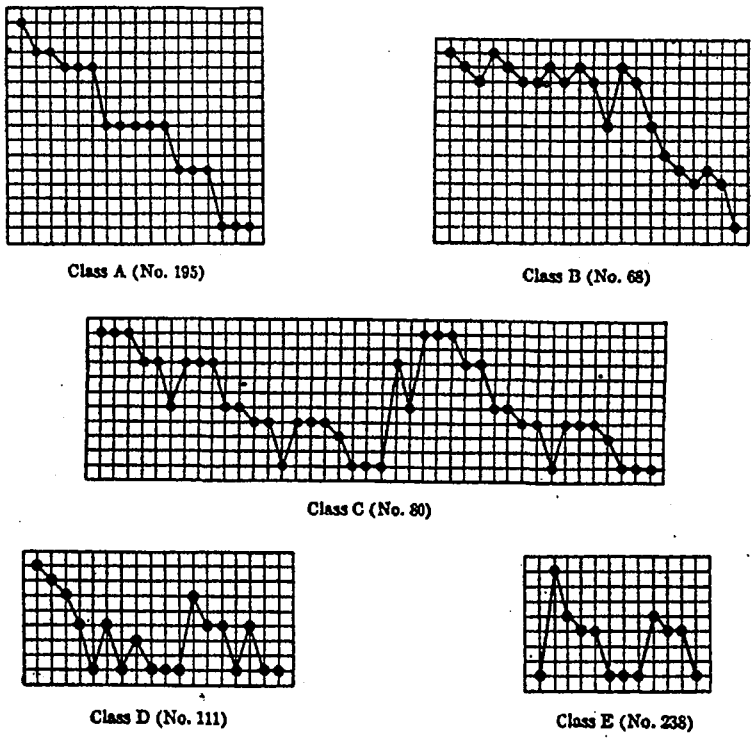


Figure 3.12 Densmore's five primary outlines of 234 Teton Sioux melodic patterns (from Densmore 1992:53)

In most cases "hand" graph transcriptions served more as another form of transnotations, from Western notation to graph notation, rather than to provide a transcription which reflects the musical sound as perceived by the musical culture in question, or to show 'what happens between the notes'. Apart from some exceptional cases (as in the above Ellingson's graph, for instance) the matrix did show Western musical values and concepts influencing the transcriber's 'complex-whole' approach.

B. Electronic Graph Notation

Another form of graph notation is made possible through the use of electronic devices. In principal, these electronic devices transform the invisible sound wave into visible sound registrations on a time-pitch matrix. Cole (1974:111) remarked that 'the attraction of automatic transcription lies in the elimination of the human, subjective element since any transcriber's perception habits are likely to influence the way in which he hears, and so notates, unfamiliar music'. Cole's remark does not take into consideration the fact that what is registered on these automatic graphs is nothing more than the sound as absorbed by the recording device itself. In other words, electronic sound registrations transcribe not the sound as perceived by that particular musical culture, but as 'perceived' by the recording equipment. In his evaluation of the objective-subjective issue in connection with electronic transcriptions, Gutzwiller remarked that:

> Any method of transcription, Western notation or graph notation, will accurately reflect the knowledge (including biases) of the transcriber; where the help of a machine is enlisted, the transcription will reflect the bias of its inventor. To believe that a melograph transcription is objective ... is pure superstition. It does not tell the truth but the gospel according to its inventor ...(1979:104)

Arguments like the ones posed above should by no means diminish the utility of electronic transcriptions in research. One should not abandon what has proved to be an effective means by which the ethnomusicologist can investigate the phenomenon of

the musical sound. Whether one should use these devices or not depends on the nature of the study itself.

Nevertheless, even if the utility of these electronic transcriptions is well-known today, it seems that there is still some sort of resistance among ethnomusicologists to this kind of transcription. Nettl, for instance, posed the following question: 'What are the bases for resisting something that should appear, to any right-minded individual, an incredibly useful device, one that would drive away human error and cultural bias and save labor to boot?' (1983:77). He proposed five main reasons for this existing resistance which I would like to summarize here (the first and second reasons have already been discussed in some detail in the previous chapter):

i. notation is highly-valued in Western musical tradition.
ii. the ethnomusicologist is culturally constrained as to give an evidence of his aural ability.
iii. the transcriber feels the need to have the closest possible contact with the music he wants to analyse.
iv. for the Western ethnomusicologist notation is potentially prescriptive.
v. an automatic transcription does not distinguish between what is significant and unsignificant for the members of the musical culture in question (ibid.:77-8).

Another reason might emerge from the unavailability of the devices themselves. In turn, this may result in ethnomusicologists who 'remain untrained in reading [these kind of transcriptions] and unable to derive from them directly some sense of musical sound and structure' (ibid.). This can also bring some kind of resistance among this group of ethnomusicologists.

In the brief historical survey of transcription we referred to Seeger's Model C melograph as that electronic device which produces a simultaneous graphical notation of pitch, interval, loudness and duration. In this way, an interrelated study of these four components is very possible. Seeger's melograph can be very helpful, for example, in ethnomusicological studies concerning the analysis of pitch and loudness. Moyle (1974), for example, analysed a number of North Australian song melograms in order to arrive at empirical evidence of the ways in which pitch and loudness could be determined by the quality of individual syllables and breaths. Other scholars used the melograph to check an aurally made transcription, especially when the music includes many inflections that normally escape the ear (see Owens 1974, for example). The melograph can handle large quantitites of material. This makes the device useful for statistical analysis: 'it is now possible to determine the rules of intonation in different types of music and styles of performance, whereas previously these subjects had been a matter for speculation without a sound empirical basis' (Cohen 1980:129). On the other hand, electronic devices like the melograph and the sonagraph (discussed below) exclude from their scientific data knowledge of context, performance practice and insider views - three important factors leading towards a complete ethno-analysis.

Another electronic device which analyses and reproduces sounds graphically is the sonagraph. 'The registration on the sonagram is made linearly, not logarithmically; each higher octave contains double the amount of overtones and is twice as broad as the preceding lower octave because the distance between frequencies is constant. Therefore, a sonagram displays the temporal progression and the structure of sound at different points of time. Furthermore, the average amplitude of all frequencies present is shown relative to time' (Walbe 1967:55). The partials (or overtones) are less suppressing on a sonagram than on a melogram with the result that the sonagraph produces more information about timbre than the melograph. One may also add that 'the Seeger melograph model C incorporates the function of the sonagraph so that the melogram includes a sonagram which supplies information about the spectrum of the examined material' (Cohen 1980:128).

Walbe (1967), for example, utilized the sonagraph to investigate aspects of Hebrew biblical cantillations as performed by different readers belonging to different Israeli communities. The objective behind this sonagraphic analysis was to enquire into the tonal structure and the vibrato of the cantillations (see Figure 3.13). Through the sonagrams, Walbe was able to determine the frequency of change and the tonal range of the vibrato, as well as vibrato control. Attempts at trying to analyse aspects like vibrato production and quality are another step forward towards a complete analysis of a musical style. Blum (1992:187) observed that 'the sonagraph and the melograph are becoming indispensable tools of ethnomusicological analysis, whether the analyst seeks to identify regularities in personal, local, regional or supra-regional styles' (1997:187).[12]

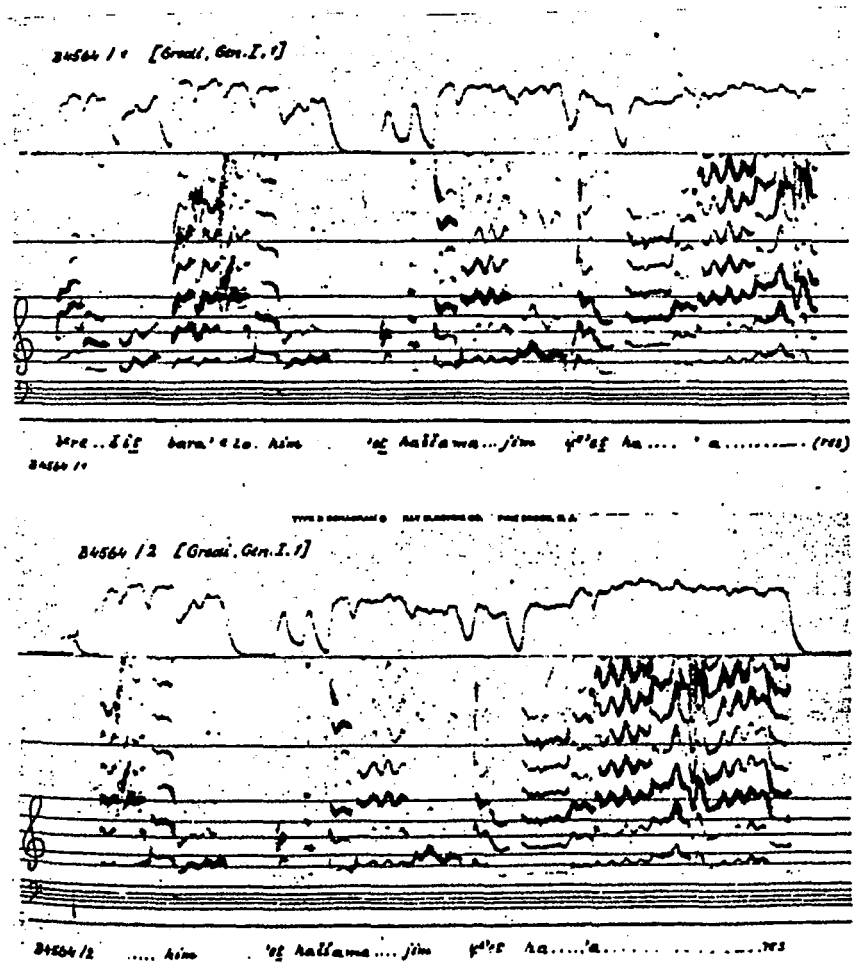


Figure 3.13 Walbe's sonographic analysis of the verse "In the beginning God created ... " in the Yemenite Jews version (from Walbe 1967:57)

Another attempt towards sound analysis has been proposed by Cogen (1984). He attempted to construct a method by which sound can be analysed through a series of electron photographic displays. Cogen's photographic graph displays 'reveal a structural aspect of musical shapes and forms' that has remained hidden for a long time. The displays 'objectify much that has previously been most elusive, even mystifying, about sounds and the ways they create the design of musical structures. In so doing, they illuminate the very nature of musical structure and expression' (Cogen 1984:3). Cogen also included a number of photographs showing the sonic structure images of some non-Western musical fragments.[13] These kinds of photographic display demonstrate the role of each particular sound in its sonic context (see Figure 3.14). The above electronic transcriptions can become indispensable to provide pertinent data that when interpreted might shed light on the metaphor behind the musical sound.

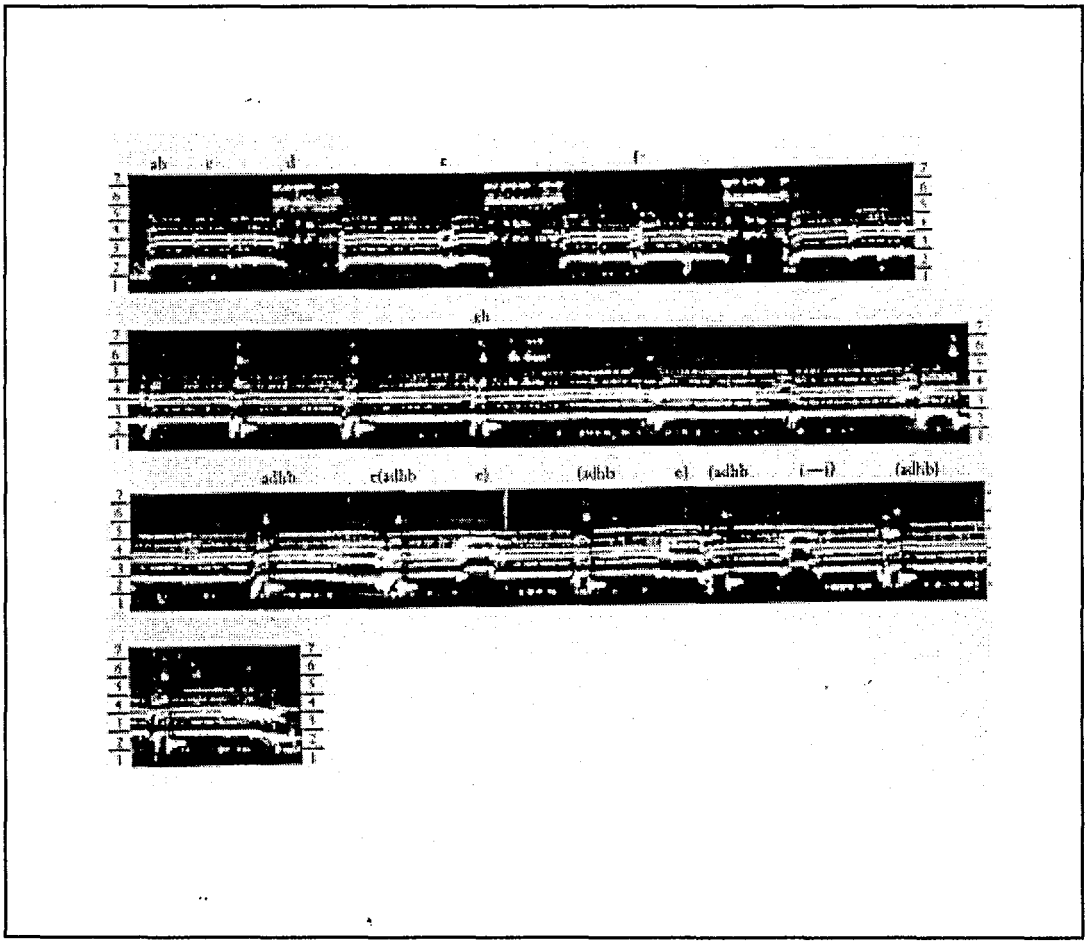


Figure 3.14 An electronic photographic display of a Tibetan Chant: Invocation of Mahakala (from Cogen 1984:30)

Like the other arts, music is another form of metaphor, itself a representation of life, 'a definition of experience' (Ferguson 1960:17). Blacking (1973:112), for instance, observed that what we refer to as mirror forms, theme and variation, repetition, and binary form 'may arise from experience of social relations'. In other words, the social context can have an important role in the formulation of a musical structure. In this sense, it is the complex-composite of the structure that contributes towards the metaphor of music; without the structure no metaphor is made possible. Embodied within this metaphor, there are the most inner and deepest experiences of humanity. An enquiry into the metaphor of the musical sound, as the product of the complex-composite structure, means an enquiry into the collective experience of mankind.

Electronic transcriptions should have an important role in the metaphorical interpretation of the musical sound. Feld (1986), for instance, showed how the sonagram can be utilized in this direction. For Feld (ibid.:155), the sonagraphic registration of the Kaluli drum sound, in Papua New Guinea, became a source of metaphorical interpretation in which the overtones produced have been associated with the 'visible realm' and the 'reflection realm' of the world we are living in. If electronic transcriptions prove as being a good means by which the ethnomusicologist would be able to interpret the metaphor behind the music, then they should become indispensable forms of descriptive notations and the devices which produce them continually improved.

Indigenous Notation Systems (or the Hipkins Solution)

In this section, I would like to discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of transcribing a non-Western piece of music in an indigenous notation system. Apart from the oral musical tradition, some non-Western cultures have also a written musical tradition as we have in the West. 'Cultures that distinguish between art music and popular music and those that have a body of music theory are most likely to have notation, if only for theoretical or didactic purposes, as in Arabic-speaking cultures' (Randel 1986:547).

In the second chapter, I referred to Hood's appeal to ethnomusicologists in order to present their transcriptions in the original notation of the particular culture in question. This section consists of a critical evaluation of Hood's appeal. The first part presents Hood's Composite Solution with special emphasis on the Hipkins Solution, as a basis for the discussion which follows. The second and third parts will develop around one of Hood's statements about the Hipkins solution.

In his book *The Ethnomusicologist*, Hood (1982) presented a thorough evaluation of the problem of transcription in ethnomusicology. The evaluation developed in an attempt to solve this same problem by suggesting a Composite Solution composed of three solutions: the Hipkins Solution, the Seeger Solution and the Laban Solution. According to Hood, each segment of the Composite Solution should be continually applied either independently or interdependently to particular problems in transcription. The Seeger Solution focuses on the utility of the Seeger's Melograph Model C as an indispensable device for transcription (See above). The other solution proposed by Hood is the Laban Solution.

The Labanotation is a *phonetic* type of choreographical notation developed in 1905 by Rudolph Laban. Apart from its facility to provide a detailed dance transcription, the Labanotation can be applied to all styles of dancing from any part of the world - a quality which is frequently mentioned in the ethno-transcription debate. In the Laban Solution, Hood proposed an analogy between the various components of a dance and the different parameters in a piece of music. According to Hood (ibid.:104), the symbolic representation of a movement in Labanotation can be applied to the registration of a melodic movement:

> The notation of three-dimensional, curvilinear movements of the human body and all its parts would seem to be at least as demanding as the notation of multiple melodic movements, including the variable pitch of melodic contour, attack, duration, and release. The registration of loudness in

> music should not be more difficult than the representation of tension and relaxation in dance defined through accent, hold, and release. Notational problems of time, tempo, and rhythm should be nearly equal in both fields.

The Laban Solution is rarely applied for transcription purposes. A reason for this reluctance might be the complex symbolic representation of the system.

The other segment of Hood's Composite Solution is the Hipkins Solution. This proposed solution suggests an interesting approach, but not necessarily realistic and/or practicable, by which the transcriber can notate a non-Western piece of music in an indigenous notation system. Hood (ibid.:91) considered a quotation by Alfred James Hipkins as a reminder 'that the music of each culture must be known and understood in its own terms and its own milieu'. He laid stress on the fact that 'every professional ethnomusicologist should expand the literacy of his international musicianship to include the written ABCs of major musical cultures that have established systems of notation' (ibid.). He proposed the dissemination of knowledge of non-Western musical notations among ethnomusicologists. In this way, if a transcriber decides to use an indigenous notation system for his transcription he would find receptive readers.

Hood also considered as possible the direct modification of transcriptions, transcribed in indigenous notation systems, as it is normally done on transcriptions in Western staff notation. Towards the end of the solution Hood proposed the following:

> ... the Hipkins Solution provides an opportunity [for the transcriber] to demonstrate his own sense of responsibility in the dissemination of international literacy in music. After a few such publications, he will have established a mode of communication that not only supports an honest presentation but also gives his readers the intellectual satisfaction of being at ease in the habit of reading non-Western notation (ibid.:93).

My evaluation of the Hipkins Solution, as proposed by Hood, will be developed round the above assertion.

There is no doubt that a transcription in an indigenous notation system claims the right of being an 'honest presentation' of the principal organization of the music being produced. A musical notation may reflect particular indigenous interest over others, and these interests may consolidate the theoretical knowledge of the researcher. The traditional Tibetan *dbyangs* notation, for example, leans heavily on melodic contour representation (see Figure 3.15), making use of undulating graphic contours to indicate melodic contours. Figure 3.15 is an excerpt of a vocal piece called *Ah Hum ma* by Karma pa Dus of the 12th century. The rising and falling curves show changes in pitch, and the multiple lines show repetitions. The notation does not separate musical units, including pitch levels, into discrete and separate elements (Ellingson 1986:318). There is no indication of exact pitches, since there are in fact no predetermined pitch levels, no fixed scales and no model degrees for this music. 'Scale and pitch are performance variables; the musical identity of a piece is determined by the unique patterning of the melodic contour of the vocal line' (ibid.:317). The thickness of lines corresponds to loudness, while the vowels of the text determine tone colour.

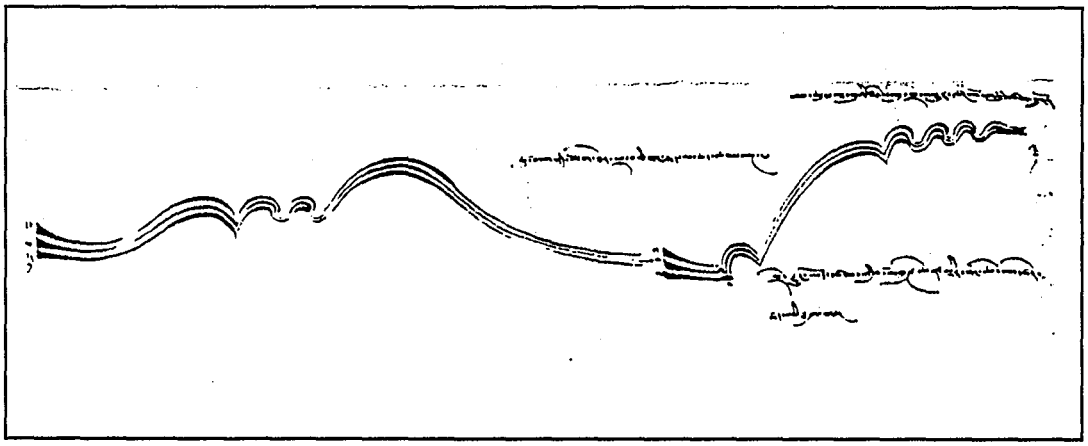


Figure 3.15 Traditional notation of Tibetan *dbyangs*.
(from Ellingson 1986:318)

Other non-Western notations give prominence to the technical demands required in the production of sound. An example of this, is the *jianz* tablature notation for the Chinese *qin* (a plucked zither).[14] Figure 3.16 shows a single note symbol made up of

six elements indicating the manner in which a string is to be plucked - with which finger, the number of the string to be plucked, the number of the *hui* (that is, the stud), whether inward or outward, and in some instances, the number of the *fên* (imaginary, small subdivisions between any two adjoining *hui*) (Kaufmann 1967:283). In the case of the *jianzi* notation the interest leans heavily on action description, the technique of sound production. A tablature notation system such as the *jianzi,* with its in-built technical information would undoubtedly aid the ethnomusicologist to understand the 'how-to-do-it' aspect of the music under investigation.

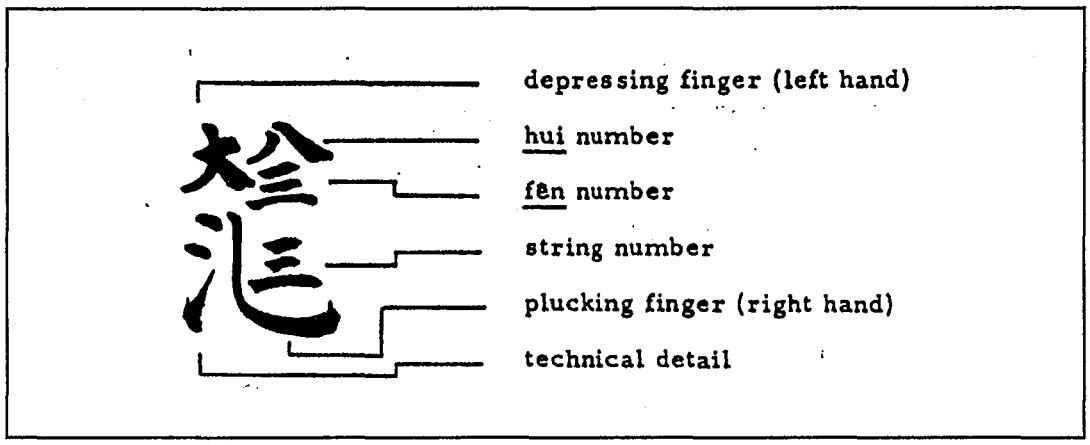


Figure 3.16 A symbol from the *jianzi* tablature notation (from Kaufman 1967:283)

Some indigenous systems of notation provide other information which when evaluated results in a great deal of insight not only about the theory behind the notation but also related performing practices. As an example, one can refer to the notation used in a genre of *syamisen* music of Japan called *gidayûbusi*. The notation used for this genre is a form of tablature notation. Apart from the tablature it also includes names of frequently-used articulated units, or melodic patterns. Figure 3.17a shows a frequently used chain of pitches commonly found in the genre *gidayûbusi*.[15] Instead of notating this chain for several times in tablature form, *syamisen* musicians tend to write only its name. For this purpose, the musicians utilize a combination of two different names: *tunagi* and *kei* (see Figure 3.17b). These phrases are used as binding

patterns between other patterns. Apart from this, 'if a *syamisen* player happens to forget a melody on stage, these patterns can be played repeatedly, due to their intermediate character, to kill time until the player's memory comes back' (Tokumaru 1986:121). In itself, this notation owes very much to the process of segmentation.

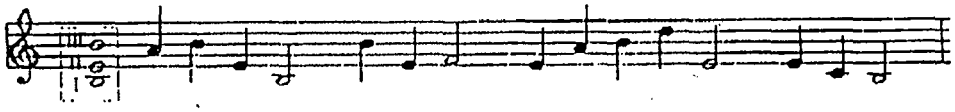


Figure 3.17a An unsegmented chain of pitches frequently found in a *syamisen* genre of music called *gidayubusi*
(from Tokumaru 1986:121)

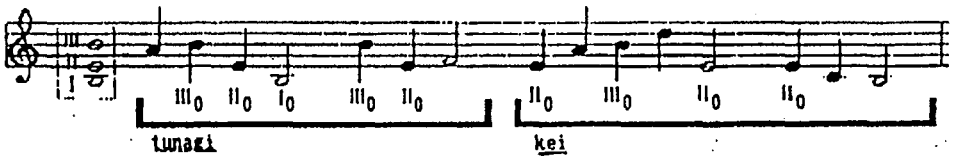


Figure 3.17b The segmented phrases and their technical names
(from Tokumaru 1986:121)

Here, segmentation means the act of segmenting a musical continuum into smaller units. About this process Nattiez (1990:80) writes:

> ... articulating music into discrete units, and this alone, allows us to define *the musical facts or musical units under consideration* in an unambiguous way, rendering possible a permanent critical debate and a progressive accumulation of knowledge.

In this context, the *syamisen* notation system suggests self-contained segmentation that when analysed could contribute a great deal towards a relevant interpretation of the musical style in question. The above and other notation qualities attempt to exemplify and sustain Hood's insistence on presenting a non-Western piece of music in its indigenous written form.

The fundamental problem in the transcriptional approach proposed by Hood is for the ethnomusicologist to make significant, or communicative, for the reader a series of 'unsignificant' signs in a relatively short period of time. The initiated reader might not have the slightest idea of the system and/or what that particular series of signs really 'means'.

According to the American scientist and mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the sign is nothing more than a 'medium of communication' (Parmentier 1994:41). In his Semiotic Mediation concept, Peirce identified three stages in the process of communication: the message leaves the *Object*, passes through the *Sign*, and falls into the *Interpreting Mind*. In this triadic relationship (see Figure 3.18) there is no stage which should be considered as more important than the other. All stages are equally important and in full dependence on each other. The application of Peirce's concept of semiotic mediation might shed light on the unrealistic aspect of Hood's assertion.

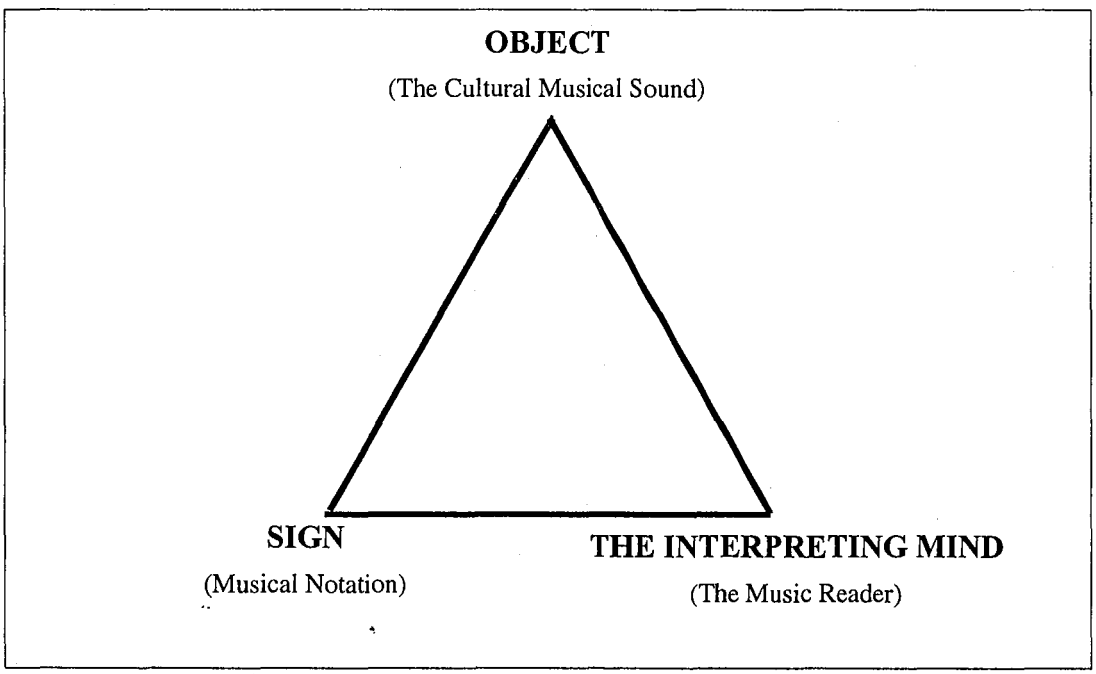


Figure 3.18 Peirce's triadic relationship

Peirce noticed that what 'is communicated from the Object through the Sign to the Interpretant is a form ... is a power, is the fact that something would happen under certain conditions' (quoted from Parmentier 1994:41). For our purpose I would like to substitute for *Object* what I would like to refer to as the *Cultural Musical Sound*, in other words, the musical sound as perceived by the musical culture in question. What is transmitted from the *Cultural Musical Sound* (that is, the *Object*) is a *package* of unique and uniquely structured tones in time. The musical notation (that is, the *Sign*) is nothing more than the *medium* through which the *package* can reach the music reader (that is, the *Interpreting Mind*). The musical sign is neither the content of the *package*, nor the *Cultural Musical Sound*, it is just a *medium*. If for one reason or another the musical notation cannot be interpreted by the music reader, the enclosed unique and uniquely structured tones remain enclosed awaiting for the right (or the 'competent') interpreter who has some kind of access to the *Cultural Musical Sound* as his "frame of reference", to borrow Charles Seeger's (1957:111) term. It is this "frame of reference" that makes possible the interpretation of the sign.

As we have already seen, a system of notation reflects a native pattern of emphasis and omissions. On the other hand, the omission of certain things from a musical notation does not necessarily mean that these things are not important for the culture's music. Nicholas Cook explains this in the following way: 'What it means is that when musicians use the notation for the purposes it is intended for - when, that is, they *read* it - they supply a great deal of information which is not actually in the score' (1989:227). Such information can only be supplied if the reader is in possession of that stock of theoretical and interpretative musical knowledge which permits him to *read* (in the sense described above) into the notation. Apart from the above knowledge he is also expected to be equipped with an extensive understanding of the cultural traits that shape, fundamentally, the musical tradition under investigation.

Ethnomusicologists possessing the above essentials for a given musical culture

can *read* an indigenous notation system, within their subject area, and supply for themselves that information which is not actually written in the music. On the other hand, if the reader is not equipped with the above requisites he would be unlikely ever to accurately supply for himself the unwritten information which is essential to a complete (or almost complete) meaning of that series of symbolic units. It is through the theoretical, interpretative and cultural requisites discussed above that real *reading* into a transcription, in its indigenous form, can take place. In this context, Hood's assertion seems to apply more appropriately for the first category of ethnomusicologists mentioned above.

To recapitulate, in this chapter I have evaluated three alternative forms of musical notations for transcription. The first section of the chapter focuses on the utility of the cipher notation as applied by Javanese transcribers. We have seen that the main advantage of the system is that it does not suggest fixed tones, equal to a specific number of cycles per second, and fixed intervallic relationship. The system is also able to reveal both the content and the transmission of a gamelan *gendhing*. On the other hand, the *Kepatihan* system limits the transcriber in making a detailed descriptive transcription of rhythmic, melodic, ornamental and intonational aspects of an actual performance.

In the graph transcription section to two types of graphs havce been mentioned: "hand" and "electronic". In the hand graphs we have seen how the matrix determines the kind and amount of information retrieved. Apart from this, we have also seen how the matrix reflects the "complex-whole" approach of the transcriber towards his transcription. The ethnocentric problem in transcription cannot be resolved through the application of electronic devices mentioned in this section. This does not mean that these devices have no utility. They can be indispensable devices to provide a deeper understanding of certain aspects within a musical style and to reveal what is hidden behind what seems to be a mere musical structure.

The third section focused on the advantages and the limitation of the Hipkins Solution as proposed by Hood. We have seen how an indigenous notation system might communicate information about the theoretical and technical aspects of the music under investigation. We have also discussed the problematic aspect of presenting a transcription in its indigenous form to readers who may not be equipped with the theoretical, interpretative and cultural knowledge which constitutes a true *reading* of a notation system.

What should be remembered, and well-considered, is the fact that notation is only one kind of musical transformation and therefore it 'should not be the only basis or starting point for analytical observation' (Yamaguti 1986:31). Notation is on a continuum of musical transformations that also includes, for instance, performance practices (ibid.:32). A thorough investigation and understanding of the other transformations, that take place within this continuum, can help the transcriber to get closer to the most possible 'honest presentation' of the *Cultural Musical Sound* in question.

Notes

[1] The cipher-notation was introduced in China by Western missionaries in the late 19th century. For more information of how the cipher notation system is used by Chinese *erhu* players see Stock 1993:292-7.

[2] The information about the gamelan ensemble draws heavily upon Becker 1980a:xv.

[3] There are other *pélog*s with other numbers. The main difference is in the intervallic structures; but for Central Java the 5/7 distinction is more or less valid.

[4] When referring to the gamelan repertoire, Palman (1983:20) makes this observation: 'The practice of playing a *sléndro* composition in the *pélog* tuning system is common; many well known compositions, such as *Gambirsawit*, *Bondhet*, *Onang-onang*, and *Kutut Manggung* can be played in both tuning systems. One practice - *molak-malik* - involves switching back and forth between *sléndro* and *pélog* during the performance of a single piece. To the best of my knowledge, *sléndro* pieces can often be played in *pélog,* but almost never vice versa'.

[5] For more information about Rousseau's musical life see Heartz 1980.

[6] For more information about Souhaitty see Albert Cohen 1980.

[7] Chinese *erhu* players however indicate ornamentation in their cipher-notation parts.

[8] Hughes (1988) applied a structural linguistic model to investigate a genre of gamelan music called *Gendhing Lompah*. The cipher notation followed the linguistic model employed by Hughes. Through this linguistic approach Hughes attempted to describe some of the melodic features of the *Gendhing Lompah*, laid within the deep level of the *gendhing*'s subgenres: the *Sampak*, the *Srepegan* and the *Ayak-ayakan*.

[9] For similar forms of cyclical cipher-transcriptions see Becker 1980b:458-9.

[10] See also Herndon 1976.

[11] The present writer makes use of Densmore's 1992 reprinted version.

[12] Sonogram-based papers (or melograph-based) are still very rare. Even at international ethnomusicological conferences papers presenting sonagrams are (still) quite uncommon.

[13] Cogen's non-Western musical excerpts are: Tibetan Tantric Chant: Invocation of Mahakala; Balinese Shadow-play Music: *Pemoengkah*; music for the Japanese Shakuhachi.

[14] For more information about the *qin* tablature notation see Kaufman 1967:267-95.

[15] The pitches in Figures 3.17a and b have been transnotated in Western staff notation by Tokumaru.

Chapter 4

Transcription and the Ethnography of Musical Performance

One may attribute a form of similarity between transcription and ethnography. While musical transcription is the representation (writing) of sounds, ethnography is writing about people (from the Greek *ethnos*: 'folk', 'people' and *graphein*: 'write') (A.Seeger 1992:88). Seeger defined the ethnography of music as the 'writing about the ways people make music' (ibid.:89). The ethnography of music 'might be likened to the analytical transcription of events, rather than simply of sounds. It usually includes both detailed descriptions and general statements about a people's music based on personal experience or fieldwok' (ibid.). Normally, ethnography of music concentrates on the musical performance which, in our discipline, is considered as the event wherein musical aspects are interrelated to, and affected by, other processes which in themselves might not be musical.

If we pose a number of questions, as examples, we may be better able to understand the importance that ethnographic data of performance has for the analysis of music. What is the relationship between the musical structure that emerges during a particular musical performance and the musical occasion itself, referred to by Herndon 'as an encapsulated expression of the shared cognitive forms and values of a society' (quoted from Kaemmer 1981:62)? Is there any connection between the time at which a performance is executed and the production of sounds? Does the audience consider the various sections in a piece as equally important or does it reserve special attention to certain sections over others? To what extent do the perceptions musicians have of what is happening in the performance affect the music produced? Anthony Seeger argued, that 'in music, the performance context is crucial, and it constrains the production of sound in a number of ways' (1990:9). Ethnographic description, analysis, and interpretation of music events should lead to a richer and more dynamic view of the

musical sound under investigation. Nketia argues that: 'To view a music event solely from the perspective of the auditory component is to ignore all the effort that goes into its presentation' (1990:82).

An ethnographic consideration of a musical performance strengthens the whole process of analysis, even if ethnographic and musical data are separately organized and presented to the reader. In such a case, a transcription may become more 'meaningful' for those who may be 'reading' it because it brings closer to each other the reader's perception to the *Cultural Musical Sound* referred to in the third section of chapter three. Recent trends in ethnomusicology show a strong commitment to bring ethnographic data as close as possible to the musical blueprint. As already stated in the first chapter, such an attempt has been proposed by Regula Qureshi (1987).

Qureshi's 'videographs' constitute one of the steps in her attempt 'to show, in a testable way, how the inclusion of the contextual dimension is indeed indispensable to gaining a full understanding of musical sound, and how the extra-musical meanings inherent in musical sound give music the power to affect its context in turn' (ibid.:58). The model was developed by Qureshi for the study of *qawwali*, the music of the Sufi assembly of India and Pakistani. The first stage consists of an analysis of the musical idiom in terms of a structure of musical units mostly obtained from the performers. The second stage proceeds by examining the performance context as a structure, made up of units and rules of behaviour. At this stage, she also includes 'a consideration of the larger cultural and social structure behind the specific performance occasion which gives sense to it' (ibid.:65). The third stage analyses the actual performance process. For the purpose of this model, Qureshi has developed 'videographs' (ibid.:73) (see Figure 4.1) to provide 'an accurate visual record of audience behaviour as it occured in response to the ongoing song performance' (ibid.:72).

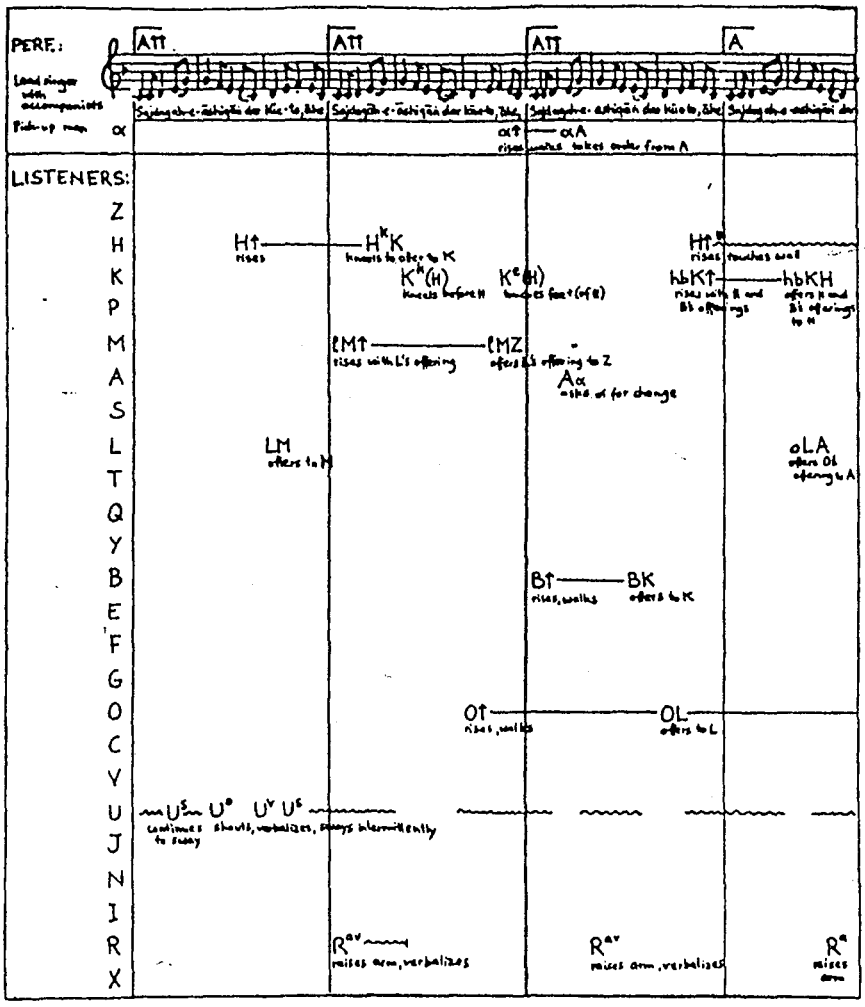


Figure 4.1 Videograph
(from Qureshi 1987:73)

This chapter seeks to re-affirm the importance of amalgamating the ethnographic data of a musical performance with the musical blueprint, as its counterpart, in the most concrete possible way. The styles of transcription included in this chapter may be categorized under what Ellingson (1992a:147) calls 'innovative' forms of transcriptions. These transcriptions are specifically designed to indicate changes in the musical structure due to audience and performers' interventions and behaviours, before or during the performance. This by no means should be understood as a proposed analytical model. As already stated in the introduction to the previous chapter, a method of analysis should emerge from the nature of the music investigated and determined by the aims and objectives behind the analysis itself. This chapter is inspired by Blacking's

insistence that 'music is often the incidental product of non-musical processes' (1971:92).

The musical and ethnographic examples used in this chapter are taken from a sub-genre of Maltese *għana* ('song'; pron. 'ana') called *Spirtu Pront*. While examples from *għana* music will be used as illustration where needed, in both this and in the following chapter, this is not meant to be a study on *għana* music. In Malta, the *Spirtu Pront* is the most frequently performed style of folk music. The other two sub-genres of *għana* are known as *għana fil-għoli* ('song in high register') and *għana tal-fatt* ('a narrative song'; see also chapter 5). The following analysis attempts to throw light on the song form of the *Spirtu Pront*, by demonstrating how sub-sections within the form might be extended and/or interrupted due to audience and performers' intervention and behaviour.

The two musical events, from which the present ethnographic and musical examples have been elicited, occurred during fieldwork which the present writer carried out in Malta during the Summer of 1995. As a Maltese native the present writer was in a position to understand, and when possible interpret, both performers' and audience behaviour. On the other hand, the reader should always keep in mind all the disadvantages attributed to native researchers, mainly the problem of taken-for-grantedness.

For his ethnographic observations, the present researcher was assisted by a video-camera. Baily (1988:194) noted that film assists 'the fieldworker in overcoming human limitations of taking in and storing information in complex and often "high energy" situations'. The camera may also widen the transcriber's perspective of the musical sound under investigation by continuously presenting the sound in its socio-cultural context, rather than in a 'vacuum'. On the other hand, the camera has its limitations. It cannot, for example, 'search at the rate the eye searches' (quoted from Zemp 1988:395). The video-tape accompanying this study is divided in three parts.

The first part introduces some aspects of Maltese history and culture; these aspects are represented through some prominent historical architectural sights found in Malta. In the second part, one finds edited shots, taken from the two musical events under consideration. This part of the video is intended to explain: the three sections within the *Spirtu Pront* form and the ethnographic data accounted for in the third section below. The third part includes the examples transcribed in the fourth section of this chapter.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a brief historical and cultural background of Malta. The second section introduces the *Spirtu Pront*, mainly its style and performance practice. In the third section, one finds an ethnographic account of the two musical events from which the examples were elicited. The fourth section seeks to present a couple of musical transcriptions which in themselves reflect a strong commitment, on the part of the present writer, to explain aspects of the musical structure under investigation in terms of the ethnography of performance.

Malta: an Island in the Mediterranean

This introduction to Malta's history and culture is of a moderate length considering the subject of this study. For this section, the reader is encouraged to see the first part of the video accompanying this work. This introduction is intended to orientate the reader to Maltese culture and history. The cultural aspect included in this section is not intended to interpret the Maltese cultural identity. It only seeks to depict some typical scenes of Maltese life and events which, in the present writer's opinion, contribute towards the formulation of a frame of reference for the ethnographic data included in this study.

Malta is a Mediterranean republic comprising three islands: Malta, with a population of approximately 300,000; Gozo, with a population of approximately 60,000; and Comino, a tiny island in-between the other two. The archipelago is situated 60

miles South East of Sicily and 220 miles due North of Tripoli, the capital city of Libya on the North African coast (see Figure 4.2). The official language is Maltese, a Semitic language that has a strong Italian element.

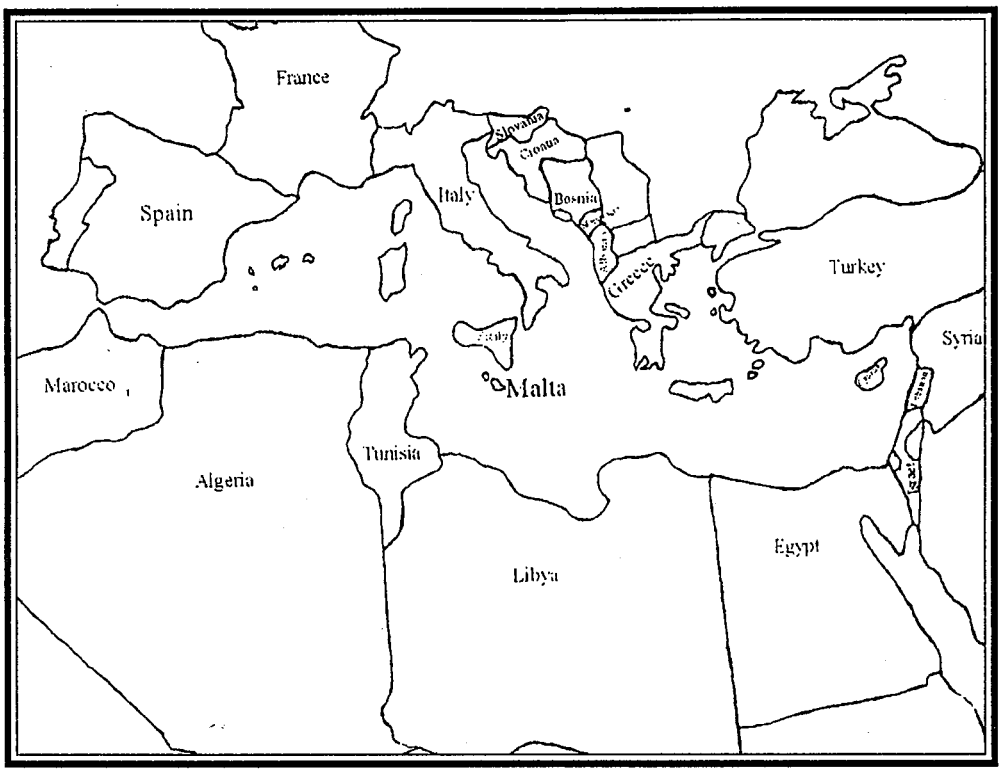


Figure 4.2 The geographical position of Malta in the Mediterranean

Malta has numerous monoliths and other stone ruins, the earliest dating back to about 3500 B.C. Phoenicians came about 1000 B.C. Greek, Carthaginian and Roman occupations followed. The apostle Paul was shipwrecked on Malta about 60 A.D. After conquests by the Moslems in 870 and the Normans in 1090, control passed in 1530 to the Knights of Rhodes (from then on called the Knights of Malta). The Ottoman Turks, who had driven the knights from Rhodes, besieged Malta in 1565, but failed to take it. The island was captured by Napoleon in 1798 and annexed by Great Britain in 1814. During World War II Malta was an important British sea and air base and underwent an Axis air siege lasting more than two years. The island gained full internal self-government in 1962 and became independent in 1964.

One of the main annual events in the cultural life of the Maltese is the village or town *festa*. These feasts are celebrated in honour of the village patron saint. A *festa* may take from three days to a week of celebrations depending on how strong the *festa* tradition is in that particular town or village. Most of the feasts are celebrated during the Summer season, for the weather to permit a smooth running of the *festa* programme of activities. The content of this programme would be planned months before the formal celebrations take place. For some village men, and recently also women, the village *festa* represents a whole year of preparations which culminate during *festa* week. Most of the preparations which have to do with the external celebrations of the *festa* (the flamboyant secular celebrations which compliment the religious aspect, like band playing, fireworks and street decorations) would be coordinated by the village band club/s. It is in these clubs where some village men spent their free time in the evening, obviously, not only to help in the preparations of the coming *festa* but also to chat, drink and eat traditional Maltese appetizers in the company of their friends. Sometimes the *Spirtu Pront* takes place in these clubs, but normally it takes place on Sunday mornings in some village wine-bars.

People who frequent these bars are working-class gents. Women do not attend in these bars due to the presence of men; women attending these bars are considered as dishonourable women and sometimes even prostitutes (see McLeod and Herndon 1975). The wives of the above men would be left at home either preparing the Sunday lunch, or running after the kids, or doing something different from the daily routine. One can hardly find women attending for *Spirtu Pront* sessions in wine-bars.

One can only find women during *Spirtu Pront* sessions organized during traditional Maltese feasts, celebrated on a national scale. The most important are the feasts of Saint Gregory (first week after Easter) and *L-Imnarja* (the feast dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul celebrated on the 29th June). These two national feasts are attended by mixed audiences and held in the open-air; the former at the village of Marsaxlokk,

while the latter at the gardens of Buskett. One of the attractions included in these two feasts' programmes is the *Spirtu Pront*. While it is shaming for a woman to attend a *Spirtu Pront* session in wine-bars, there would be nothing wrong if a woman attends a *Spirtu Pront* session held during the two traditional feasts.

The *Spirtu Pront*: Style and Performance Practice

The *Spirtu Pront* is an improvised poetic duel, sung by two men, each trying to better the other in argument. A *Spirtu Pront* session may be composed of four or six *għannejja* (singers, pron. 'anneyya'), each pair of singers forming a duel. In a session composed of four *għannejja* the first *għannej* (singer, pron: 'anney') is matched against the third and the second against the fourth. When many *għannejja* would be waiting to participate in a *Spirtu Pront* session, the number of *għannejja* in each group would increase from four to six. In the latter case, the first matched against the fourth, the second against the fifth and the third against the sixth. The singing of the *għannejja* in a *Spirtu Pront* would be accompanied by three to four guitarists. One of the guitarists plays the leading part while the others keep on strumming a steady accompaniment built on the triadic chords (I and V) of the established key. Normally, a *Spirtu Pront* session lasts for about an hour. When the *għannejja* sing on television or radio they might be asked to reduce the session to half-an-hour.

The *Spirtu Pront* begins with an instrumental section which we may refer to as the prelude. In this section, the leading guitarist improvises along an already familiar tune which one finds in the limited repertoire of *għana*. The other guitarists keep on strumming a steady rhythm till the end of the session. The prelude's function is to establish the tonality and the tempo for the *għannejja*. Apart from this, it introduces particular intervallic and rhythmical structures which are then reiterated in the vocal stanzas of the *għannejja*. A vocal stanza is referred to by the *għannejja* as *għanja* (lit. 'a song'; pron. 'anya').

The second section consists of a series of alternations between the vocal stanzas of the singers and the instrumental interludes of the leading guitarist. The stanzas of the *għannejja* take the form of quatrains. The ideal syllabic arrangement of these quatrains is that of 8-7-8-7, but nowadays it is the rhyme which counts rather than the number of syllables. One can easily find improvised lines composed of nine syllables instead of eight, and eight syllables instead of seven. Syllabic irregularities are commonly found in the *Spirtu Pront*. The end of the second line in an *għanja* must rhyme with the end of the fourth line, in other words, they should either end on the same consonant or on the same vowel.

The guitaristic interludes (known as the *prejjem*), in between the quatrains of the *għannejja*, take the theme introduced in the prelude as their source of improvisation. Sometimes an *għannej* may intervene immediately with his stanza without giving chance to the leading guitarist to play his interlude. This may surprise both the audience and the guitarists and it is normally reserved for the last turn of quatrains, known as the *kadenza* ('cadence'; pron. 'cadenza'). The middle section lasts for an hour, regardless the number of participants, when the last volley on the part of each *għannej* consists of two quatrains known as the *kadenza* ('cadence' pron. 'cadenza'). Sometimes it happens that an *għannej* instead of singing a *kadenza* of two quatrains, extends this to three and even four quatrains. This happens either to finish off his argument and/or to show bravura. As will be seen in the fourth section an extension of the cadence may be influenced and stimulated by members of the audience. The session ends with an instrumental coda.

Herndon and McLeod (1980:148-51) have listed a number of commonly mentioned rules of the *Spirtu Pront* which I would like to reproduce below. These rules show the various musical, poetical and social constriants that regulate a performance of this kind. McLeod and Herndon emphasized that these rules 'represent a verbal description of the *spirtu pront* style, as considered by better singers in Malta'. They

are 'a normalized statement about how a public performance of *spirtu pront* should be conducted' (ibid.:151).

I. Rhyming

1. The end of the second line must rhyme with the end of the fourth line.
2. A word may not be rhymed with itself.
3. A Maltese word may not be rhymed with a word in another language.
4. Pronounciation of a word may not be changed in order to make it rhyme.
5. Words should rhyme in the dialect taught in the schools. In some contexts, the singer is permitted to use rhymes from his own dialect.
6. In some contexts, words must be spelled the same in order to be regarded as rhymes. In others, such rhymes as *trid/ftit* would be acceptable, since "d" is voiceless as a final in Maltese.
7. Easily rhymed words are improper.
8. Two words may be rhymed with each other only once within a song.

II. Stanzas

1. The four lines of a verse should be composed of 8-7-8-7 syllables.
2. Other arrangements are not incorrect, but are not as good as the ideal.
3. Each line of text should be a single sentence. However, it is not a mistake to make the first two lines into one statement without a pause between them if the key being sung in is not Sol (G).

III. Subject Development

1. It is a mistake to agree upon a subject before beginning to sing. However, if the real subject is a lengthy debate between two groups of singers and is carried out at the level of double entendre (*doppju sens*), the subject is

already set.

2. The first few verses must be general and introductory in nature.
3. Subjects should be developed in pairs, ideally, with four singers developing two subjects.
4. If there are only three singers, one should adopt the role of referee and comment on the subject developed by the other two, but may not take sides.
5. The subject must be maintained in all verses after it is developed.
6. The subject should not be directly mentioned over and over, but rather, referred to. The exception is performance at *Mnarja*, in the folklorist-directed contest.
7. If two singers sing two subjects at once, it is a mistake.
8. The verse following an allegation must stay close to what was said in that allegation, since response is obligatory.
9. A singer may not answer himself instead of his opponent, even if his verse stays on the same subject(s).
10. Singers may not comment on the subject of the other two singers in a four-man duel.
11. New subjects may not be introduced into a song duel in progress.

IV. Grammar and Fact

1. Grammar should be correct at all times.
2. Mixing of pronouns is especially bad.
3. Proverbs must be properly cited and not altered in any way.
4. Facts must be correctly stated. A mistake in actual information is a mistake in singing.

V. Cadenzas

1. Cadenzas should not be sung before the subject has been properly developed (for at least half an hour).
2. A cadenza must consist of eight lines, rhymed: a b c b d b e b; or, a b c b d e f e. However, on some occasions,

singers perform a "cadenza feast", in which a singer may sing a cadenza lasting as long as he wishes with as many lines as he can manage.

3. A cadenza should "wrap up" the subject(s).
4. A cadenza should make reference to the fact that the argument was not serious, or that the singers were only joking.

VI. Singers

1. It is a mistake to drink too much and then sing.
2. Singers must not become angry while singing.
3. Singers should not deliberately sing a funny verse, or laugh at themselves, hoping to upset the opponent's concentration.
4. If one's opponent makes a mistake in singing, it is a mistake to mention this directly; the proper form is to use allusion. The exception is when a direct fight is taking place and there are no guitar interludes.
5. Singers may not compose a verse, then alter it while singing it. Of course, no one knows this but the singer.
6. If a singer composes a verse then forgets it just before it is his turn to sing, and sings something else, this is a very serious mistake.
7. Insults may never be direct.
8. Songs should be composed with the burden of the message in the second two lines, leaving the first two lines free. It is not regarded as a serious mistake to do otherwise.

VII. Music

1. The established tempo of a song should be maintained.
2. Singing should be in the counter tenor range; if the natural speaking or singing voice is different, it is not regarded as good.
3. It is a mistake to begin singing too soon or too late.
4. Melisma may be used only in the second line of a verse.
5. The melodic outline chosen should conform to the tradition of a generally descending melody.

6. The singer should be in tune with the harmonic outline of the guitars.
7. Singers should sing as loudly as possible.
8. The singing voice should be tense.
9. Although the voice should be in the countertenor range, it is a mistake to sing in falsetto.

VIII. Guitar Accompaniment

1. Each singer's verse should be followed by a four-phrase guitar interlude, in which a solo guitarist improvises a melodic line.
2. Guitar accompaniment consists of one solo guitar and two accompanying guitars.
3. Song duels begin with a guitar prelude and end with a guitar cadenza.
4. Where there are no guitar interludes between singing, singers are fighting seriously.

The ethnographic data in the two following sections will show that most of the above rules are still in effect, while others have been modified to suit contemporary *Spirtu Pront* singing.

An Ethnographic Account of Two Musical Events.

For convenience, this section is divided into two sub-sections. These provide an ethnographic account of the two musical occasions under investigation. For this section, the reader is encouraged to see the second part of the accompanying video. This section seeks to answer the ethnographic questions proposed by Anthony Seeger in his 'do-it-yourself ethnography of performance' (1992:104). The questions proposed by Seeger are (order mine):

i *what* is being performed?
ii *where* and *when* is it happening ?
iii *why* is it being performed?
iv *who* is involved ?

v *how* is it being performed ?

vi *what* is its effect on the performers and the audience?

Event A: Two *Spirtu Pront* sessions at *L-Imnarja*.

The first *Spirtu Pront* performance I attended for took place on *L-Imnarja* (It. *luminaria*; 'illuminations') eve (28th June) at Buskett, Malta's only wood. *L-Imnarja* marks an important event in the calendar of Maltese popular customs. It goes back to before the coming of the Knights in 1530 and is essentially a folk festival. The original scope of the feast was to provide peasants with a break from the hardship of daily life:

> Following as it does close upon the hard toils of the harvest, it forms a pleasant break in the dull routine of existence that makes up the peasant's life - a few crowded hours of merry-making and rustic song in a year of sweat and toil (Cassar Pullicino 1992:58-9)

Nowadays, *L-Imnarja* is celebrated by the public in general. The Maltese are still celebrating this old popular custom, annually, at the gardens of Buskett.

I arrived at Buskett at around 9.00p.m. A large crowd of people invaded the place. Some families were reposing under the greenwood trees, ready to dine. Others preferred to buy a snack from the many food vendors who were nearly blocking the narrow passages of the wood. One of the attractions was the Agricultural Show. People flocked to see the vegetables, fruits, honey, local wine and other exhibits. On that evening, two *Spirtu Pront* sessions were on programme.

The first session began at 10.40 p.m. while the second one began at 11.35p.m. It is a custom that on this feast activities start late in the evening and continue till the early hours of the day after. The sessions were allotted half-an-hour each with a different item in between. The organizers were conscious of the fact that a one-hour session would be too much for an unfamiliar audience who may not be used to the one-hour

wine-bar session. Apart from this, the item in between, provided the audience with some 'relief' from the 'unsophisticated' singing of the *għannejja*, which the audience might not be used to.

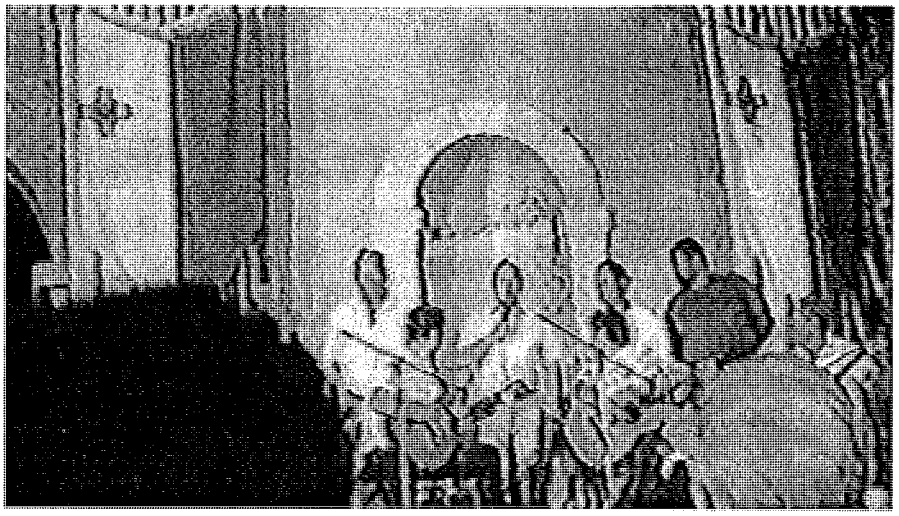


Figure 4.3 The first *Spirtu Pront* session at Buskett

The two sessions followed the same pattern. Both the *għannejja* and the guitarists were introduced to the audience by that evening's compère. The performers were referred to either by their names or nicknames. The ages of the *għannejja* who participated in the first session ranged between thirty and sixty years old (see Figure 4.3). While that of the second session varied between the twenty-six and sixty years (see Figure 4.4). The elder *għannej* sung in both sessions, while the same three guitarists accompanied the singers in both performances. The leading instrumental parts were entrusted to the same guitarist who sat in between the other two guitarists. In the *Spirtu Pront*, the guitarists sit in front of the *għannejja* while the latter stand.

From the brief interview, which the singers had with the compère, I could notice a bit of uneasiness coming out of their shaky voices. This was noticed more in the second rather than in the first session. One can easily understand the cause of this uneasiness. They were being exposed to a different audience, different from that which they were used to in wine-bars on Sunday mornings. They were taken out from the

wine-bar, placed on a high stage and given a microphone to be heard from the relatively large crowd waiting for their singing. The guitars were amplified as well.

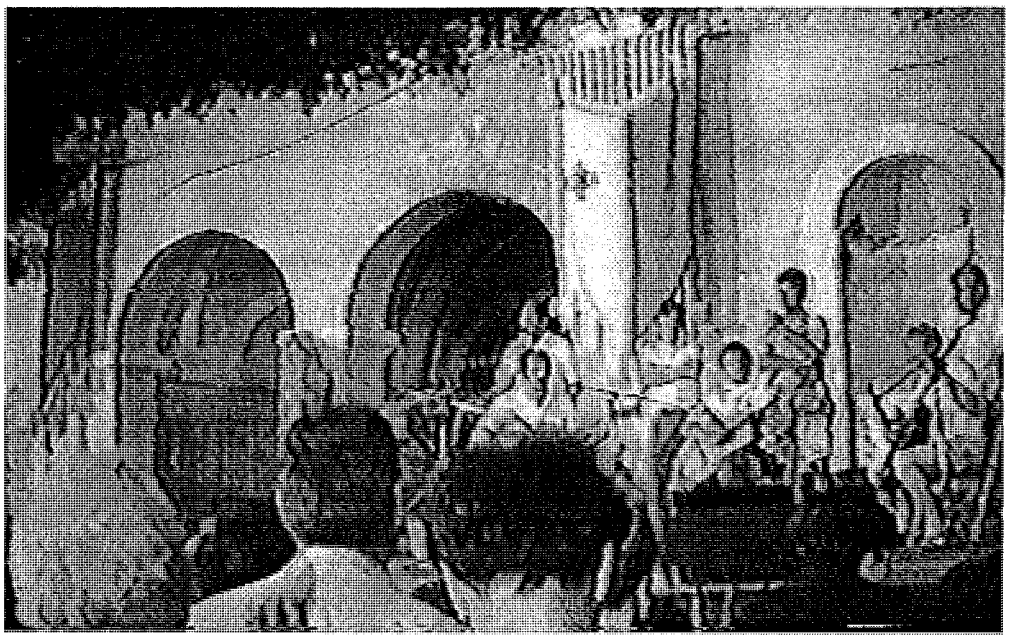


Figure 4.4 The second *Spirtu Pront* session at Buskett

The audience was a mixed one composed of men, women and children of all ages. Some members of the audience left as soon as the compère announced that the next item on the evening's programme was a *Spirtu Pront* session. During both performances, some members of the audience remained passive at what was happening on the stage; they showed no sign of interest. I took the impression that others were present just to share in the annual traditional spirit that *għana* brings with it on *L-Imnarja* eve. For many Maltese (especially for those who do not frequent *Spirtu Pront* sessions on Sunday mornings), *għana* singing is synonymous with *L-Imnarja* and symbolizes a relic from the past. However, its worth giving it some kind of attention, at least once a year, even with just one's passive presence.

Both sessions followed the normal form of the *Spirtu Pront*, that is, a short instrumental prelude and then the stanzas and the interludes, and finally the coda. It was

extremely difficult to understand the words of the *għannejja*. They had a microphone which they were handling unskillfully. The first *għanja* (or stanza) of the first round, on the part of each *għannej*, was greeted with an applause from the audience. One might add that applause during a *Spirtu Pront* session is not permitted in wine-bars; normally applause is reserved till the end of the session. But in audiences as the one at Buskett, applause seemed to be acceptable at least fôr the first turn of stanzas. The *għannejja* did their best to minimize the normal formality which one associates with stage set-ups. For example, some *għannejja* waved at members of the audience; others smoked cigarettes; while guitarists and *għannejja* exchanged words during the ongoing performance. Formality and *Spirtu Pront* seemed to be incompatible.

Event B: A *Spirtu Pront* session in a wine-bar on Sunday morning.

The other performance which I attended took place in a wine-bar at Żejtun, a well-known village for *Spirtu Pront* sessions on Sunday mornings. It was a small and crowded bar with men drinking beer, eating traditional Maltese food, chatting and listening to *Spirtu Pront*. Although chatting is permissible during a *Spirtu Pront* session, this by no means had to overcome the singing of the *għannejja*. In fact, frequent signs were being done on the part of the involved *għannejja* for the audience to keep it down.

Each session consisted of a different group of *għannejja*, but the guitarists remained the same group throughout all the sessions. Several singers were waiting to participate in one session or another. However, each session was composed of six *għannejja* instead of four. This could give chance to the awaiting *għannejja* to participate in one of the sessions. The sessions were held one after another with a short break in between. During this break the guitarists could drink something, exchange a word and release their fingers from the continuous one-hour pressure exerted on the same strings. The only two women in the bar were the owner's relatives who were serving drinks. Their presence had no negative connotation.

The sesssion which the present study took into consideration began at 11.20 a.m. After an agreement among the awaiting *għannejja* as to who will be taking part, the leading guitarist (accompanied by the other two guitarists) played a popular Maltese folk-tune to announce that another session was about to begin. The *għannejja* were standing facing the bar with bottles of soft-drinks and beer laid in front of them on a small table. Their ages ranged from about twenty-six to fifty-six years (see Figure 4.5). The youngest one of them sung his first stanza in a standing position but remained seated for the rest of the session. From time to time the *għannejja* took a sip, especially before and after the singing of their stanzas. Their singing was relatively loud for the small place they were singing in; but as Lortat-Jacob noted: 'In Mediterranean countries things seem to acquire a reality only when they are debated out loud' (1995:2).

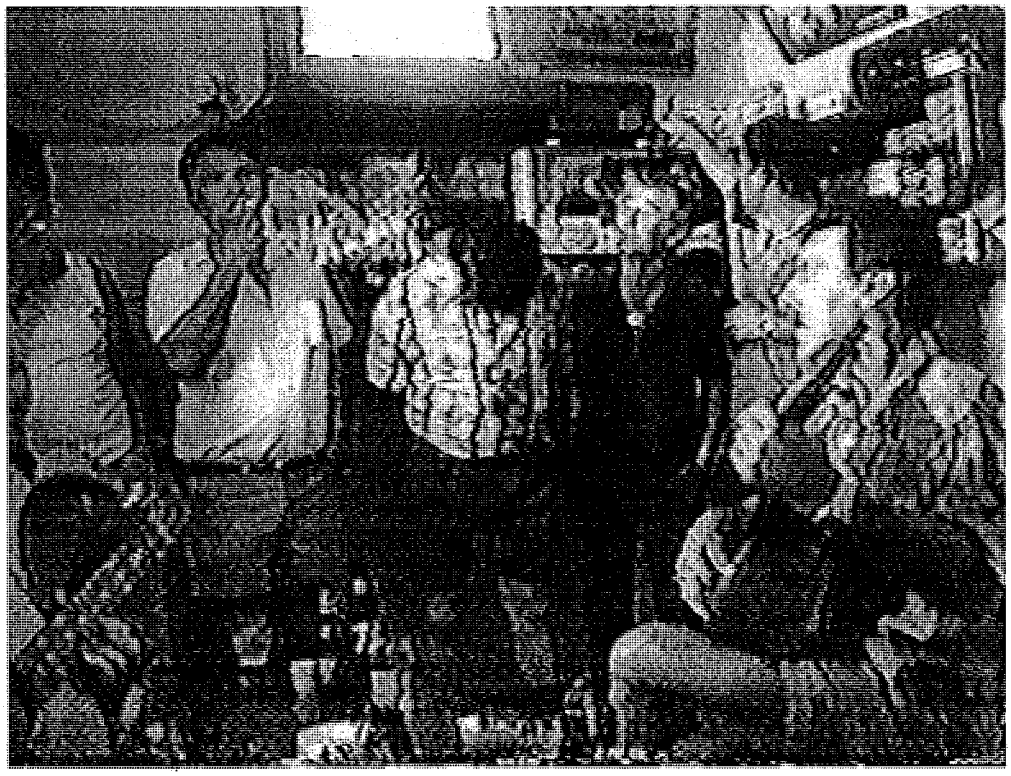


Figure 4.5 The *Spirtu Pront* session at Żejtun

The audience listened attentively to the *għannejja*. Since it was mid-day the audience was not so numerous. Even the bartender had some free time in which he could follow the session. Although the television set was on, and placed on top of where the *għannejja* were standing, it did not disturb the attention of the audience and the performers.

The interludes (or *prejjem*) seemed to be the less important for the audience. Members of the audience waited for the interludes to cross the bar and entering the lavatory, which happened to be beside where the *għannejja* were standing. This lack of importance to the interludes was indirectly pronounced to me by a member of the audience. He remarked that I should never move my camera away from the singer, who would be singing his *għanja,* to take shots of the audience. According to him, I should reserve that for the *prejjem*. On the other hand, the cadence of the singers stimulated the attention and interest of both the audience and the performers, as we will see in the following section.

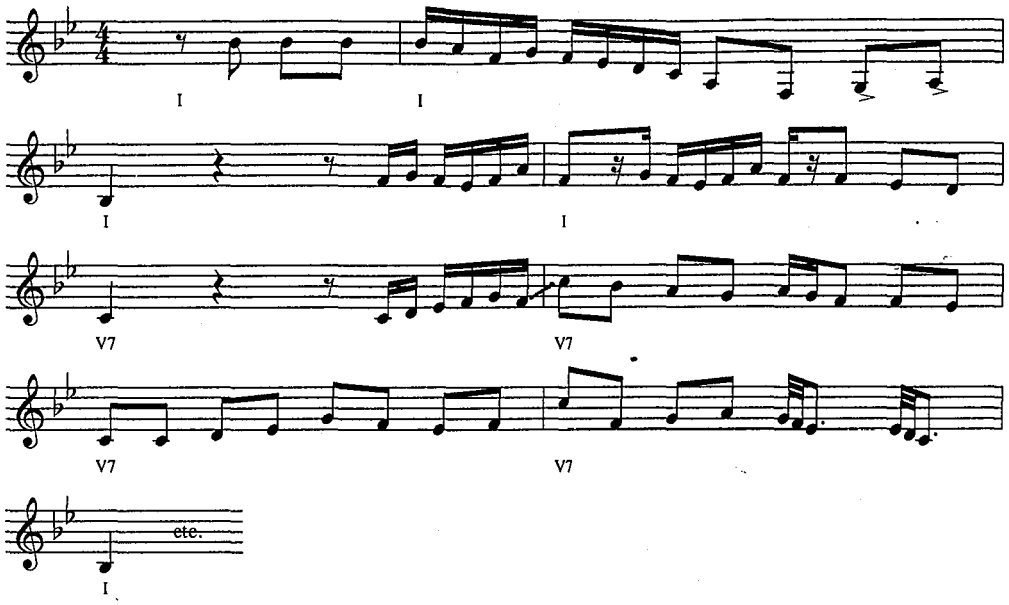
Ethnographically Designed Transcriptions

As already indicated above, in this section I would like to present forms of transcriptions showing an amalgamation of the musical blueprint with the ethnographic data. Some of this data might be already accounted for in the previous section, but treated differently in this one. The transcribed examples are edited on the accompanying video-tape (part three) in a way that the reader could easily follow the transcriptions. The examples on video correspond to those included in this section. The transcriptions exclude guitar accompaniment (except for some examples) and microtonal deviations. Unclear, or dubious, text is put in round brackets. Text which the present writer completely failed to comprehend is left blank within square brackets.

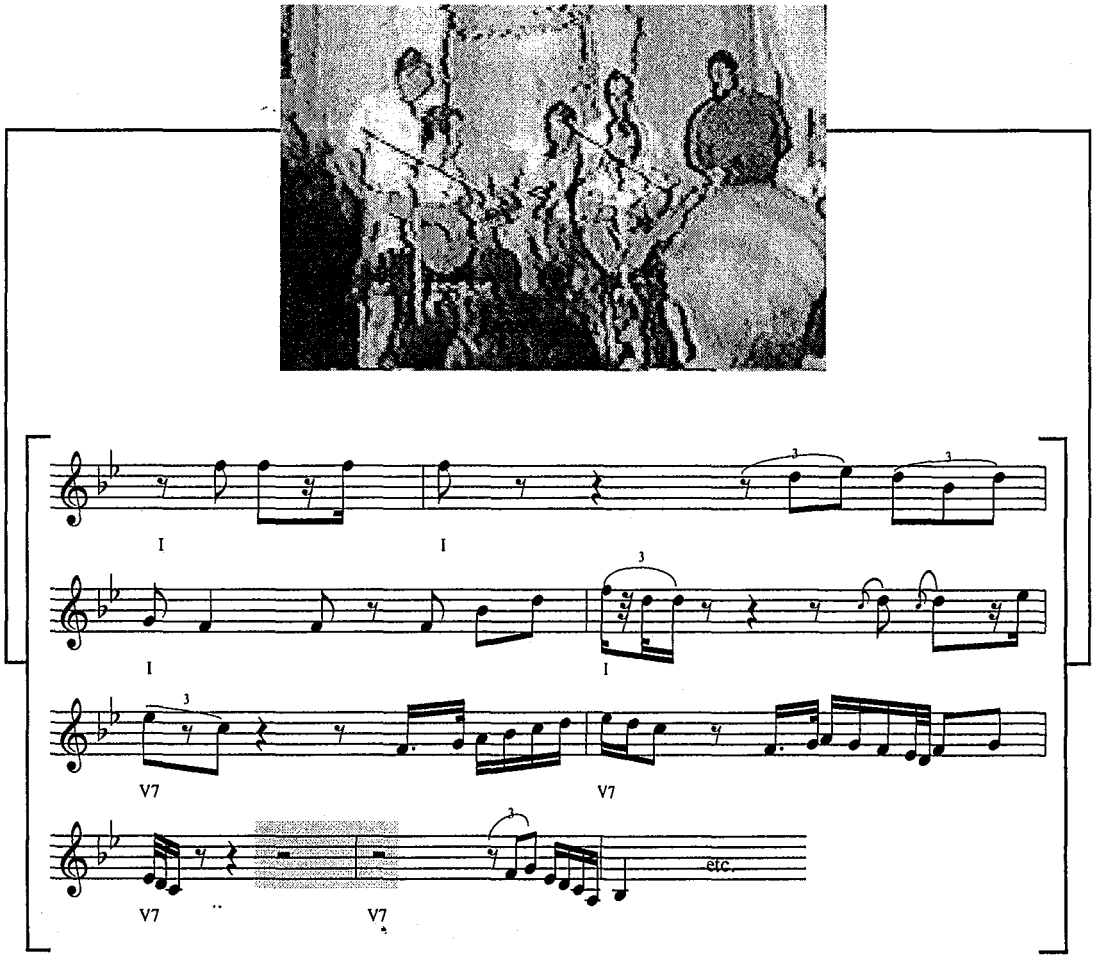
The guitaristic interludes of the *Spirtu Pront* are melodic structures which arise from patterned movements deeply embedded within the motor behaviour of the lead-

ing guitarist. These movements generate other melodic structures, as Baily has argued: 'Once the player's motor structure has been established and a set of skilled movements acquired, it can function in a generative manner' (quoted from Stock 1993:297). Example 4.1a shows a transcription of a normal interlude taken from the first session at Buskett. Example 4.1b is a transcription of an interlude in which the leading guitarist not only generated improvised melodic structures, through the above patterned movements, but these same movements allowed him to socialize with the *għannejja* (the latter example was also taken from the first performance at Buskett). The leading guitarist managed to create an improvised melodic structure while he was talking to one of the performing *għannejja*. When comparing example 4.1a with example 4.1b it is evident that the leading guitarist's attitude, resulted in an interrupted melodic movement (indicated by a shaded area in example 4.1b). Example 4.1b also includes a picture of the leading guitarist, talking to one of the *għannejja*, linked to the resultant musical structure.

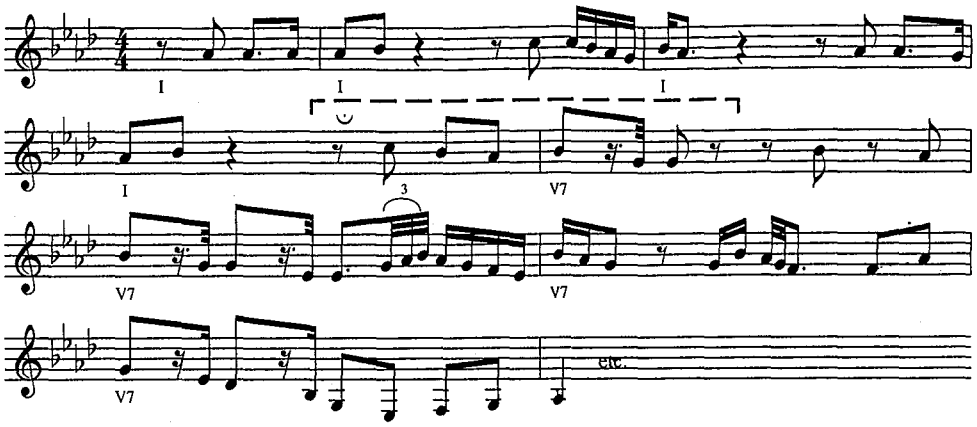
Examples 4.2a and 4.2b are elicited from the session at Żejtun. A member of the audience (the one who gave me the above advice) proposed to me that the camera videotape would be changed during one of the interludes, rather than during the quatrains of the *għannejja*. However, before the session began, he asked the leading guitarist to extend one of the interludes to twice its length, for me to have enough time to change the video-tape. The leading guitarist was supposed to do this as soon as this man made a sign to him. He also advised the *għannejja* of this modification not to intervene before with their *għanja* (see beginning of the session at Żejtun on the second part of the accompanying videotape). Since the whole performance has been recorded on a cassette recorder, the missing part from the videotape has been recorded on cassette; in this way, a complete transcription of the complete interlude was made possible.



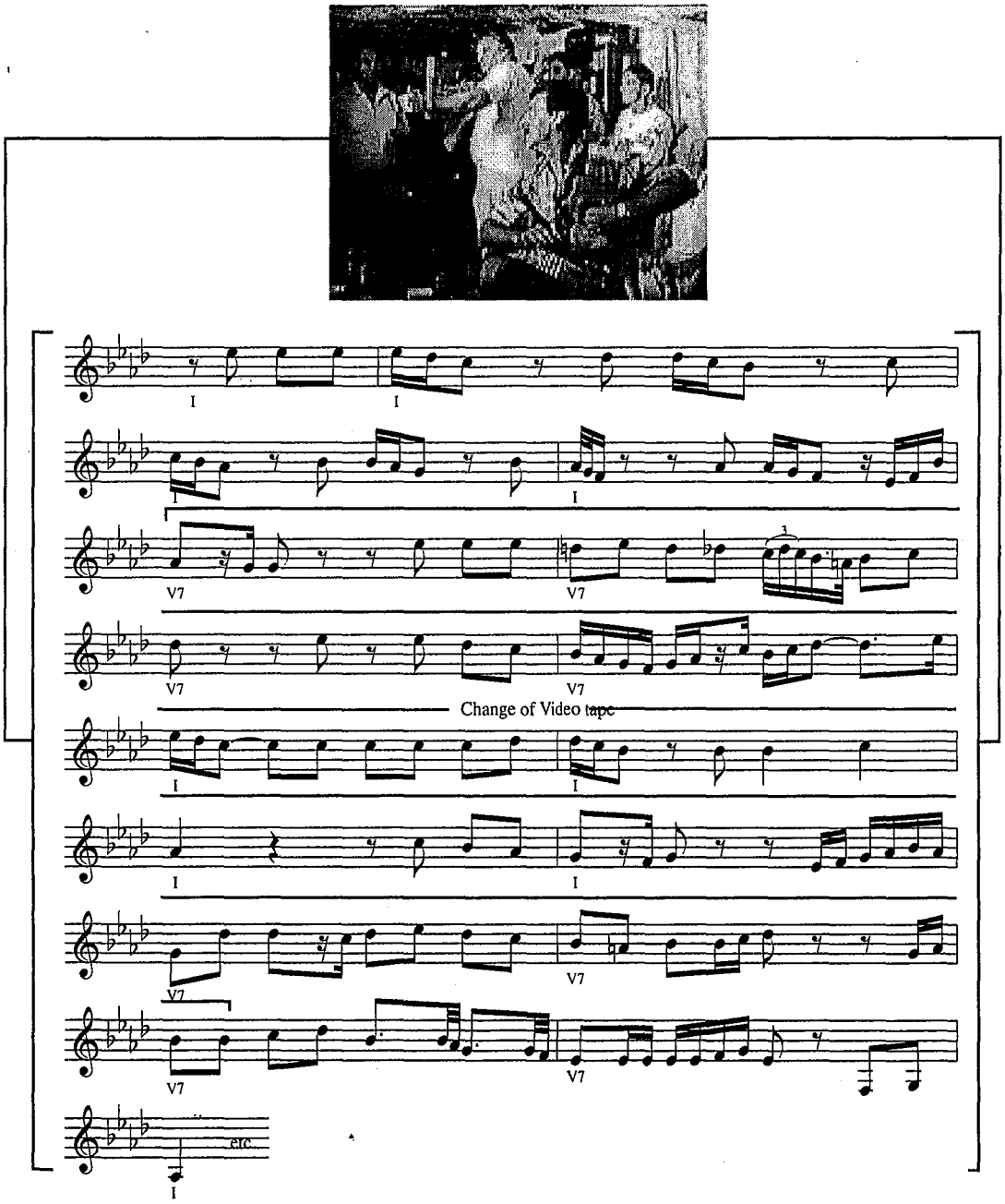
Example 4.1a A normal interlude from the first session at Buskett.



Example 4.1b An area of melodic interruption as the result of the leading guitarist's socialization with one of the performing ghannejja (an interlude taken from the first session at Buskett).



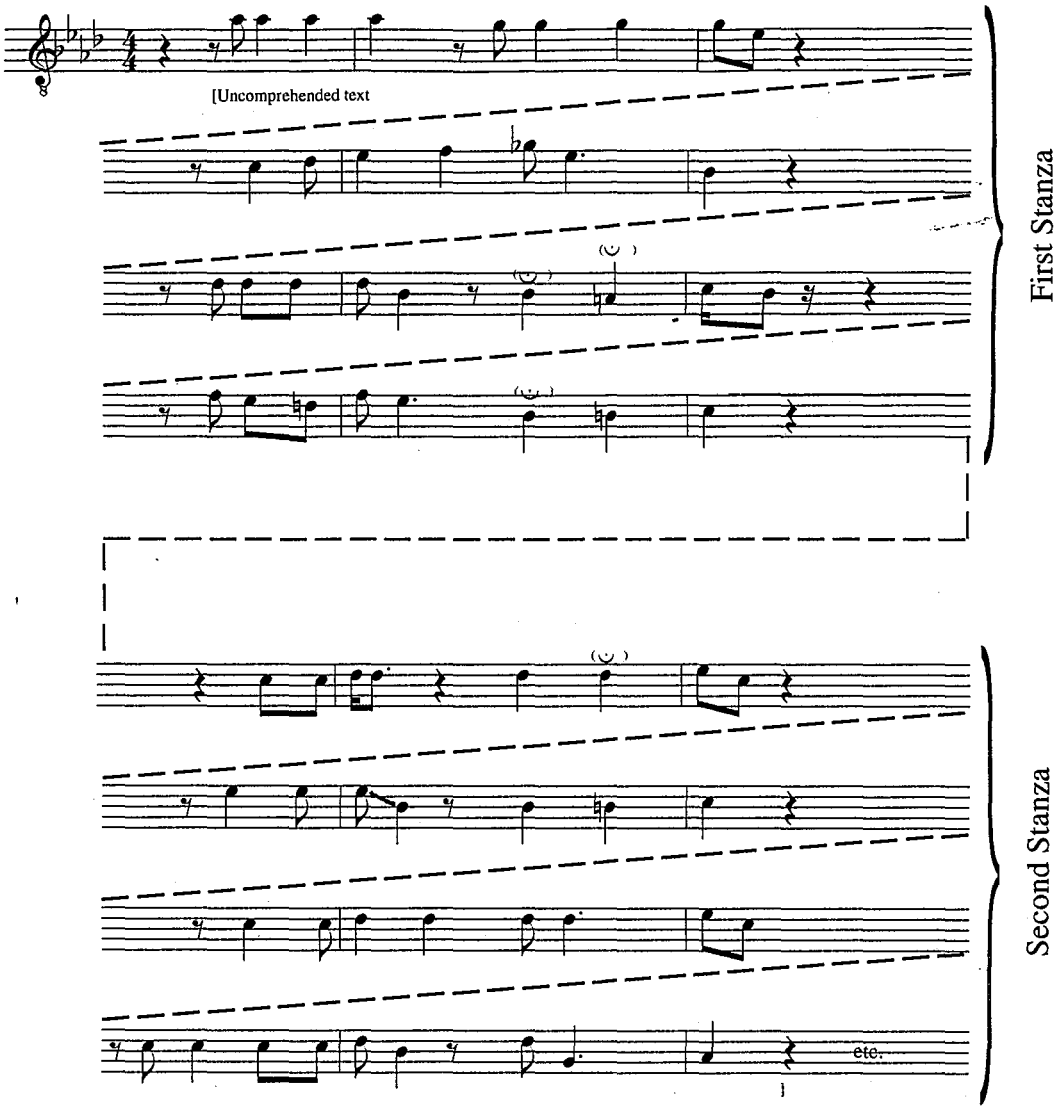
Example 4.2a An interlude from Żejtun



Example 4.2b An extended interlude to double its normal lenght, premeditated by a member of the audience (from the session at Żejtun)

Example 4.2a is a transcription of a normal interlude taken from the same session; it has been transcribed to provide a comparison with the interlude transcribed in example 4.2b. The picture included in the latter example shows the member of the audience making all the necessary arrangements for the extension. The same example shows the extended interlude, to twice its normal lenght, with an indication for the time taken to change the camera videotape.

In a *Spirtu Pront* session, the audience may influence or determine the cadence length of the performer. The *għannejja* have their own supporters who may encourage them to extend the cadence to three and even four quatrains. These supporters may not only be members of the audience, but they might also be fellow *għannejja* who would be taking part in the same performance. As already said, in the context of the *Spirtu Pront*, the extention of a cadence to more than two quatrains signifies a bravura. Example 4.3a (text uncomprehended) below, shows the cadence of the first *għannej* composed of the normal two quatrains. The cadences in examples 4.3a, b and c are divided into stanzas. This may better explain the relative lenght of each cadence when compared with the cadence lenght in example 4.3a. The diagonal dotted lines represent the continuity in between stanzas. This transcriptional format made possible the sole appearance of the clef, key-signature and time-signature at the beginning of each cadence. The picture included in example 4.3b shows an *għannej* being encouraged by his fellow singer to extend the cadence; no specific number of stanzas has been indicated to him. Example 4.3c includes the picture of a member of the audience (already mentioned above) showing the number three, with his fingers, to the last *għannej* who was going to bring the session to an end. For the *għannej* this meant a request to extend the cadence to three quatrains. The transcription in example 4.3c shows the extension of the last cadence to four quatrains instead of three. The last *għannej* went beyond what had been originally asked from him by the member of the audience.



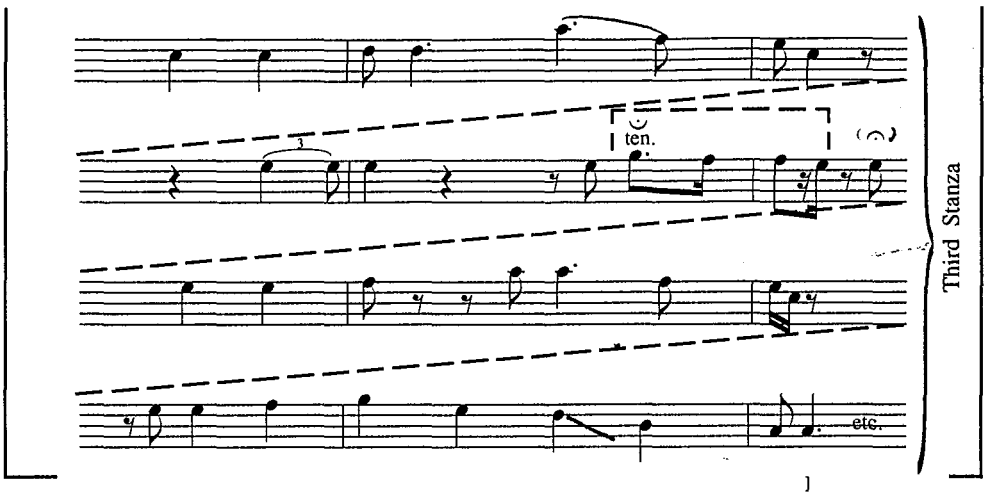
Example 4.3a A two-stanza *kadenza* from Żejtun

The cadences in this particular session were developed one after another without giving chance to the leading guitarist to intervene with his interludes. One of the rules enlisted above refers to this circumstance as a sign that the 'singers are fighting seriously'. This was not the case in this particular session. One reason for the exclusion of the interludes could be the time factor. The session was going to exceed the hour, in fact it finished at 12.25 p.m. I got the impression that some performing *għannejja* were anxious to go home for lunch!

[Uncomprehended text

First Stanza

Second Stanza



Example 4.3b An extended *kadenza* to three stanzas, from Żejtun, motivated by a fellow għannej.

The length of a cadence in the *Spirtu Pront* may be determined by the audience as a whole. The last *għannej,* in the second session at Buskett, extended his cadence to three stanzas. He seemed obliged to add something extra to his cadence when the audience reacted positively to something he said in the first stanza of the *kadenza*. This reaction encouraged him to extend his cadence to three instead of two stanzas (something which he did not do in the first session). This extension misled a member of the audience who seemed conditioned by the two-stanza cadence length of the previous *għannejja*. This man was incidentally caught by the camera trying to applaud at the end of the second stanza of the cadence. These ethnographic details are all included in example 4.4.

The transcriptions included in this section attempt to avoid the isolation of aspects included in the sound produced (that is, extensions and melodic interruptions within the form of the *Spirtu Pront*) from the activity of producing and hearing it. Transcriptions designed to include data elicited from the ethnography of performance may concretely show to what extent certain 'non-musical processes' may extensively

First Stanza

In - du - najt se tip - pru - va - ni

B'hekk il - sie - ni xtaqt li nholl

Second Stanza

Se ni - ġi ghal li ghidt qa - bel

ha nu - rik kemm jien ghan - nej

In - ti kont l_an - ġlu kus - tod - ju

iż - Żej - tu - ni il - fed - dej

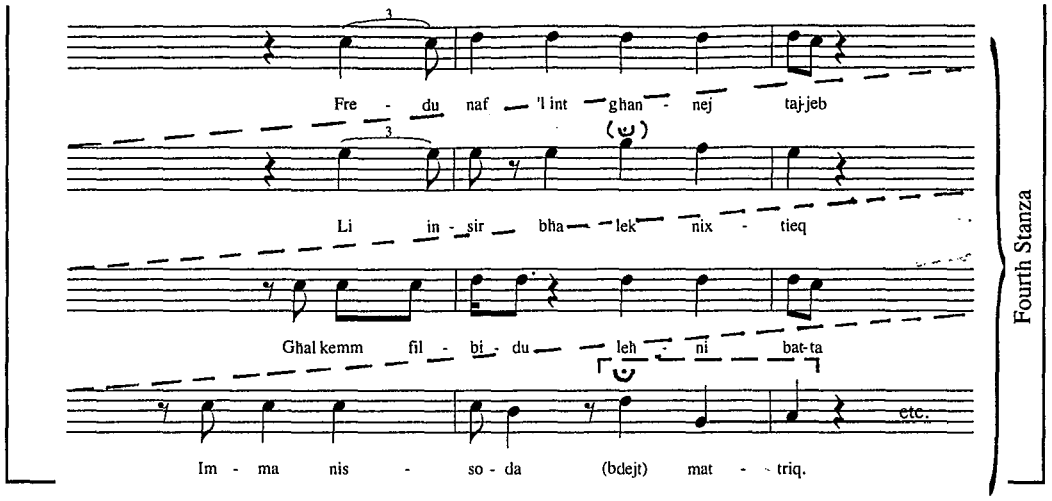
Third Stanza

A - ra din x'se bgħid lek is - sa

Jew nis - ta' ngħid li m'u - rejtx

Dawn għm - lu sie - gha u xe - bgħu

Jie - na ghad - ni lan - qas bdejt

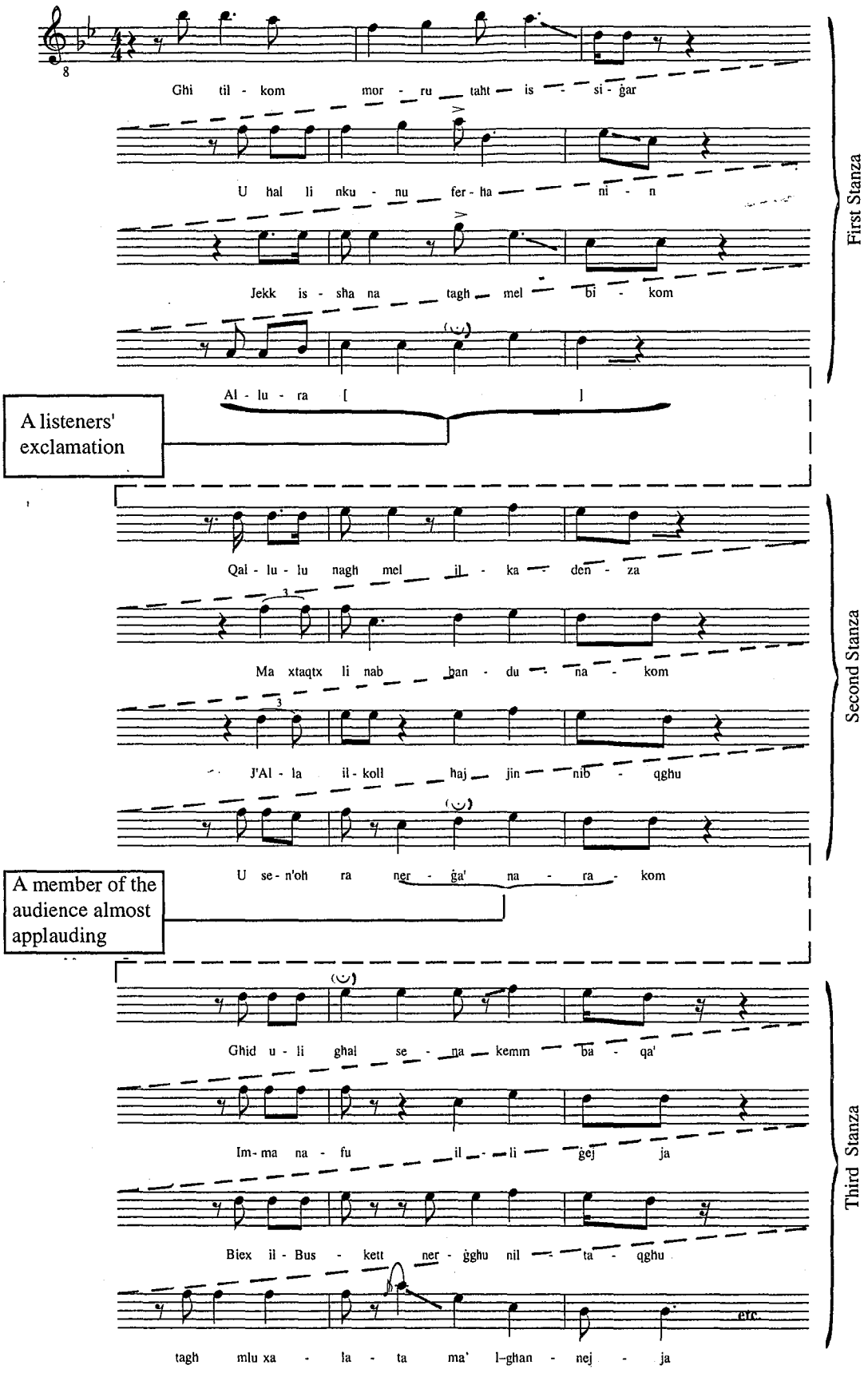


Example 4.3c An extended *kadenza* to four stanzas, from Żejtun, motivated by a member of the audience

determine the music produced. Such an amalgamated transcriptional approach may provide a partial solution to the questions posed by Béhague (1975:165):

> ... does the musical event determine the form of a song or simply condition it? Do we have enough evidence to support the contention of McAllester, Blacking, and Merriam that the social context of a composition is not external to its music sound structure? Do we have suitable analytical procedure to establish convincingly this relationship between the social context of a piece and its internal structure? (quoted from A.Seeger 1980:7).

To recapitulate, this chapter opened with an observation about the parallelism that exists between musical transcription and ethnography. We said that, while musical transcription is the writing of sounds, ethnography is writing about people. The ethnography of musical performance is writing about audience and performers' behaviour during the ongoing musical performance. The opening of this chapter also emphasized the point that ethnographic data of a musical performance always makes a transcription more meaningful. This is true if the data is treated separately and, more so, if it is concretely combined.



Example 4.4 A *kadenza* of three stanzas, from the second session at Buskett, motivated by an audience reaction. The transcription also indicates that part of the melodic structure which prompted a member of the audience to almost applaude before the end of the *kadenza*; this member of the audience seemed to be preconceived by the two-stanza cadences of the other three *għannejja.*

This chapter attempted to show how audience intervention and performers behaviour may be the factors that determine the development of a musical structure. To demonstrate this, the present writer took as examples three performances of the *Spirtu Pront*, a style of Maltese folk-singing. The analytical procedure has been developed in three steps. Firstly, the reader was presented with a brief historical and cultural background of Malta. This background also introduced the reader to the social context of the *għannejja* and of those who regularly attend to *Spirtu Pront* sessions on Sunday mornings. The second section focused on the style and performance practice of the *Spirtu Pront*. A special emphasis has been given to the rules that mainly regulate both the poetical and musical content of the *Spirtu Pront*.

In the third section, the focus was on the three performances from which the ethnographic data, included in this chapter, has been elicited. The two ethnographic accounts show different audiences reacting differently in two different contexts. The designed transcriptions, in the fourth section, attempted to integrate the ethnographic data with the musical blueprint in the most possible concrete way. This approach showed how the integration of the ethnographic data within a musical transcription may simultaneously provide an instant explanation for aspects within the musical sound produced.

Chapter 5

The Involvement of the Performer in Transcription and Analysis

Throughout the history of ethnomusicology, the performer has held an important status. The interaction of the researcher and performer has always been a focal point of method by which the researcher could explore the music of another culture. The history of ethnomusicology, however, shows a continuous change in the role of the performer.

Originally, the performer was assigned the role of an informant singing his tunes for a recording machine. Stumpf for example, worked with performers who were willing to sing their tunes several times to reproduce these same tunes as accurately as possible. Another role, which has been assigned to the performer, was that of an informant disposed to answer questions not only about his particular performance but also about the entire musical culture which he represents. In this regard, Gourlay observed that: 'Ethnomusicologists are fortunate in that, outside the fields of archaeology and ethnohistory, they can question the living, and, if not satisfied, rephrase the question' (1978:13).

Another status assigned to the performer was that of a teacher rather than as a mere informant. Nettl (1983:257) acknowledged that informants 'are our teachers'. Hood promoted the idea of making music to understand its intricate structure. This concept inspired several ethnomusicologists to enquire into the music of other cultures by learning a non-Western musical instrument under the tuition of non-Western musicians. Through this approach, renowned non-Western performers found themselves teaching and performing in several American and European academic music institutions (see Hood 1957 for a seminal discussion).

The academic involvement of these non-Western musicians and their interaction with Western musicologists generated new challenges in the general methodology of ethnomusicology. Widdess (1994), for example, proposed a collaborative approach, on the basis of equal partnership, between the performer and the transcriber in the process of transcription and analysis. Widdess's collaborator in this process was Dr. Ritwik Sanyal, a professional *dhrupad* (a style of North Indian classical vocal music) singer who, at the time of the research, was Visiting Artist at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where the author is a Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology. Widdess (ibid.: 61) stressed the point that both he and Sanyal 'were equal partners in the exercise in the sense that transcription and analysis proceeded by discussion and agreement, rather than by the interrogation or testing of an informant by an investigator'. An important factor that should be considered, in the approach as proposed by Widdess, is Sanyal's familiarity with Western notation. In this regard Widdess remarked that: 'the collaborative method would clearly be less appropriate where the performer is unsympathetic to the use of notation or to the academic enquiry in general' (ibid.).

This chapter attempts to evaluate the limitations and the practicability of applying the above proposed method with a performer who has no knowledge of Western notation and of 'academic enquiry in general'. Apart from this, the chapter also attempts to propose solutions for these limitations. The performer with whom I collaborated is the Maltese *għana* singer Frans Baldacchino, known as *Il-Budaj.* Baldacchino is an *għannej* ('singer'; pronounced 'annei') who specializes in a sub-genre of Maltese *għana* singing called *għana tal-fatt.*

This chapter is divided in five main sections. The first section provides a profile of Baldacchino's musical life as an *għannej*. The second section introduces the reader to the *għana tal-fatt*, mainly its form, style and performance practice. Apart from this, the second section introduces the three pieces of music which have been transcribed

and analysed. The third section opens by establishing the aims for the analysis. It then describes the collaborative method as it has been applied in this particular case. The fourth section presents the results of this method. The fifth section concentrates on the performer by asking: what did he learn from this experience? This question is inspired by the various efforts done in the field of ethnomusicology 'to place the acquisition and manipulation of ... knowledge in people's hands' (Sheehy 1992:333-4).

The Performer's Profile

Frans Baldacchino was born in 1943 at Żejtun, a small village in the Southern part of Malta. When he was still a child he used to attend to *għana* sessions, held in the village wine-shops and village square. From an early age he admired the singing of the then well-known *għannej* Manwel Cilia. Cilia's singing has always been considered by Baldacchino as a model of good *għana* singing.

From an early age, he collected poems cut out from local newspapers sticking them in a copy-book which he used to keep for this purpose. Later he began also to experiment with some lines of his own. At the age of thirteen he attempted his first public appearance as an *għannej*. He wrote a *fatt* (Malta's basic stanzaic ballad form) and asked an *għana* guitarist to accompany him. This first attempt, which took place in one of Żejtun's wine-shops, was warmly greeted by those present.

At the age of twenty he emigrated to Australia where he joined the *għana* community (composed of Maltese immigrants). Baldacchino's reputation as a good *għannej* had already reached the *għana* community in Australia, before his arrival. This happened through reel-tapes and letters which local *għannejja* used to send to their emigrated *għana* fellows in Australia. His first venture into the *Spirtu Pront* was in Australia. Before that, he had never sung *Spirtu Pront* in Malta. During his twelve years stay in Australia he became very popular especially among the *għana* community living in Melbourne.

When he returned back to Malta he was immediately considered as one of the leading *għannejja*. Senior *għannejja* began to invite him to join them for *Spirtu Pront* sessions. His fame quickly spread throughout the island. Baldacchino also began to sing *għana tal-fatt* on Malta's national radio station. Through his *għana* singing on radio he became more popular among the Maltese. He has been chosen several times by local cultural organizations to represent Malta in various folklore festivals out of the country (France, Greece, Canada, Libya and other countries). Presently, he sings only *għana tal-fatt*.

Baldacchino is in favour of 'change' in the Maltese *għana*. 'The *għannej* should please his audience', he told me. For instance, recently Baldacchino has recorded two *fattijiet* having a guitar accompaniment programmed on a synthesizer instead of live guitar playing. As he explained to me: 'A synthesizer never misses a note, if it is properly programmed'. For Baldacchino, 'change' is an exigency. For example, he told me that there are only few *għana* guitarists who are capable enough to produce good playing. These few guitarists are not always available to accompany him. As a result of this, he had to prepare a play-back cassette of guitaristic accompaniment as an alternative to the shortage of good *għana* guitarists.

The *għana tal-fatt*

As it was already stated in the previous chapter, the Maltese word *għana* means 'song' and it is only used to refer to this genre of folk singing. *Fatt* is a story narrated in song form by one *għannej*. The *għana tal-fatt* is Malta's basic stanzaic ballad form. It can be considered as a semi-improvisatory style of singing. The *għannej* chooses a tune from a small range of *għana tal-fatt* tunes and seeks to provide a slightly variant rhythmical and melodic structure from the first introductory *għanja*. In the case of the *għana tal-fatt* the term *għanja* may mean either one vocal stanza or a group of vocal stanzas (generally two). In the *Spirtu Pront* by *għanja* is only meant one vocal stanza.

Feasts, love, drink, satire and practical philosophy are the most common subjects of exposition. Heroic deeds performed by folk heroes, Mattew Callus and Toni Bajada in particular, were frequently remembered in song (*fatt*) as are important victories and other historical landmarks (Cassar Pullicino 1975:97). Forty or fifty years ago the content of many *fattijiet* (plural of *fatt*) was related to astounding local news. For instance, there have been *fattijiet* about the theft of the Admiral's payroll of £125,000 in 1948; the gruesome murder of a boy by his mother in 1960; and the tragic death of a man killed by a huge fish at Saint Thomas Bay in 1956 (ibid.). Nowadays, the textual content of these *fattijiet* is more related to contemporary local affairs: probems of social, moral and political nature. In the case of Baldacchino, the *għana tal-fatt* does not only serve to recount a story. It also serves to 'say in song what one is not permitted to say in speech' (Nettl 1983:182). About this phenomenon, Merriam writes:

> ... song itself gives the freedom to express thoughts, ideas, and comments which cannot be stated baldly in the normal language situation.
>
> Song texts ... can be used as a means of action directed toward the solution of problems which plague a community (1964:193, 201).

Merriam's statements are indeed appropriate to the textual content of current *fattijiet*.

The narration takes the form of a poem with a number of quatrains in a rhyme scheme of a-b-c-b; each line consisting mostly of eight, sometimes seven syllables. According to Baldacchino, a stanza can also consist of six lines instead of four on a rhyme scheme of a-b-c-b-d-d. 'Before World War II, many fat*tijiet* were obtained by buying booklets of printed *għana* poems, which the semi-literate *għannej* could read with some difficulty and memorise. Illiterate *għannejja* sometimes composed their own *fattijiet* by dictating them to others' (Fsadni 1989:8). Nowadays, it is the *għannej* himself who composes the text. On the other hand, one cannot exclude those occasions in which the *għannej* would be provided with an already written *fatt* to sing. Baldacchino remarked that he prefers to compose the text himself:

> I give importance to two aspects when I come to compose the text myself: word selection and poetic metre. One should select words having a rich euphonic quality, distinguished from other words for their sonic beauty. In other words, those words which I can fluently pronounce without problems. Secondly, there's poetic metre, something which I know and apply.

He also told me that sometimes he is inspired, for the composition of the text, from books that he reads in his free time.

One can listen to *għana tal-fatt* either on local radio stations, by buying cassettes of *għana tal-fatt*, or by attending to Maltese festa nights occasionally organized by various social and cultural village groups. The *għana tal-fatt* is sung by one għann*ej* accompanied by two to three guitarists, one solo and two accompanying guitars. Nowadays very few *għannejja* sing the *għana tal-fatt.* The reason for this has been given by Baldacchino:

> First of all, one should be able to write the text (or the poem). Most *għannejja* are not capable of doing this. Some are illiterate and others are not able to write a poetic text. Literary writing is a skill! Another problem is that, since, the *għana tal-fatt* is sung by one *għannej* he might lack endurance in the course of the song. Then there is tonality! G*ħannejja* who sing only the *Spirtu Pront* rarely sing in other tonalities except that of *La*♭ *maggiore* (A♭major). In the *għana tal-fatt* one should be able to sing in *Fa maggiore* and in Mi m*inore*, for example. Also in the *tal-fatt*, the *għannej* should be able to include some degree of variation in his singing. One cannot keep on repeating exactly the same tune throughout the whole session, otherwise the audience gets bored. *Għannejja* who sing the *Spirtu Pront* sing an *għanja* now and then without preoccupying themselves of these technicalities.

Apart from the soloistic interludes, it is also expected that the leading guitarist will provide some elaborated accompaniment while the *għannej* is singing his vocal stanzas. The role of the other guitarists is to strum a steady rhythm based on triadic chords.

The g*ħana tal-fatt* has the same form as that of the *Spirtu Pront*, in that, it also

consists of three sections. The first section can be referred to as the instrumental prelude. This establishes the tonality, the tempo and the 'general mood' for the *għannej.* Tonality and tempo change according to the gist of the narration or the subject chosen by the *għannej* to sing about. As we will see in the third section, the prelude also introduces certain rhythmical and intervallic structures which are then reiterated by the *għannej* himself in the course of the song.

The second section consists of a number of alternations between the vocal stanzas and the guitaristic interludes. Except for some unusual cases, the stanzas that constitute an *għanja*, are evenly grouped. The number of stanzas in an *għanja* depends on the endurance of the g*ħannej* and/or on the suspense or excitement of the narration. Sometimes, the għannej passes from one stanza to another without allowing the solo guitarist to intervene with his interlude. In this way, the *għannej* will be in a better position to maintain the audience's attention on the development of the narration or the subject. An *għana tal-fatt* performance may take anything between five to twenty minutes. On the last line of his last stanza the singer sings what is referred to as the *telgħa*, ('ascension'; pronounced 'tela'). The *telgħa* indicates the end of the narration approached by an upwards interval of a perfect 5th and followed by a descent melismatic movement. When the *telgħa* is left out the *għannej* treats his last line of the session as any other line. After the *telgħa* the first guitarist plays an instrumental coda to bring the session to an end.

The three pieces of *għana tal-fatt* I will be working on with Baldacchino are: *Kundanna u Mrar* (Condemnation and Bitterness), *Serenità* (Serenity) and a number from a recent folk-opera called *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli* (The Acts of the Apostles). Another extract which Baldacchino will be referring to is *Ninu ta' Ħal-Farruġ* (Ninu of Ħal-Farruġ). From the latter piece only a fragment has been transcribed in order to consolidate the performer's ideas. The texts for Kund*anna u Mrar, Serenità* and *Ninu ta' Ħal-Farruġ* were composed by Baldacchino himself, while the text for *L-Atti ta' l-*

Appostli was written by the Maltese author Frans Sammut. The subject of *Kundanna u Mrar* is a fictitious one. *Serenità* is based on the personal experience of the *għannej*. The text for *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli* is biblically inspired and modified.

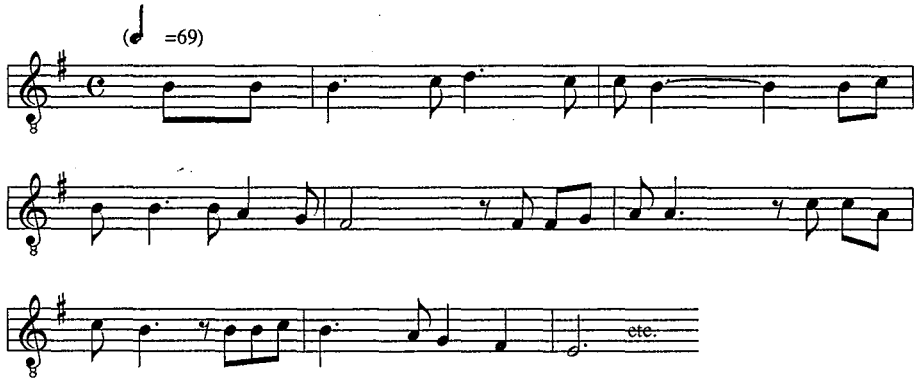
Kundanna u Mrar was recorded on Malta's national radio station (then called 'Xandir Malta'), in 1988 or 1989. *Serenità* was recorded during a live performance at an international folk-festival held in Paris in 1992. The folk-opera *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli* was recorded in Summer of 1995, only a week before one of its numbers was transcribed by the present researcher. The folk-opera has been presented in play-back form. As one can notice, the problem of time lapse between the recording of these *fattijiet* and the transcription of them was one of the drawbacks in this research. Like Widdess's performers (1994:61), in the interim, Baldacchino has become a listener unable to remember exactly what was going through his mind at any given moment. I decided to rely on three pieces, rather than on one piece, for the performer to become gradually familiar with the aims and objectives of this collaborative approach. Apart from this, he could have a better and wider chance to explore his own music.

Serenità has been chosen for its recognized prestige by the performer himself as one of the numbers included in the first ever recorded compact disk of Maltese *għana*. Apart from this, I was interested in aspects of interpretation during a live performance. According to Baldacchino, the audience was mainly composed of folk scholars.

The folk-opera consisted of a number of Maltese *għana* tunes. The opera utilised tunes mainly derived from the *għana spirtu pront*. The reason for this was that most of the parts were in dialogue form and the *Spirtu Pront* style, therefore, could easily match the textual structure of the opera. In fact, the transcribed number was the only *għana tal-fatt* tune included in the opera. In *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli*, Baldacchino was assigned the main part of Saint Paul. At the time of this research, the folk-opera

was Baldacchino's latest recorded performance. Apart from this, this excerpt is a lament based on a religious theme. Religiosity is one of Baldacchino's favourite themes.

The other lament which has been chosen and transcribed for the purpose of the present research is *Kundanna u Mrar.* This piece was chosen by the present writer as a representative piece of *għana tal-fatt* based on a lament tune. When I asked Baldacchino about the number of lament tunes which one could find in the *għana tal-fatt* repertoire, he replied that to his knowledge only three lament tunes exist: the lament in *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli* and *Kundanna u Mrar* and another one which he sang for me during one of our sessions. The latter lament has been included in this work for preservation purposes (see Example 5.1).



Example 5.1 A lament

The story of *Kundanna u Mrar* is based on a Spanish story about an ex-convict, called Raphael, who lived in Madrid. He terrorised his wife as well as the whole neighbourhood. One day he was convicted of killing a criminal. While in his cell, waiting for his execution, he received news that his wife had given birth to a baby boy. He wished he could live to see his new born son. While waiting in his cell, he was informed that the queen commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment. His wife was very dipleased by this, not because she wanted him dead, but because this meant she could not marry again. According to her Catholic beliefs she could not marry since her husband was still alive. Hence, like him, she was also condemned to live in distress.

The message of *Serenità* is one of genuine peace and serenity of heart. The *għannej* recalls his personal experience and his endeavours to find peace on earth. The narration was transformed into a metaphor with the narrator embarking on an imaginary tour of the world which took him to various places. He flew above the earth thinking the sky could provide the serenity he was looking for. He plummeted into the depths of the oceans as well as joined a relaxing cruise with passengers on a tour of new countries and towns. Wandering and still disappointed he entered churches and monasteries. He also visited the eternal city of Rome. He walked through forests and the countryside tasting the very essence of mother nature, by rivers and up mountains. The beauty he found had been spoiled. The very thought that this can happen destroys the serene atmosphere which one longs to find. At this point the narrator decides to return back to his country. On entering his home he noticed a young child, not more than three years old. The narrator was struck with the child's innocence characterised in his tender face, his sparkling eyes, wide open, his smiling lips, reflecting at last, a serene heart!

The extract from the folk-opera *L-Atti ta 'l-Appostli* consists of one of Saint Paul's speeches to the pagans in which he encourages them to believe in one God, the Creator of all the earth. Then the extract ends with a prayer of praise to God.

The Method Adopted

The present analysis attempts to throw light on aspects of interpretation as revealed in these three pieces. Together with Baldacchino I worked in the following way. First, we decided on the recorded pieces that we were going to work together on. The next step was for me to transcribe the three pieces. Sometimes the rhythmical and melodic lines of these transcriptions look cleaner than they actually are. Certain vocal glissandos, for example, are only indicated by symbol rather than written out. This can shed light on what a native transcriber considers to be the essential melodic and rhythmical information and what he takes to be 'ornamentation'. For the purpose of this

research, the text is sometimes indicated by different kinds of brackets; this will be explained in the following section. The transcriptions exclude the guitaristic accompaniment; this is only included where it is necessary for the purpose of the present analysis.

The transcribed pieces were then discussed with the performer for further interpretative markings and a detailed explanation of them. The pieces were separately discussed and the elicited information from each piece was systematically organized by the present writer. We worked with two different types of notations: the transcribed score and the recorded tape (or the compact disk for *Serenità*). The latter is another alternative form of notation specifically 'read' by the sound machine. This approach links with Sloboda's assertion :

> By recording an improvisation and then playing it back to the performer, with as many pauses and backtracks as required, we could hope to obtain a detailed record of the conscious decisions involved in constructing the improvisation (quoted from Widdess 1994:60).

The transcriptions were accompanied by a series of graded questions intended to: orientate the performer to the proposed approach, stimulate the performer to apply an attentive attitude to listening, keep our discussion within the subject being discussed.

Even if the transcriptions were accompanied by controlled questioning, the approach has been characterized by three intertwined phases. In the field of text, we could work on the basis of equal partnership. Baldacchino was able to discuss with me, for example, why he chose a particular word instead of another in terms of euphony, accents and rhyme, and how this effected his singing. In other words, he was able to discuss the musicality of the text and its constraints on his singing.

Sometimes I had to pass from equal partnership to the level of 'interrogation or

testing of an informant by an investigator' (Widdess ibid.:61). This happened when Baldacchino 'stretched' his answers as to include other information regarding the sub-genre of *għana* in consideration. I considered this as extremely important in order to put the results of our analysis in the wider context of the sub-genre being discussed. This phase provided, for example, the opportunity for the performer to elicit examples from other recordings of his own and to sing for me other melodies which had some stylistic connection with the ones being discussed (as in Example 5.1, for example), do a critical judgement of past and recent performances of other *għannejja*. This critical evaluation shed light on what the performer considers to be 'good' and 'bad' *għana tal-fatt* singing.

The third phase gave Baldacchino the chance to explore the task of transcription. Obviously, his involvement was inevitably restricted by his illiteracy in Western notation. But his contribution served to minimize the present writer's subjectivity, especially in the aspect of 'ornamentation', referred to by Baldacchino as *ksur*. Certain 'embellishments', for example, which the present researcher had failed to indicate in the transcriptions were observed and communicated to him through the performer's hand gestures.

Faced with such limitation, the researcher should rely on alternatives in order to bring the performer as close as possible to the task of transcription and to elicit from him ideas about his "own" (that is, the performer's) performance. As already pointed out in the previous chapter, notation is only one kind of musical transformation. However, at this stage of the research the present transcriber shifted to hand-movement communication to elicit the performer's ideas and opinions. Yamaguti observed that chieronomy, or hand movement, may be considered as another medium through which ideas and concepts about music can be communicated:

> Turning our attention to primarily visual aspects of music, we can ... see non-sonic objects representing a music structure and, moreover, a culture

> at large. One such example is body movements accompanying, or at least associated with sound production - most notably, so-called cheironomy or hand movements, as in teaching or conducting. Here, colotomic regularity of articulation or wave-like curved contours of melodies, for instance, may be observed; and in this case, even if inaudible (as in silent movies), they tell us something about an essential part of the music structure which may further be considered to be a reflection of a cultural value. It is to be noted here that cheironomy should be regarded not only as a visual representation of a music but also as a tactile, or better, kinesthetic transformation of it, especially from the perspective of the executors (1986:31).

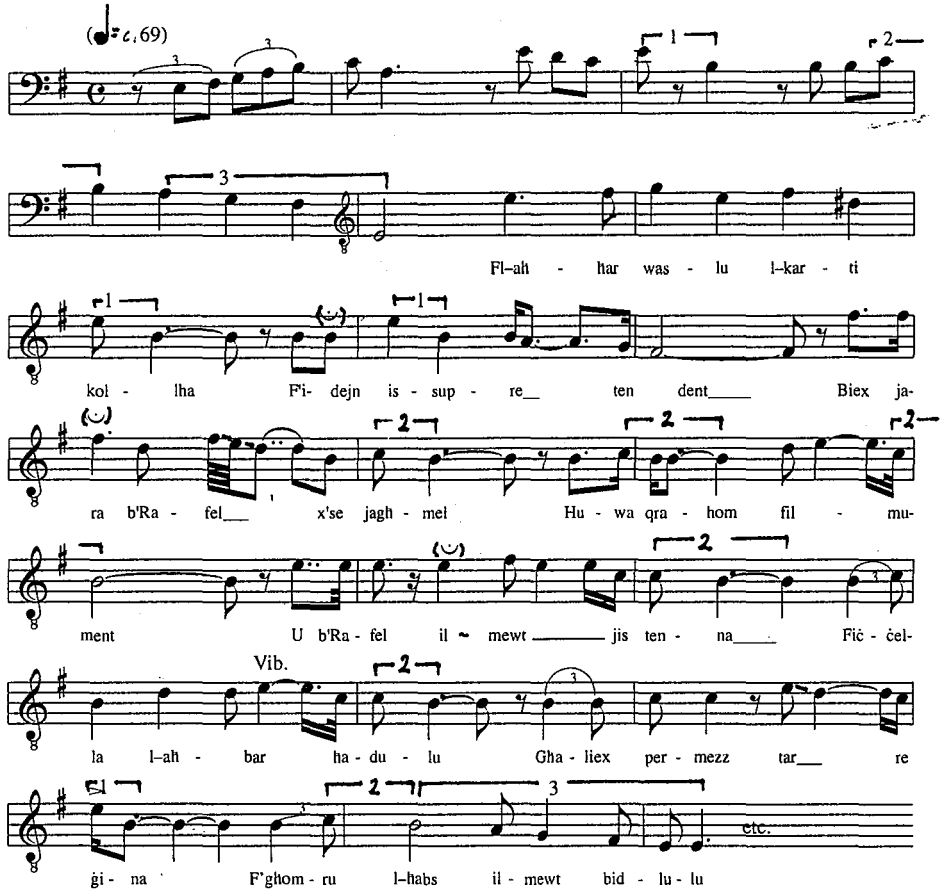
Hand movement seemed quite effective at this stage of the method. In the following section we will evaluate the elicited results from the above intertwined phases.

The Elicited Transcriptional and Analytical Information

The *għana tal-fatt* is a strophic (mostly quatrain) type of singing. As said above, an *għanja* consists of evenly grouped stanzas. Each line within the stanza corresponds to a phrase in the pattern of a statement and response. The music is tonal and follows a Western harmonic language. In these three transcribed pieces the vocal range of Baldacchino is from c# to g1.

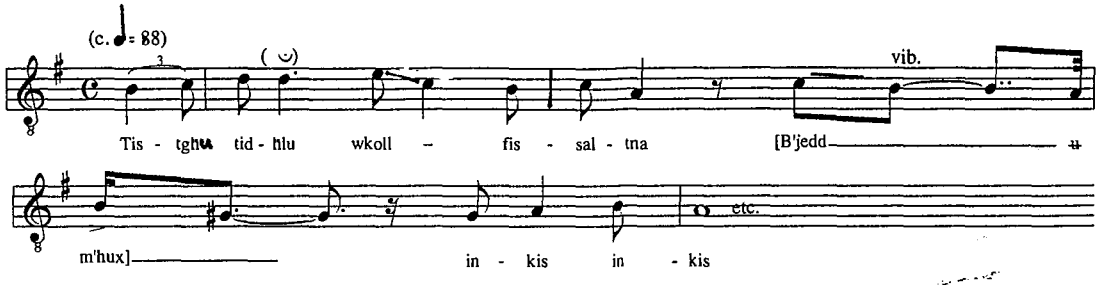
The general tendency in these three pieces is for the first two syllables in each line being introduced by an anacrusis. The transcriptions also show a strong inclination towards syncopation, particularly noticed on the last two syllables of the line (mainly, with an eighth-note followed by a quarter-note). It has been written that this syncopation, which is frequently found in the Maltese *għana*, reflects the syncopated nature of the Maltese language (Grech 1984: 21). The present writer is of the opinion that this syncopated characteristic has been guitaristically inspired rather than linguistically determined. If one considers, for example, the instrumental prelude or any other guitaristic interlude, one could easily notice some common intervallic and rhythmical patterns (not necessarily syncopation) which are reiterated by the *għannej* him-

self in the course of the song (see Example 5.2). (Examples 5.2 to 5.7 are included in the accompanying tape).

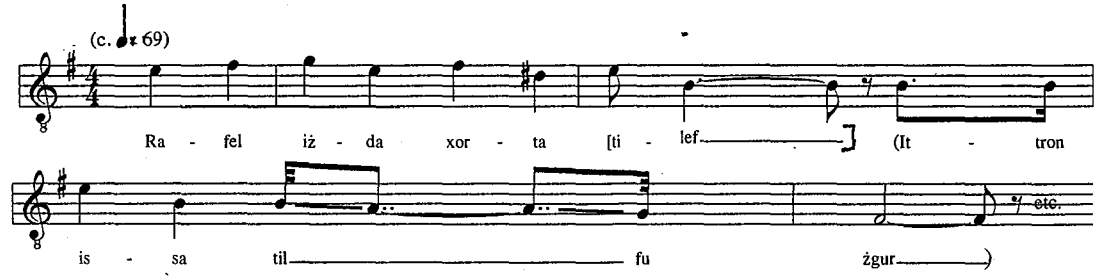


Example 5.2 Areas of intervallic and rhythmical similarities (in numbered brackets) found in the twelfth interlude and the thirteenth għanja of Kundanna u Mrar

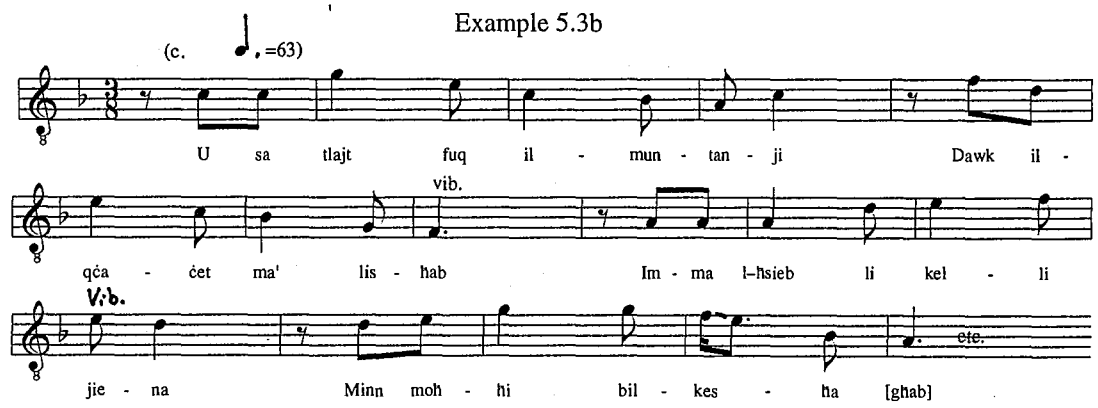
The first task in this collaborative approach was to check unclear diction with the performer himself (more in *Kundanna u Mrar* and the extract from *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli*, which were provided on tape, rather than in *Serenità* which is recorded on compact disk) resulting from deficiencies in the recording. Text enclosed in square brackets are words and phrases which, for one reason or another, I could not comprehend; only Baldacchino had a solution for them (see Examples 5.3a, b, c). On the other hand, there were phrases which neither I nor Baldacchino could understand. The performer was only able to attempt a solution for these uncomprehended phrases. These attempted solutions are indicated in the transcriptions by round brackets (see Example 5.3b). The time lapse problem was obvious even at this early stage of the method.



Example 5.3a



Example 5.3b



Example 5.3c

Examples 5.3a, b, c Extracts from *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli, Kundanna u Mrar* and *Serenità* respectively, showing unclear diction.

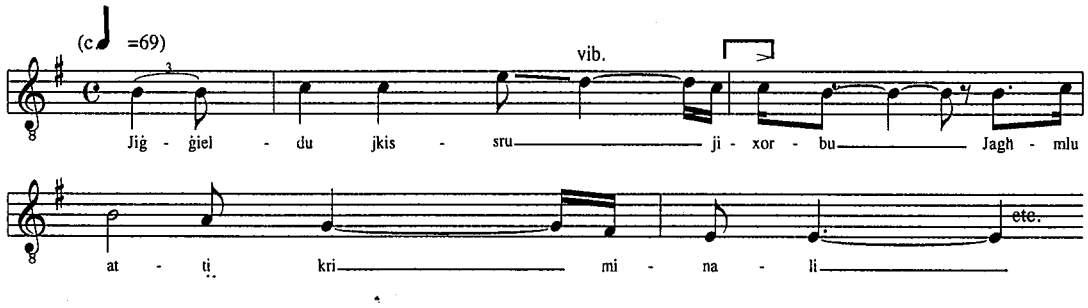
Baldacchino remarked that the problem with my comprehension of certain words and phrases was not only caused by the recording. He explained to me that even at a live performance one could also come across this problem. We noticed that certain words were problematic to apprehend due to their adjacency in the line. For instance, in example 5.3c the adjacent words '*kesħa*' and '*għab*' have the same sound 'a' at the end for the former and at the beginning for the latter. In the case of the word '*għab*' the consonant *'għ'* takes the sound of the vowel 'a' which follows it.

In the case of *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli*, the performer explained that the text was more inclined towards words of Semitic origin rather than of Romantic origin (that is, languages developed from Latin). However, the resultant text was short of vowels. Baldacchino asserted: 'When I compose the text myself, I try to use as many Romance words as possible. Such words make the text more singable, by adding more musicality to it'.

Baldacchino also remarked that 'sometimes the guitars have the tendency to dominate the singing of the *għannej* with their accompaniment, especially in descent melodic movements and at the end of an *għanja*. In the latter situation the *għannej* may be running out of breath and his voice becomes weaker when compared to the volume of the guitars.

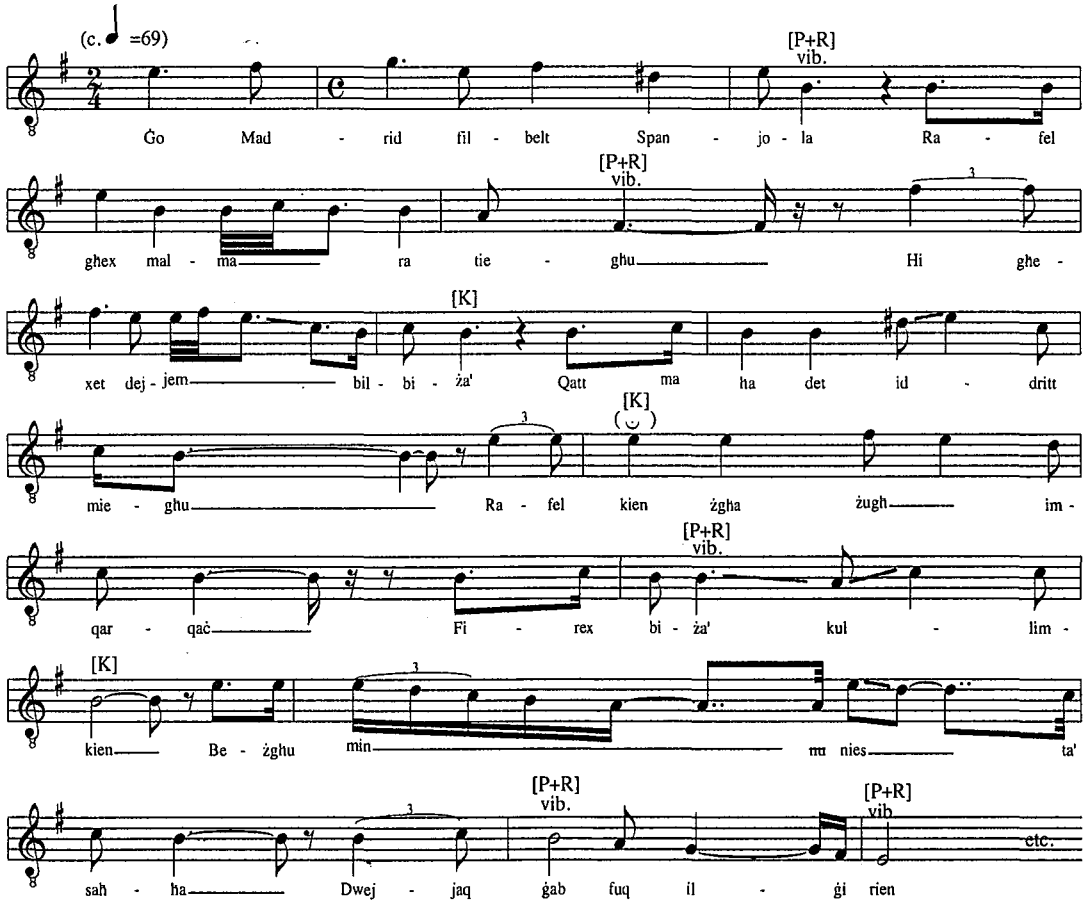
Baldacchino explained to me that, in moments when he is running out of breath he gives a strong accent on a syllable to regain the necessary breath to finish up his stanza. This happened, for example, at the end of the fifth *għanja* of Kundanna u Mrar, on the syllable '*xor*' of the word '*xorbu*' (see Example 5.4). From this I realized that an accent does not necessarily correspond to a word emphasis, but it may be the result of a technique consciously or unconsciously applied by the performer in the course of his singing.

In this same transcription of *Kundanna u Mrar* I asked Baldacchino to indicate

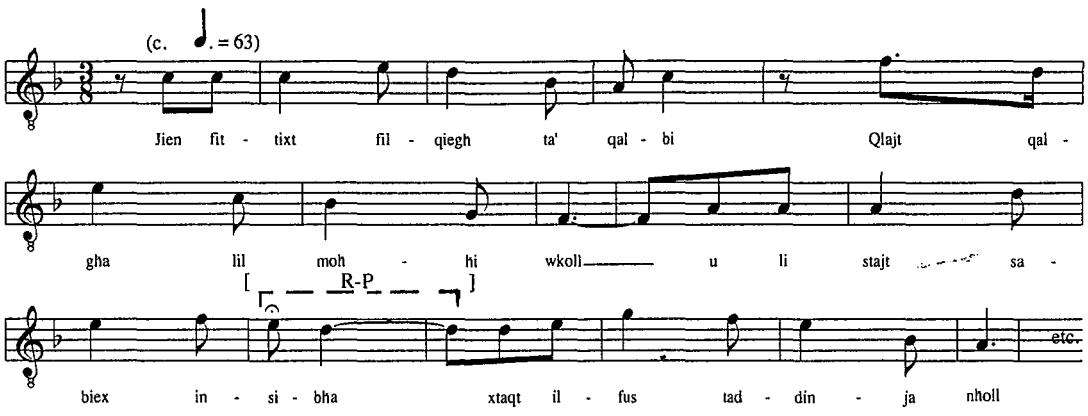


Example 5.4 An extract from *Kundanna u Mrar* showing a physically determined accent on the syllable 'xor' (in square bracket for emphasis) of the word 'jixorbu'

for me, by his hands, any unusual moments where his voice produced any vibrato, tremolo, mordent or any other similar 'embellishment'. Obviously, Baldacchino was not able to distinguish, for instance, between a mordent and a vibrato; for him these were categorized under the term *ksur* . Examples 5.5a and b may be taken as examples of a compromise form of transcription between what the performer and the researcher agreed to be indicated in the transcription. For example, there have been situations in which the performer proposed the marking of certain 'embellishments' which in the present writer's opinion was not the case. However, on the transcription I included the letter K which stands for what the performer considered as *Ksur*, or for any other 'embellishment' which the transcriber could not identify. The P+R stands for those musical observations which have the mutual agreement of both the Performer and the Researcher. The R-P means that the Researcher had no support from the Performer about certain transcription indications. This latter case may be noticed in example 5.5b; in



Example 5.5a



Example 5.5b

Example 5.5a and b Compromise forms of transcriptions from *Kundanna u Mrar* and *Serenità* respectively

this example the transcriber noticed and indicated a ritenuto (for a short passage) but which for Baldacchino did not seem to be the case.

In the opening of the second *għanja* of *Kundanna u Mrar* I noticed that Baldacchino approached the second line, reading '*Rafel qatt ma ħa pariri*', with more spirit. This came after a short elaborated accompaniment by the leading guitarist, a few bars before the beginning of the above line. Baldacchino told me that some 'elaborated' accompaniment 'is always stimulating' for his singing. He continued:

> An elaborated accompaniment by the first guitarist does not only stimulate my singing, but it will provide something different for the audience as well. The audience hates listening to the same rhythmical strumming. On the other hand, the first guitarist should not exaggerate. Once, I had a guitarist who did too much elaboration. So much that it nearly threw me off.

He remarked that in the case of *Kundanna u Mrar* the interludes were developed on the low register of the guitar (the low register of the guitar is known among *għana* guitarists as *Burduni*):

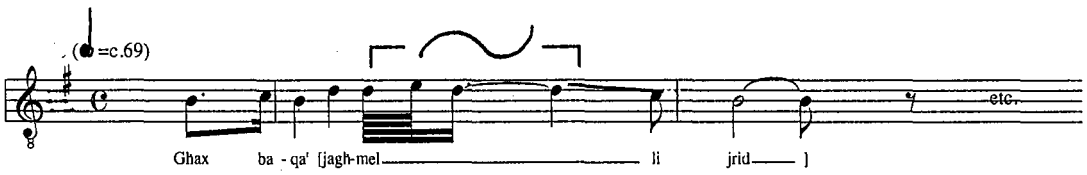
> If I knew that he was going to play only on the *Burduni* I wouldn't ask him to accompanying me. The *Burduni* provide no stimulation for more ex-

pressive singing. The way the first guitarist develops his interludes has a lot of effect on my singing.

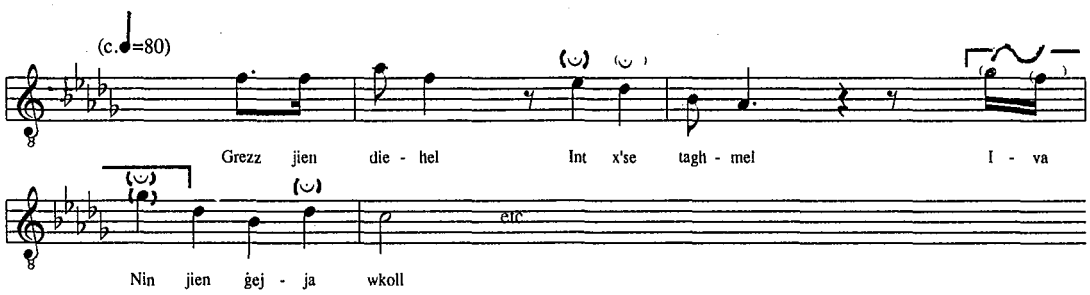
From the recordings I could notice some interesting timbre effects like: nasal and sighing sounds. The nasalization indicated in example 5.6a resulted in an unclear pronounciation of the text. When I asked Baldacchino why did he introduce that nasalization, he had no reply. But he remarked that sometimes he uses nasalization as to express comic situations. He referred me to an example from *Ninu ta' Ħal-Farrug* in which he makes use of nasalization to imitate a woman's voice (see Example 5.6b). His reply can be evaluated in the light of what happens in lyrical art: ' nasalization is used, in Mozart for example, to express irony, but more generally, serves to mark the grotesque' (Lortat-Jacob 1995:101).

Another interesting timbre effect found in *Serenità* is sighing (see Example 5.7) reflecting sentiments of anguish. Unusual timbre effects, according to Baldacchino, 'always provide that something new for the listeners'.

If one compares *Serenità,* which is in waltz tempo, with the two other transcribed

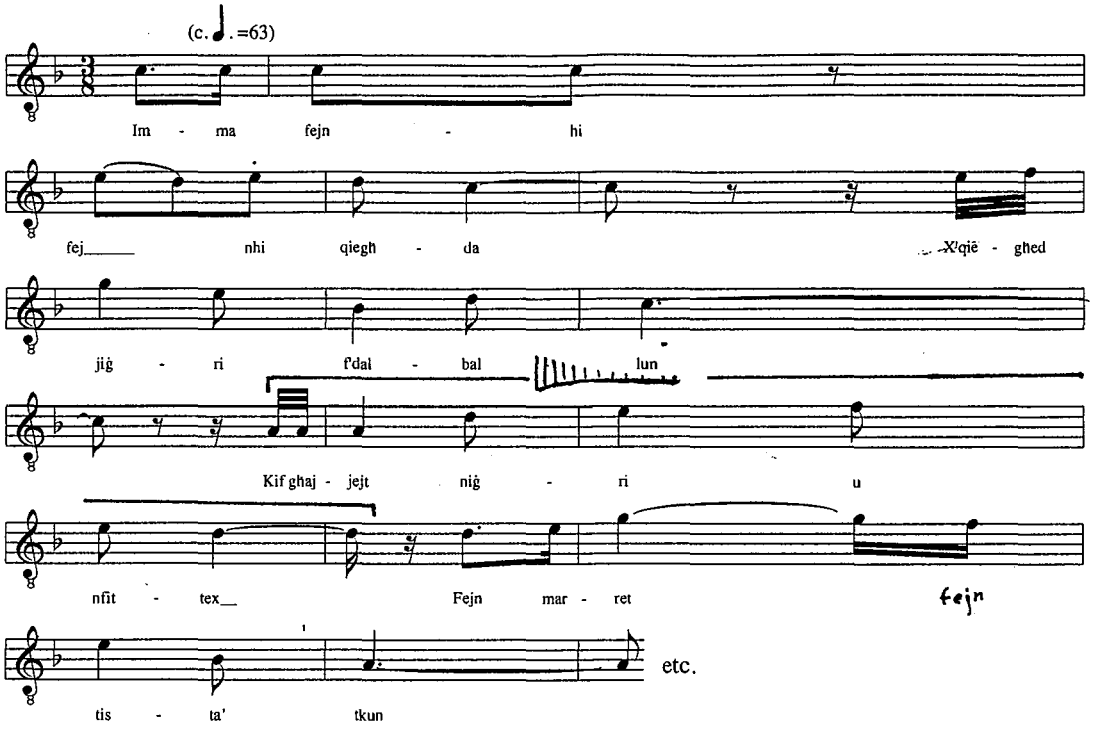


Example 5.6a



Example 5.6b

Example 5.6a,b Nasalised vocal timbre effects. Extracts taken from *Kundanna u Mrar* and *Ninu ta' Hal-Farrug* respectively



Example 5.7 Sighing effects noticed in *Serenità*

pieces, one concludes that the former lacks 'ornamentation'. A reason for this has been proposed by the performer himself. According to Baldacchino, the relatively quick tempo of the waltz restricts the possibilty for the *għannej* to elaborate his singing with 'ornamentation' (see Example 5.9). On the other hand, if one compares the degree of 'ornamentation' in the two laments one may notice that the andante tempo of the extract from *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli* imposes restrictions on the degree of 'ornamentation' when compared with the degree of 'ornamentation' in *Kundanna u Mrar* (which is in adagio tempo) (see Examples 5.8 and 5.10). In this regard, Baldacchino remarked that 'ornamentation' also depends on the 'mood' of the *għannej* on the day of the performance.

One of the main musical features in Baldacchino's *għana* is his ability to provide a slightly different rhythmical, and sometimes even melodic, variation on the theme introduced in the first *għanja* of the *fatt*. Examples 5.8 to 5.10 show all the rhythmical and melodic variety in Baldacchino's singing, as emerged in the corresponding lines of

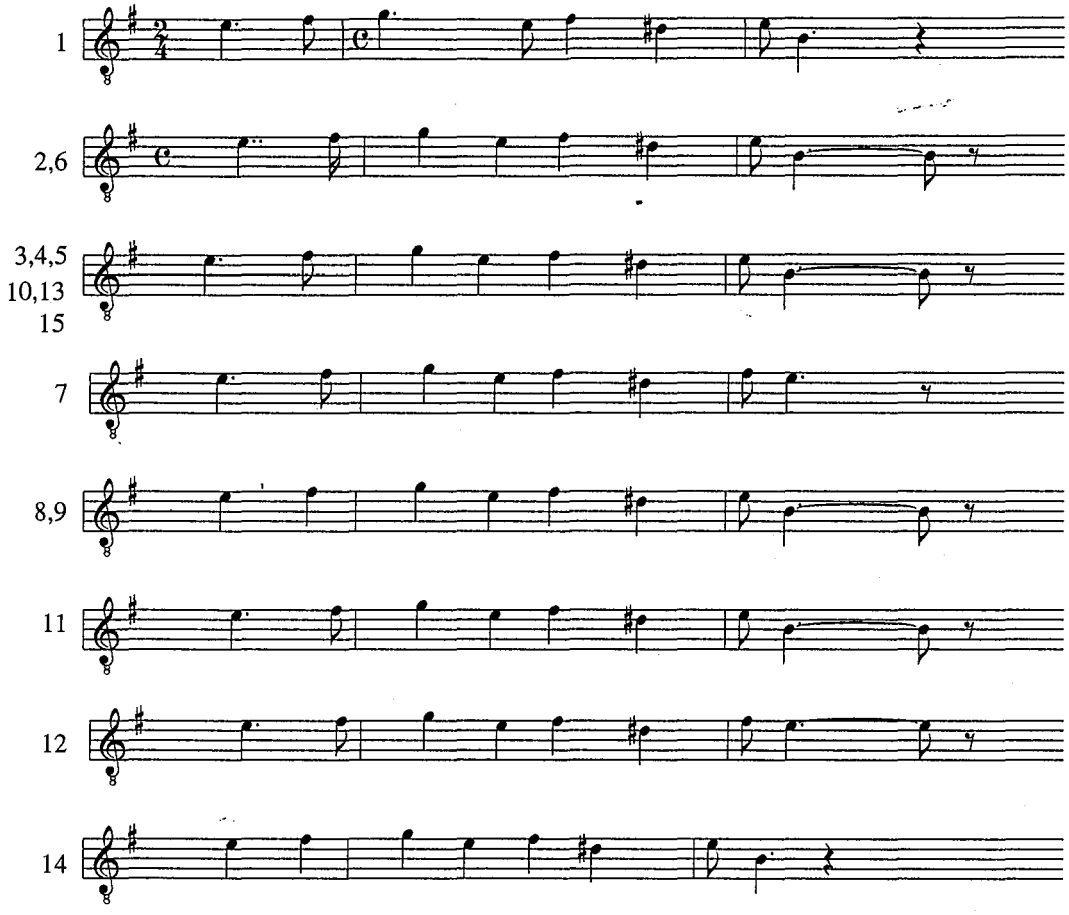
every *għanja*. This schematic representation shows that the 'something new', referred to by Baldacchino, runs through and rules almost all the lines of the three transcribed pieces. In this schematic representation, one can also notice the occasional continuity of two adjacent lines (or phrases) without a definite distinction in between (represented in examples 5.8 to 5.10 by superscript square brackets).

Another interesting aspect discussed in our meetings was the prolongation of the last note at the end of each line (see Examples 5.8 to 5.10). Baldacchino remarked that this prolongation may be one of the factors that makes his singing different from that of other *għannejja:* 'I always prolong the last note of the line to make my music more melodious. Other għa*nnejja* fail to do this, with the result that they sound as in normal speech. I fail to prolong the last note of the line when I'm short of breath'. Baldacchino was also aware that this prolongation did not follow a constant length. So, as examples 5.8 to 5.10 show, we agreed to notate the varying lengths of the lines.

The above information shows a flexible approach towards the involvement of the performer in transcription and analysis. One can say that, with performers unfamiliar to Western staff notation this collaborative method may still be applied. A simplified musical discourse, on the part of the researcher (like, for example, when I used his own terminology rather than the normal musical terms), together with the manipulation of other musical transformations (like, for example, hand movements and facial expressions) may help the collaborator to involve himself as much as possible in such an exercise. On the other hand, one should also notice that in this case, the aim of the analysis provided enough space for the performer to explore his own interpretation which in itself is very close to him. At this stage, one should also reflect on what type of results one would expect if the analysis had a different objective.

Line 1

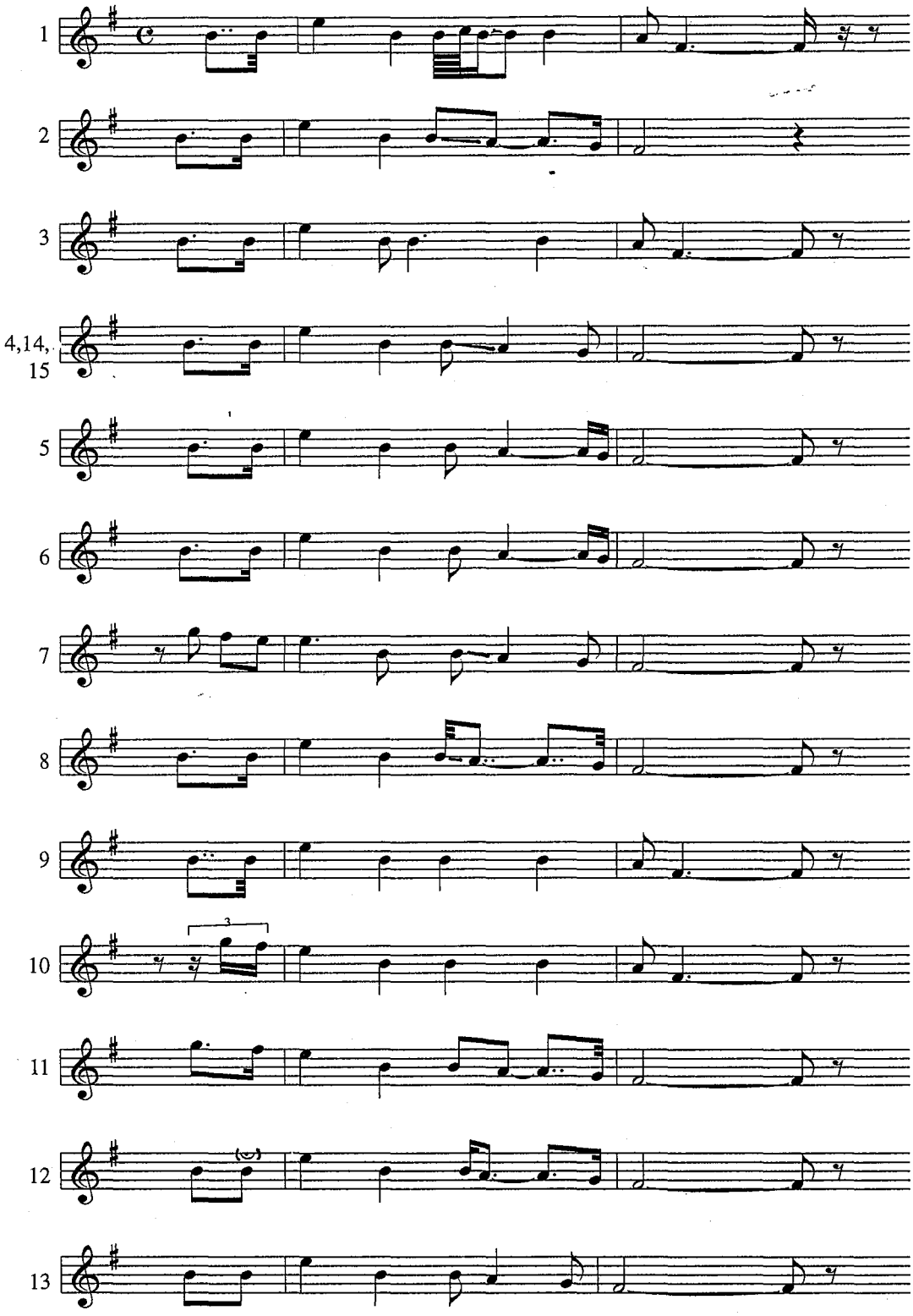
Għanja:



Example 5.8 ***Kundanna u Mrar***

Line 2

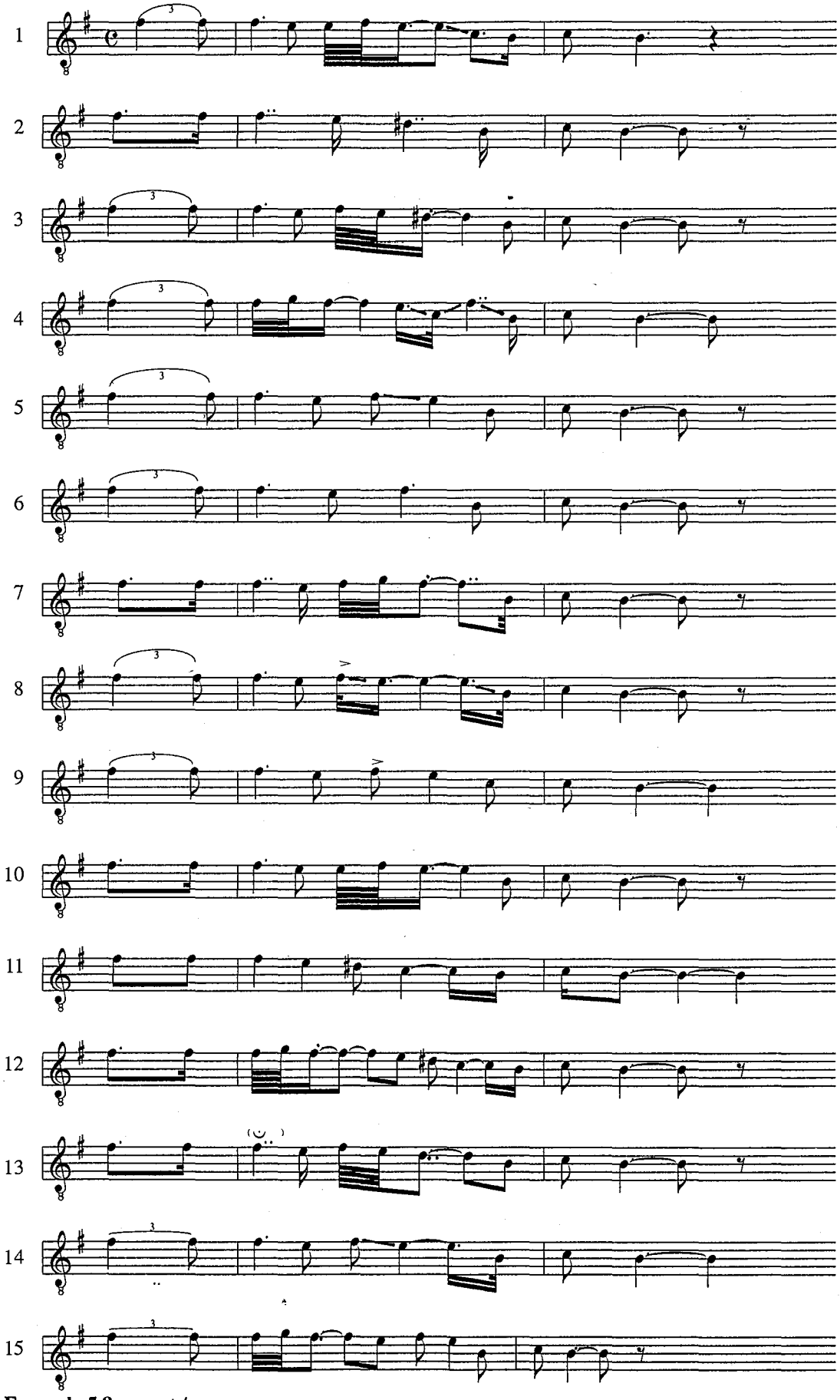
Għanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 3

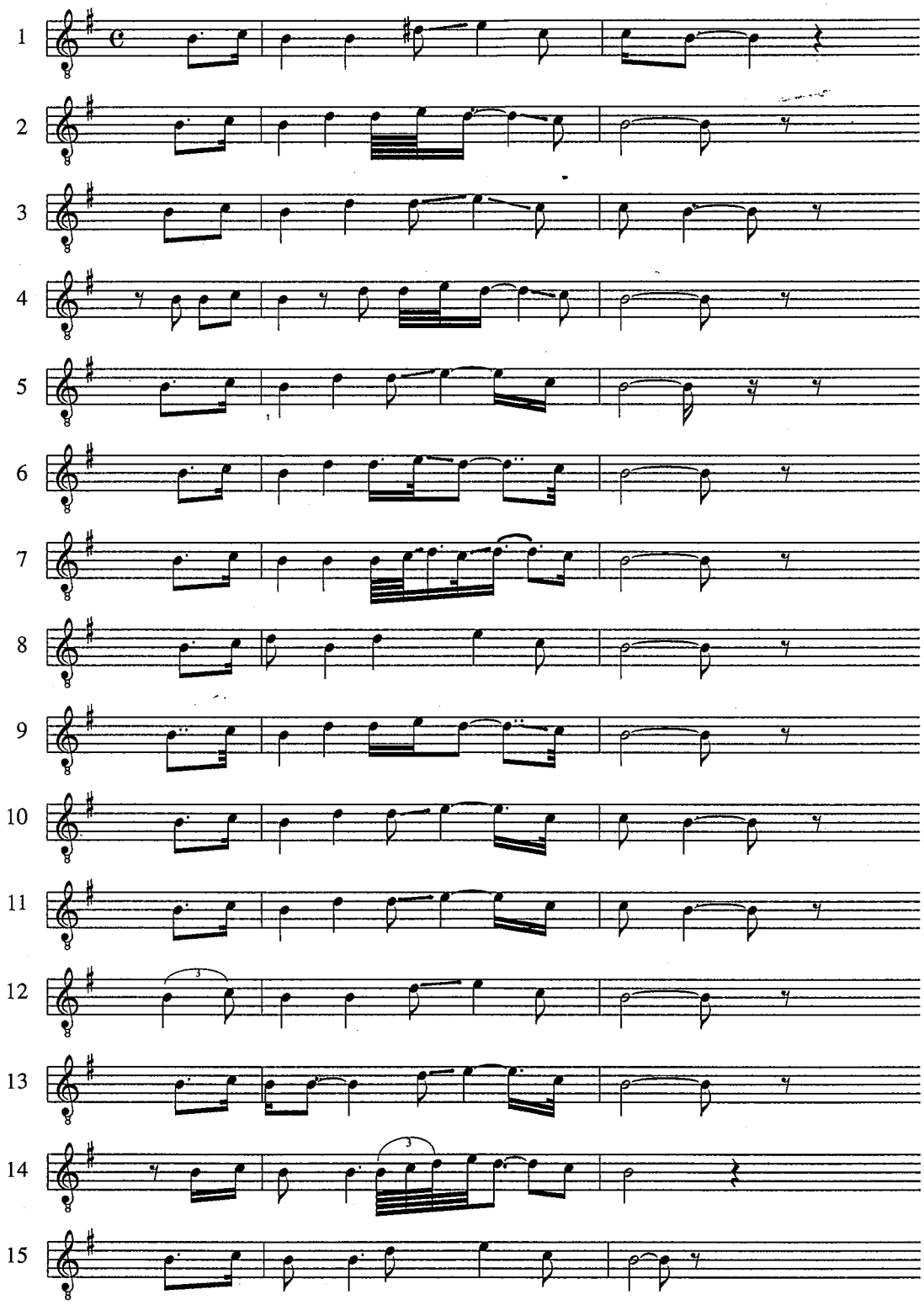
Ghanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 4

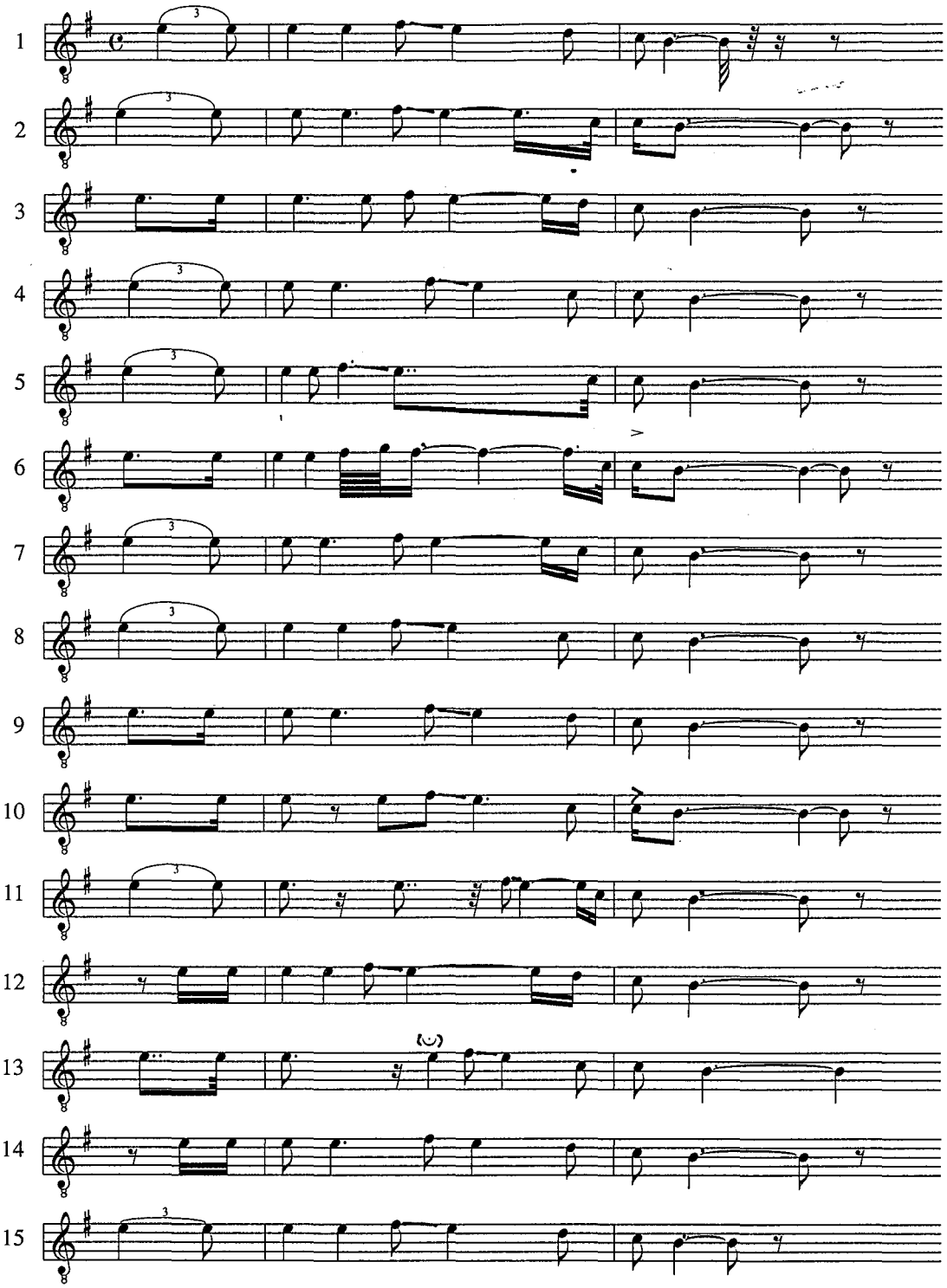
Ghanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 5

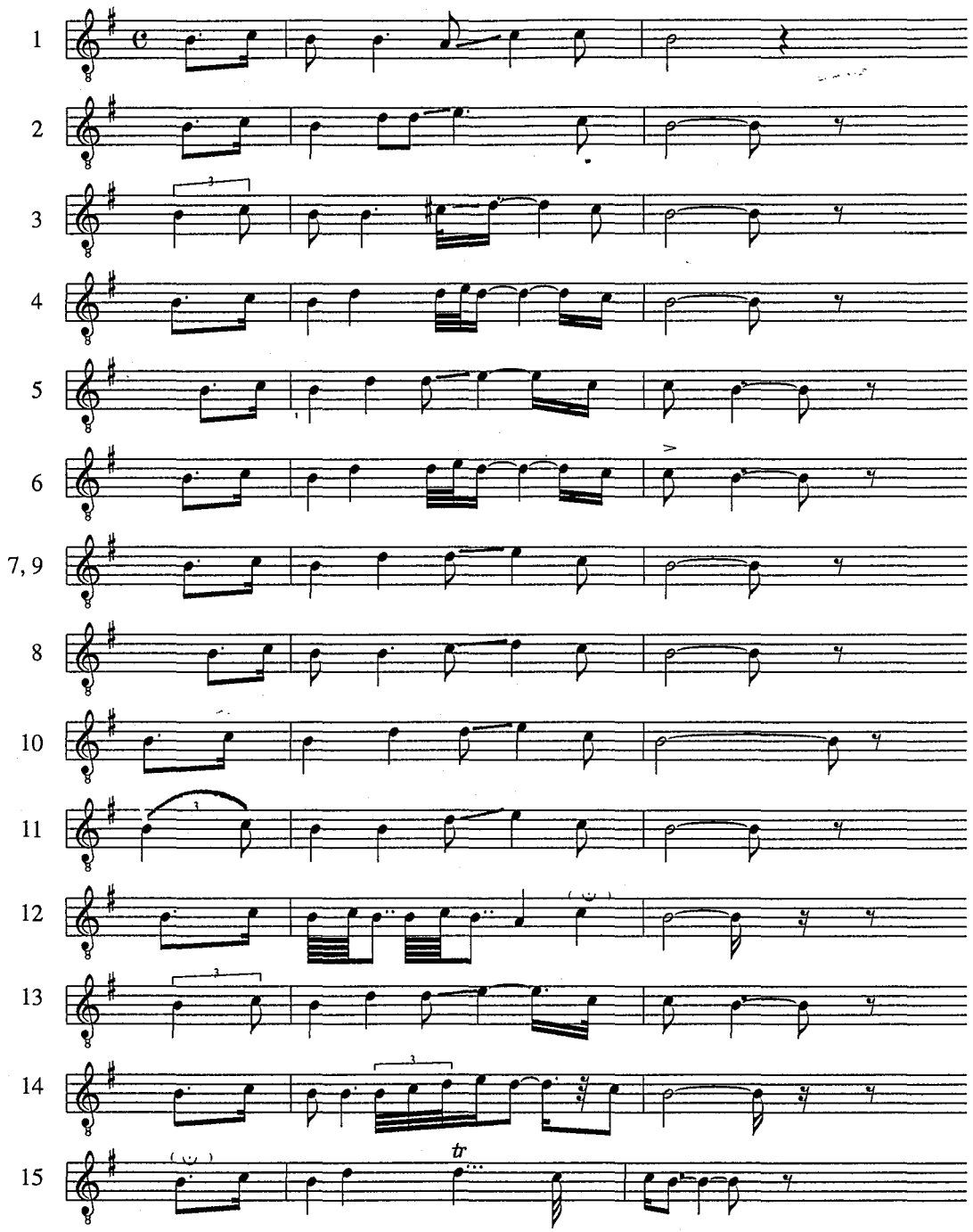
Ghanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 6

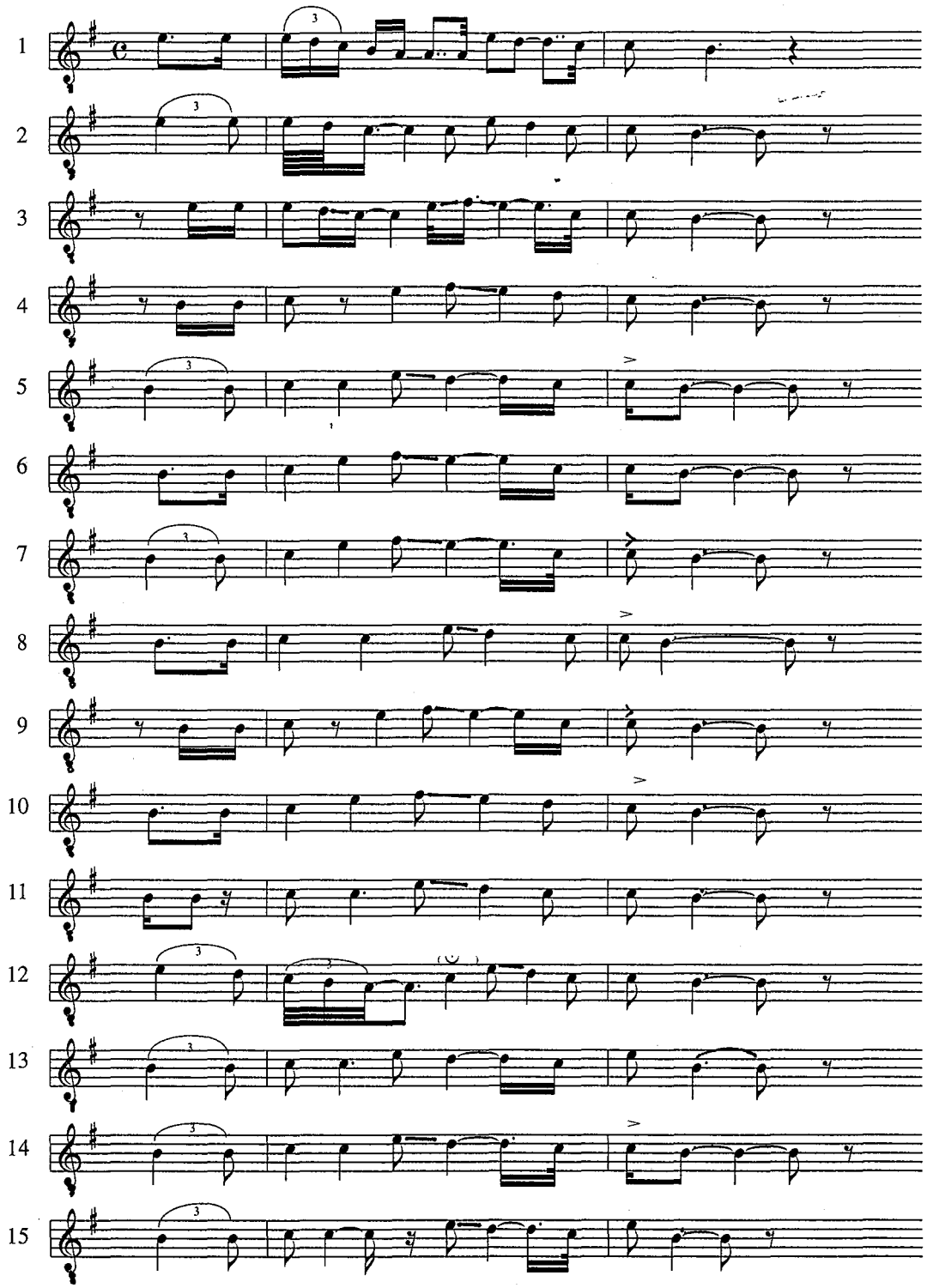
Ghanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 7

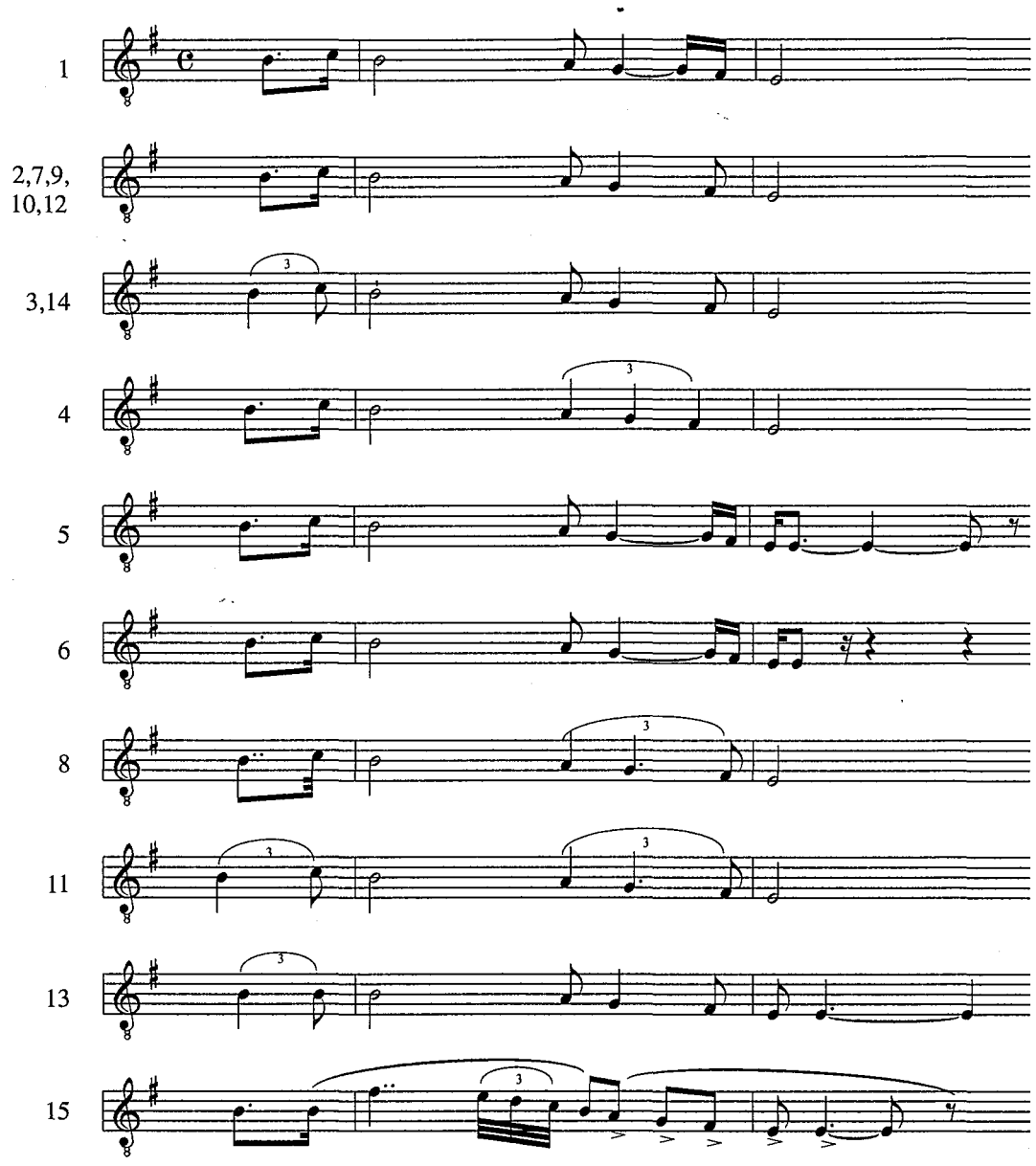
Għanja:



Example 5.8 ... cont./

Line 8

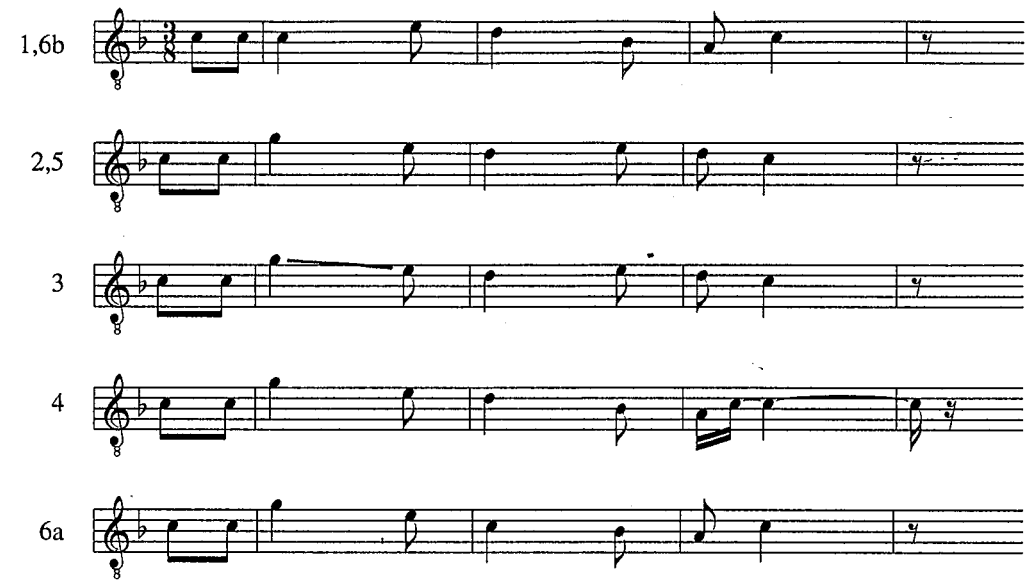
Ghanja:



Example 5.8 ... (cont.)

Line 1

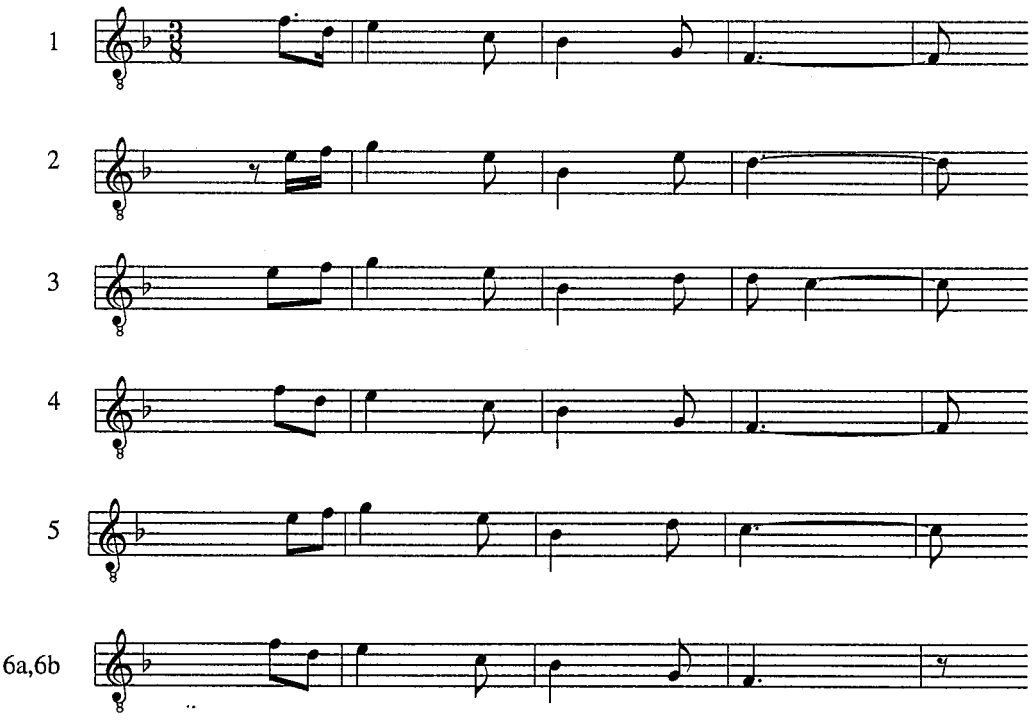
Għanja:



Example 5.9 ***Serenità***

Line 2

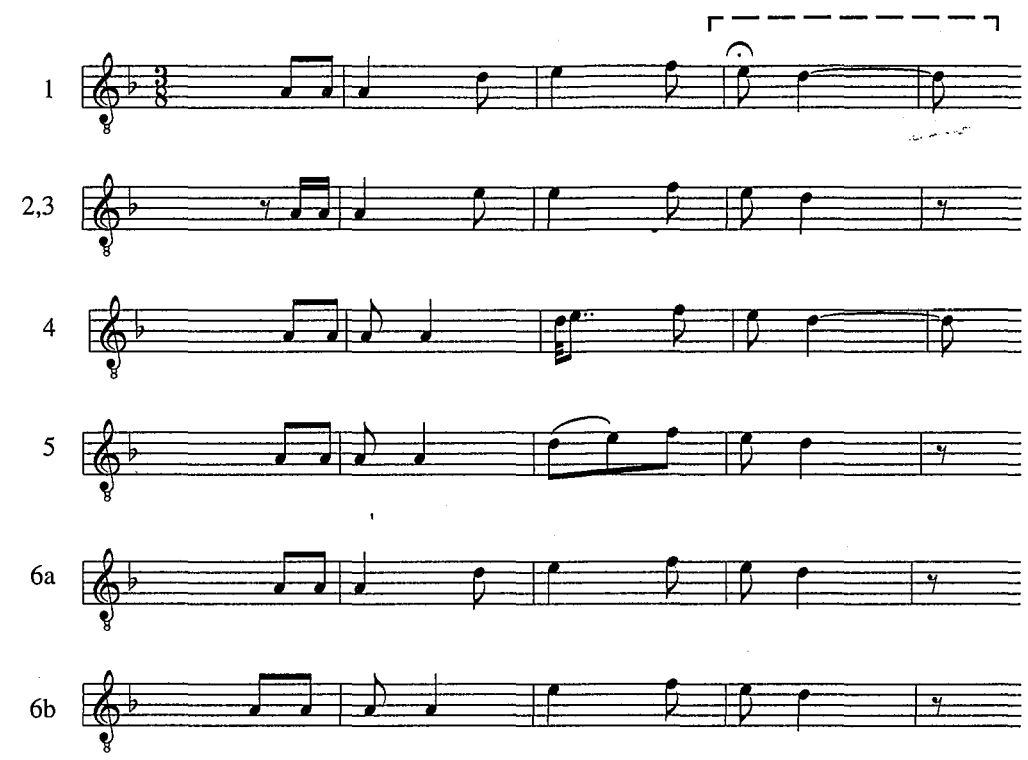
Għanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 3

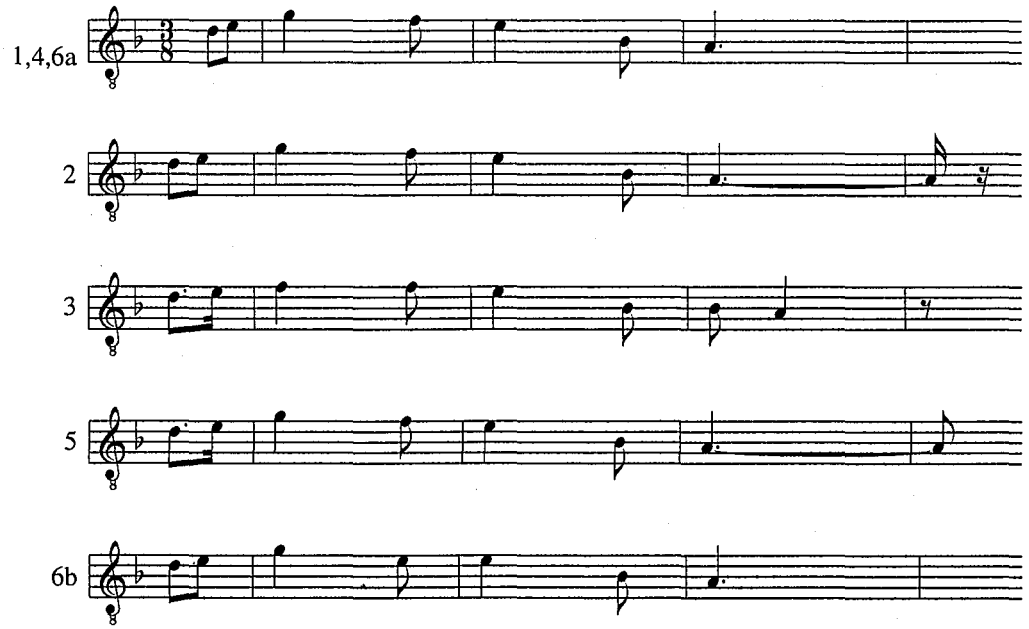
Għanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 4

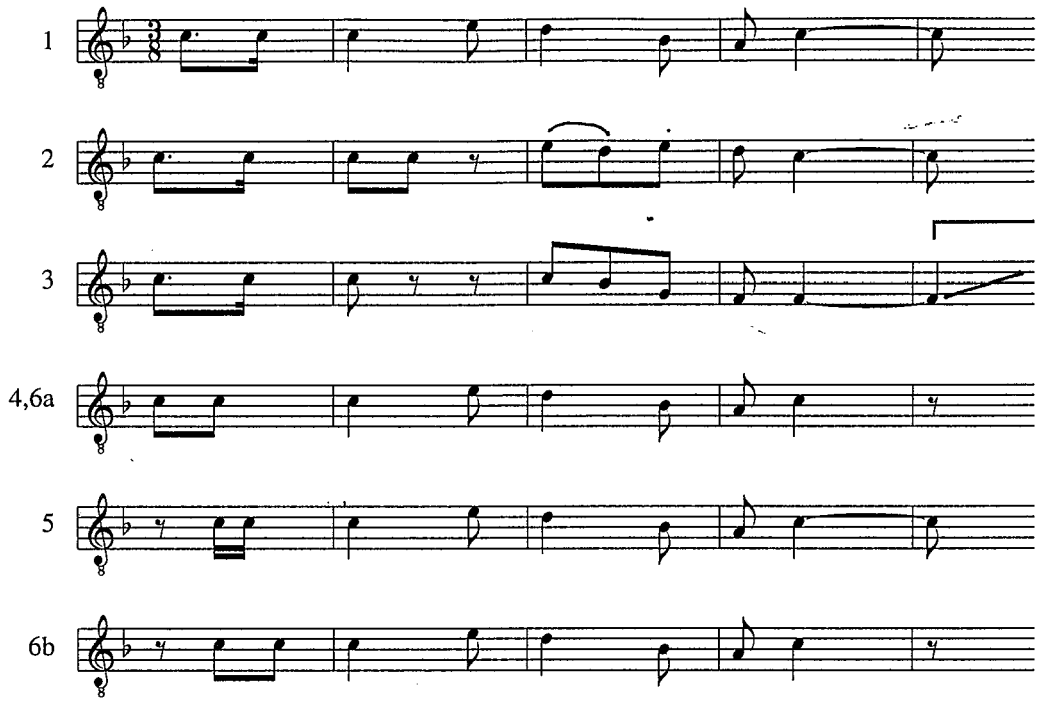
Għanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 5

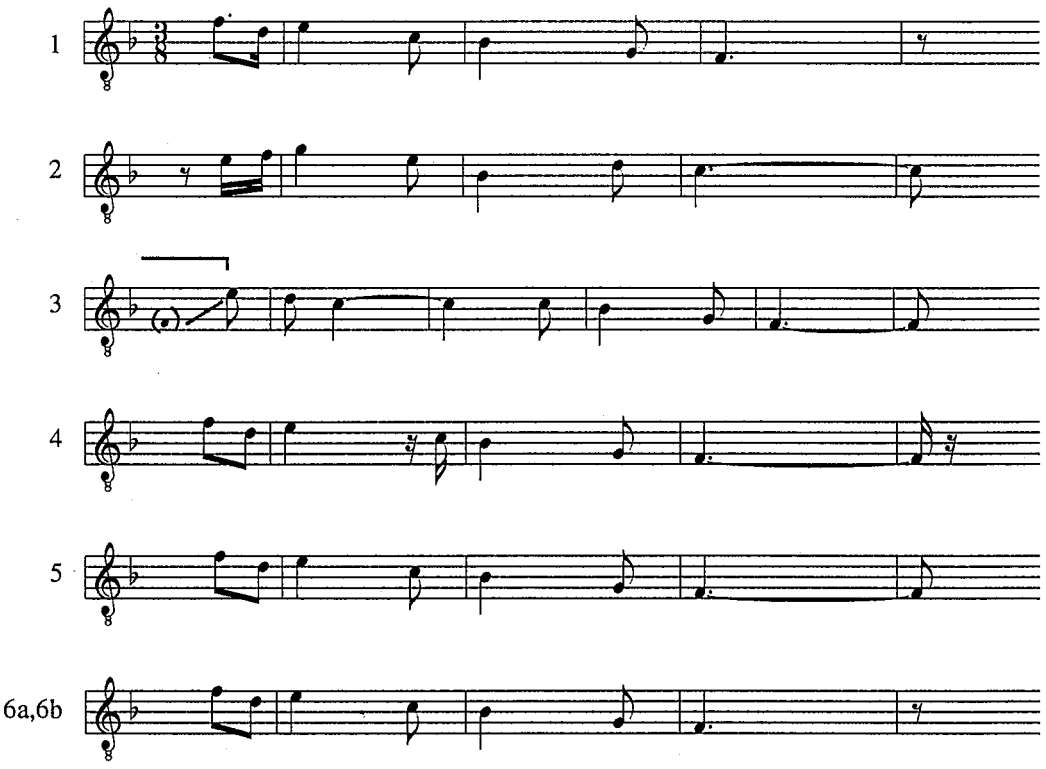
Ghanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 6

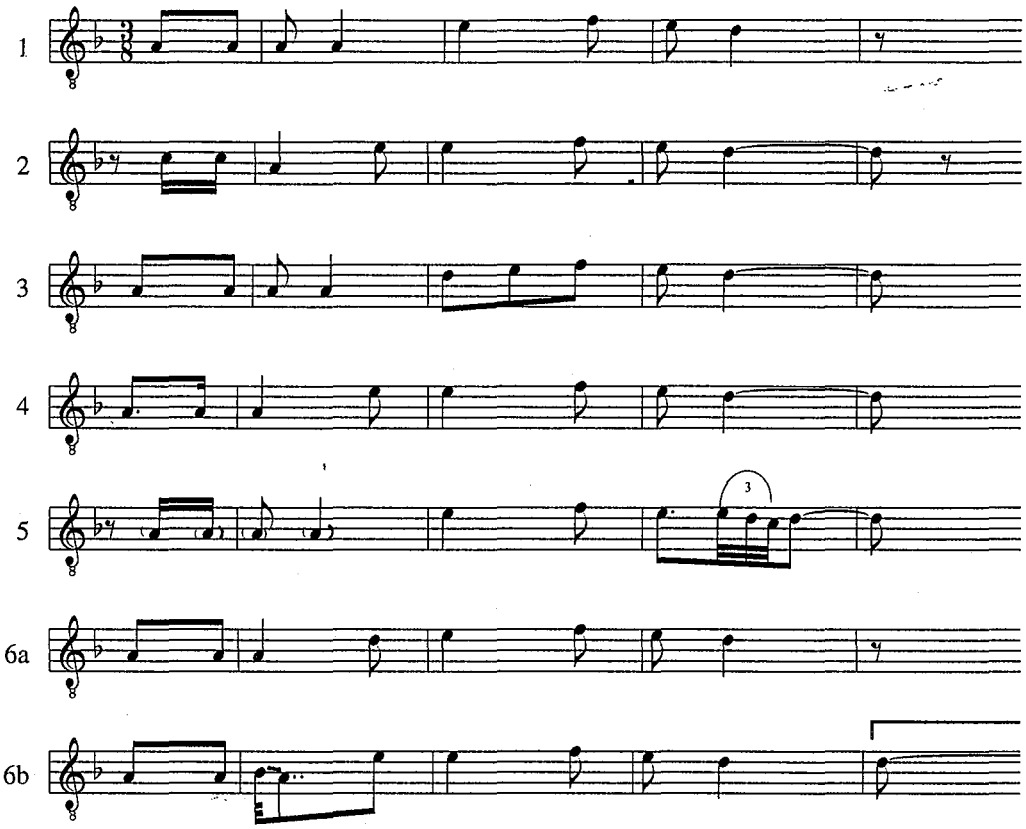
Ghanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 7

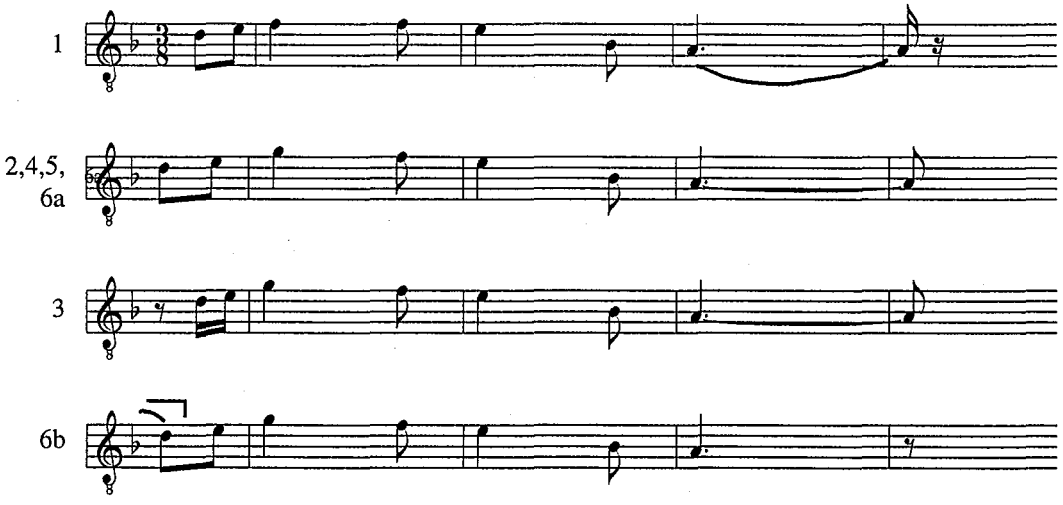
Ghanja:



Example 5.9 ... cont./

Line 8

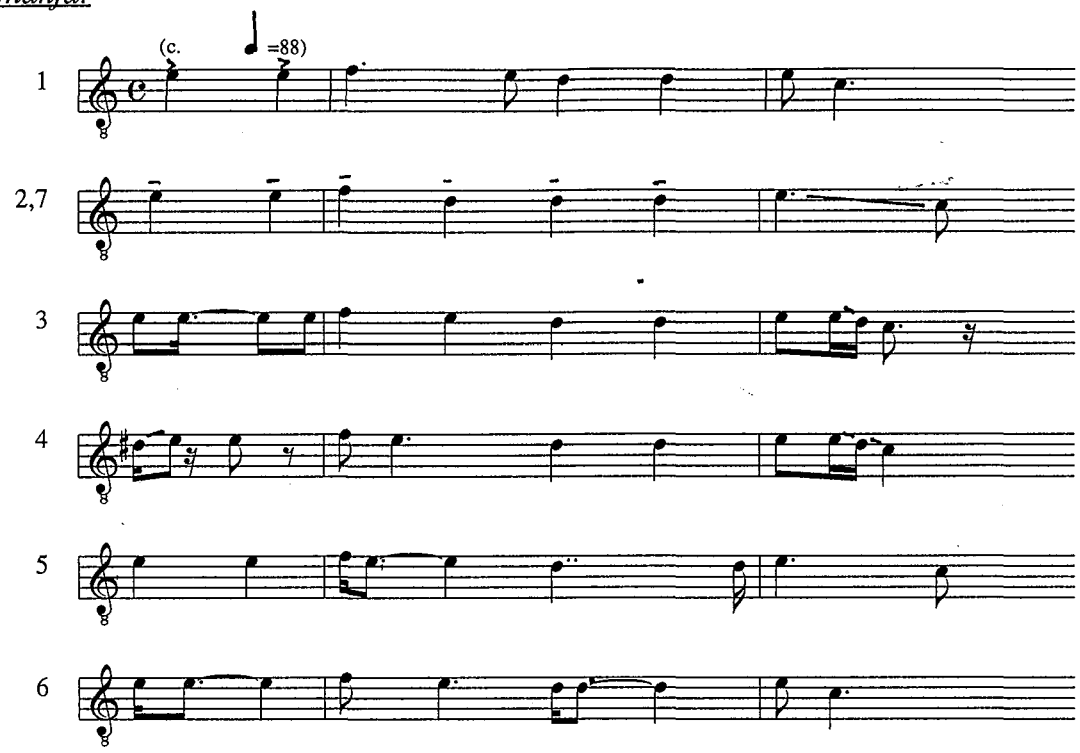
Ghanja:



Example 5.9 ... (cont.)

Line 1

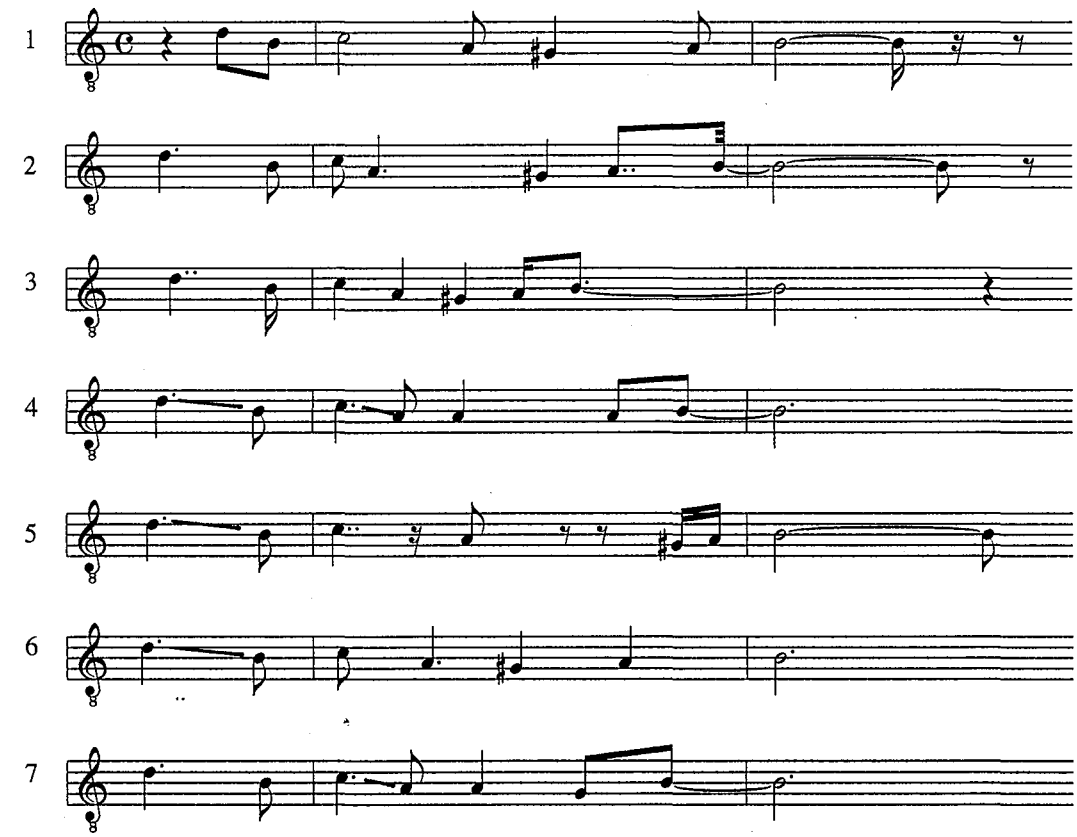
Għanja:



Example 5.10 Extract from the folk opera *L-Atti ta' l-Appostli*

Line 2

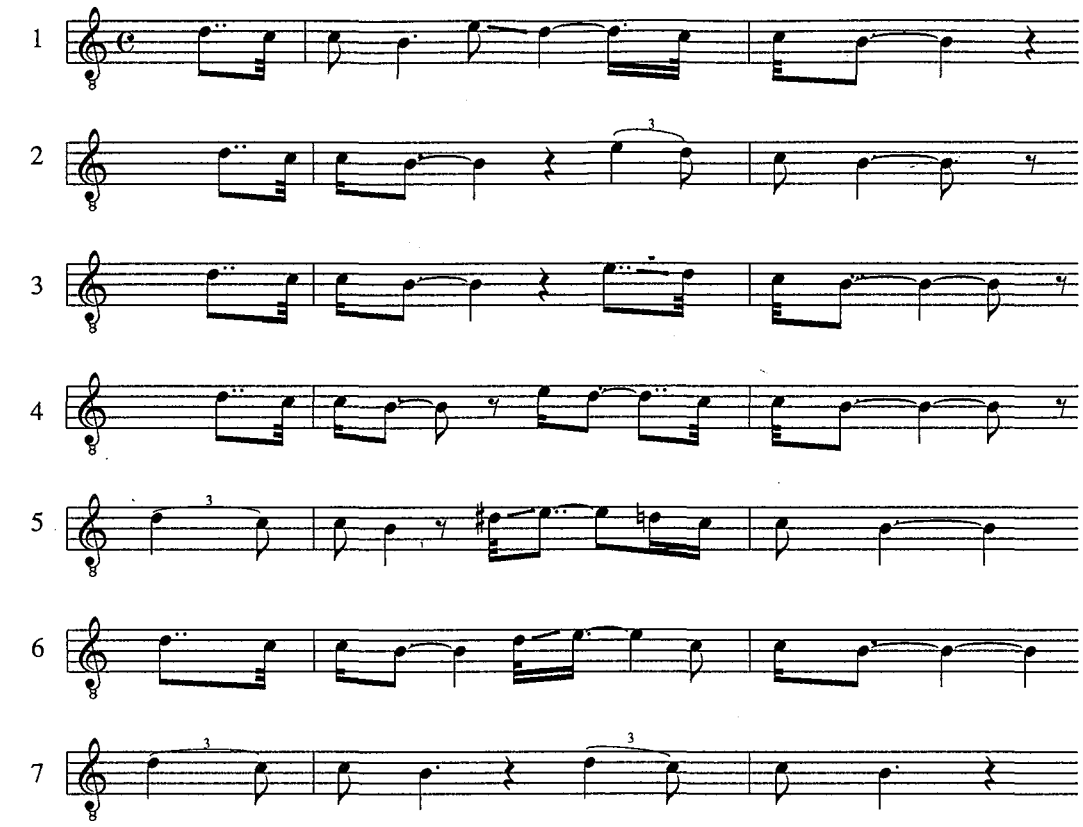
Għanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 3

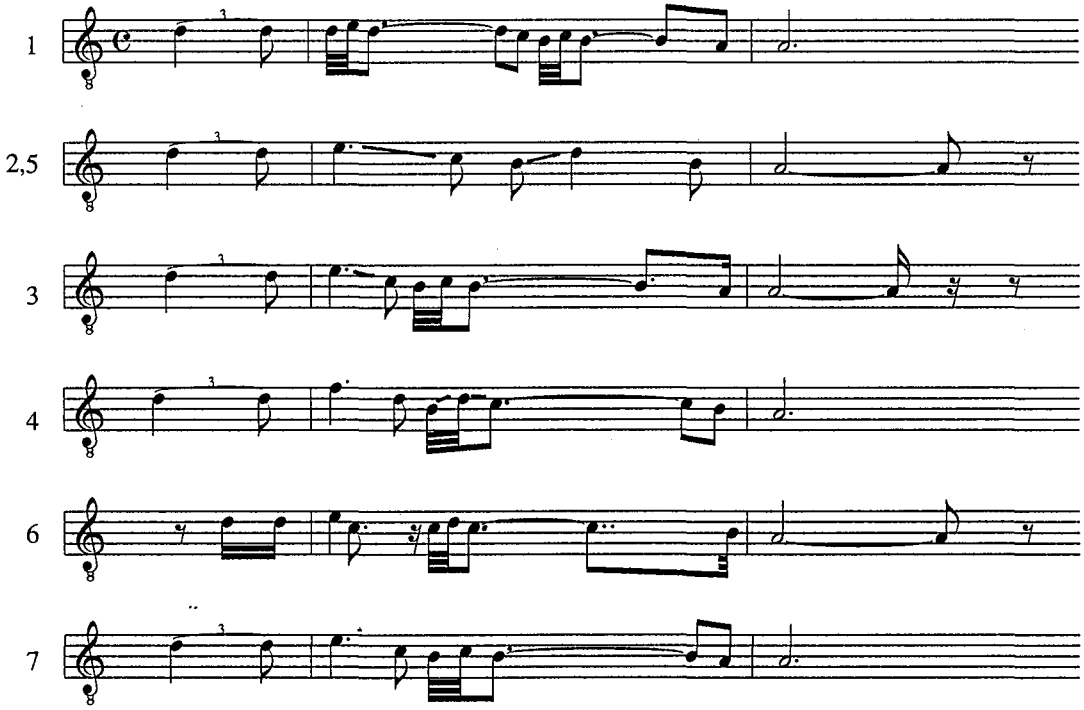
Għanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 4

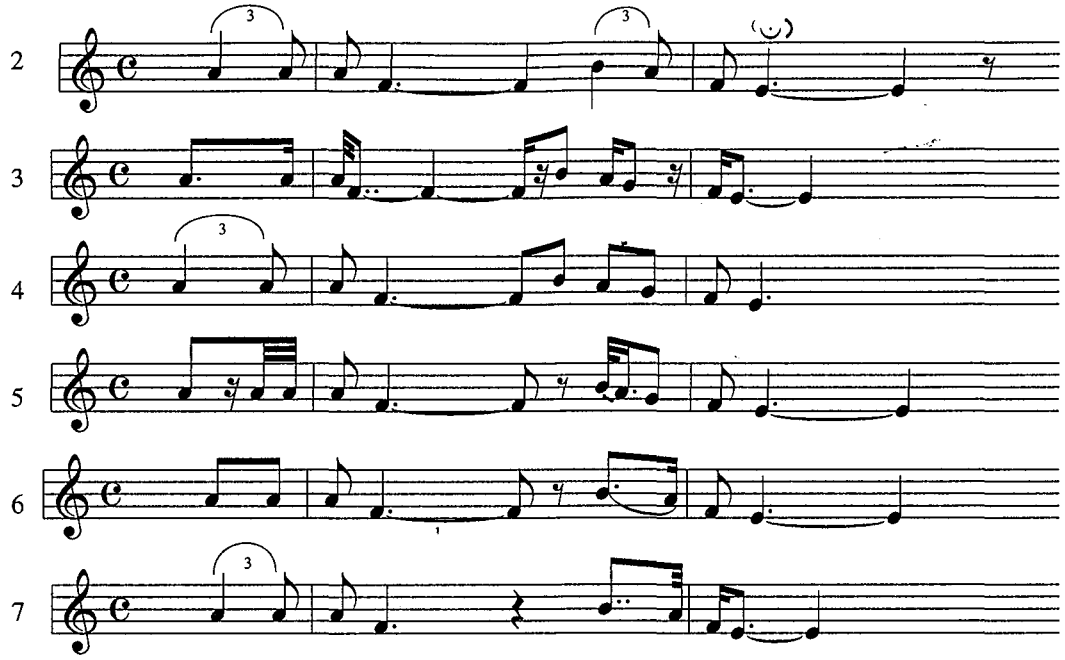
Għanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 5

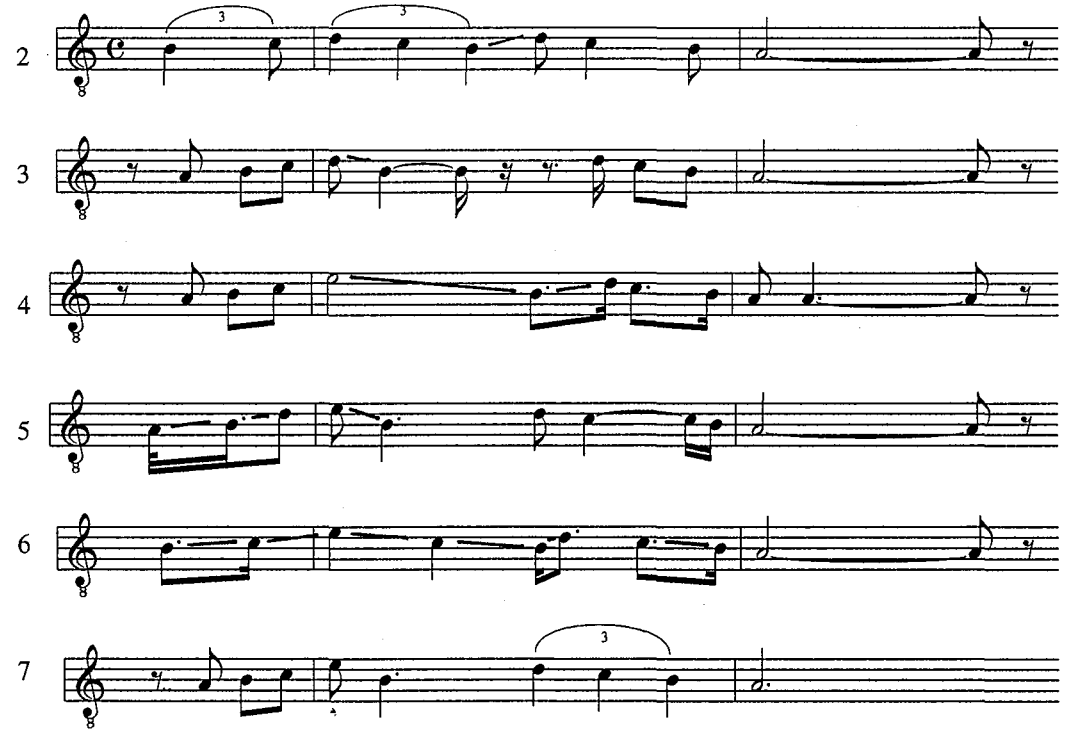
Ghanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 6

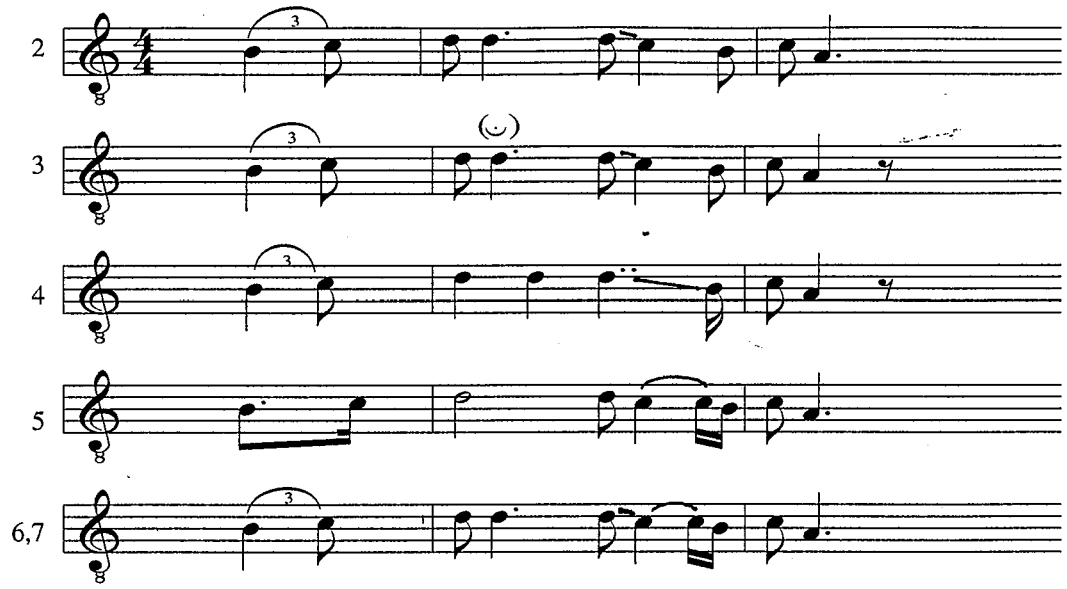
Ghanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 7

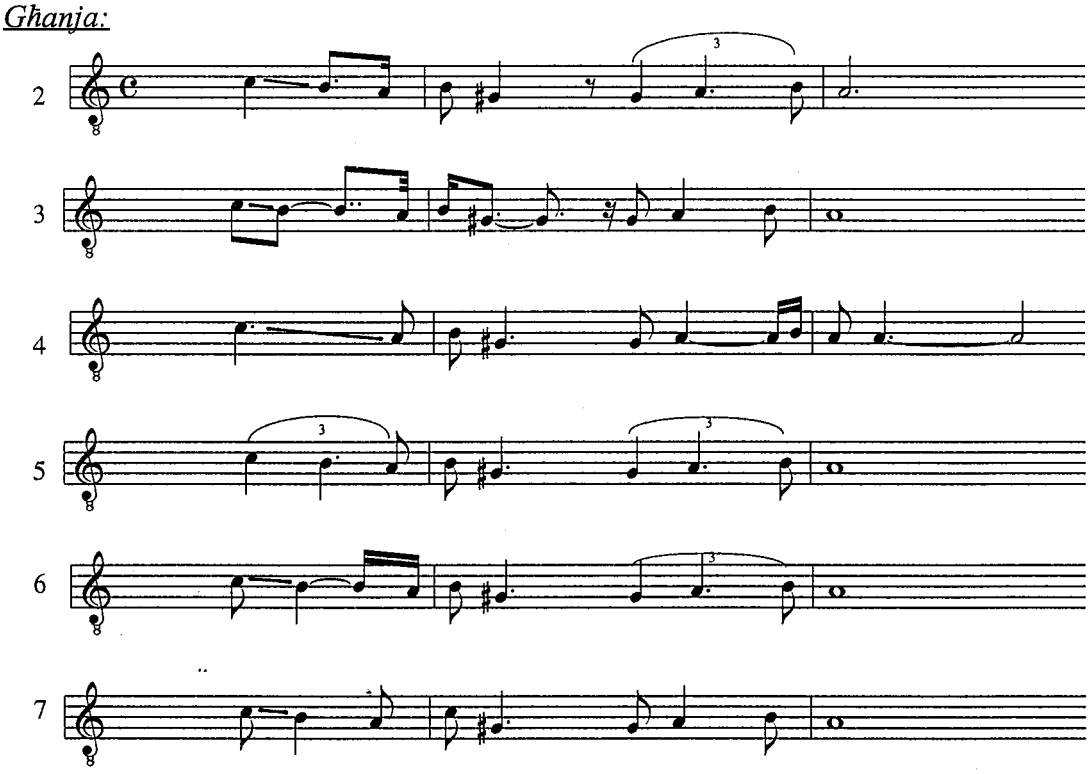
Għanja:



Example 5.10 ... cont./

Line 8

Għanja:



Example 5.10 ...(cont.)

What did He Learn from this Experience?

It will be much more interesting if the researcher evaluates what his collaborator has learned from this collaborative approach. In *The Ethnomusicologist*, Mantle Hood (1982:375) appealed to ethnomusicologists to ensure that carriers of traditions they study would also have the opportunity to become ethnomusicologists of their culture as well. With this in mind, I asked the performer to share with me his impressions about this collaborative experience.

Through this approach Baldacchino became aware of how easy it is for a performer to become a passive listener, even of his own music. And that attentive, or active, listening requires an effort not only on the part of the 'common' listener, but even from the 'performer-listener'.

He also became more aware of the rhythmical and melodic variety that he creates, practically, on every line. One of Baldacchino's hobbies is painting. The present writer utilized this visual ability of the performer to share with him something which is technical. When I presented him with the schematic examples 5.8 to 5.10, included in this research, he could visually notice that virtually all the lines had something different from each other. He approached the written music as if approaching a painting. He could not understand the notes, but he did understand that architectonically there was something different in almost all the lines.

To recapitulate, in this chapter the practicability and the limitations of involving the performer in the process of transcription and analysis have been evaluated. The first section provided a profile of the Maltese *għana* singer Frans Baldacchino, the performer with whom I collaborated in this research.

The second section began with a description of the style of Maltese *għana* singing called *għana tal-fatt*. A brief stylistic and textual description of the three tran-

scribed pieces which the researcher and the performer worked together on was then provided.

The research method was described in the third section. The approach had been determined by three intertwined phases. There were moments of equal partnership on the level of text. In other words, we had the chance to discuss the musicality of the text and generating ideas about this same aspect on the basis of equal partnership. The second phase was characterized by the attitude of a researcher 'investigating, or testing, his informant'. This happened when the performer passed from a particular discussion about the three transcribed pieces to more general comments about the subgenre *għana tal-fatt.* The third phase, was the direct involvement of the performer in the task of transcription. At this particular phase of the research the present writer encouraged Baldacchino to make use of other alternative forms of musical transformation apart from notation.

These intertwined phases provided some interesting results. The present transcriber's subjectivity has been minimized by including in the transcriptions other diacritical signs which are not normally included in ethnomusicological transcriptions. These signs are composed of letters which in themselves produce a compromise form of transcription between the performer and the researcher. The results, elicited from this collaboration, show a great deal of involvement on part of the performer more in the interpretation of the blueprint rather than in the making of the blueprint itself.

As can be noticed, this collaborative process was not wholly comprehensive. For instance, the performer did not participate with the present researcher in the planning of the process itself. The performer's unfamiliarity with the written aspect of music and with the general academic enquiry made this process less thorough than it was expected. Although the chieronomy applied, as another form of musical transformation, gave some positive results, it lacked specification of meaning.

In the latter section we focused on what the performer had achieved through the collaboration with the transcriber. The performer became aware of the fact that even the listener can become a passive listener of his own music. He also became more conscious of the rhythmical and melodic variations he developed throughout the course of a *fatt*. The latter awareness became possible by utilizing other sensibilities of the performer which in themselves are not musical.

At the conclusion of this work I would like to point out that such collaboration, as applied and approached in this chapter, may be amalgamated with other styles of transcription already discussed in the previous chapters. A transcription in cipher notation, for example, should by no means exclude the possiblity of the performer's collaboration with the transcriber. Graph transcriptions may also find their place in similar collaborations; the written medium and the academic qualities needed for transcription should not hinder the transcriber from collaborating with the performer in the closest possible way. The success of such collaboration depends on a dynamic strategy which may also be planned by both the transcriber and the performer. This is a task which should be further developed in the field of transcription. Putting any style of transcription in this framework may shed more light on the music under investigation.

Appendix

Diacritical Signs Used

⟋	voice glides up
⟍	voice glides down
tr	tremolando
Vib.	vibrato
	nasalised
	sighing ,
◠·	prolongation of a single tone
(◠)	slight prolongation of a single note
⌜‾‾⌝ ◠·	*ritenuto* or *più lento* (for a short passage)
◡	shortening of a single tone
(◡)	slight shortening of a single tone
⌜‾‾⌝ ◡	*più presto* (for a short passage)
(♩)	impresice pitch
❄	falsetto

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