

Reframing Teaching African Music and Dance in the Tertiary Education Context: Alternatives and Pedagogical Solutions for Online and Other Forms of Non-contact Teaching in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has been offering practical study in African Music and Dance (AMD) for over two decades since 1996. Always in contact mode with the genre specialist providing either individual or group instruction, learning is by rote where students carefully observe examples presented by the practical lecturer, as well as carefully outlined techniques to be used in mastering the instrument or dance style under study. In light of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this teaching model has to be reviewed immediately and alternative ways of working remotely with students devised. This educational practice is against the backdrop of indigenous music transmission that is characterised by in-person engagement between a specialist and the tutor/learner. A method that UKZN AMD program has proved works well is adopting indigenous practices of enculturation from the traditional non-formal contexts for learning African Music and Dance to the

institutional setting in the tertiary education setting – but by still maintaining the wisdom, creativity, interpretation that flourishes as a result of this non-formal method of teaching. In addition to the already removed enculturative setting, we are now at a new juncture where we need to offer these practical modules via non-contact instruction. This chapter will examine the work in two different scenarios of the UKZN African Music and dance (AMD program). The first, individual instrumental instruction, in this case, the palmwine guitar from Ghana, explores a re-imagination of its instructional mode within the context of a remote teaching and online assessment. The second example in the context of ensemble work that involves group work with different members playing percussion, singing and dancing, and in this case, the genre/style provided is *ngalanga* dance-drumming from Mozambique.

Keywords: Palmwine music, African guitar pedagogy, performance practice, African Music and Dance, group instruction, *Ngalanga* music, *Ngalanga* instruction, remote instruction.

Introduction

The University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus in the School of Arts – College of Humanities has amongst the qualifications on offer a Bachelor of Arts with a specialization in African Music and Dance (AMD). In the curriculum, students are introduced to a variety of African music and dance genres both from within South African cultural practices and also extended to other regions of Africa to get students acquainted with a wide variety of genres and aesthetic styles. This approach increases and augments their knowledge base, establishing them as versatile artists who can engage in a broad range of varying performance genres and contexts. This chapter presents examples of two different teaching-learning contexts to explore how the University of KwaZulu-Natal African Music and Dance practical staff are engaging with this new reality of non-contact remote teaching in the face of the vicious global pandemic COVID-19. The AMD program includes both individual tuition on a specific instrument, as well as group instruction in dance and ensemble work. Practical teachers in the program are recruited based on their competencies in particular music/dance genres and who can teach students at varying levels in the tertiary education setting. Ensemble classes meet twice a week, while in-

dividual instrumental tuition is once a week for 45 minutes.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has presented a situation where university teaching has embraced remote instruction. Although online learning has gained ground around the world in recent years, the pandemic has immediately compelled university educators to engage with an online mode of teaching and learning. According to Johnson (2016), a theoretical orientation that captures the nuances of experiential learning to frame online learning activities is one where the individual and social learning contexts engage. To achieve these nuances, Johnson (2017) advances the need for collaborative learning designs that support students' learning in an online environment. According to Lock and Johnson (2015), three such types enhance interactive learning exchanges include student-student, student-to-content, and student-to-instructor. This understanding suggests that digital tools become invaluable to ensure a complete learning process as Johnson (2017) notes, a well-designed online learning environment offers unlimited access to learning materials and management of the learning process with flexible schedules. In developing a theoretical orientation that ties these notions together, Johnson suggests, is to embrace the constructivism paradigm. Thus, the chapter espouses this theory to frame its discussion that proposes an alternative teaching and learning process for African Music and Dance in a remote non-contact teaching context.

The notion of constructivism has its roots in the works of Piaget, Gruber and Vonèche (1977) and Dewey (1938), and understands one's experience in learning through action. According to Johnson (2016), educational researchers including Bandura (1981), Jonassen (2013), and Vygotsky (1978) embraced this theoretical orientation to explore the connection between individual creation and making from their experiences. She highlights the theory's primary focus, which centres on how individuals construct their learning of the subject matter and performance skills through how they understand the process. These experiences thus become essential to success in an online learning environment (Garrison 2011).

The theory of constructivism defines teaching and learning within the context of the active involvement of the learner to construct their knowledge rather than be passive receivers of information (Sharma & Chawla 2014). Within this theoretical approach, the learning activities of the learner are foreground on notions that leave room for them to uncover and create their knowledge base by interacting with the learning resources provided to them. Thus, the learner constructs the knowledge both individually and by an

engagement with the learning materials within the context. Sharma and Chawla (2014) acknowledge that the theoretical paradigm inadvertently reconfigures the role of the teacher from one of transmitting knowledge to a facilitator. In framing an alternative approach to teaching African Music and Dance from a remote learning context, the constructivist theoretical orientation provides a guide that assists in designing a course that presents learners room to construct their own learning experiences when they engage with the learning materials. Data for this chapter embrace an autoethnography methodology (Spry 2011), where the authors draw on their experiences in designing syllabi for the program that over the years aims to envisage and design an online pedagogy for African Music and Dance that caters for its students without necessarily losing the very essence of the module.

Mr Eric Sunu Doe, originally from Ghana, is currently completing his doctoral studies on revitalizing palmwine music in Ghana at UKZN, and his research and teaching area is Ghanaian palmwine guitar tradition. He has been teaching in the program for three years and has groomed several versatile guitarists. Before this, he taught at the University of Ghana, where he constituted both a pop ensemble and created his own Legon Palmwine Band, which has grown in popularity over time. At UKZN, the students would have studied *maskanda* guitar in the previous semester, and therefore somewhat familiar with the instrument and coordination between playing and singing. Of course, the palmwine guitar style has very different nuances, tunings, and fingerpicking styles, so students must immerse themselves by exploring a new culture and opening their ears and sensitivities to a new music tradition. Mr José Albèrto Chemane, originally from Mozambique recently completed his MA studies at UKZN on Chopi *ngalanga* dance drumming (2018). A proficient drummer in a broad range of styles, he has been one of the leaders of the AMD Ensemble for almost ten years. His ensembles have introduced local South African, African Music and Dance students to an area of performance they were previously unfamiliar with, but as the semester progresses, they become proficient performers. Chemane draws on his primary research on *ngalanga* tradition in his classes.

Palm-wine Guitar Scenario

The very essence of teaching Ghanaian palmwine guitar in the AMD program is to generally introduce the students to this unique indigenous music tradition

that emerged along the coast of West Africa in the late 19th century. Schmidt (1994:4) observes that its uniqueness lies in how it fuses various ‘indigenous musical resources such as rhythm, instruments, performance approaches and imported guitar traditions’ introduced as a result of contact with Europeans. In Ghana, this fusion characterizes a blend of rhythmic influences drawn from such indigenous dance-music forms as the *osibi*, *kurunku*, and *adakam*, and played in a variety of fingerpicking patterns on the guitar. Also, it embraces a singing approach that resonates with Akan storytelling heritage, which is characterized by proverbial and philosophical commentary on the social life and values of the people (Coplan 1978). Thus, a group of stylistic forms termed *sadwa ase* styles, which include the *mainline*, *fireman*, *dagomba*,¹ *odonson*,² *kwaw*³, and *amponsah*⁴ characterize palmwine music in Ghana. Each of these *sadwa ase* styles comes with its unique musical characteristics. For instance, writing on the music of Koo Nimo, Kaye (1999) observes that *dagomba* form is tuned conventionally [E-A-d-g-b-e]. Its harmonic structure derived from the seven diatonic scale of a Western ‘major’ key emphasizing on two chords – tonic major (I), and dominant seventh (V₇). Kaye’s description of the tuning system and harmonic structures, as well as what Collins (2006) describes as a two-fingerpicking technique that engages the thumb and index finger in alternation, are standard features of *sadwa ase* styles. However, their unique stylistic nuances are on the emphasis placed on the chord progressions. For instance, while the *dagomba* style emphasizes on a two major chord progression, the *odonson* style features the median minor chord (iii) and the subdominant major chord (IV). Also, the *amponsah* and *mainline* styles feature the major chords (I-IV-V₇).

Thus, when teaching such a music tradition within an institutional setting as the university, one is mindful of not losing the main elements that characterize the tradition. In drawing up a syllabus for Palmwine Guitar for the UKZN AMD program, it is essential to capture not only the historical nuances of the music tradition but also its performance practice. Hence, the module aims to introduce students to the music tradition and its repertoire by emphasizing articulation, dynamics, rhythmic ability, and skills, which are

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyCJ6SMYyIU>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UioOniJ3GJU>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH_mFCwqgGs

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_W3LD10CzQ

fundamental to the performance of palmwine music. The students are guided in the application of concepts and techniques that aid in playing palmwine guitar. Also, an approach to singing is employed to assist students in developing technical proficiency in the performance of the music tradition. The expected learning outcomes upon the completion of the module often include,

- a demonstration of correct fingerpicking techniques in playing palmwine guitar;
- an understanding of the basic concepts of palmwine guitar and its repertoire; and
- to perform in a solo or an ensemble of palmwine music.

The mode of delivery embraced for this module is one that involves a hands-on approach where learning is by rote. Students are expected to carefully observe and imitate what the instructor demonstrates in class. This approach is realized through the teaching of songs and while students learn the song, they gradually gain the techniques employed in playing each of the *sadwa ase*. As time is of the essence when dealing with institutional instruction of practical instruments, in designing the syllabus for palmwine guitar, four main types of the *sadwa ase* styles – *kwaw*, *odonson*, *dagomba*, *amponsah* are taught. The syllabus design takes into account the twelve weeks of instruction the academic calendar provides and evenly spread the four *sadwa ase* styles. Each style is thus taught over up to three weeks, as illustrated in table 1 below. The lessons for each style are structured to embrace a week where the instructor introduces specific styles that involve teaching a song and its associated lyrics. Another week is used to introduce and demonstrate the fingerpicking technique or approach to a particular style, consisting of teaching students how to employ the nuances of the style's techniques in the song. In the final week of instruction on a particular style, the instructor introduces students to the performance approaches to the styles. It entails working with students on the coordination between synchronously playing the guitar while singing in performance. Throughout the process, the instructor pays attention to articulation, rhythmic fluency in the fingerpicking technique and correct diction in songs.

Individual classes are usually the mode of instruction. On occasion, where enrolment is large, students are paired or put in groups for their weekly

sessions. Even in pairs or groups, each student’s unique learning capabilities remain the ultimate concern of instruction.

Palmwine Guitar Course Delivery Plan/Schedule		
Planned Session	Session Outcomes	Planned Teaching Activity
Week 1	Introduction to the <i>kwaw sadwa ase</i> style	Introduction to the <i>kwaw</i> style & teach <i>Onua pa, due</i> song and its lyrics
Week 2	Learn Fingerpicking technique/approach to <i>kwaw</i> style	Teach fingerpicking technique/approach to <i>kwaw</i> style in the <i>Onua pa, due</i> song
Week 3	Learn performance approach to the <i>kwaw</i> style	Work on coordinating playing guitar and singing of the <i>Onua pa, due</i> song

Table 1: Excerpt of a model contact instruction syllabus for palmwine guitar

In addition to students drawing encouragement and learning from their classmates, the extra sessions are offered to cater to individual learning challenges. What happens in this scenario is that when a student in the group learns a technique before their classmates, they can quickly assist their colleagues in the learning process. This peer teaching is helpful, as for the majority of the students, it is their first time encountering the music tradition and for them it takes a little longer to grasp some of the concepts introduced to them. Also, students who assist their colleagues in the learning process tend to enhance their understanding of the ideas further.

In light of the coronavirus Covid-19 global pandemic, this mode of instruction has had to be reviewed and re-imagined within the context of a remote teaching and online assessment. For the palmwine guitar module, it means exploring alternative modes of instruction other than the contact mode. Thus, within this context, it becomes necessary to embrace online teaching and learning. According to Johnson (2017), online instruction in the higher education sector has seen exponential growth over the last decade. She observes that online learning outcomes within the sector equal those of the

traditional learning environments leading higher education music programs to further explore the online learning context (Johnson 2017: 439). The findings of her study suggest a pedagogical shift in embracing the fully online mode of teaching. In that case, although the method of instruction of palmwine music in the African Music and Dance program slightly changes, its pedagogical essence remains the same, as Table 2 below illustrates.

<p align="center">Palmwine Guitar Plan of action for remote learning (Examples include Live teaching with Zoom, using WhatsApp, Face Time, recording of lectures, scripting lectures, Loom, PowerPoint with audio, social media, among others)</p>		
Planned Session	Session Outcomes	Planned delivery mode and remote teaching activity
Week 1	Introduction to the <i>odonson</i> style	Class session via Zoom. Also, record demonstration of <i>Odo Akosombo/Senkyenbuyaa</i> to be uploaded onto Moodle as a media file
Week 2	Learn <i>odonson</i> fingerpicking technique/approach to the style	Class session via Zoom. Also, record a demonstration of guitar technique to <i>Odo Akosombo/Senkyenbuyaa</i> to be uploaded onto Moodle as a media file
Week 3	Learn the approach to performing in the <i>odonson</i> style	Class session via Zoom. Also, record demonstration of the approach to performing <i>Odo Akosombo/Senkyenbuyaa</i> to be uploaded onto Moodle as a media file

Table 1: Excerpt table of the proposed syllabus for Palmwine Guitar based on the module template plan for remote teaching developed by the Faculty of Humanities

In the first week, the students will focus on learning the lyrics to the songs that accompany a particular style. Because students will learn songs from a different music culture, which they are unfamiliar with, it is essential to ensure correct pronunciation of lyrics. Thus, students repeatedly pronounce every line of each song slowly and with great care and attention. In every

session, the idea is to review and assist students to articulate and enunciate the words of the songs properly before moving forward with the topic for the day. The general aim remains the same – to introduce students to palmwine guitar and its repertoire with the emphasis still on articulation, dynamics, rhythmic ability, and skill, which are fundamental to the performance of palmwine music.

The specific learning outcomes will also be the same as with the contact mode of instruction; however, there would be a slight change in expectation when it comes to student performance. With the contact mode of instruction, students were expected and encouraged to, besides performing as a solo, also engage in ensemble performances of the palmwine music tradition. The new expectation will thus require of the student to only perform as a solo act as a result of remote lessons and students residing in different cities throughout KwaZulu-Natal province. This has become necessary because of new regulations passed to curb the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, the challenge of putting together an ensemble with fellow course mates as would have been the case will be difficult. The solo performance, however, does not take anything away from the performance nuances of the music tradition as, besides the fact that ensembles were known to have promoted palmwine music, there is also an equal abundance of solo performances (Collins 2018; Nketia 1994). The content topics in remote non-contact offering of the course will cover palmwine music performance techniques and approaches, palmwine repertoire, and the performance practice of the music tradition.

Live teaching sessions will be organized via virtual platforms as provided by the university. In this case, the Zoom platform is beneficial, as it enables students to see a live demonstration of the fingerpicking techniques. Students can also use the opportunity to ask questions, where necessary. This option takes into consideration the fact that although the session is in the form of a group or class, individual students will learn in the comfort of their personal spaces. The drawback of this approach is where there would be the tendency of some students either slowing down or moving faster than their other classmates in the class, because they would initially struggle to grasp the concepts, or understand them quicker than their classmates within the timeframe of the session. Also, where the students would have been at hand in assisting their colleagues in the class situation, the option is not available with the remote teaching. Recorded demonstrations for each week's lesson are uploaded as media files onto Moodle, the official UKZN Learning

Management System for students. This provides added support for students who encounter challenges in moving with the tempo of the class. The challenge posed with media files on Moodle is the inability of the platform to accommodate video files or large files; thus, it is welcoming that the university has procured *Kaltura*, another online platform that provides this mode of uploading such media files. The other option is to explore the transfer of videos via class WhatsApp platforms. Students who need further assistance will be provided with the possibility of direct contact with the instructor at designated times, as would be announced via WhatsApp.

What does this new re-imagined mode of remote instruction mean for an assessment? Initially, student assessments happened in two ways – where there was a weekly assessment of how students comprehend the concepts and techniques, as the instructor was able to observe them in class. This form of continuous assessment assists in learning the individual needs of the students and providing feedback that helps them meet or overcome their specific challenges. The other assessment option was a performance presentation of the songs taught during the period to a panel at specific dates during the semester, a midterm assessment, pre-examination, and their final exit recital. In the new remote mode of instruction, assessments will entail students performing the songs they learn to a panel via the Zoom platform. The student will be assigned a specific time slot to log onto the platform on the assessment day, similar to what would have happened in contact instruction as described above. The only difference is the migration onto the online platform. Since we will be dealing with internet connectivity and issues often associated with such connections, an alternative arrangement for assessment will require of the students also to record themselves performing the songs and forwarding them to the module coordinator via specified online platforms on the due date. This addresses instances where, because of connectivity issues, it becomes difficult to give a critical assessment of the performance by the student. The mode of the recording will be video as the examiners would be able to identify the student performing directly.

Continuous assessment within this context will constitute a short essay on the history, the styles, and the exponents of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana. This will involve students conducting library searches on the music tradition, in addition to a reading list that will be provided by the instructor to answer set questions. This assessment form, which will constitute 10% of their total marks, is a new inclusion that will offer a personal understanding of the

sociocultural context within which the music tradition emerged and now allows them to draw upon in their performances. Also, students will be required to upload a video recording of their performance of songs learned in weeks 4 and 10. The video is necessary because, in addition to assessing the student's progress, it is essential to watch how students incorporate the techniques and the nuances of the music tradition into their performances. The midterm assessment will represent 20% of their continuous assessment, with students being required to perform the first two songs learned. There would also be a pre-exam, which will constitute 30% of their continuous assessment, with the students required to play all four songs taught throughout the semester. 40% of the student's assessment will consist of their exit recital, and 45-minute concert incorporating all seven genres of music and dance learned over the three years of their undergraduate curriculum, which includes *maskanda* guitar, *timbila* xylophones, *umakhweyana* bow, *isicathamiya*, *ngoma* dance and gumboot dance.

The major challenge as envisaged for the remote instruction of palmwine guitar in this module will be the personal attention paid to individual students' learning preferences with regard to how they respond to the learning. The contact mode of instruction provided a situation where the instructor picked up and addressed emerging challenges. However, with remote learning, there is the likelihood of a delayed response in picking up such issues to be addressed. Also, although the students will have the opportunity to contact the instructor directly for follow-up, the instructor must become proactive in also often reaching out to the learners. In this way, the instructor can pick up the challenges the students face at an early stage; thus, contributing towards instruction via remote mode becoming increasingly seamless and effective.

***Ngalanga* Dance Drumming**

Ngalanga is a rich and vibrant dance-drumming tradition of the Chopi from Mozambique,⁵ and its transmission within a tertiary education context contributes significantly towards its continuous practice and preservation (Chemane 2018). Its origins and development resonate with Chopi history,

⁵ The Chopi people had strong ties with the former Zimbabwe's *Mocaranga* kingdom to the extent of, in some point of their exodus, having been known as the *Mucaranga* who spoke *tchiChopi* (Lichuge 2016).

which accounts to its early interactions with the Karanga from Zimbabwe (Tracey 1940/70; Lichuge 2016; Chemane 2018). Similar to other Chopi music styles, *ngalanga* performances occur within a myriad of socio-musical contexts including rites of passages, initiation, remembrance ceremonies, weddings and official ceremonies. Its performance conventions include a fusion of routines systematically tied by dance, drumming, and singing. It characterizes movements such as *mutsitso*, *mungenu*, *kuwemisa*, and *tshigaza mavingwa*, each comprising a distinct approach and repertoire unique to its aesthetics (Chemane 2018). For instance, *mutsitso* is one aspect of *ngalanga* which employs intensive drumming. At the same time, in *mungenu* and *tshigaza*, *mavingwa*, such routines as *kutchatcha*, *kukavata* and *makhara* are nurtured and give evidence to the distinct dance aesthetics intrinsic to *ngalanga* (ibid). Contemporary uses of *ngalanga* include its fusing with Chopi and other popular genres.⁶

Drumming in *ngalanga* is orchestrated and features the following support drums each playing a specific role. For instance, *txindzomana* (figure 1) provides the timeline; *ntxinga* (figure 2), the lead drum, accompanying the soloist-dancer and adding a thrill to it; and a *gulu/txikhulu* (figure 3), providing the low timeline and groove to the music. Playing all three drums involves using sticks made from dry tree branches; the *gulu* sticks are an exception, as they are mallet-like sticks. Also, one or two *mbila* xylophones (figure 4) and the shakers provide the melody and rhythm aspect of the music. *Ngalanga* attire includes a handmade raffia skirt, a piece of material (*nguwu*) wrapped around the waist, and a rattle shaker, i.e. *mitchatcha* (figure 5) tied to the dancer's leg. The dance gestures are energetic and incorporate *kutchatcha*, i.e. stamping, and *kukavata*, dance routines. Both dance and drumming incorporate solo extemporization. In the traditional choreography, dancers stand in a semi-circle opposite the rhythm support creating. The centre of the circle becomes the dance floor, where most interaction and extemporization take place (Chemane 2018).

The course draws on the conventions of *ngalanga* tradition as reflected in dance, drumming and choreography. Instruction emphasizes interactive demonstration, replication, and participation. The content draws on *mutsitso* and *mungenisu* repertoire to allow students to grasp the basics of playing the timeline, *kutchatcha* (stamping step) and its variation, *mungenisu* (the entry

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD50DKuZ9eQ>

routine), to execute the *kudana* and *gwinya* (call routine). Students also learn the accompanying drum patterns specific to each routine. Progressively, the students learn selected *ngalanga* repertoire in a manner that allows them mastery of the techniques for both the dance and drumming.



Figure 1. *Tshindzomana* with sticks.
Picture by Jose A.D. Chemane on 28 May 2017



Figure 2. *Ntshinga*.
Picture by Jose A.D. Chemane on 28 May 2017



Figure 3. *Tshikhulu*. Picture by José A.D. Chemane 28 May 2017



Figure 4. *Mbila* xylophone.
Picture by Jose A.D. Chemane, 28 May 2017



Figure 5. *Mitchatcha.*
Picture by Jose A.D. Chemane, 28 May 2017



Figure 6. Dancers in *ngalanga* attire. Picture by Jose A.D. Chemane, 17 December 2017

The course systematically runs towards a final assessment that entails students learning the repertoire and choreography, and rehearsing for their final live performance. As per the specifics of teaching the repertoire, classes start with a general warm-up, followed by briefly discussing the lesson plan. Subsequently, the instructor gradually introduces the repertoire as outlined in the syllabus to the class. For instance, in a typical class scenario, the instructor demonstrates the first step, *kutchatcha*, to be repeated. While the dance section practises this step, he instructs the rhythm section to add *tshindzomana* (the timeline) and the specific accompanying drum pattern to *kutchatcha*, which frames *ntshinga* (lead drum). Subsequently, the teacher introduces a call-and-

response session to the class, which forms part of an exercise that adds thrill to the repetition. In the meantime, the rhythm section would add a second timeline played on the *tshikhulu* to complement the support of the dance. The instructor then demonstrates *mungenisu*, *kudana* and *gwinya* routines with the student, expected to be learnt and practised in an integrated manner, and students’ interchange.

Songs are learned collectively through a word-by-word transcription process. Then, the harmonization process follows. Specific to *ngalanga* drumming, students are taught the importance of warming up before playing to develop proper hand motion and stick control. Also, *ngalanga* drum instruction explores scatting to enhance the learning process. By scatting drum patterns, students allow themselves to master drum patterns which they initially find challenging. Scat is a vocal Jazz technique, and instrumentalists use it to approach improvisation. It became well-known within the Jazz circles through Louis Armstrong’s 1926 recording ‘Heebie Jeebies’. Different interpretations underpin scat; however, as a musical artefact, scat is meaningful without needing to carry tangible signifiers (Nattiez 1990). As applied to *ngalanga* instruction, scat assists students’ drumming skills, and improve lyric articulation, pulse, and rhythmic feel. Also, students are encouraged to take written or voice notes to capture what they hear, which speaks to their needs in terms of memory aid.

1 e + **2** + **3 e** + **4** +
 Tã ka tã gõ tã (.) ka tã gõ

1 e + **2** + **3 e** + **4** +
 Tã gõ (.) tã (.) tã gõ (.) tã (.)

Assessments are repertoire-based. In a class assessment scenario, it is the expectation that students perform the dance steps with acquired techniques, playing the various drum parts and accompanying another student. There is also an assessment of the mastery of choreography. In a public performance scenario, besides individual performance, teamwork skills by ensuring the success of the ensemble are also checked.

Students assessments are in three contexts – a continuous assessment, which seeks to identify the challenges students face in order to manage their progress. The assessment considers weekly tasks in terms of mastery of dance

steps/routine and drum techniques. Thus, the task of students is to perform the repertoire both individually and in a group. It becomes necessary to evaluate the individual as well as the group components as the midterm and final assessments are framed around those aspects. Hence, the instructor continuously checks on student performance to ensure progress. Also, at the midterm assessment, students are expected to perform selected repertoire in terms of dance, drumming, singing, and choreography. It also looks at drumming and dance in both execution and technique, choreography, and singing. The final exam comprises two parts – live performance and a studio exam. Here the same requirements apply, with the semester mark reflecting the general performance.

***Ngalanga* Online Instruction**

The objectives of the re-imagined remote instruction align with contact instruction, as the module still aims to introduce the students to the *ngalanga* tradition, although the pedagogy differs. The goal of the module is to ensure that students would gain basic knowledge of the performance practices of the dance drumming tradition. The expectation is that students record themselves performing selected repertoire and techniques in both dance and drumming. Being cognizant of limited access to instruments, e.g. hand drums, students will be encouraged to creatively explore other sound-producing resources, such as recycled bucket drums for the learning process.⁷ The repertoire for this mode of instruction will be prepared and packaged into a series of instructional audio and video files. A set of video files will cover the dance routines and the other, the drumming techniques. There will be another video file with a combination of both techniques. In each video file, the instructor will give a detailed explanation and a step-by-step demonstration of either dance routines or drumming patterns. The focus will be on posture, technique, execution, and dance aesthetics. Also, each instructional video will have a backing track/play-along specific to the particular dance step or drumming part under study. The play-along will serve as the sound source from which students practise their dance routines and drumming.

Furthermore, audio-files will include drum patterns. Instructional notes and notation will also be made available in PDF format. These sources will

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IyHQJzgDCgg>

serve as a reference to assist the instruction during the live-streamed classes. Instructional videos/audios will include:

- Video 1: Introduction

This video introduces the course, its aims and objectives as well as the outline – a brief note on the music tradition, the instructional videos and other support resources.

Dance Instruction Video (six instructional videos)

Dance sequences in these videos have six different instructional units.

- Video 2: Step #1 – *Kutchatcha*/stamping
- Video 3: Step #2 – *Kutchatcha* variation
- Video 4: Step #3 – *Mungenu* (Stop & Go)
- Video 5: Step #4 – *Kudana* (The call)
- Video 6: Step #5 – *Kukavata*
- Video 7: Step #6 – *Gwinya*

Each dance component is broken down and explained, and sequentially demonstrated. Videos will be labelled and coded for easy access with a paper edit, which indicates key dance routines, drum patterns and improvisation for reference. An additional video link will provide students with an opportunity to experience *ngalanga* from the culture bearer’s perspectives.

Drumming Instruction videos (dance accompaniment)

This set of videos and audios introduces various layers of drumming techniques. The instructor introduces the various names of the drums, its role in the ensemble and playing techniques before demonstrating.

- Video1/Audio 1: Pattern #1 – to accompany *Kutchatcha*)
- Video2/Audio 2: Pattern #2 – to accompany *Kutchatcha* variation)
- Video3/Audio 3: Pattern #3 – to accompany *Mungenu*)
- Video4/Audio 4: Pattern #4 – The call
- Video5/Audio 5: Pattern #5 (*Kukavata/Makhara*)
- Video6/Audio 6: Pattern #6 (*Gwinya*)

Online classes will be mediated interchangeably between Moodle, Zoom, WhatsApp and E-mail. To ensure that students access learning, and mindful of the fact that accessing and manoeuvring technologies can be challenging and can somehow expose inequalities (Heyang & Martin 2020:3), the course will employ technologies/platforms that are accessible and user friendly. Live streaming of classes will follow the UKZN's timetable; however, where necessary, rescheduled, following consultation through the online learning WhatsApp group to be created (before live streaming). Students will learn the same aspects of music set in the instructional resources. For record purposes, WhatsApp sessions will be screen-shot or recorded. Feedback will be through the same identified online channels. Through this group, various logistics of the remote teaching will be deliberated and discussed.

As this an ensemble class, the challenge is to find alternatives that can capture the groupwork while in a context of social distancing. Although Zoom provides a virtual platform to bring many people together in a virtual space, issues with connectivity, bandwidth, delays in receptivity and data consumption make it a challenge to engage a class on African music and dance ensemble effectively. Alternatively, the video collage app provides a way to organize multiple, yet synchronized demonstration of various orchestrated aspects of performance. For instance, it is easy to embed four frames in a video, such that the instructor demonstrates the timeline pattern in synchrony with the primary *kutchatcha* step, accompanied by the lead drum and the *tshikhulu* bass parts.⁸ Students can use this approach to package their assignments by collaborating in duets, trios or quartets to exchange recorded tasks, each performing a specific task, and produce an edited video collage to submit for grading. This, however, does not replace the essence of ensemble work.

Assessments in this mode of instruction will reflect the new normal; however, examine the essence of the pedagogy. Students will record themselves performing the prescribed weekly tasks and submit for evaluation, which will form part of the continuous assessment. The assessment will focus on progress on repertoire, dance and drumming techniques as well as choreography. Assessment will be conducted either via Zoom or WhatsApp conference call. The other option will require of students to pre-record themselves and submit the recordings on Moodle within a set timeframe. The final assessment will encompass the component performance; however,

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LA04H81yba4>

framed in two possibilities; the first option – a live performance via live-streaming on a platform either Zoom, WhatsApp or Facebook. The assessment grading will follow – Midterm (30%), Live-streaming show (10%), and End-of-semester (10%), with a total semester mark of 50%.

The transition process from contact to online modes of instruction is a complex one (Gold 2001: 35), as it involves specialized training in the technical aspects of delivering quality educational materials in an online environment, and how to foster knowledge acquisition within this new environment. Teaching African dance and drumming in a confinement context, within a limited space, with limited resources while trying to make sense of the new normal and the socio-political and economic dilemmas makes it even more impractical. Although UKZN made provisions for students and staff to access the internet, issues of connectivity, bandwidth become a challenge. Teaching a dance-drumming tradition rich in content becomes challenging virtually, especially in a limited space with sound disruptions delays which takes away the aesthetics of the style, impacts the teaching mechanism and collective engagement. Thus, having the course pre-recorded and packaged in instructional videos minimizes these challenges; however, investing in professional video production ought to ensure a successful synchronous module.

Conclusion: Program Delivery and Assessment in the Context of Institutional Closures

In the two examples above, the Ghanaian palmwine guitar tradition taught as individual instruction and the *ngalanga* dance drumming tradition from Mozambique taught as an ensemble class, one can see a carefully laid out pathway towards the program delivery and assessment. Most of the innovations happen during the program delivery, particularly in the ensemble class, where things need to occur with some synchrony. In the case of individual instruction, other than delays in transmission in the visual media available, there is not a significant departure from the norm. What helps in both cases is the opportunity students have to play difficult parts of pieces and continue to rehearse with the assistance of the recorded examples, and that way increase their proficiency and clean up their articulation. They do not also have that possibility in contact instruction that is a short 45 minutes per week.

Similarly, with assessment, the assessment instrument used does not

deviate much from the norm, as the examining panel views the presentation and scores the marking sheet. Following the individual scoring, the panel can have a Zoom or WhatsApp meeting to discuss their marks, and the necessary moderation can happen per usual. Assessment of the ensemble work provides the most significant challenges. Concepts need to be isolated, in not always natural ways, and this interrupts the flow and creative momentum – the natural build-up and ebb and flow that characterises live performance. Absence of an audience affects a live performance of many genres of African music and dance to come further alive with their participation – ululation, cheers, and claps. Also, ensemble members do not feed off one another’s creativity and spontaneity in performance. What falls away is the spontaneity, creative outbursts, the dialogue between drummers and dancers that build up to points where each peaks with some virtuoso interplay. Even in the solo instrumental tuition, the energy of in-person contact teaching and the rapport that creates a positive dynamic environment are missing in the online and remote education. Teachers cannot lean forward towards their learners, or help place their finger on the correct string, or gently correct the posture, as the screen stands in the way. Also, one finds that the lesson moves along a lot slower than with in-person contact.

However, with the view that institutional closures will be a long-term reality, and indeed the new normal, teachers and students warm up to remote and online teaching. Soon indeed, various technological advances will enhance things, particularly the ensemble teaching, in which case, a few months ahead, we should find ourselves closer to reaching a level of creativity that we can all be happier with. In the future, we can utilize broader social media, including Google Hangouts, to explore other options further. With faster internet speed, the quality of online video engagement will improve immensely, and the current delay experienced when performing on platforms such as Zoom will fall away. The new audience for concerts will now be these online platforms too, and some of these pedagogical experiments can be included on YouTube, a channel set up mainly for these genres studied, not as a complete well-rehearsed performance, but as educational tools to aid learning. With more of a social media presence, these materials will have an even broader reach and will be valuable pedagogical materials available to populations around the globe. In such a setting, teaching can open chat rooms and blogs to explain creative pathways further around challenging passages and to engage with questions and discussions with others learning the traditions.

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