

#6

Song

This song has the most basic of forms: the leader's call is answered by the group's response. Despite this formal simplicity, the song's disjunct melody and multi-determinant tonality make it tricky. Learning by ear from the sound recording presents challenges because the singers repeat the tune a few times settling the pitch material. The leader's part begins with string of short tones that walk up and down the top of the range (d5-e5-f#5) but then it abruptly descends a major seventh in two dramatic leaps (d5-b4-e4). This wide interval and sudden disjunct melodic contour is unusual in my experience of Ewe music. The group's part feels more familiar within the context of Ewe song: after lingering on d5, it walks down to g4, visits d4, before ending with ease on g4. I hear the group's tune within a standard anhemitonic pentatonic frame: the song is in G (g4-a4-b4-d5-e5, 1-2-3-5-6) with strong complementary pull towards D (d4-e4-g4-a4-b4, 1-2-4-5-6). This tune's significant use of pitches below the finalis, i.e., d4 serving as 5 to g4's 1, stands out in comparison to songs we have encountered thus far. Rhythmically, the song favors punchy two-note figures in two settings. Within the first half of the bell phrase we hear two-note figures (onbeat-partial 2, DA-da) that push against the bell's rhythm; in the bell's second half pickup-onbeat (da-DA) figures reinforce the inherent attraction of bell tones 6-1 to four-beats 4-1. Both sorts of figure occur at the mid-point of the bell phrase, four-beat 3.

But what is the tonal logic of the leader's phrase? Given the nature of Ewe tonality, we suspect a pentatonic scale...but which type and mode? When the leader's melody reaches b4 (m.2), I anticipate a step down to a4. With A as a temporary tonal

center, the leader's tune would fall within an a4-b4-d5-e5-f#5 (1-2-4-5-6) mode. Since the group's part sets the tune firmly within standard Ewe tonality, are we encountering a shift of pitch sets and modes when leader and group trade off? Or is f#5 better regarded as a note added to the g4-a4-b4-d5-e5 (1-2-3-5-6) mode that enables step-wise motion in the leader's opening phrase? The b4-e4 leap (m.2) keeps the situation unresolved. Significantly, these notes set the text's dramatic words, "My liver is burning."

Drumming

A two-measure kidi phrase that features pickup-onbeat figures moves in close support of the tune. Over the span of two bell phrases, the kidi phrase shapes the flow of beats 3-4-1-2-3-4-1-rest. The alignment of kidi and tune confers a very strong four-beat accentuation to this song. Of course, this creates a strong contrast to the ever-present six-beat feeling of the handclap and rattle parts. The sogo largely plays ga and dzi strokes in unison with kidi's bounces. The tsa strokes ratchet up the rhythmic tension, however, by sounding binary offbeats that create 2:3 within four-beat units. In his improvisation GFA confers phenomenal accent to the offbeat six feeling (see mm.33, 35) and third partial accentuation within four-beats 2 and 4 (see m.43). The second drum language phrase (B) begins on four-beat 2, which stretches the drumming phrase one beat earlier than normal.