

Fishers of song: Music education and community in Andavadoaka, Madagascar

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Abstract

What might pre-service music teachers learn by stepping outside the formal curriculum? In between semesters student teaching in New York City, I investigated music education practices in the Vezo fishing village of Andavadoaka, Madagascar. By investigating how this community practices advanced musicianship learned primarily outside the classroom, I aimed to understand what formal music educators can do to improve musicianship in our communities. This research focuses on the teaching and learning of music as observed through one community institution (the Catholic school) and three knowledgeable, local music makers (Gustin, Felicia, and Sylvera). Through ethnography and oral history, I asked, what is the relationship between community and music education practices in Andavadoaka? And, how do my observations as a cultural outsider provide insight into the relationship between community and music education practices in the formal, school settings where I was learning to teach? Three themes emerged from these experiences. By imbuing our classrooms with a participatory ethos, practicing music in a richer cultural context, and tapping into the social networks inhabited by our students, we can musically develop our communities far beyond their current limits.

Keywords

Community, ethnography, Madagascar, musicianship, participatory music, teacher education

The Vezo fishing village of Andavadoaka—meaning “hole in the rock”—inhabits a stretch of desert along the southwest coast of Madagascar. The word *vezo* is imperative for “paddle” (Astuti, 1995). Vezo men spend most of their time on the ocean in *lakana*, dugout pirogues strung with homemade sails. Women walk out onto the reef at low tide to collect octopus and shellfish. Instead of sandpaper, craftsmen there use the desiccated tail of a sting ray. My partner is an archeologist

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Figure 1. Kabosy with view of Andavadoaka and the Mozambique Channel.

raised in Madagascar who has worked alongside the Vezo since 2011. Accompanying her one summer between semesters student teaching in New York City, I investigated how musical traditions in a contemporary setting are practiced and transmitted by the people of Andavadoaka to better understand what formal music educators can do to improve musicianship in our classrooms and communities.

Though remote, Andavadoaka is quite cosmopolitan. Society there consists of an intricate web of social networks. There are *taxi brousse* that carry people, animals, goods, and mail between villages and faraway towns. There are wells on the outskirts of town where people gather to bathe, launder clothes, catch up on gossip, and sometimes sing or strum a *kabosy*, small guitars with fish-net strings (Figure 1). There are Catholic and Protestant churches; a beach-front disco bar where the overdriven stereo blares through the night powered by a car battery; and Monsieur Rina's *épicerie*, which people frequent for cigarettes, candies, cellphone credit, and the latest news.

Through discussions with Dr. Barthélémy Manjakahery—then Director of the Center for Documentation and Research on Malagasy Art and Oral Traditions at the University of Toliara—I learned of the need for investigations of the region's musical traditions (Figure 2). UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes that “the processes of globalization and social transformation” have given rise to “grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage” around the world (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1). According to local oral historian Thomas, the people of Nosy Ve—a small island just northwest of Andavadoaka—still sing the songs of the ancient people, but they can only clap and hum them because they have forgotten the words (personal communication, August 10, 2012). I aligned my ethnographic case study's objectives with UNESCO's recommendations, namely “identification, documentation, research, preservation. . . transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 3).



Figure 2. Center for Documentation and Research on Malagasy Art and Oral Traditions at the University of Toliara.

Dr. Tanambelo Rasolondrainy, an anthropologist from nearby Toliara, was my guide into the community of Vezo music. Few people in Andavadoaka speak English or French. Vezo is the local language and Rasolondrainy was an essential interlocutor. Additionally, he is himself a guitarist and singer famous in Toliara and the surrounding villages, where he is known by his nickname Nado. So, he was familiar with traditional Malagasy music and instantly recognizable to the consultants I sought to interview.

Literature

From 1962 to 1963, American Norma McLeod spent a year in Madagascar supported by “the first Ford Foundation grant of its kind to study the peoples of the island through their music” (Garrett, 1961, p. 11). Her work investigated musical specialists but only made one mention of the Vezo: “Among the West Coast fishermen, the Vezo and Antanalana, similar case zithers are used with women’s choruses, the accordion sometimes replacing the zither” (McLeod, 1964, p. 280). Emoff’s (2003) review of the 1963 field recording *Madagascar Côte Ouest: Antandroy, Masikoro, Vezo* by Charles Duvelle pointed out the dearth of material on Vezo music—only one song by a women’s chorus—and asks “what sort of music Vezo men might make” and “how such music might relate (or not) to women’s roles in Vezo culture” (p. 279).

Scholars of education have taken a more recent interest in Madagascar. Writing about the indigenous institution of *hiragasy* (meaning “Malagasy song”), Antal and Easton (2009) saw this traditional performance of music, dance, and proverb-infused oratory as “an arena for citizen engagement in the democratic process” (p. 604), one that is “very well suited to the reinforcement and propagation of civic knowledge, skills and values” (p. 609). External influences are apparent, as well. In 1862, the London Missionary Society sent Reverend Robert Toy to John Curwen to learn the

Tonic Sol-fa method for psalm singing class instruction. Toy then employed this method as part of his evangelizing in Madagascar (Southcott, 2004).

Education scholarship has begun to develop sophisticated frameworks for pre-service music teacher education (McKoy, 2019) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), frameworks that emphasize, “the importance of community involvement and engagement by linking all classroom work to and through the lens of the local community” (Palmer et al., 2022, p. 8), as well as specific calls “to acknowledge rich knowledge in African values” and an education curriculum that reflects the African experience (Owino & Akuno, 2019, p. 160). Yet in the U.S.A., despite increased immigration from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, research finds unbalanced teacher education programs primarily devoted to western art music (Wang & Humphreys, 2009). Music teachers need to recognize the cultural underpinnings of their own beliefs (Ladson-Billings, 2006), immerse themselves in other ways of being musical (VanDeusen, 2019), consider indigenous education paradigms in our communities (Ake, 1988; Isabirye, 2021), and prioritize social relations over artistic production (Turino, 2008). However, given the monocultural training prevalent in many programs, teachers are largely responsible for equipping themselves to explore diverse musical cultures (Wang & Humphreys, 2009). Research is needed to document their experiences.

Schools across the globe, from the United States (Asante, 1987) to Uganda (Isabirye, 2021), exemplify the legacy of European colonialism, where the positioning of Eurocentric views as universal hinders cultural understanding. Contemporary scholarship has explored “decolonising [sic] the curriculum in Africa by means of postcolonial education systems that reclaim indigenous African voices” (Owino & Akuno, 2019; Wa Thiong’o, 1986), but classroom-based research is insufficient to the depth of cultural analysis that decolonization demands. Thus ethnographic approaches to education research are needed (Gruenewald, 2003). In post-colonial contexts like Madagascar and the United States, studies must re-analyze indigenous educational activities, which largely predate colonial systems and persist outside their boundaries (Brock-Utne, 2018). Ethnographic approaches to education research by Emily Achieng’ Akuno (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), James Isabirye (Uganda), N’dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba (Côte d’Ivoire), and others have contributed to the reinvigorating of indigenous knowledge systems based on self-reliance, play, *ujamaa* (sometimes called African socialism), and the *ubuntu* paradigm; yet there is a lack of systematic application of such approaches and further in-depth research is needed (Assié-Lumumba, 2017; Brock-Utne, 2018; Isabirye, 2021; Mans, 2002; Owino & Akuno, 2019). Through collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005), I sought to understand how indigenous musical traditions survive in a globalized community setting. I asked (1) *how one community can practice high levels of musicianship learned primarily outside the classroom* with an aim to understand (2) *what formal music educators can do to improve musicianship in our classrooms and communities*.

Methods

Ethical research procedures approved by Yale and New York University (February 2012) included (1) establishing a research protocol with the University of Toliara, (2) receiving an official research accord stamped by the village president in Andavadoaka and the mayor of the Commune Rurale de Befandefa (June 2012), (3) compensating all participants in the study who shared significant amounts of time with us (through performances, interviews, lyric transcriptions, field logistics, and translation), and (4) obtaining signed release forms from all consultants to make sure they approved of my mission and gave permission for the public, non-commercial presentation of the research.

I conducted fieldwork in Madagascar between June and August 2012. Using ethnographic case study methodology, I investigated Andavadoaka’s musical customs through subject-oriented, semi-structured oral history interviews (Larson, 2006), attendance at local secular and religious musical

events, observation of informal settings for music education, audio and video recording of musical happenings around the community, and taking detailed field notes with thick description (Geertz, 1973; Rossman & Rallis, 2017) of the content and context of my observations, including autoethnographic commentary (Emerson et al., 2011). A contextual approach was warranted “to facilitate the exploration of meaning in music beyond descriptive analysis” in a society where “people are more concerned with the meaning or the interpretation of music than with its description” (Nketia, 1990, p. 79).

Rasolondrainy and I interviewed 18 adult male and female oral history narrators. Narrators cited in this study’s findings have been identified by actual names with their written consent. Interviews lasted 45 to 60 min and included questions such as “Where/how did you learn to play and sing music?” “Whom do you teach these songs to and how do you teach them?” and “When and why did you start writing songs/composing/producing original music?”

After reviewing jottings (short notebook entries made during interviews or observations) and writing up fieldnotes with thick description, Rasolondrainy and I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim, contributing to a sustained immersion in the data. I utilized in vivo coding while revisiting the data in the early stages to discern emerging themes (King, 2008; Strauss, 1987), employing this method specifically to prioritize participants’ voices (Saldaña, 2015) and to ensure that analytical concepts flowed from research participants’ own words (King, 2008). Oral history transcripts and detailed fieldnotes (augmented by recordings) of the content and context of my observations provided a rich descriptive basis from which to analyze and interpret data through ethnographic storytelling (Wolcott, 1994), a process by which “hierarchical reorganization of data into a narrative complexifies, rather than simplifies, social reality” (Au, 2021, p. 1165).

My role was as a pre-service, formal music educator in between semesters student teaching music in New York City public schools. My musical training came from the oral tradition of American jazz and the instruments I brought to the field (bass, guitar, violin) helped me to establish rapport with my research partners in Andavadoaka.

My research was limited by its geographical and social milieu. Andavadoaka is a community of about 1,500 residents wherein one ethnic group (Vezo) predominates. Research was also limited to 3 months of observations. Therefore, I chose to focus on the teaching and learning of music as observed through one community institution and three knowledgeable, local music makers with varied roles and points of view.

Findings

School

The Catholic compound in Andavadoaka includes a primary school, an intermediate school, and a chapel. Father Canut, the church head, told me they were in possession of a few instruments, but the school had no music program. The instruments—a guitar, a keyboard, and drums—were used only by a few people during services. Canut put me in touch with the *directrice* of the school, Sister Marguerite, and the next week I returned to the compound to observe classes.

The school day started with the Vezo mass. Marguerite led the proceedings. The only word I understood was *mpianitra*, or “student.” The chapel was full of kids from about 4 years old to young teenagers. Next to the altar sat a bespoke drum set. The kick was a recycled oil drum covered with a *zebu* hide. The snare, a wooden djembe.

According to one teacher, parents “can’t reinforce their children’s musical capacity” (Eloi Solo, personal communication, June 29, 2012). There were music books and a curriculum, but no professional music teacher. The only music in primary school was singing. Children were



Figure 3. Gustin and Lazaso Ampasilava in Andavadoaka.

preparing for their first communion, so they sang evangelical songs from the Malagasy Hymnal. Later on, I asked Sister Marguerite if I could come to mass Sunday to *écouter la musique Catholique*. She corrected me: “*Oui, mais participer. Pas écouter.*” Yes, but to participate. Not to listen (personal communication, June 29, 2012).

Gustin

We teach our kids because we are getting old. Once we get old, we could not do this business anymore. Our kids can come up and take over the business.

I found out about Andavadoaka’s most renowned *gorodo* player through the local equivalent of Google. I went to Monsieur Rina’s shop to copy release forms and we asked about Gustin. Nado and I had talked to everyone in town about music. People concluded we wanted to track down experts, something of a misunderstanding. Everyone knew who these people were, but they could not be found just playing around town because their job was to play for patrons during ceremonies (Nado, personal communication, July 13, 2012). Otherwise, music in Andavadoaka was more democratized. Rina played us a recording on his cellphone. The music reminded me of zydeco. He called nearby Morombe and a few days later we met Gustin at his father-in-law’s compound on the northern outskirts of Andavadoaka.

It was afternoon when we met Gustin and his bandmates and greeted their families. The fishing was done and everyone was sitting on a boat sail spread across the sand (Figure 3). A wooden, two-string bass and goat-skinned drum lay beside the musicians. The name of the group was Lazaso Ampasilava, or “Good Popularity from Ampasilava.” Gustin and Dena got out two button accordions—antiques made of thin, rusted metal and painted blue, black, yellow, and red. They were decorated with words, initials, and flowers. Gustin later told me that his instrument cost him 800,000 Ariary, equivalent to \$400 US, a justifiably large sum because playing the

accordion is more prestigious than other ceremonial instruments and therefore more lucrative. Gustin modified the sound of the instrument himself (“cut the blades”) to give it the wailing, overdriven sound he was looking for. “It is not the notes but the sound that matters,” he told me (personal communication, July 18, 2012).

The leader played melody and improvised while the other accordionist played rhythm chords. The bass—or *besogady* (“big butt”)—had strings of thick, nylon fishing line and was plucked percussively with a plastic comb. Tenasoa, the bassist, also sang and played whistle. Although this was ceremonial music, the rhythm and form of the songs were taken from *tsapiky*, popular dance music from the south.

Lazasoa Ampasilava works from July or August until December when there is a lull in the fishing season. They have a business performing music for ceremonies like *savatse* (circumcision), *doany* (spirit possession), and *zotso botry* (christening a boat). Their main occupation is *mbandrano eny, magniriky*—“going to the sea and diving for fish” (Gustin, personal communication, July 14, 2012).

Tenasoa, the group’s composer, made his instrument out of a local wood called *rombe*. The drum was also made locally out of *zebu* leather and cane tied across a cement canister. The two accordions were purchased from renowned master Remoko in Ankililoake near Toliara. Only musicians sell such rare and important instruments. You cannot find them at any market.

Gustin told me that he began playing only 7 years prior. Now everyone in the villages surrounding Andavadoaka hires Lazasoa Ampasilava:

The reason is that we coveted our friends from inland when they come and perform here. Then we said, “Ha! Let’s learn it so that we will know how to play as well.” We copied somebody’s talents, but only we composed ours in our own way once we started to master it. (Gustin, personal communication, July 14, 2012)

Lazasoa Ampasilava started out the same as any other venture expanding into a new market—they hired a consultant. They brought accordion master Remoko to come and live with them in Ampasilava: “We invited him so that he teaches us. . . We like [the music] very much. We want to become like them as well.” In a short time, not only were Gustin and his group performing around the region; they were also teaching the music to others. As Gustin likes to say, *mpianatsy koa ro niramose*, or, “The student becomes a teacher” (Gustin, personal communication, July 14, 2012).

Felicia

José: So, who teaches you the song?

Felicia: No! We just know it like that.

Felicia Fenomanana is an octopus fisherwoman, mother, and housekeeper in Andavadoaka.¹ She and daughter Hira (Malagasy for “song”) offered to convene the women’s choir for us, less a formal ensemble and more a group of adults from the village who knew each other and spent their lives singing together around bucket-top *adesy* (“charcoal grills”), in church, and at village ceremonies. They do not consider themselves to be musicians. The main occupation of women in Andavadoaka is collecting octopus and, when octopus are out of season, collecting firewood in the forest.

The group Felicia assembled for us did not sound like non-musicians. Eighteen women danced, beat syncopations on a jerry can, and sang—in three-part harmony—13 songs from memory. There was no clear leader and soloists changed from song to song. The singers remade their coiffure with

every new song depending on the its intent to ward off accidents, say goodbye, or celebrate Jesus Christ. “Everybody knows” was Felicia’s answer to so many questions about music:

We directly sit and then everybody knows which voice one should sing with. Everybody knows something like I know my voice can do this. So, each to their own, but there is nothing like second voices sit here, first voices there. (Felicia, personal communication, August 2, 2012)

As Felicia told me about solos, “Anybody who has a high voice can lead” but “whoever has a nice voice leads first.” Elders were welcomed into the group regardless of talent, but Felicia specified that “the younger and the middle-aged actively take care of the song” (personal communication, August 2, 2012).

The women exchanged songs with other villages through an intricate social network that coalesced around wakes and large funeral gatherings:

When there is someone dead in Lamboara, we go there for vigil. Then we sing following rounds. Now it’s time for Andavadoaka to sing. When Andavadoaka finishes singing, then it comes to Lamboara’s turn. Then it comes to Ampasilava’s turn. (Felicia, personal communication, August 2, 2012)

Songs are traded and shared, Felicia emphasized, not taught. The sharing traversed ethnic boundaries as well as geographical ones, as music was traded between the Vezo (coastal fishing people), the Masikoro (cattle pastoralists), and the Mikea (hunter-gatherers of the spiny forest). The sharing of songs was often driven by kinship ties: “I have an elder living there [Kindranoky]. . . so I took this song from them. . . [and] taught those people around here” (Felicia, personal communication, August 2, 2012). Songs traveled from as far as Salary (which took us several hours to reach from Andavadoaka via 4 × 4), where Felicia picked up a new one at her brother-in-law’s son’s wedding.

With all this extra mileage, I asked Felicia if the songs changed a lot over time. No, she answered, the songs hadn’t been “modified.” As far as she knew, the songs and the lyrics—which Felicia described as “very old”—“persevere from the former time” (Felicia, personal communication, August 2, 2012).

Sylvera

To tell the truth, I did not go to a music school. But I did an effort. I said, “How can I play guitar?” Then I struggled.

I met the guitarist Sylvera through James, Hira’s husband. Sylvera had married into James’ extended family and taken a number of family members into his gospel singing group, Armistice: Balbine, Henriette, Guillaume, and Freddo. I could tell right away at our recording session that Sylvera’s group was diligent. It was a Wednesday and they had performed at mass that morning. Sylvera brought with him a book that included over 90 songs. Before playing a note, the members of the group spent half an hour making decisions together about what to play and arranging the music. It was more like working in a studio than field recording.

Sylvera wrote all the group’s songs himself. In 1995, British marine conservation non-governmental organization (NGO) Blue Ventures opened their first marine reserve off the coast of Andavadoaka and the prime minister came to the village for a large ceremony. They commissioned Sylvera to provide music and dancers to entertain the guests. Sylvera wanted to craft highly rhythmic songs without overshadowing the environmental content of the lyrics: “We transferred the message to the people” (personal communication, August 17, 2012). That’s how Sylvera’s

songwriting style—powerful social and gospel messages bound up in irresistible rhythms and harmonies—was born:

It's a message for everybody, to sensitize them. It's a sensitization kind of, so as to motivate people to love each other. That's the message it transfers. It's not only for the local people here but for people around Madagascar. Because our songs are about the know-how in life. So, it's a research endeavor to educate the mentality of people, their lifeway. That's it. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

Sylvera's personal musical growth was driven both by an inner urge to learn and the support of the Catholic church:

It's like that. It's my own effort but nobody taught me. That incited me to learn. I personally did efforts, my young brother and I. Nobody helped me but it was my initiative. That is what I did. I struggled and then I shared. Then I saw that the result of my effort was excellent. Then I did another effort with the Padre, to improve it. He assists with instruments, so that I can develop and release songs, leading choir. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

Sylvera's talent and hard-earned skills led to commissions from the Catholic church to compose themes for the priests-in-training throughout the Morombe district. Eventually, Father Stefan sent away to a friend in Switzerland for a guitar. That's the instrument Sylvera plays today:

The guitar was given to the choir. I was the [one] responsible. This stays with you. Even if there is a new Padre arriving, it stays with you. [Padre said,] "I don't trust anybody else but you either about songs or about precaution. So, take it. When it is needed at church, you can use it there." That means it's not mine, but it belongs to the church. I am just a responsible [one]. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

While Sylvera downplayed the role of teaching in his musical upbringing, he clearly benefited from the guidance of a more experienced guitarist during his developmental phase:

When I started to know how to play, there was someone who knows tunes of guitar. I place my fingers like this. What is that key, tune? This is *do*. Sometimes they correct something, and then I adjust it. *Fa*, like this? *Sol*. I wrote all of these following the arrangement of my fingers. Then after that, I did an effort because there is traditional music. Most of the time, they are of three keys, especially here in Madagascar. However, we put a few modern things in it so that it sounds well when people are listening to it. So, we put some minor key. Minor starting with *do*, minor *la*, minor *si*. Then I combined all these keys. I tried to make the song sounder so that people can admire it. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

Sylvera's songs were unique, indeed, for they were the only songs I heard in Andavadoaka that ventured into a minor mode. Sylvera's harmonic innovation suited his diligent, thoughtful personality, and the seriousness of his message.

Once Sylvera had successfully developed a recognized body of work as a guitarist and songwriter, he began to pass on his knowledge and expertise to others in the community:

You can call me music teacher, because there are people who don't know how to play guitar. They ask to learn. There are four persons who succeeded. There is also my senior son. He is twelve years old and the junior is nine years old. The junior just looks at my fingers holding the chords. Then he knows. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

To teach guitar, Sylvera starts the off with the chords C, F, and G. The students "struggle with it" for a while, "playing around it" until they get it, at which point Sylvera introduces the next

challenge. By teaching students a single new chord at a time, he slowly moves them through the keys around the circle of fifths:

Because he already knows *sol* and *re*, he has only to learn *la*. He only learns how to hold *la*. He's playing around that one. Repeating it often. That is how I teach. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

Sylvera's choral directing and songwriting skills are highly valued by those interested in studying music in Andavadoaka. As far as teaching is concerned, he has an open-door policy:

When I teach songs, many are interested and asking to join the group. But I did not discriminate because they want to learn. Even today, many are interested in learning songs, saying, "Let's compose a song." We will do it because I want to sing together with you. (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012)

But that open door closes sometimes. Sylvera is a consummate professional. So, when it comes to official performances or the recording studio, "Only those who sing [well] can come" (Sylvera, personal communication, August 17, 2012). Unlike Gustin's working quartet or Felicia's ceremonial singers, Sylvera's musical world is shaped like a pyramid. There are many aspirants striving at the foundations, but only a select few assembled artfully at the top, their voices lifted heavenward.

Discussion

There are limitations to cross-cultural understanding through such brief immersion (VanDeusen, 2019), especially where a Western scholar is attempting an "understanding and appreciation of African music as an art and a mode of communication" (Nketia, 1986, pp. 36–37). However, I ultimately returned to student-teaching in New York and subsequent years as a formal music educator more keenly aware of the values of *participation*, *context*, and *social relations*. By imbuing our classrooms with a participatory ethos, practicing music in a richer cultural and environmental context, and tapping into the intricate and vast social networks inhabited by our students, we can not only develop musicianship beyond its current limits but, more importantly, we can create, strengthen, and preserve community through music.

Turino noted that participatory performance does away with artist-audience distinctions in favor of "an ethos that holds that everyone present can, and in fact should, participate in the sound and motion of the performance" (2008, p. 29). This is what Sister Marguerite was trying to tell me. This is what I witnessed when a large cohort of working women, ages 18 to 80, spontaneously gathered atop a dune and sang, exhibiting an advanced level of multi-dimensional musicianship rare among formally trained choirs in my home country. And it was this—the audience-become-artists by singing, dancing, clapping, and simply being moved—that propelled Gustin's *gorodo* quartet to such great musical heights when they abandoned the pitched, concert atmosphere of our recording session and rejoined us later that evening at the Blue Ventures barbeque. As I put away my TASCAM recorder and joined the line of enthusiastic dancers, I was reminded of Turino's observation that, "Participatory values are distinctive in that the success of a performance is more importantly judged by the degree and intensity of participation than by some abstracted assessment of the musical sound quality" (2008, p. 33).

An understanding of context is essential "to facilitate the exploration of meaning in music beyond descriptive analysis" and leads to "a richer and more dynamic view of a music culture" (Nketia, 1990, p. 79). Felicia and her women's choir had us hike up into the dunes south of the village to record their music so no one would think that a funeral ceremony was taking place. For one



Figure 4. Dr. Tanambelo Rasolondrainy with funeral singers.

young men's choir I recorded, it wasn't enough to sing a particular funeral chant; they had to march while performing, just as they would while carrying the coffin on their shoulders during an actual ceremony (Figure 4). Music was almost entirely absent from the schools in Andavadoaka except in the context of Catholic religious practice, in which case it was a daily occurrence. Chernoff (1981) called it "a mistake 'to listen' to African music" because it cannot be "set apart from its social and cultural context" (p. 33).

Musical community thrives in Andavadoaka through intricate, multi-layered social networks. Participatory culture prioritizes sociality over sound quality, meaning that participatory music "is more about the social relations being realized through the performance than about producing art that can somehow be abstracted from those social relations" (Turino, 2008, p. 35). Monsieur Rina led us to Gustin, whose band came to cosmopolitan Andavadoaka from Morombe and Ampasilava. Our landlord Bic led us to Felicia whose women's choir performed songs originating from a half dozen different villages, villages that held shared funeral ceremonies with Andavadoaka and shared family ties. Hira, through her husband James, led us to Sylvera whose musical development depended on the coincidence of support from the Catholic Diocese in Morombe and the British NGO Blue Ventures in Andavadoaka. In Andavadoaka, community both influences and is influenced by music. African society, wrote Asante, "is essentially a society of harmonies, inasmuch as the coherence or compatibility of persons, things, and modalities is at the root of traditional African philosophy" (1987, p. 65).

Implications

My experiences in Andavadoaka led me to question previously held assumptions about who music teachers are, what we do, what music means, and what learning looks like. Such experiences are lacking in formal teacher preparation and, where they exist, their effectiveness requires additional

investigation (Joseph, 2012; Kratus, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Madrazo, 2017; Southcott & Joseph, 2010; VanDeusen, 2019). I argue pre-service music teachers in training ought to pursue the following objectives, whether or not they are included in the curriculum:

- Immerse yourself in a community music group, event, or culture outside of school.
- Observe music teaching and learning settings outside of school.
- Record oral history interviews with musical elders in the community.

Schools certainly have an important role to play, one that can only be enhanced through community integration and partnership. It is remarkable the extent to which community music education in Andavadoaka conforms to “certain common principles amid the variety of progressive schools” Dewey (1963) observed during the Progressive era in the United States:

To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal. (pp. 19–20)

Evidence from Andavadoaka supports the argument that progressive teacher training programs strive to meet the following requirements:

- Build bridges between university, K-12 schools, and community arts through grants, hosting of events, partnerships, and resource sharing.
- Recruit from the local and regional community students with extensive music experience outside of school settings.
- Reconsider application and audition criteria for admission to music education programs, as well as music education curricula and certification requirements, that place impediments between highly qualified community music practitioners and the teaching profession.

The social integration and musical enjoyment I witnessed all over Andavadoaka—a place with no formal music education in school—are a testament to the educative power of participatory music making. “As compared with the other musical fields,” wrote Turino, “participatory music making/dancing is the most democratic, the least formally competitive, and the least hierarchical” (2008, p. 35). All members of the school and the community should be invited into the music—as I was—not to listen, but to participate.

Music educators worldwide are empowered to strengthen relationships within and between communities through our work. “Given the fact that education is supposed to identify and contribute towards satisfying the needs of the community,” Otchere (2019) argued, “it is imperative for music educators to identify what the community needs musically and tailor their programmes [sic] to produce individuals who can fill this gap” (p. 67). Pre-service teachers, preparing for the formal music teaching profession in schools, need to commit much more time to immersion in out-of-school music making, teaching, and learning experiences. Otherwise, school music education risks obsolescence, diminished participation, and failure to provide all students with an opportunity for personal and collective growth through music (Kratus, 2007).

To create, strengthen, and preserve community through music, formal teacher preparation must be concentric. Ideally, it radiates from the local to the global, like the rippling of water outward from a falling pebble. In 2019, seven years after fieldwork for this study was completed, a research delegation of my partner’s colleagues from Andavadoaka traveled to our home in the United States

to visit labs at the Pennsylvania State University (where Rasolondrainy also worked) and the Smithsonian. I remember Dr. Manjakahery nodding his head one evening as Nado's children sat on the floor next to my children while we all played instruments and sang Bob Marley songs. I could sense the ripples expanding outward without end.

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Research data

Efforts are underway at Dr. Kristina Douglass' Olo Be Taloha (OBT) laboratory at Columbia University to obtain grant funding to develop a database infrastructure to store datasets related to past, ongoing, and future OBT projects in Andavadoaka, including this study. This will permit data access, curation, and sharing between OBT, external collaborators, and local communities who are research partners. At time of reporting, the cultural artifacts, oral histories, and multimedia dataset generated by this case study are held jointly by the author and Dr. Tanambelo Rasolondrainy, who succeeded Dr. Manjakahery as director of CeDRATOM at the Université de Toliara in 2022.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Note

1. She subsequently became the subject of a 2019 documentary film, *Felicia: The Life of an Octopus Fisherwoman*, by Mexican director José Carlos Pons. See <https://filmfreeway.com/FeliciaFilm>.

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