improvisation; this brief ostinato provides an entirely new, more flexible structure for improvisation; electronic bass, guitar, and piano are used; and a rock element is present, especially in the bass and drum patterns.

Be sure to draw connections between this work and the example of Yoruba drumming in the *Listen* set. Davis turned to African influences deliberately and with increasing frequency in the 1960s, and *Bitches Brew* surpassed his previous albums in this regard. Some of the song titles point to Africa—*Pharaoh's Dance* and *Miles Runs the Voodoo Down* (as we will see below, voodoo derives from Yoruba religious practices)—and even the cover art (bring the album or an image from the Web) demonstrates a clear African influence. But the most striking connection can be found in Davis's rhythm section. In a remarkable departure from standard jazz conventions, Davis calls for an ensemble of drummers that includes two drum sets and a third player on auxiliary percussion—comparable to our Yoruba *bata* ensemble! Invite students to listen for the dense polyrhythmic ebb and flow these drummers create as they interact with the rest of the ensemble. Later jazz-rock fusion bands achieved greater popularity than Davis's, especially the bands formed by Davis's own former sidemen: Weather Report (Josef Zawinul and Wayne Shorter), Headhunter (Herbie Hancock), and Return to Forever (Chick Corea). Nonetheless, Davis always remained the jazz musician's musician, a thoughtful improviser who always seemed to know exactly what had to happen next. *Bitches Brew* remains a difficult work for musical neophytes, yet its many-layered textures, prolific inventiveness, and rhythmic energy become more apparent the more one listens. This music's haunting restlessness cannot easily be forgotten.

Global Perspectives 6: African Drumming

The influence of African drumming on music in the New World cannot be underestimated. Wherever Africans found themselves, under whatever circumstances, they left their mark on the music of that region. Jazz, rock, Jamaican reggae, Mexican cumbées, minimalism, and a host of contemporary popular styles would be unthinkable without the influence of African drumming. And that's just North America. The effect of African drumming on Latin or South American music has been no less profound.

Jazz was the first significant, pervasive American style to take root in a genuinely African rhythmic sensibility. This is therefore the perfect place to look at African drumming—right in the middle of our survey of American jazz. The *Listen* recording takes us into the Yoruba region of West Africa. Since a disproportionate number of slaves were shipped from this region to the New World, the Yoruba influence proved especially strong in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. The notes below begin with historical and cultural background materials on the Yoruba people, continue with information on Yoruba drumming, and conclude with specific teaching suggestions for "Ako," a performance by a Yoruba *bata* ensemble.

Yoruba History and Ritual

Today the Yoruba people live in western Nigeria, southern and central Benin (formerly Dahomey), and eastern Togo. About fifteen million, the largest group, live in Nigeria, but a significant number live in Benin as well. The large urban buildup around Lagos and the resulting influx of Western influences have profoundly affected the course of traditional Yoruba music in Nigeria. In Benin, however, the lack of a natural ocean port created a more stable rural

environment in which indigenous customs have flourished. Although Nigerian Yoruba music has lost much of its ritual significance, in Benin we can still see drumming in its original sacred contexts.

The first significant Yoruba kingdom was established at Ife in the eleventh century C.E. The more northerly Oyo kingdom emerged by the fifteenth century and became the dominant Yoruba kingdom by about 1600. Spain began shipping black slaves to its colonies in the Americas beginning in 1517. With the "help" of some local rulers, the Yoruba region quickly became a major hub of the slave trade, and by the 1700s about thirty-five thousand slaves a year were shipped out from this region of West Africa's Gold Coast. Meanwhile, the Oyo kingdom continued its domination in this region up until the nineteenth century. During Europe's mad scramble for Africa at the end of the 1800s, portions of Yoruba land were grabbed up indiscriminately by Germany, France, and Great Britain. Germany's colony was passed to France after World War I, but when all three colonies were granted independence in 1960, they retained their colonial boundaries. These arbitrary boundaries have caused no end of strife, because they randomly group together peoples of very different languages and cultures.

The religious practices of the Yoruba region are of special interest. A good number of the Yoruba people have adopted Christianity, and Islam has made significant inroads, especially in Nigeria, where nearly half the population is Muslim. In Benin, however, two-thirds of the people still practice indigenous religious rituals. Many of these rituals center around cult practices, with each cult devoted to a specific deity. Curiously, no cults directly worship the chief god—Olorun, the sky god—though Eshu, the divine messenger, is thought to mediate between mortals, Olorun, and the other gods. Some lesser gods include Ifa, the god of divination; Odua, creator of the earth; Orishala, creator of humankind; and Ogun, god of iron (or war). Interestingly, the Yoruba have divinized many of their ancient kings, conferring on them the mythic qualities that most closely approximate their human personality traits. Odua was also the first king of Ife (the first recorded Yoruba kingdom), and Yoruba kings up to the present day must be able to trace their lineage to one of Odua's sixteen sons. One of those sons, Oranmiyan, became the first king of Oyo and ruled Ife after the death of Odua. Oranmiyan's son, Shango, was noted for his violent temper and his skill as a great warrior. Like his predecessors, Shango was also divinized, becoming the god of thunder (and lightning and fire).

The word *orisha* applies to any of these divinized ancestors of the Yoruba people, and most *orisha* cults choose one primary *orisha*. In the practice of its rituals, a cult can also invoke other deities in order to strengthen its own *orisha*. The principal *orisha* rituals involve a complex mix of specific dances, songs, rhythms, instruments, costumes, and so on, but the most characteristic feature of many rituals is a trancelike possession. Each cult's practices differ somewhat. In Ifa and Odua cults, possession never occurs, divination being the preferred method of communication with the *orisha*. In the popular Shango cults, possession tends to occur at the end of the initiation ceremony, after several weeks of seclusion and training in a shrine. And at the annual festivals of cults devoted to Yemoja or Oshun—two river goddesses—dozens can become possessed simultaneously.[1]

When many Yoruba were sold into slavery, the *orisha* cults were transplanted to the New World. In this new setting, they formed the basis of important religious practices: the *candomblé* in Bahia (Brazil), the *santería* in Cuba,

[1]William Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 78.

and *vaudou* (vodou or voodoo) in Haiti and elsewhere. These New World cults worship many gods, not just one, for fear that one god or another might otherwise get lost in the shuffle. Shango (Xango in Bahia, Changó in Cuba) remains especially popular, and he is saluted with the ritual greetings "Kabiesile" ("Your Majesty") in Bahia and "Kabiosile" in Cuba (both resemble the original "Kawo kabiye sile" used in Nigeria).[2] In some locations, including Cuba, *bata* ensembles continue to accompany this ritual. Apparently, there is now a Shango temple in New York City as well. In all cases, drumming (with gourds or drums) and possession trances remain a significant part of these transplanted rituals.

Somewhat different from the *orisha* cults are the popular Egungun cults. Like the cults described above, Egungun cults are secret societies, but Egungun rituals do not call upon a divinized ancient ancestor. Rather, they invoke the spirits of ancestors from their own town, benign spirits who mediate between the dead and the living. Various explanations account for the origin of the Egungun ceremonies. One story attributes it to the god Amaiyegun, who taught the Yoruba the use of costumes and dances that could protect them from death. In yet another story the goddess Oya, after bearing Shango eight speechless children, made sacrifices that enabled her to bear a son, Egungun. Egungun could speak, but only in a distorted manner. Both stories explain aspects of the Egungun ceremonies, the first the notion of death's impermanence, the second the distorted voices used by Egungun ritual dancers.

Egungun festivals also have a public side. The cult carefully prepares and rehearses its rituals in private, but the actual "performance" of the ritual takes place in public, and "repeat performances" are often given at different locations around the city. Central to the ritual are costumed dancers who represent the Egungun, the ancestral spirits. Their costumes—long swirling robes—cover the entire body, with masks or veils that disguise each dancer's identity. As the dancers enter they speak or sing in a characteristic distorted manner. The dancers synchronize with an ensemble of *bata* drums in an elaborate choreography. Because these drums are small and portable, the lead drummer can interact closely and often theatrically with the dancers. Several types of Egungun dancers commonly participate in each ritual, including the trickster Egungun. While the other dancers evoke specific religious associations, the trickster group exists purely to entertain the crowd; in fact, the tricksters can ply their trade as street entertainers independent of an official Egungun festival. The entertainment aspect distinguishes Egungun performance from the more purely sacred rituals of many *orisha* cults.

Yoruba Drumming

Drums play a significant role in virtually all Yoruba religious rituals. Although they can serve to entertain or provide rhythmic accompaniment for public processions, their sacred nature makes them the preferred instruments for *orisha* and Egungun cult ceremonies, including those that involve trance possession. Each god requires specific sacrifices, carvings, symbols, taboos, and so on—and each god responds to specific rhythmic patterns. The drummers take the responsibility for invoking the right god by playing the correct rhythms. The patterns become equally important for the initiates; they are trained in such a way that the rhythms themselves help trigger their trance states.

Many different drums are used by the Yoruba, and each different type has its own specific religious associations. Drums typically perform in an ensemble

[2]William Bascom, *Shango in the New World* (Austin: Occasional Publication of the African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin), 1972, p. 17.

of like instruments that include an *iya ilu* ("mother drum," or lead drum) and several support drums. Most commonly used are the *dundun* and *bata* drums. *Dundun* drums are hourglass-shaped tension drums; though they are double-headed, only one head is used. The mother drum is configured so that the performer can produce different pitches by pressing the tension string. *Bata* drums are two-headed, cone-shaped drums. In the *bata* ensemble, support drums play on just one head, but the mother drum plays on both. *Bata* drums are associated with the god Shango and the rituals of Shango cults. According to one of the stories mentioned above, Egungun was the son of Shango and Oya; thus, *bata* drums are commonly used for Egungun festivals as well.

In both *dundun* and *bata* ensembles, the ability of the mother drum to sound multiple pitches points to a significant aspect of Yoruba drumming: These are talking drums. They not only duplicate the rhythms of Yoruba speech but follow the pitch contours of its words as well. The Yoruba language, which belongs to the Kwa family, is a tonal language with three basic pitch inflections: high, medium, and low. Further, the drums do not merely imitate speech, they actually speak—in words and sentences that Yoruba speakers recognize immediately. Egungun *bata* drummers often "recite" rather sophisticated poetry as part of the Egungun rituals. The following story from Mickey Hart's *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* makes the point in a more humorous way:

> [John] Chernoff tells a story of how he was sitting one afternoon with a drum master, learning some basic rhythms, when suddenly the man deviated from the rhythm he was playing, just for a few seconds, then returned to the lesson. A few minutes later a man who had been walking by at the time returned with two beers. That little rhythmic deviation had actually been the equivalent of a shouted, "Hey, friend, get us a couple of cold ones."[3]

Before turning to "Ako," let us follow a brief digression, especially since it bears on the syncretic nature of the music discussed in Global Perspectives 7 at the end of this chapter. Christopher Waterman has done much research in the area of Nigerian popular music, especially the *juju* music that originated in Lagos in the 1930s.[4] In its earliest form, *juju* served up a fusion of traditional Yoruba songs, Western percussion instruments, Western African urban music, and a guitar style that borrowed from American country music as well as Cuban and Liberian styles. Essentially an urban popular style for the working class, the music appealed little to rural Yorubans recently moved to the big city. That changed significantly with the arrival of electronic amplification, a Western invention. African drums would have drowned out the *juju* ensemble in its original form, but with the arrival of amplification, voices and guitars could now compete. In 1949 the talking *dundun* mother drum was added to the *juju* ensemble, followed shortly thereafter by various Afro-Cuban percussion instruments. The use of a mother drum with its typical support drums, coupled with frequent use of call-and-response patterns, changed *juju* dramatically. The result was an incredibly popular style that resonated with Yoruba peoples throughout Nigeria. Surprisingly, Western technology (amplification) made it possible for *juju* to sound *more* like indigenous music, not less. Nigeria's growing urbanization fostered the slow decline of traditional music; for once, Western influence helped reverse that trend.

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[3]Mickey Hart, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey into the Spirit of Percussion* (San Francisco: Harper Collins), 1990, p. 200.

[4]Christopher Waterman, "Juju," in Bruno Nettl, *The Western Impact on World Music* (New York: Schirmer), 1985, pp. 87–90.

Yoruba Drumming, "Ako" "Ako" (the piece referred to, though not named, on textbook page 393) is a work from the Egungun festival repertory; it features the ensemble of five *bata* drums typical in Egungun ceremonies. Like all Yoruba drum ensembles, the *bata* ensemble is led by the *iya ilu,* or mother drum. As mentioned above, the player uses both heads of the drum and interacts with the dancers in the Egungun rituals. As befits its lead role in the ensemble, the *iya ilu* often plays highly varied soloistic patterns that interact with the support drums to create elaborate cross-rhythms. Unlike most other African drums, the heads of the *bata* mother drum produce pitches both higher and lower than the pitches of any other drums in the ensemble. Unfortunately, this can make it more difficult to follow the mother drum part in performance.

The second most important drum in the *bata* ensemble is the *ako,* which can also be played on both heads. Its small head produces the second-highest pitch in the ensemble, but the pitch of its large head falls right in the middle of the ensemble's range. The *ako* mediates between the support drums and the mother drum; it generally provides steady support patterns for the *iya ilu,* but it can break away at specific places to interact with it.

The remaining three drums constitute the support drums of the *bata* ensemble, and they play on only one drumhead. From highest to lowest, they are the *omele ako,* the *omele abo,* and the *eki.* The two *omele,* close to each other in pitch, fall into a middle register. The *eki* is much lower; in fact, it provides the second-lowest pitch in the *bata* ensemble, low enough to be confused with the bottom pitch of the *iya ilu.* The support drums are given less freedom than the mother drum or the *ako;* they must repeat ostinato patterns throughout each piece. On occasion they can vary their rhythms as long as they preserve the feel of the assigned ostinato.

When you present "Ako" to your class, start with some background material. Feel free to use any of the information above, but at the very least explain the nature of Egungun ceremonies, describe the role of the drums in those ceremonies, and talk about the five drums of the *bata* ensemble. Make sure your class has read Global Perspectives 6 (textbook page 393). The authors don't provide a listening chart for this piece, but they do provide some useful notated examples, and any bit of notation can help students see and hear the complex polyrhythms of this work. You will almost certainly need to play "Ako" several times for your students. With each playing, help them listen for just one or two patterns at a time. As you work your way through, try to draw out each of the main features described below.

Call attention first to the "main pulse," a constant sixteenth-note pattern played by the *omele ako.* This constant pulse provides the basis for the entire work. Note that the sixteenth-note pattern appears not in the highest-sounding voice, but in the middle. The basic ostinato for the *omele abo* and the *eki* is a constant eighth-note pulse that supports the main pulse. While these repeated ostinatos constitute the bulk of their playing, all three support instruments occasionally break out and play other patterns, each one at different times. The *omele ako* is the one that briefly speeds up to play six notes per beat instead of four, as the authors describe. The sixteenth-note/eighth-note pattern, written out just under the main pulse on textbook page 393, is played by the *eki.* Although not described, the *omele abo* occasionally substitutes a two-sixteenth-note/eighth-note pattern for its usual constant eighth notes.

The other two instruments play irregular patterns. The *ako* is difficult to hear because its pitches fall in the middle of the ensemble, where its slower ostinato patterns easily get lost. The mother drum proves much easier to hear, since its two pitches provide both the highest and the lowest sounds in

the ensemble. Show students how the combination of its high register and elaborate, irregular rhythms makes the *iya ilu*'s top line sound almost like a solo melody over the regular accompaniment of the support drums. If your speakers offer a good bass response, you may also be able to point out the mother drum's low pitch at the bottom of the ensemble's range. As described above, the mother drum's part is much more soloistic than that of the other drums. It is the *iya ilu* that provides the triplet rhythm the authors describe at 0:41–0:44, and it plays many other rhythmic motives with an almost melodic feel.[5]

The triple feel reappears briefly near the end, this time in the support drums. But at the very end, just before the rhythms peter out, a little codetta finds every instrument using triple and sextuple divisions. These triplet sections provide just one of the many polyrhythmic patterns that pervade this music. Other cross-rhythms weave in slower 3 + 3 + 2 patterns. Help students understand that polyrhythms involve the simultaneous use of two or more rhythms different enough that they sound as if they were using two different meters (3 + 3 + 2 versus 4 + 4) or tempos (triplets versus sixteenths). That they all fit together stands as a tribute to the virtuosity of these Yoruba percussionists.

Jazz in the Concert Hall

GERSHWIN Prelude No. 1

George Gershwin and Aaron Copland were born to Jewish immigrant parents in Brooklyn, New York, within two years of each other. Their musical paths diverged early, though. Copland received a solid education in music, whereas Gershwin did not begin piano lessons until the age of ten. Although Gershwin studied the well-known classics of the nineteenth century, his heart lay with American popular music and jazz. He entered the music profession as a "plugger" (song demonstrator) at a New York music-publishing house. Gershwin's own songs began to attract attention, and by the early 1920s he was a popular composer of musical comedies. Gershwin's first attempt at a serious concert work was his *Rhapsody in Blue,* composed in 1924 (see Further Listening Examples below for teaching suggestions). Despite the fact that Gershwin did not orchestrate the work and, by his own admission, knew no more about harmony than could be obtained "in a ten-cent harmony manual," its imaginative, youthful energy and brittle, jazzy melodies make *Rhapsody in Blue* a favorite to this day. By the time he wrote the Concerto in F, Gershwin had learned a great deal more about the classical side of composition, and the final movement presents as tight an example of rondo form as you could hope to find (see Further Listening Examples below for teaching suggestions).

Less well known than his *Rhapsody* or the Concerto, Gershwin's Three Preludes for Piano share the same concern as these larger works: the blending of jazz and classical sounds and techniques. Both larger works make use of traditional forms: *Rhapsody in Blue,* the Romantic free-form rhapsody (cf. Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* from the *Listen* Companion DVD); and Concerto in F, the three-movement Classical concerto format. As the authors point out, the Preludes for Piano also follow an earlier model: the Romantic miniature, specifically the character piece for piano. When you present

[5]Do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of the CD from which "Ako" was taken—*Yoruba Drums from Benin, West Africa* (Smithsonian Folkways SF 40440). The excellent liner notes include a nearly complete transcription of the mother drum part that can help you feel more at home with this complex music.