

# Music and meaning: Some reflections through personal compositions

Njoora, Timothy, 2010

On 31 May 2007, with the cooperation of musicians from Kenyatta University<sup>1</sup> and Goethe-Institute; (German cultural centre) in Nairobi, I had the privileged opportunity to share several premiere compositions with the audience in Nairobi as part of community reach out with 'art music'. Regarding music composition, Barret (2003) argues that composition assists in expressive meaning-making for both the composer and the audience. But then (he argues) meaning is 'culturally mediated...and is most effectively described as a dialogue between...the musician and the composer, the emerging musical work, the culture that produced the composer, and the emerging work'. For me personally, the compositions shared during the concert served several purposes – (a) sharing my creative world with the audience; (b) responding to music enthusiasts interests and academic requirements; (c) adding cultural capital to Kenyan art music; and (d) exploring some fundamental issues in meaning-making through music compositions. As Barret (2003) observes; Specific practices and connections, traditions from which they emerge become the cultural benchmarks against which other constructions and ways of communicating meaning are judged – and are often found deficient. In this paper I share some reflections of my creative exhibitions, my thoughts on meaningmaking and its unavoidable cultural underpinnings. At the same time, I interrogate some thoughts on the area of 'creativity', which is often considered abstract. Among the ideas discussed are the five discreet stages of 'creativity' as advanced by Wallas (1926) model of the process namely; (a) Preparation; (b) Incubation; (c) Intimation; (d) Illumination and (e) Verification. Ultimately, I hope that sharing this information will invigorate academic dialogue to contribute towards defining of current generation of 'Art Music' compositions in Kenya and ultimately for the benefit of the region (East Africa).