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by Florian Carl

Africa constituted a vivid part of the popular European imagination as early as the nineteenth century. Fascinated by travel accounts and adventure novels and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, by ethnographic shows and colonial exhibitions, audiences in Europe followed with great interest the “scramble for Africa,” with its spectacular discoveries on the periphery of the expanding colonial empires, just as people marvelled at the images of the first landing on the moon a century later (Lindfors 1999; Rotberg 1970). Towards the turn of the nineteenth century, new media technologies and forms of representation emerged such as the panorama or the cinematograph, conveying ever new images of seemingly exotic worlds. Thus, at Berlin’s *Kolonialpanorama* which opened its doors for the public in 1885, a 115-metre long cyclorama, showing scenes of Germany’s colonial occupation of Africa, awaited visitors. In exhibition rooms, ethnographic objects from the colonies were on display. Palm trees, a special lighting system, and artificial fog were installed to create a “tropical atmosphere” (Zeller 2002). The holistic, three-dimensional experience panoramas so created led Erlmann to speak of the “first mass medium to set up a perfect enclosure, a proto-cyberspace that enabled the viewer to become an inhabitant of image-space, someone who enters an image rather than someone who contemplates it from the outside” (1999:5–6). Other technologies such as phonography imparted not only a sonic but, as it were, a new “psychophysical” reality to the myth of Africa as a continent persisting in a seemingly timeless past (Carl 2004:126–31; see also Kittler 1986).

Up to this day, the experience of Africa as a mythical place continues to be highlighted in popular cultural events. André Heller’s musical production *Afrika! Afrika!*, for example—the “magical circus adventure from the amazing continent,” as it is promoted—also offers audiences a “sensory discovery of Africa” (Heller 2009:2–3) by way of entering an imaginary world. This discovery includes the experience of “an immeasurable wealth of cultural traditions and creativity,” “spectacular acrobatics,” “costumes that remind one of mythical creatures or of gods from different worlds,” as well as gastronomic specialties offered in “Tented Palaces” with “Moorish decor,” where “visitors can enter a different world for hours at a time” (ibid.). The production, advertised as “the most successful show in the German-speaking world,” attracted over three million visitors in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Great Britain since its premiere in December 2005 (ibid.).¹ In Germany, large-scale and costly productions like this have given rise to a number of smaller, less expensive shows that are also staged as circus events and usually present a mixture of music and dance, acrobatics, clown-

1. See the official website of the production at <http://www.africancircus.de> (accessed 2 June 2009).

ing, as well as acts featuring trained animals. In this fashion, *Afrikas Big Circus [sic]*, for instance, claims to bring the “magic of the jungle” to the German provinces, while the *Mama Africa Circus from Africa* hypes itself as “Wild! Exotic! Erotic! Different!” and promises audiences a “trip to the African continent, a colorful safari brimming over with life.”²

Meanwhile, “performances of Africa” are under pressure to justify their politics of representation. In this regard, Heller’s show is presented as educational and informative, fostering dialogue and cultural understanding. As the initiator of *Afrika! Afrika!* writes himself in the official press kit:

Our impression of Africa is one of a continent of continuous catastrophes: war, hunger, AIDS, corruption and political instability. This view was shaped by the media, yet Africa is a continent that is three times as large as Europe and home to twice as many people as in the United States. That the unquestionable suffering and bitterness of life in Africa has wrung out the great artistry of the people is lesser known. (Heller 2009:8)

In contrast to negative images of Africa transported in the media, Heller conceives his show, as “an attempt to present certain cultural aspects of this amazing continent to the eyes and ears of the West. It is not about the difficult work for a conference of anthropologists and ethnologists” (ibid.). Heller found prominent supporters for his project. Senegalese UN representative Doudou Diène, for instance, formerly responsible for intercultural and inter-religious projects at UNESCO, attests to the potential of Heller’s show to overcome prejudices against Africa on the part of European audiences. “His project,” he writes, “will help the new *homo europaeus* expand the horizons of his appreciation and understanding of African culture” (cited in ibid.:14). Likewise, former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan, expresses his sympathies with the show that would give us “a dazzling glimpse of a continent beyond the stereotype of poverty and conflict” (cited in ibid.:10).

The overall framework of events such as Heller’s and the politics of representation they employ often follow a familiar pattern. Despite its educational intent and the assertion to work towards cultural understanding, the imagery we are confronted with in the case of *Afrika! Afrika!* still entails the fundamental problem of constructing Africa as a mystified exotic Other,³ as a “different world,” as Heller himself puts it. One wonders which Africa exactly are we meant to understand. The very conception of the performance of Africa as an educational task, the assumption that understanding Africa’s difference is a *cultural* endeavour, that the continent is indeed so different that it is in constant need of cultural translation, is already a part

2. See the websites of these productions at <http://www.afrikas-bis-circus.de> and <http://www.circus-mother-africa.com> (both accessed 2 June 2009).

3. A good overview of the construction of Africa as exotic Other in Western popular culture in historical perspective is found in Nederveen Pieterse (1998). Analyses of the production of knowledge about Africa in academic discourse and in literature and art were undertaken by Mudimbe (1988, 1994). The construction of the cultural Other as an object of anthropological inquiry more generally was prominently examined by Fabian (1983).

of its problematic disposition.⁴ Looking at the representation and performance of Africa over the course of the past one hundred and fifty years, Erlmann is therefore right when he points to the “amazing durability of a number of fantasies about the order of things” (1999:7). We are dealing with the continued mystification of the “black continent” and thereby the shift of African lifeworlds into a seemingly static space beyond historical realities. In this way, Africa remains a timeless continent, just as Hegel imagined it: as a continent “without history” (see Eze 1997:109–53). African music and, by extension, the music of the African diaspora, forms an integral part of this African myth, functioning as an effective signifier for the continent’s difference (see Agawu 2003; Carl 2004; Radano 2000).

This article discusses continuities and discontinuities in the staging of Africa and African music with a particular focus on German popular culture.⁵ I will highlight two recent instances where Africa was enacted as culture in the context of the zoo. The first of these events, which I witnessed myself, occurred in Leipzig in 2004. The second event took place in 2005 in the Augsburg Zoo and provoked a heated debate about the politics of representation in its wake. The staging of African music and culture in zoos gives rise to more general questions about the relation between contemporary performances and former ones, particularly the so-called *Völkerschauen* (sing. *Völkerschau*) or popular ethnographic shows of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of which were also staged in zoos. In this connection I will critically examine conceptions of the Other as they are revealed in the staging of Africa, both within the ideological framework of nineteenth-century imperialism as well as that of twenty-first-century multiculturalism. Beyond questions of representation there are socioeconomic parallels between multicultural events and today’s market for world music on the one hand, and the staging of Africa as it took place in ethnographic shows in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the other. This nexus will also be addressed. Towards the end of the essay, I will consider the appropriation of African music and dance by German audiences and relate this to the discussion about representation. But, to develop a historical perspective on current events, let us first turn to the commodification of Africa as exotic Other in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Ethnographic shows in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

An entertainment industry addressing an urban mass audience emerged in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly after the political unification of the German empire under Prussia in 1871 which fostered economic growth

4. Africa is, of course, not alone in its fate of being relegated to a sphere of absolute cultural difference. Edward Said (1978) has prominently analysed the discourse of Orientalism and its mechanisms in the production of difference.

5. My ethnography is based upon research in and on the German-African music scene between 2004 and 2007, which was supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, as well as earlier historical research on the German colonial discourse on African music (Carl 2004, 2006). The bulk of my field research took place in the transnational field between Berlin and Accra (see also Carl 2009).

and entrepreneurial mobility (Dreesbach 2005:40–42). Technological innovations, urbanization, an advanced level of industrialization, and, in its wake, more leisure time for people, as well as an “emerging global consciousness” (Erlmann 1999:44), facilitated the commodification of “the exotic” in forms of popular entertainment. The staging of foreign peoples took place in circuses, fairs, bars, theatres, and other venues, where non-European groups performed music and dance, presented indigenous customs and rituals, and enacted hunting or war scenes as an exotic spectacle. At times, entire “native villages” were reconstructed to give visitors an impression of “primitive” life in the non-European world (Dreesbach 2005; Lindfors 1999). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, ethnographic shows were also staged in Europe’s newly founded zoological gardens, which were part of the emerging entertainment industry (Brändle 1995; Staehelin 1994). And ethnographic shows became an integral part of colonial and world exhibitions, those grand self-displays of the Western imperial powers (Debusmann and Riesz 1995; Hinsley 1991).

In Germany, one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the ethnographic show business was Carl Hagenbeck, founder of the zoological garden in Hamburg (Thode-Arora 1989). Initially concentrating on the trade in exotic animals, it was in 1874 that Hagenbeck first had the idea for an “anthropological-zoological” exhibition, displaying a Scandinavian reindeer herd alongside a family from Lapland including their tents and complete household effects. Others followed his example. A show of so-called Nubians from the Sudan first toured the German empire in 1876 and was successfully repeated several times in following years (Hagenbeck 1928:50). In other African shows, audiences were presented “Somali warriors,” “Duala from Cameroon,” or an entire “Amazon corps” (Thode-Arora 1989:168–69). A more bizarre *Völkerschau* of “Cameroon Zulus” toured Germany in the 1880s (Gieseke 2006:270–71). Yet other shows rather blatantly utilized sexism or the fascination of physical abnormalities to attract people. Thus, in 1913 Berlin’s Passage-Panoptikum staged a show of “50 wild Congo women” (*50 wilde Kongoweiber*), one of whom lasciviously lolled with bare breasts on the poster announcing the event (see illustration in van der Heyden and Zeller 2002:134). In 1886, “three tiger-striped Negresses” (*drei getigerte Negerinnen*) performed as singers and acrobats in Cologne, and in the early 1930s *Lippenplattennegerinnen* (lip-plate Negresses) could be gazed at in Cologne’s zoological garden (Gieseke 2006:272–73).

Exoticism and eroticism often went hand in hand in the staging of the exotic Other in Wilhelmine Germany and the allure of “the black body” was undoubtedly one of the elements African ethnographic shows brought into play. Authors have also stressed the ideological function of ethnographic shows in reinforcing and popularizing the imperialist worldview and promoting the colonial project. Colonial and world exhibitions, with their educational ambitions, particularly contributed to a dissemination of ideas about human difference and the “backwardness” of non-European societies, substantiated by scientific racism and social Darwinism (Arnold 1995:9–19; Rydell 1999).⁶ However, the organizers’ commercial inter-

6. Showcasing artistic talent and skills was, of course, also a major objective of many eth-

ests often outweighed ideological considerations. After all, they displayed what they assumed would sell well. Hinsley's observation about the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where the actual experience for visitors took the form of "window-shopping in the department store of exotic cultures" (1991:355), can therefore be applied to nineteenth-century ethnographic shows more generally in that "public curiosity about other peoples, mediated by the terms of the marketplace, produced an early form of touristic consumption" (ibid.:365).

Discrepancies between ideology and social reality became also apparent at the First German Colonial Exhibition that took place in Berlin in 1896, where ethnographic shows and the display of "native villages" from Germany's colonies in Africa and the South Pacific featured prominently (Meinecke 1897; van der Heyden 2002). Advocates of colonialism expressed criticism of the depiction of colonial subjects at the exhibition as "savage" or "primitive," arguing this would rather bespeak the failure of the civilizing mission. Moreover, on the fringes of events, contacts between visitors and participants in shows or displays on a more personal level took place, some leading to "procreative" engagements between Germans and Africans. Obviously undermining ideologies of racial difference, these relationships eventually became the subject of a debate in the Reichstag, where a delegate reported in disgust on the "racial misconduct" (*rasseverräterisches Benehmen*) of "white women and girls [who] ran after the Negroes and proposed to them" (cited in Roller 2002:79). As an attempt to better control representations of the colonies and also to prevent personal encounters between people from the colonies and the metropole, the recruitment of *Völkerschau* participants from the German colonies was eventually prohibited by the authorities in the early twentieth century (Thode-Arora 2002:153).

It would certainly be wrong to think of African participants in ethnographic shows as passive victims of European racism and the audience's desire for the exotic. Performers were hired on a contract basis and, though we do not have primary sources in which Africans express their views on the *Völkerschauen*, we have to assume that they played the "savage" quite consciously. It was often a "thirst for adventure and a decisively entrepreneurial spirit" (Bechhaus-Gerst 2007:26) that motivated Africans to partake in the ethnographic show business. For some, joining a *Völkerschau* troupe was part of a migrational strategy, an opportunity to travel to the metropole. There were individuals who reappeared in different shows, pointing to a professionalization on the part of some performers. And some Africans also became successful entrepreneurs themselves, organizing their own ethnographic shows. Nayo Bruce, for example, toured Western Europe for over twenty years

nographic shows. In this connection, it is worth keeping in mind that *Völkerschauen* also provided an opportunity for scholars like Carl Stumpf, Erich Moritz von Hornbostel, or Alexander J. Ellis to collect information about non-Western music, just as cultural anthropologists like Friedrich Ratzel or Franz Boas used such troupes in their research. Particularly in the work of physical anthropologists like Rudolf Virchow, it becomes apparent, however, that ethnographic shows often seemed to support racial stereotypes, providing "evidence" for the larger project of scientific racism (Carl 2004:122; Goldmann 1987; Thode-Arora 1989:127–36).

with his Togolese troupe, just as his countryman John Smith organized his own “Ashanti Show” (ibid.:27; Gieseke 2006:274; Thode-Arora 2004:36–40). While *Völkerschauen* came to an end in the 1940s, there are more recent forms of entertainment that suggest certain parallels to the performance of Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Contextualizing contemporary performances: The Afro scene

In a contemporary context, African music features prominently at world-music festivals and other multicultural events as they are organized in many cities throughout Germany every year. Some larger annual festivals such as those in Würzburg and Potsdam specialize exclusively in African music. The wider cultural market in which African performers operate is clearly organized transnationally, as it has been described for the “world music” economy more generally (Guilbault 1993, 1997). Yet, most find themselves in a market niche offside the international record industry. While artists like Youssou N’Dour or Angélique Kidjo, to name just two of the more obvious examples, serve as headliners at the larger annual Africa festivals, the majority of African performers in Germany neither make a living with the production of records—if they record at all, that is—nor exclusively with concerts, the availability of which also fluctuates seasonally. The latter might well add to the income of artists. In this regard, musicians operating on the periphery of the market have surely profited from the emergence of world music as a marketing category in the 1980s and 1990s, which has generally increased opportunities for African musicians in Europe to perform. Yet, in order to secure their livelihood, most African performers depend on the organization of regular classes and workshops. It is through these that they are able to target their particular clientele, that is, people who want to actively learn African music and dance, and who often commit themselves to particular performer-teachers on a longer-term basis (figure 1).

Workshops in African music—particularly drumming—and dance are offered at all major Africa or world-music festivals; they are, today, an integral part of multicultural events even in provincial towns. In the wake of world music’s success in the 1990s and in connection with the belated redefinition of Germany as a multicultural society in the past decade or so (cf. Meier-Braun 2002), politicians and agencies commissioned with “city marketing” have finally also discovered the appeal of non-Western musics and the fact that immigrants can actually be used to generate revenue. For African performers, such occasions offer the possibility to promote their regular classes and to widen their networks of potential workshop participants.⁷ Festivals give those organizing workshops exposure and are thus important for publicity, but they do not constitute the primary market for

7. An additional market for African musicians is anti-racism programmes in public schools that were particularly launched in the eastern parts of Germany during the wake of recent xenophobic excesses and the government’s attempts to implement its new “integration policies” (interview with Mark Kofi Asamoah, 13 April 2004, Berlin). Drumming workshops as part of advanced training for professional teachers are another market.



Figure 1. Public performance of an African dance class led by Ofei Ankrh, Berlin-Kreuzberg, April 2004 (photo by the author).

workshops. As teacher-performers, African musicians are central figures in wider social networks of drumming and dancing enthusiasts that are best grasped as musical scenes. Such scenes have emerged in many urban centres in Germany. Built around rather vague notions of “Africanness,” I generally refer to this social formation as Afro scene (*Afro-Szene*), a term that is actually commonly employed by “scenesters” themselves.

Following Will Straw’s definition, a musical scene is, in contrast to a musical community, a principally open-ended yet concrete and localizable social network built around the notion of style. Musical scenes are not so much “rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage,” but rather constitute a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexists, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization” (Straw 1997:494). The social networks of a musical scene depend to a large extent on face-to-face interaction and the sharing of a common physical space, yet they are, at the same time, translocally interlinked, allowing for “affective links between dispersed geographical places” (*ibid.*). The mediation between the local and the translocal is, therefore, an important aspect of the social interaction that takes place within the networks of a musical scene. The terminology developed by Mark Slobin in his *Micromusics of the West* is another way of conceptualizing the Afro scene. In this context we might think of it as an “affinity interculture” (1993:68), that is, a cultural formation offside the music industry that is constituted by a “transnational performer-audience interest group” (*ibid.*). As Slobin explains, “musics seem to call out to audiences across nation-state lines even when they are not part of a heritage or a commodified, disembodied network, and particularly when the transmission is of the old-fashioned variety—face to face, mouth to ear” (*ibid.*) (figure 2).

In contrast to the more disembodied networks of the record industry or what Slobin calls “industrial intercultural” (ibid.:61–69), personal interaction is one of the Afro scene’s constitutive features. The scene is particularly performance-oriented, emphasizing spontaneous music-making and collective musical experience. Thus, in addition to organized workshops, spontaneous gatherings of drumming and dancing enthusiasts are a common picture on the fringe of music festivals or in public parks of larger cities. Public performances by dance-drumming groups—frequently built around a particular performer-teacher or “master drummer” whose audience is made up to a significant portion by his own students—often take on the character of jam sessions towards their end, blurring the distinction between performers and audience. African performers in this context function as “expressive specialists,” one of the groups involved in the transnational flow of culture identified by Hannerz (1996:128–32). Expressive specialists are by definition cosmopolitans, and they are important nodes within the networks of musical scenes, since for them being highly connected is a professional necessity. As cultural brokers and professional dealers in cultural difference, African expressive specialists play, as we will see, a central role in the mediation of diverging cultural positions, offering people access to different experiential worlds (cf. Carl 2009:108–14) (figure 3).

Given the importance of face-to-face interaction and active participation in musical performance within the Afro scene, I suggest that in the following we reconsider forms of representation on the level of musical practice and social interaction. As Straw reminds us, “the crucial site” of “the politics of popular music” is found “neither in the transgressive or oppositional quality of musical practices and consumption, nor uniformly within the modes of operation of the international music industries” (1997:504). With regard to social interaction within musical scenes, he urges us to focus on those “processes ... through which particular social differences ... are articulated within the building of audiences around particular



Figure 2. Performance by an amateur dance-drumming group on the fringe of Berlin’s *Karneval der Kulturen*, May 2005 (photo by the author).



Figure 3. Amateur *jenbe* players at Berlin's *Karneval der Kulturen*, May 2005 (photo by the author).

coalitions of musical form” (ibid.). Such a perspective actually presupposes a less monolithic, more performative and strategic notion of power as it has been prominently developed by Michel Foucault (1979) who remarks that “power is exercised rather than possessed” (ibid.:26). In the following, we therefore have to complement the structural analysis of the representations of African music with an examination of strategic uses of representations by various social agents operating within the networks of the Afro scene.

Entering the German jungle

It was in August 2004 when, in the course of my research on the German-African music scene, I did not just become a participant observer of, but eventually more of an observing participant in, a staging of African music in the Leipzig Zoo. I came to Leipzig with Adikanfo, a group of Ghanaian musicians and dancers that is based in Berlin-Kreuzberg and led by Mark Kofi Asamoah. I had been working with Adikanfo for several months, attending rehearsals and performances as well as workshops in African music and dance, as they were organized by some of the group’s members on a regular basis. The group dedicated itself to the performance of “traditional music and dance from Ghana,” and its repertoire coincides with the multiethnic canon of dance-drumming traditions that has become synonymous with “culture” in Ghana since independence. Promoted by state institutions such as the regional Centres for National Culture or the Ghana Dance Ensemble, which are under the auspices of the National Arts Council, this standardized repertoire is performed by “cultural troupes” throughout Ghana today and includes dances of various ethnic origins, such as *kpanlogo*, *adowa*, *kete*, *atsiagbekor*, and *bawa*, to name just a few. In the form of state-sponsored staged performances, this canon—

intended to promote “unity in diversity,” as Kwame Nkrumah phrased it at the time—was established mainly in the 1960s as part of the nation-building process and postcolonial cultural policies (Agawu 2003:17–20; Coe 2005:53–84).

I was not aware that the performance in Leipzig would take place in the zoo. I also did not know that Adikanfo was supposed to perform at what was called *Dschungelnacht* (“jungle night”)—a multicultural event that had, quite successfully, it seems, been organized in the Leipzig Zoo since 1998. When we arrived at the venue, I asked the group members, somewhat perplexed, whether they would not find the location and occasion somehow odd for a performance, but it seemed that I was the only one who was surprised. Asamoah told me that the organizers had been looking for “something colourful” and thus decided to book Adikanfo. In previous years, as I found out later, the role of adding “some colour” to the *Dschungelnacht* had been played by Adesa, another Ghanaian dance troupe based in Germany. To give an impression of what the event is about, it is worthwhile quoting the promotional text for the 2002 *Dschungelnacht* in full. It went under the headline “The Drums Are Calling.”

Hot rhythms, fiery dances, and wild acrobatic shows are waiting for the visitors on the entire premises of the zoo. At 5 p.m. the Ghanaian group “Adesa” will enter the concert garden with a Gamashino parade in the style of the Asafo warriors. Director of the zoo, Dr. Jörg Junhold, will open the jungle night there at 6 p.m. On a mystic cult place (concert garden), international fireworks of high-powered artistic performances by Myth Company (South Africa) and Nduduzo Makhax (Ghana), Latin American and African music by DJ Bongo, and a splendidly colourful parrot revue can be expected. The absolute highlights of the evening are the groups “Badenya” from Burkina Faso with songs, dance, and acrobatics starting at 9 p.m., and hot reggae with Root B Tama at 11 p.m.

Outside the concert garden, the zoo will be covered in torchlight. Artists animate with music and dance for a nightly walk and to the popular special tours into the tropical houses and to Pongoland ... Close to the Hacienda Las Casas, the mystic sounds of voodoo percussion resonate in the light of a campfire. A happy and colourful African celebration with hot rhythms, songs, games for children, and information about the black continent will take place in the jungle village of Pongoland.

The zoo gastronomy, as well as the scene gastronomy, “Basa Mo” will provide all kinds of exotic food and cocktails. (Leipzig Online 2002; translated from German by the author)

The conceptual relatedness of this event to the idea of “anthropological-zoological” exhibitions can hardly be overlooked. From “hot rhythms,” “fiery dances,” and “wild acrobatic shows” to the encounter with exotic animals and a subsequent visit to a “jungle village”—where visitors are educated about the “black continent” emblematically represented by “Pongoland”—Leipzig’s *Dschungelnacht* seems to offer every element of a nineteenth-century *Völkerschau*. At the event itself, these problematic historical parallels were reinforced by the fact that many buildings of the zoo, founded over a century ago, are fashioned in colonial architectural style. Moreover, the imaginary Pongoland seems reminiscent of Togoland, Germany’s former West African *Musterkolonie* (model colony). None of these obvious histori-

cal links were made explicit when I attended the event in 2004, though the Leipzig Zoo, too, had hosted ethnographic shows in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the message of the *Dschungelnacht* as brought forward in the above-quoted announcement seems clear: Africa is the jungle and its music and dances are hot, wild, mysterious, occult—come and enjoy an exotic spectacle!

Almost needless to say, the event itself, at least as far as *Dschungelnacht* 2004 was concerned, was not quite as exciting as its promoters tried to make it sound. Close to the entrance area of the zoo, a large stage had been put up, on which Adikanfo was supposed to perform in the late afternoon, after a South African troupe of acrobats. Smaller “African” performances, particularly drumming workshops, were placed along the paths through the zoo, between food stands offering *Bratwürstchen* and traders selling all kinds of “ethnic” products: figurines, masks, beads, and trinkets, dreamcatchers, carved giraffes, and elephants, the ubiquitous *jenbe* drums, batiks, and the like. By and large, except perhaps for its location, the *Dschungelnacht* did not essentially differ from other multicultural events as they are organized in the summer months all over the country.

A little more surprising, at least for me, was Adikanfo’s performance. Minutes before the group was supposed to go on stage, when everybody was already dressed in “African costume,” Asamoah announced a slight programme change. The organizers had asked him whether a few of the members could drum at the zoo’s entrance to attract visitors, parallel to the group’s performance on the main stage. This led to some argument, but it seemed Asamoah had already agreed. Thus, two of the nine members had to play at the entrance—complemented by me, as it then turned out. Though not particularly delighted, the mutual obligations ethnographic fieldwork brings about did not put me in a position to deny this request. I was also quickly dressed in an “African costume” and went to the main entrance with two of the drummers, instead of taking photographs of Adikanfo’s performance as I initially intended. There we played some simple, not particularly “hot” rhythms, while East German families, some stopping for a moment to watch us before entering the zoo, passed by in expectation of a “colourful” event. The rest of the group joined us at the entrance for two or three more pieces after they had finished their performance on the main stage.

An “African village” in the Augsburg Zoo

Largely unnoticed by national public attention, the *Dschungelnacht* continues to be organized annually in the Leipzig Zoo. Meanwhile, in May 2005 a heated debate came up centring on a very similar event in Augsburg’s zoological garden. Announced as *African Village*, this event promised, as the promotional text had it, a “visit to the zoo with surprises.” And it continued:

Over the course of four days, an African village will emerge in Augsburg’s animal park. Artisans, silversmiths, basket makers, and hair twisters are grouped around a unique savannah landscape. The park is filled with the scent of African tea and selected specialties from the African continent. Visitors will enjoy concerts and

events for the whole family. Information about Africa's multifaceted culture and nature, and expert travel tips will awaken the wanderlust [*Reiselust*]. (cited in H-Net 2005; translation from German by the author)

Rather to the surprise of the organizers, in the weeks before the event, which took place 9–12 June 2005, this text provoked a debate of growing proportions. The *African Village* was seen as a direct continuation of the *Völkerschauen* popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and those responsible for its organization were charged with serious accusations. While critique initially came from the side of Afro-German organizations, within a short period of time a larger public of academics, creative artists, and political activists took notice of the planned event, alarmed by circulating bulk emails and entries at online discussion forums. Allegations against the organizers of the *African Village* ranged from neocolonialism over racism to even fascism. In an open letter to the director of the Augsburg Zoo, in which they called for protest against the event, leading representatives of the politically organized “Black German community” (*Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland* (ISD)) wrote:

Quite obviously the organizers do not understand the historical implications of their project, which reveals a remarkable ignorance given the fact that even in Germany there is now public debate on the implications and consequences of German colonial rule. The reproduction of colonial perspectives [*Blick-Verhältnisse*] whereby black people can be gazed at as exotic objects, as non- or sub-humans harmoniously embedded in the animal world and perpetual village life [*zeitlose Dörflichkeit*], thus serving the majority of Germans [*den Mehrheitsdeutschen*] as an inspiration for future tourist destinations, can hardly be understood as a cultural encounter on an equal footing. (cited in H-Net 2005; translated from German by the author)

In her reply to the open letter, the director of the zoo strongly rejected the critique and, in turn, alleged that the authors of the letter had misconceived the true character of the planned event. Apart from its title—which, she amended, would not be *afrikanisches Dorf* (African village) but rather *African Village* (English in the original)—there would be no intention whatsoever to actually present a village to visitors. The objective would rather be to promote “African culture” and “African products” and, overall, to foster “tolerance and understanding among peoples.” The organizer, who, as she added, would be a “born African with black skin” himself, had successfully realized similar events in southern Germany over the course of several years. Requests from exhibitors to partake in the event, coming primarily from “coloured Africans,” the director explained, would already exceed available space. And finally she added that she considered “the Augsburg Zoo exactly the right place to convey the atmosphere of the exotic” (cited *ibid.*).

These comments led to even more enraged reactions and the fronts became more clearly demarcated. On one side were the organizers, supported by local politicians of the Augsburg city council and the mayor, who insisted the *African Village* would be a harmless cultural event, considering the allegations of racism or neocolonialism “absurd.” On the other side were the critics, who, for their part, insisted that a

Völkerschau was planned in the Augsburg Zoo and therefore called for a boycott of the event. One of the critics even held that “the exhibit/event purporting to ‘nurture tolerance and understanding among peoples’ was nothing short of a reminder of the outrageous, racist, eugenic practices of Nazi Germany and the exoticizing of Africans in freak shows in Europe” (Nnaemeka 2005:90). Meanwhile, the critique of the *African Village* was not directed towards the event as it actually took place and as it was finally experienced by visitors.⁸ None of the critics entered the zoo. What was condemned were the politics of representation in the short promotional text quoted above and particularly the title chosen for the event in connection with the setting of the zoo.

Some journalists, who took notice of the heated debate and subsequently decided to visit the *African Village* to see for themselves what it was all about, came to conclusions like this: “The village everybody is talking about does not exist. It is just not there” (Schallenberg 2005). What this reporter finally found were rather

the usual suspects, as one knows them from the alternative Tollwood-Festival in Munich’s Olympia Park, the Afrika-Tage which took place recently at the International Handicraft Fair in Munich, from the tourist quarters in Johannesburg or any given Africa Market or Africa Festival anywhere in the country. (ibid.)

A journalist writing for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* came to a similar conclusion:

One could see what one had seen many times before, if, however, not in front of antelopes: arts and crafts and ethno knick-knacks, leather bags, beads, carved warthogs and fortune cards, tents for water pipes and South African wines. A blonde Rastafari is drumming next to the Watusi cattle. And anyway, three quarters of the traders are not Africans. (Zekri 2005)

When this journalist asked a seller what she thought about the event and the debate that flared up in its wake, the Senegalese woman replied that she would not feel as an object but simply display her products. She had formerly run a shop in Berlin-Weißensee, she explained, but had to give up that business because of the growing presence of neo-Nazis in that area. And she finally added: “Believe me, sometimes it’s better to live among animals than among humans” (cited ibid.). Other observers of the event stressed that drumming workshops featured prominently, matching my observation at Leipzig’s *Dschungelnacht* the previous year. Dea, Höhne, and Schiller (2005:33–34) write that drumming constituted one of the main fields of interaction between visitors and Africans in Augsburg.

African music in the periphery of the world-music market

When I talked to the members of Adikanfo after our performance in Leipzig, they concurred in their view that the overall context there was quite similar to other

8. For a detailed description and analysis of the *African Village* as it eventually took place, see Dea, Höhne, and Schiller (2005).

shows they had done before. Though none of them had heard about the ethnographic shows of former times, they were not really troubled by the setting of the zoo. For most of the members of Adikanfo, being professionals in the business with African music and dance for many years, performing with the group was clearly an economic affair. In Ghana, some had worked at the Centre for National Culture in Accra or Kumasi, and one of the dancers was formerly a member of the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre. At the time of the Leipzig performance, at least six of the then nine members were making a living exclusively as drummers and/or dancers in Germany, performing not only with Adikanfo, but also with other groups and additionally organizing classes and workshops in African music and dance (figure 4).

Quite obviously the perspective of African expressive specialists with regard to events like the *Dschungelnacht* or the *African Village* differs radically from that of intellectual postcolonial critics such as those organized in the ISD, quoted above. Many of the latter were born and raised in Germany and, often having an academic background, are very familiar with the literature in postcolonial studies and other critical paradigms. Most African performers, on the other hand, are recent migrants, some with only little formal education. Performing at events like the *Dschungelnacht* in Leipzig or, for that matter, the *African Village* in Augsburg, is an economic necessity for them. Moreover, representations of African music in the German context differ little from reified notions of culture one commonly encounters in West Africa itself. From this perspective, then, performing in the zoo is simply a matter of adjusting to the circumstances of the local market. And the setting for performances of groups like Adikanfo within Germany's multicultural economy is indeed often very similar, be it at the annual *Karneval der Kulturen* in Berlin, the *Masala Welt-Beat Festival* in Hanover, the *Afrika-Festival* in Potsdam, or any other multicultural event somewhere in Germany. The repertoire, the make-



Figure 4. Performance of the group Adikanfo at the *Masala Welt-Beat Festival*, Hanover, Germany, May 2005 (photo by the author).

up of audiences, “ethnic” markets, workshops in drumming and dancing—all this is an integral part of the business with African music and culture.

In Germany, the emergence of this market, which established itself as a workshop market in the first place, coincides with the increasing immigration of people from sub-Saharan Africa from the late 1960s onwards. During the same period, as part of the nation-building process in many of the newly founded postcolonial African states, repertoires of traditional African music were transformed into standardized canons of staged folklore (Askew 2002; Coe 2005; Turino 2000). These canons and the forms of representation that go along with them were subsequently also taken up by the tourist industry and are now often used to market Africa as a tourist destination (Bruner 2001; Ebron 2002:189–93). In Western Europe, the marketing of African dance-drumming was facilitated by the sociocultural changes initiated by the generation of 1968 with its quest for authenticity, spirituality, holism, and a new body politic. African music, just like Eastern mysticism, seemed to satisfy this demand. One of the pioneers on the German market was the Ghanaian drummer Mustapha Tettey Addy; his biography might serve as an example of the development of the market in African music in the postcolonial period.

In the early 1960s, Addy was among the first students at the School of Music and Drama, then attached to the Institute of African Studies that was inaugurated at the University of Ghana by Nkrumah in 1963 and which later became the School of Performing Arts (cf. Coe 2005:63–65). The dance-drumming ensemble of the school was created to display Nkrumah’s nationalist, indeed pan-Africanist, vision to audiences both in Ghana and beyond. As Addy remembered in an interview:

I went with the School of Music and Drama to East Germany, West Germany, Russia, Poland, and Hungary ... That was 1964 when the School of Music and Drama ... assembled so many music and dance [*sic*] from Ghana. So we went out to show the rest of the world. When we came back they ... turned it into the Ghana Dance Ensemble. And then later they moved to [the] National Theatre. ... During those days a lot of Ghanaians ... got scholarships to study medicine in Germany, in Hungary, Russia. They travelled a lot. But [with] this kind of business, drumming and dancing, I would say the School of Music and Drama were the first to do this travelling with culture. (interview, 23 January 2005, Kokrobite, Greater Accra)⁹

Like many other Ghanaians, Addy immigrated to Germany in the 1970s, where he had his first major performance at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. In the same year an LP was released which Addy had recorded in London, promoting him as one of Ghana’s prime “master drummers” (Addy 1972). Addy first settled in Essen and then moved to Düsseldorf, where in 1973 he started to organize workshops and concerts at the so-called Ur-Werkstatt, a cultural initiative founded by alternative performing and creative artists which later became the Tanzhaus NRW. In 1974, together with his nephew, Aja Addy, he founded the group Ehimomo, in which other family members were also active. As a matter of fact, many members of Mustapha and Aja’s extended family—which is based in Kokrobite, west of

9. For a slightly differing account of the history of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, see Schramm (2000).

Accra—live in Germany today, working with different dance-drumming ensembles and offering workshops in African music and dance.¹⁰ It is possible to reconstruct the chain of migration initiated by Mustapha Addy of both family members and other drummers and dancers from Ghana to Germany over the course of the past thirty-five years in quite some detail (Ziegler 2005). This example illustrates well how the performance of African music and culture is employed as a migratory strategy that encompasses quite an impressive transnational social network which, at least in this case, is substantially based on kinship. As a more general pattern, transnational migration from West Africa is often not so much an individual but a family affair (cf. Akyeampong 2000:204–13; Peil 1995). Though in its extent perhaps exceptional, this economic strategy is therefore by no means peculiar to the Addy family (figure 5).

Mustapha Addy played a formative role in the emergence of the African music scene, particularly in the Rhineland and the Ruhr area, where a number of his former German students have also started their own drumming and dancing schools.¹¹ Meanwhile, in Ghana he played a key role in establishing a market for cultural tourism that specifically focuses on African music and dance. In the 1980s Addy began to organize tours to Ghana for his German students, offering drumming and dancing workshops interspersed with a touristic programme. He is now running his Academy of African Music and Arts in Kokrobite, Greater Accra, which has a hotel attached to it as well as its own cultural troupe, the Obonu Drummers. Other entrepreneurs followed Addy's example, and today a number of private "Cultural Centres" have been established along the Ghanaian coast, such as the Odehe Cultural Centre in Teshie, Akuma Village in central Accra, and the Kasapa Cultural Centre, west of Kokrobite, all offering visitors accommodation and catering, drumming and dancing classes, as well as other tourist activities. Businesses like these operate on a transnational basis, demanding a high degree of mobility on the part their managers. Not unlike Addy's enterprise, the Odehe Cultural Centre, for instance, is led by a Ghanaian, Emmanuel Gomado, who is mainly based in Germany where he teaches African drumming in regular classes and workshops. The Odehe Cultural Troupe, which is attached to the Centre, tours extensively in Germany and other European countries on an annual basis, performing at festivals and additionally organizing workshops.¹²

10. An example is the group Boba, which is based in Duisburg and led by Nii Annan Odametey, a brother of Aja Addy's. Adesa, based in the Lower Rhine, was founded by a sister of Aja's, Korkoi Odametey, and her German husband. Both of these groups, Adesa and Boba, are mainly made up of family members. Another group that has been active is Bibiba, in which Mark Kofi Asamoah and Gordon Odametey, a brother of Aja's who is now based in Berlin, formerly performed. Asamoah is, however, not related to the Addy clan. Aja died in 2002. The Odametey brothers and sisters—Aja's siblings—number fourteen altogether, and most of them are today based in Germany with their families (interview with Gordon Odametey, 28 April 2004, Berlin).

11. See for example, <http://www.trommeln-in-duesseldorf.de>, <http://www.trommelschule.de>, or <http://www.unbuntu-krefeld.de> (all accessed 11 June 2007).

12. Other Centres that are not linked to the German cultural market include the Agbeli family's Dagbe Centre near Denu in the southern Volta Region and xylophonist Bernard



Figure 5. Mustapha Tettey Addy performing with The Obonu Drummers, Kokrobite, Ghana, January 2005 (photo by the author).

The symbolic economy of the Afro scene

I have elsewhere dealt in some detail with the specific locations and institutions of Berlin's Afro scene particularly (Carl 2009:100–120). Here I want to look at some of the representational strategies expressive specialists employ in order to position themselves within the networks of the scene. There is, to begin with, something peculiar to the social structure of the Afro scene with regard to the factors of gender and race. While African expressive specialists, particularly drummers, are more or less exclusively male, workshop participants are predominantly female. This creates an overall gendered impression of blackness and whiteness or, if you will, a racialized impression of masculinity and femininity within the spaces of the Afro scene.¹³ If African women appear as expressive specialists, they mostly offer dance workshops. Many (white) German expressive specialists, on the other hand, offering both workshops in African drumming and dance, are women, mostly the former students of African master drummers and dancers. The imbalance of the gender ratio has, of course, an impact on social interaction and it also shapes expressive specialist's strategies in targeting their clientele. Some Africans utilize—though seldom explicitly—eroticized images of the black male body and black virility to attract workshop participants. There are other examples where

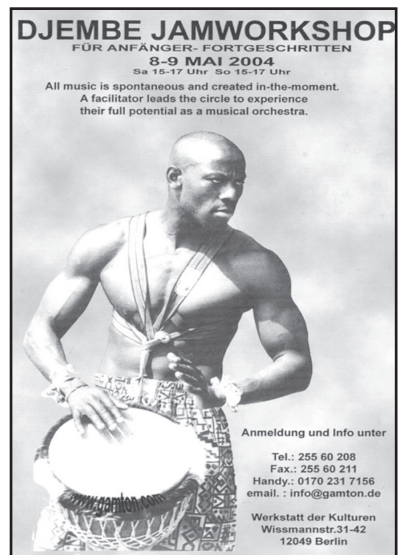
Woma's Dagara Music Centre in Medie near Accra.

13. For all workshops as well as weekly classes that I attended between 2004 and 2006, the rate of female participants was 70–80 percent in drumming workshops and even higher in dance classes, up to 100 percent in some cases. Other studies confirm this gender ratio for workshops in African drumming as a general trend (cf. Fürst & Grätschus 2002). This imbalanced gender ratio is also encountered in the nightlife of major urban centres, where specialized Afro clubs could establish themselves. For younger Africans particularly, dance clubs are a territory for meeting potential German marriage partners, which is for many the only way to obtain or maintain a legal residence status in the country (Carl 2009:114–16).

women are targeted exclusively, with more esoteric offers by female teachers; for example, in a workshop on “African dance and menstruation” I came across in Berlin in 2004 or one designed to explore “gentleness and strength” (*Sanftheit und Stärke*) through African dance, quite obviously also aimed at a female clientele (Flaig 2004; Schwahlen 2004) (figure 6).

A representational strategy that African drummers employ is connected to stereotypical depictions of the “natural musical faculty” that blacks supposedly possess. Actually, many workshop participants I spoke to reinforce the common view that musicality and a sense of rhythm, rather than being based on training and practice, are an innate quality of Africans, that rhythm is somehow “in their blood.” African expressive specialists tend to confirm this stereotype when in biographical accounts they claim that nobody in particular taught them how to drum or dance, but they were rather born with it as a God-given talent. I encountered this strategy in many of my conversations and interviews with expressive specialists, and it is also prominent in promotion materials, such as flyers advertising workshops. There are many rumours about who is a “real” and who a “fake” drummer within the Afro scene, gossip that is unquestionably connected to the competition for students among expressive specialists. Yet, there are also obvious qualitative differences between drummers’ technical abilities and their knowledge of repertoire that appear to give credibility to accounts about some expressive specialists who are said to have gone into music rather late. The point is that becoming a professional musician has become one possible avenue through which Africans can acquire a visa and make a living in Western Europe; furthermore, the construction of one’s biography—just like in other professional fields—is a crucial part of the strategic positioning of African expressive specialists within the market.

Figure 6. “All music is spontaneous and created in-the-moment. A facilitator leads the circle to experience their full potential as a musical orchestra.” Flyer advertising a drumming workshop at Berlin’s Werkstatt der Kulturen, May 2004.



Not surprisingly, the metaphor of “African rhythm” features prominently in the Afro scene’s symbolic economy and is put into play by expressive specialists in a variety of ways. We are told, for instance, that “rhythm is an essential human experience. Our heartbeat, our breath, tension, relaxation, day, and night. When we play rhythms we create vitality, pleasure, energy, relaxation” (Schwahlen 2004). Or we are confronted with the question: “What do dance and menstruation have in common? Dance is movement with rhythm; movement is life; rhythm is a Greek word and means ‘flow’, ‘flowing’. The womb creates life, it is the source of crafting and creating; menstruation is flow” (Flaig 2004). On his homepage Mark Kofi Asamoah assures us: “Who thinks: ‘Oh God, I don’t have any rhythm in my blood,’ can trust me ... Every human being has a rhythm in his/her body” (Asamoah 2009). The Ghanaian drummer Gordon Odametey focuses in his teaching on the concept “Spiritual Healing Drumming.” In a brochure, he writes: “Not the mind but the whole body appropriates a rhythm—drumming, keeping the rhythm, breath, relaxation, and a free mind belong together. The ear is trained for the beat and the coordination of all participants. Drumming with Gordon means to laugh a lot, to have fun and to experience oneself anew on unusual paths” (Odametey n.d.).

The forms of self-discovery offered to us here, employing philosophies of holism and spirituality, have, of course, become “canonic features of worldbeat imagery” (Turino 2000:224) more generally. On a structural level, they reinforce images of the “naturalness” of African and other folk music traditions, their “authenticity” often contrasted with the supposed “artificiality” of Western artistic forms. Such representational strategies were integral to primitivist ideologies as early as the nineteenth century. Today, as has well been noted, they are commonly used in the marketing of world music, and they certainly add to what Connell and Gibson have described as “a ‘fetishization of marginality’ and an essentialist identification of cultural practices in developing countries with otherness itself” (2003:157). It is exactly this process of othering, the exoticizing of the cultural Other in forms of representation, that we described above in connection with the staging of African music in the zoos of Leipzig and Augsburg, where it came under heavy criticism. This structural critique has, by now, been firmly established in fields such as post-colonial studies (cf. Ghandi 1998; Moore-Gilbert 1997; Mudimbe 1988; Said 1978). A related argument has, at times, also been made with regard to the “super-structures” imposed by the music industry on consumers of popular cultural forms, thus leading to a certain level of “alienation” (cf. Longhurst 1999).

Representation, performance, and the appropriation of African music

Reconsidering the representational critique outlined above, we should first note that it does not only apply to more blatant forms of representation. The exoticizing of Africa and depiction of Africans as “savage” or “primitive” in nineteenth-century ethnographic shows has been a more obvious case in point, just as the recent instances of the staging of Africa in zoos have been. The appreciation of the exotic Other as entertainment and as a form of touristic consumption quite obviously links

performances of Africa over the course of the past 150 years or so. I therefore agree with Dea, Höhne, and Schiller that “continuing colonial and racist stereotypes and the history of ethnographic shows overlap with current forms of marketing and lead to a racialization” (2005:43). It would be wrong, as I stressed, to view Africans as passive victims in this process, which makes a reading of the politics of representation as a one-sided imposition of symbolic violence by a collective yet impersonal subject (e.g., majority society, the West, the music industry) problematic. Quite to the contrary, African expressive specialists and other professionals have often reinforced essentialist depictions of the continent and its inhabitants. It could be argued that the problem of constructing Africa as a racial Other is *structurally intrinsic* to the representation of African music as such. To insist on the “Africanness” of a particular music, in other words, means to insist on its being essentially different (from Western music)—a crude binary logic that finds its continuation in other dichotomies such as body/mind or nature/culture (cf. Carl 2004:151–55).

I have to admit that, in this regard, I was surprised about the vehemence, even violence, of the argument about the Augsburg case, since I did not see the event as exceptional. In my view the more general problem is the tendency to represent musical forms and certain ways of being in the world essentially *as* African, not so much referring to geographical origin, but rather to some kind of naturally inherited quality. This kind of essentialism, the isomorphism of culture, space, and place which has come under critique in anthropological literature (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992), is, I think, intrinsic to the term “African music” itself. As analysts, rather than asking what African music *is*, as Agawu (2003:xiv) does, for instance, we should perhaps better ask why certain people have an interest to *make* particular musics African and how they do it. We have looked at some of the strategies that organizers of cultural events as well as expressive specialists employ; their interest is clearly in creating African music and culture as a distinguishable and thus marketable product. The basic mechanism in making a particular music “African” seems to consist in constructing a link between the cultural product and nature—the animal kingdom, physiology, the body.

If we look at the representational modes employed by expressive specialists in the Afro scene again, it is striking that what is marketed is not so much “African rhythm” as such, but rather a “sensual discovery” of “the rhythm in all of us.” Workshops in African drumming and dancing are about self-awareness and self-discovery, not only in an esoteric, but a very “real,” physical, bodily sense. They are not about (textual) representation, but about (collective) musical experience. It is this experience that workshop participants consciously seek. The role of expressive specialists in this process is that of a moderator or “facilitator,” to help people to “experience their full potential as a musical orchestra” (figure 6). In contrast to images of music as a highly specialized field that demands years of professional training, as it has been institutionalized in the realm of art music and also some “higher” forms of popular music (cf. Small 1998:8), African musicians offer musicality as a general human faculty, or, put in a different way, they empower people to become musical performers themselves. Many of the workshop participants I spoke to in the course of my research considered themselves “not particularly

musical,” yet they enjoyed making music a great deal. In this regard, the role of expressive specialists could be described as brokers in musicality or, more generally, as brokers in performativity itself.

The mediation of musicality is a central aspect of social interaction in the Afro scene. The underlying processes of appropriation that characterize the Afro scene as social formation often make it difficult to distinguish between performers and audience, and they also render questions about the authenticity of the music that is actually performed obsolete. Yet, appropriation is always an ambivalent process, enmeshed in relations of power, as Steven Feld reminds us:

Musical appropriation sings a double line with one voice. It is a melody of admiration, even homage and respect, a fundamental source of connectedness, creativity, and innovation ... Yet this voice is harmonized by a countermelody of power, even control and domination, a fundamental asymmetry in ownership and commodification and musical works ... Appropriation means that the question “Whose music?” is submerged, supplanted, and subverted by the assertion “Our/my music.” (Feld 1994:238)

Considered from this perspective, the question of what African music and culture actually is and how it should be represented must be regarded not so much as an aesthetic consideration, but rather a political question. And there are, as we have seen, various groups of agents who claim power over the right to define “Africanness.” For Afro-Germans, it is a matter of national identity, a matter of transforming the still prevalent “ethnic absolutism” (cf. Gilroy 1993) in public discourse into a more inclusive definition of the nation based on citizenship rather than ethnicity or race. On the other hand, African expressive specialists, just like the organizers of Africa festivals and multicultural events, often employ essentialist representations to market their product. While this is part of a common marketing strategy, for at least some African performers there is also an element of nostalgia involved. As one of the Adikanfo dancers told me after the performance in the Leipzig Zoo: “You know, Florian, we’re doing this for ourselves. Most people for whom we’re playing don’t really understand what we are doing anyway. But it’s very important for us” (interview, 24 August 2004, Leipzig). The point here is that the images of Africa we encounter in German popular culture are the same images that are used to represent the continent in Africa itself, by Africans, for Africans. As Agawu remarks, it is “in postindependence Africa [that] one frequently encounters the most self-conscious attempts to hold up certain cultural products as quintessentially ‘African’” (2003:17).

To conclude, I would like to stress that the intention of this article is not to condemn African performers’ attempts to make a living or to insult the promoters who help them do so, as one anonymous reviewer of this paper felt I was doing. My intention was rather to critically examine one of the contexts in which African music today is performed and to develop a deliberately historical perspective on current forms of representation and performance. Representations and performance modes themselves have a history. I disagree with the view that we, as ethnomusicologists, should focus on depicting “authentic” cultural traditions or on representing music

cultures in “their proper” contexts, since—as I hope it has become clear—I oppose the essentialist and static notion of culture on which such an approach is based. Instead, we should develop a more dynamic notion of cultural processes that are never abstract, but always take place in concrete social interaction. Every musical performance, in this sense, is a “re-contextualization” of former performances, and every performance that means something to somebody is in that sense “authentic.” I strongly believe that we as researchers, educators, and performers have a responsibility not only to document, preserve, or revive performance traditions, but also to create a critical awareness as to how these traditions are represented—in our research, our classrooms, our curricula, textbooks, and on stage. Every representation will ultimately have an effect on real people’s lives, particularly in the media-saturated societies in which we live today.

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