

Verbal Interjections and the Making of Awilo Mike as a social Representation of “Good performance” in live Music in Eldoret, Kenya

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Abstract

Live music performance takes a narrative form where experiences are narrated collectively by a “live band” both in song and performance. In such a performance, one band member often becomes a social representation of “good performance” for the audience. This paper seeks to contribute to this debate on “liveness” by exploring how “Awilo” Mike Otieno, one of the lead singers of Ja–Mnazi Africa Band in Eldoret–Kenya, uses verbal interjections – in between speech narrations during live music performance – to endear himself to the audience. This paper is based on data collected using unstructured interviews with “Awilo” Mike Otieno and purposively selected Band members for a period of six months. Augmentative data was obtained by participant observation and informal discussion with regular members of the audience. Based on Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper argues that verbal interjections in live music performance are not mere discourses. Instead, they are sites and means for the musician to exercise his/her power over the audience. By exercising this power, the musician is able to shape, (re)define (re)negotiate and contest (pre)existing subjectivities among the audience, and that of the audience towards him/her due to their diverse social positions in society. This subsequently aligns their physical and emotional realities. In addition, verbal interjection enables the musician to create new meanings on the narrated experiences to that which the audience can identify and relate with in their everyday lives, despite both being decontextualized. The ability to create congruity using verbal interjections proves the effectiveness of an artiste’s performance and accounts for his or her popular acceptance.

Keywords: Live music, popular culture, performance, verbal interjection, lived experiences, social representation.

Résumé

La performance musicale en direct prend une forme narrative où les expériences sont racontées collectivement par un “orchestre en direct” à la fois en chanson et en performance. Dans une telle performance, un membre de l’orchestre devient souvent une représentation sociale de la “bonne performance” pour le public. Cet article cherche à contribuer à ce débat sur la “la performance en direct” en explorant comment “Awilo” Mike Otieno, l’un des chanteurs principaux du Ja–Mnazi Africa Band à Eldoret–Kenya, utilise des interjections verbales – des narrations entre les discours pendant les performances musicales en direct pour s’attacher au public. Cet article est basé sur des données recueillies lors d’entretiens non structurés avec “Awilo” Mike Otieno et des membres du l’orchestre sélectionnés à dessein pendant une période de six mois. Des données supplémentaires ont été obtenues par l’observation des participants et des discussions informelles avec des membres réguliers du public. Basé sur l’analyse critique du discours, l’article soutient que les interjections verbales dans les performances musicales en direct ne sont pas de simples discours. Elles sont plutôt des sites et des moyens pour le musicien d’exercer son pouvoir sur le public. En exerçant ce pouvoir, le musicien est capable de façonner, de (re)définir, de (re)négocier et de contester les subjectivités (pré)existantes au sein du public et celles du public à son égard en raison de leurs diverses positions sociales dans la société. Cela permet ensuite d’aligner leurs réalités physiques et émotionnelles. En outre, l’interjection verbale permet au musicien de créer de nouvelles significations pour les expériences racontées, que le public peut identifier et auxquelles il peut se référer dans sa vie quotidienne, même si les deux sont décontextualisés. Cette capacité à créer une congruence à l’aide d’interjections verbales prouve l’efficacité de la performance d’un artiste et explique son acceptation populaire.

“Mots-clés: Musique en direct, culture populaire, performance, interjection verbale, expériences vécues, représentation sociale”.

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Introduction

Live music performance can be defined as events that bring musicians and audience together at one place, at a particular time, and involves performance on vocals or other music instruments by “live” band, both in song and dance. The band performs various dance music genres which are either their own compositions or copyrighted. The performed genres are determined by the band or as requests from the audience. In such performances, though collectively done, it is often observed that one band member is constructed as a social representation of the Band by the audience.

Admittedly, pinpointing what constitutes “good / bad performance” for the audience is problematic as there are no universal standards. Instead, such assessment is individualized, contextualized and based on subjective aesthetic criteria (Grand *et al* 2012). This allows for multiple perception of single performance as good or bad. Despite this, the attribution of collective performance to one band member raises a number of questions: 1) what makes the audience, regardless of diverse positionalities in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, social status, level of formal education, and religion to attribute collective performance to one band member? 2) what causes the audience to have unanimity in attributing collective performance to one band member? and 3) how does this band member impose his/her power on other band members and the audience, to become the social representation of collective performance?

Before delving into these questions, it is important to understand the context of live music performance and social representation of music in Kenya. Generally, music means different things to different people in time and space. These meanings are contextual, subjective and intersubjective, and include but not limited to experiences, identities, values, lifestyle, social status, ideas and power (Mboya, 2020; Ogude, 2016; Okongo, 2011; Simatei, 2011; Nyairo *et al.*, 2003). Equally, these meanings do inform why, where, when and how individuals participate and consume music (Mutonya, 2014).

Like many other forms of performing arts, live music has not escaped the impact of change in society. With commercialization of entertainment and leisure industry, for example, live music is no longer a hobby for musicians but a source of livelihood. However, with proliferation of other alternative forms of entertainment and leisure, courtesy of technology, compounded by scarcity of performing opportunities, there is stiff competition for audience attention and patronage. This has seen musicians employ various performance strategies meant to draw their audience closer, by trying to meet their demands and expectations.

In addition, live music is mostly performed in various entertainment venues in urban areas where the audience is made up of people from diverse social, cultural, economic and political background. As noted by Ogude (2016), live music performance in urban setting is not only for entertainment and leisure. It is a site for affirming, (re)negotiating and contesting identity and social belonging, as intersected by age, gender, social status, religion and ethnicity.

Live music performance takes place in an interactive and participatory context. Musicians and the audience influence each other throughout the performance. This influence is either reciprocal or does not depend on how each actor exercises power, and at what scale (Mboya, 2020; Grand *et al* 2012). As consequence, there is continuous (re)negotiation, contestation and (re)shaping of performance. This thrusts the audience as co-creators of performance, and gives birth to new ways of defining performance interactively and contextually.

Further, Naya (2014) observes that the way musicians and the audience perceive and relate with each other is informed by individual subjectivities which arise from personal experiences and histories. During any performance, the audience has preconceived perceptions about musicians and their performances based on socio-cultural identifiers such as age, ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender. These identifiers, not only inform how the audience perceive the musicians, but also how the performance is subjectively evaluated and experienced.

Live music performance is constituted by the relationship between musicians and the audience. Though this shifts performance to be seen more as “an event” than a work or art, it does not mean that we should perceive and interpret performance as one-way interaction between musicians and the audience. Instead, performance should be seen as a transformation process involving both musicians and the audience becoming co-subjects with meta-communicative reversal roles. In this case, there is dissolution of dualities, blurring of boundaries and fusion of dichotomous oppositions which in turn affects the creative process that results to transformative power of performance.

A number of studies such as Radbourne *et al.* (2009), Naya (2014) and Mboya (2020) have discussed the relationship between musicians and the audience. The processes on how this relationship is created, (re)negotiated and contested is mostly muted, yet it has implications on how performance is enacted and experienced. The more important question is, why this relationship is individualized yet it is collectively performed.

The construction of one musician as social representation (Mascoveli, 2000) of a band’s identity and performance is common in the music industry. For example, Francois Luambo Luanzo Makiandi was seen as an

embodiment of TPOK JAZZ, Pepe Kalle with Empire Bakuba, and Bob Marley with The Wailers. As such other band members are relegated to the periphery, despite their central role in constructing a band's identity and performance. This, however explains why most bands, despite their popularity, do not outlive the demise of the embodied member.

Sociologically, social representations are not universal but relative to time and space. That is, there are multiple representations of the same objects contextually. Social representations are institutionalized with material and symbolic contexts, and provide a template for interpreting and making sense of a given social reality. In doing so, social representation legitimizes and reifies a particular knowledge system which informs the construction of realities experienced (Howarth, 2006).

In everyday life, social representations act as a collective map common to a given social group, as a point of reference in making sense of a particular social reality. In this case, social representations aid in understanding and interpreting the world in which we live, by either sustaining or resisting a particular construction of social reality. This is achieved through communication, negotiation, resistance, innovation and transformation of a particular representation in relation to what we know "already". In this process the social representation may be confirmed, re-articulated or re-enacted in various ways which constitute our reality (Foster, 2003; Moscovici, 2000).

Ideally, this means that different representations compete in their claim to reality. In doing so, they defend, limit and exclude other realities, depending on how power is exercised and at what scale. In live music performance, power relations between the audience and musician is not binary. Instead, it is "diffused rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, ... [it is something that] constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them" (Foucault, 2000). However, how an individual musician contests, (re)defines and (re)negotiates this power to become a social representation of a collective group performance remains largely unexplored (Mboya, 2020; Brand, 2012).

To contribute to this debate of "liveness", specifically on musicians and the audience power relationships, this paper explores how the use of verbal interjections by a musician socially constructs him/her as a social representation of collective performance. This paper does so by focusing on the performance of "Awilo" Mike Otieno, one of the lead singers of Ja-Mnazi Africa Band in Eldoret-Kenya. Verbal interjections in this context are in-between narrations, response cries and expletives deployed by a musician in social and interactional manner within an ongoing performed song but are not part of the text. They take three distinct forms, namely keying, text bracketing and text-parenthetical elaborations.

In the context of live music performance, keying involves use of musical metaphors for voicings such as ironizing, or alternatively, *oppositional reading* (Hall, 1996) of texts within the song. Text bracketing entails giving introductory or closing remarks about the song. It generally occurs not only around the concert as a whole, but around each song. In this case each song may be introduced, and its ending marked in some certain unique ways. Lastly, text-parenthetical is when a musician gives in-between narration or substitutes common phrases within the song with what the audience identify with. Whereas verbal interjections can be taken as part of performance, this paper interrogates not only their function in influencing musician-audience relationship, but also how they construct individual musicians among the audience in relation to collective performance.

Methodology

This paper is based on the performance of "Awilo" Mike Otieno a lead singer of Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa band. "Awilo" was born on March 13, 1976 in Busia county, Kenya. He studied at Nabalaki Primary School and Namboto Secondary School before joining Mombasa Polytechnic for accountancy course. After college he worked briefly as an accountant in Njoro in the outskirts of Nakuru town. He started his music career as a choir member at St Charles Lwanga Catholic Church in Njoro. According to him, this is where he refined his vocals as a singer. In 1999, he left the church choir and joined a music band which was performed at Hotel Eel in Njoro, where he was made a lead singer. He performed with the band for three months and then moved to Nakuru town where he joined another band which mostly performed Kikuyu songs in various hotels within the town. He was recruited solely to cater for non-kikuyu patrons because he was fluent in Dholuo, Luhya and Lingala languages. He performed with this band for six months before he was poached by Tanzania's Kilimanjaro Jazz Band which was based in Nyeri-Kenya, as lead singer. In December 2000, his contract with Kilimanjaro Jazz Band expired. He moved from Nyeri to Eldoret where he joined Milton Ongoro's Band which performed at Kutana club-Eldoret every Friday and Saturday. He was nicknamed "Awilo", the name of Congolese musician Awilo Longomba because of his ability to sing in Lingala (Interview with the musician on March 21, 2019 at Noble Hotel, Eldoret).

Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band was formed in April 2002 when Mike Otieno "Awilo" of Kilimanjaro Band and Milton Ongoro of Banakutana Band joined together to form a new Band at Kutana Club in Eldoret. After a short stint at Kutana Club, Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa moved to Sesia Club in Wagon Hotel, Eldoret,

where it performed live music every Friday and Saturday. The band comprised of 25 members. In live music performance, the band plays both original and other copyrighted songs.

Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band is credited as one of the groups in Kenya which has changed the face of local music industry through their Rhumba fused with Benga kind of music. Although most of its songs are done in Dholuo language, there are a number which are in Swahili and Lingala. The band's music mostly deals with everyday life experiences. For example, the song *Am not sober* was composed from lived experiences of wheat farmers and teachers in the North Rift, Kenya, who would squander their earnings and loans in bars once they had been paid, to the extent that within a few days they would start begging for fare to go back home. Other songs include but not limited to *Riziki* which centers on everyday struggles of meeting daily livelihood, *Toujours probleme* (everyday problems), and shamba *la mawe* (The difficult life of immigrants in developed countries), among many others.

The band's live music performance mostly targets middle class people who live and work in Eldoret. Eldoret is a fast-growing cosmopolitan city located in Kenya's Rift Valley. The most represented ethnic groups in Eldoret are the Kalenjins, the Kikuyu, the Luhya, the Luo and the Kisii. This cosmopolitan social fabric is a result of migration of various groups to Eldoret. The town is internationally known for a home of renowned long-distance runners and middle-class people working in various institutions offering services in higher education and the medical field. Politically, there is dominance of politics of identity and social belonging pitying the local people and migrants.

The current exploration of the use of verbal interjection in live music performance is based on the researcher's reflections as an active audience in Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band performances from January 2018 to June 2018. In these performances it was observed that unlike other band members, Mike Otieno "Awilo" was fond of using verbal interjections whenever he was leading performances on the stage. This made the audience applaud him while some people moved to the stage to dance and sing with him. This happened whenever he used certain verbal interjections which were context specific, spontaneous and creatively rendered in performed songs. In occasions where he was absent, the audience would loudly register their dissatisfaction with the whole performance, despite the fact that the band performed the same music most of the time.

To understand how the use of verbal interjections defined individual musician-audience relationship in the context of collective performance, data was collected using unstructured interviews with "Awilo" Mike Otieno. These interviews were not a one-off exercise but a continuous process throughout the six months. The interviews were not confined to the time of live performance only. Rather, they were part of everyday interaction between the researcher and musician. During live performance the researcher would note the verbal interjections used, that is, when, how, where, and the reactions of the audience.

Using this information, the researcher later engaged with the musician to understand the reason behind the use of certain verbal interjections in the course of his performances. Questions during interviews were respondent-generated. The interviewer explored his performance on stage in general, relationship with audience on and off stage, and use of verbal interjections in terms of timing, choice and contexts. Augmentative data was also collected using participant observation, and informal discussions with purposively selected "friends of Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band" and a number of band members. Data collected was taken as discourses, which not only transferred information about musician-audience relationship but also how the use of verbal interjections is individualized in collective performance.

Verbal Interjections and the Making of "Awilo" Mike Otieno as a Social Representation

Performing live music, by Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band, Eldoret-Kenya, takes place in urban setting. It takes the form of interactive and participative performance of songs. This form of performance makes musicians embodied by the audience, simultaneously as speaking subjects and as subjects of discourse. As speaking subjects, musicians situate performed songs into immediate context of the audience. As a subject of discourse, musicians engage in impression management (Hedges, 2011; Turner, 2006; Swain, 1990), in response to the ever-changing power relationship on performance stage. All these aim at a successful live performance by creating social and emotional connectedness between musicians and the audience.

This means that the successful performance of live music does not only depend on form and content of performed songs but also on the ability of musicians to connect this (form and content) to social emotions of the audience. This is important because live music in urban settings is not just a form of leisure and entertainment but a site for affirming social belonging in terms of social and cultural values (Hoeven *et al*/2019; Ogunde, 2016). It is more of a social practice than individual (Lit, 2013). It represents and reconnects social practices and lived experiences of the audiences which are decontextualized due to urban life which is constructed as "disenchantment" (Ogunde, 2016).

Live performance by Orchestra Ja-Mnazi Africa Band, Eldoret-Kenya was done collectively and guided by specific rules. Each member was assigned a specific role to play. This gave each member an equal

opportunity to lead in the course of performance. However, unlike when other members were leading performance, there was social and emotional connectedness with the audience when “Awilo” Mike Otieno was leading. This happened in spite of preconceived ideas the audience had about the artist, based on social, economic and cultural identifiers such as age, level of formal education, socio-economic status and ethnicity.

Initially, the researcher assumed social and emotional connectedness with the audience had to do with the time the artist performed. This was, however, negated by observations made during the days “Awilo” Mike Otieno was not present or leading. In the former, the audience generally registered their dissatisfaction with regard to the performance of the group, despite performing same songs. In the latter, the audience still enjoyed the performance, and in some cases adjusted their time in order to come to the club when “Awilo” Mike Otieno was performing.

Live music is interactional. It involves participation and immersion of the audience in the performance, making it a social event (Lamont, 2011). Though this interaction is transactional and symmetrical, musicians (re)negotiate and contest this power at different scales in order to control and influence performance. To understand these interactional issues in live music, Bradby (2008) argues for the need to understand how musicians change power dynamics in the performance space, (re)define relationships with the audience and infuse liveliness. However, the manner this is achieved and individualized in the context of collective live performances remains a central question.

Cognizant of the fact that individual musicians have various strategies to endear themselves to their audience contextually, this paper specifically explored the use of verbal interjections by “Awilo” Mike Otieno in live music. Verbal interjections are social and interactional in-between narrations, response cries and expletives, which are context specific, spontaneous and creative renditions deployed in-between performed song. Though not part of song text, verbal interjections form part of a performance.

The use of verbal interjections by “Awilo” Mike Otieno starts immediately when he goes onto the performance stage. As other band members continue with performing, “Awilo” Mike Otieno moves around the stage, waving to the audience without uttering any word. After a while, he gets the microphone, looks at the audience, smiles and waves at them as he utters vocal whoops and yeahs such as “*Ops Ops, Mmm Mmm, Waa Waa*”. He continues with that until the audience applauds him. As this happens, the other band members continue playing various musical instruments rhythmically albeit in slow motion.

Vocal whoops and yeahs are distinctive in live music performance and help to create the feeling of informality which is a mark of successful live events. Like response cries (Goffman, 1981) which are done publicly and overheard by those co-present, whoops and yeahs were also not emitted for oneself (Musician) but directed to the audience. In this context they formed part of the interaction between the musician and audience. Consequently, they aided in creating connectedness between the audience and the musician by thawing preconceived subjectivities as Mike Otieno “Awilo” elaborates:

*When you come to stage to perform, you come face to face with an audience of diverse interests, feelings and attitudes. Some may have something against you as a person which you are not aware of. Others feel superior or intimidated because of their socio-economic status. There is also unexplained uneasiness which almost borders on tension. As a musician, I must first break all these and at the same time try to reconnect with everyone. It is neither easy nor hard……that is when these simple common utterances (*Ops Ops, Mmm Mmm, Waa Waa*) work for me.*

Live music performance is a pleasurable social event. It happens when song texts are transformed into social events where feelings, emotions and experiences are shared and exchanged. According to Goffman (1981), there is a disconnect between song text and social events which is only bridged through infusion of liveness. The fact that response cries are interactional in live music performance, they bring in the aspect of liveliness by transforming the audience as co-performers through their elicited responses. In the process they (re)create a social situation (Collins, 2004) where collective emotions are generated and exchanged. This is clearly captured by “Awilo” Mike Otieno on his use of response cries in performance:

*Indeed, there is a difference between listening to recorded music and live music. People come to live music performance not because they have never heard the songs. No, No. They want to be involved in performance of these songs……they want to express their feelings and share them with others. They attend – in part – because of something that is infused into the text on the occasion of performance, an infusion that ties the text into the occasion. When I come to stage and utter something such as “...” *Waa Waa!* it has special effects which actually capture them, and immerses them into performance. This is my special way of bringing on board my fans.*

Live music performance is not a neutral activity. It is infused by power dynamics between the audience and musician. The audience perpetuate their interests by influencing what song to be performed. At the same time the musician is obligated to perform according to a predetermined schedule. These contradicting interests makes the musician to play agency (active role) to ensure the performance is not compromised as illustrated by following scenario:

1. It was Good Friday which coincided with end month, a time when most people had been paid their salaries.
2. During the day a number of people had participated or observed performance of Christian rituals on crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
3. At 10:22PM: Mike Otieno “Awilo” walks into performance stage and greets the audience.
4. 10:30PM: The band starts performing Lingala song by T.P OK jazz “Bina na ngai na respect¹”.
5. 10:31PM: There is protest by a section of the audience over the choice of song. They want the band to perform “I am not sober”
6. 10:33PM: The band continues to perform “Bina na Ngai na respect” despite protests from the audience.
7. 10: 35PM: Some section of the audience moves to the performing stage and demand the band to honor their choice of song.
8. 10:37PM: The band stops performing.
9. 10: 38PM: Awilo starts addressing audience members using religious renditions:
 Awilo: Halleluya Halleluya, Praise God
 Audience: Halleluya, Praise God
 Awilo: “. . .” My dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we come together in this holy communion, I welcome you in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit (Audience shouts back Amen!) . . . As your beloved Bishop and holy shepherd . . . Bina na ngai na respect . . . (Applause from the audience as the band starts playing tunes of the song albeit in slow rhythm) . . . My brothers in Christ you know well as I do that the woman you are with is not yours, you have just stolen her for today’s Holy Communion . . . (Applause from Audience) . . . she is just for you now, hold her with respect as she is for someone else . . . (Applause from the audience. The band resumes playing the song as more people join in singing and dancing).

As noted in this scenario the audience are exercising their agency in determining the choice of song. However, this is contested and (re)negotiated by the musician by resorting to bracket texting. Bracket texting in this context entails introducing the song in a special way or in-between talks which are not part of performed song texts. Bracket texts were drawn from current and trending political, social, economic and cultural happenings in time and space. In this context, for example, use of religious renditions² such as “*Halleluya Praise God*” and elicited responses, not only situated the performance into prevailing religious context but “converted” the performance stage into a “religious space”.

Ideally, religious spaces are sacred. Power is asymmetrical and hierarchal, and exercised by religious leaders. The “conversion” of performance stage momentarily into “religious space” using bracket texts (re)defined the audience and musician relationships by drawing distinctive boundaries; *My dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we come together in this holy communion, I welcome you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Amen!* and *. . . As your beloved Bishop and holy shepherd.* This “conversion” of “performance space”, however, did not change musician–audience power relationships from transactional and symmetrical to asymmetrical and hierarchical due to interactional and participatory nature of live music. Instead, (re)defined boundaries and relationship enabled the musician to exercise power at higher level or scale than the audience due changed roles and status.

Consequently, due to changed roles and status, the musician was able to externally influence the actions of the audience through negotiated and oppositional (Hall, 1996) meanings and interpretations of bracket texts used. For example, the use of bracket texts from religious renditions; “*My brothers and sisters in Christ welcome to today’s holy communion*” has more to do with affirming the audience’s tradition of togetherness and identity, based on their collective experiences of live music. The appeal to collective experiences and identity was important in subjugating individual resistance, biasness, interests and desires on the performance

¹ A song about a woman who urges a suitor to dance with her respectfully for she is a married woman.

² In this paper I have used religious renditions as an illustration on how Mike Otieno “Awilo” uses bracket texts in his performance. It is important to note that the musician also uses other renditions from political, social, economic and cultural events.

stage. Thus, the musician was able to reorient the audience to focus more on performance as a “social event” (Wynn, 2016).

Urban life, where live music performance is popular, is best constructed as “disenchantment” (Ogunde, 2016) due to perpetual insecurity, poverty and unequal economic relations. Live music in this setting is not only for leisure and entertainment. It is a site for reenacting repressed identities through pleasure and fantasy (Rose, 1996). Subsequently, the use of bracket texts by the musician, “*My brothers in Christ you know well as I do that the woman you are with is not yours, you have just stolen her for today’s holy communion... (Applause from Audience) ... she is just for you now, hold her with respect as she is for someone else...*” situated the song “Bina na Ngai na respect” into lived experiences of hegemonic masculinity which the audience identified with. This resulted in thawing initial resistance towards the song.

Bracket texts play an important role in (re)defining live music performance. However, their effectiveness depends on the ability to make right choices of bracket text to use, that is when, where and how, during performance. This ability is individualized in collective performance by the audience as captured by Mr. Onyango, a 45-year-old senior accountant in a public university:

Ordinarily whenever I meet “Awilo” in in the streets, he is just a common person and ...you see... I mean no one takes him seriously. You can at best greet him and go on your way. Personally, I have my own biasness towards him. However, whenever he is leading performance, there is away he brings somethings into a song that really touches you. Actually, it is not about what the song is all about, but what he adds to the song in terms of catchy words or sometimes the stories he blends with the song which makes you feel part of the song. This pulls you out of your feet. You find yourself uncontrollably jeer up as you dance and doing anything he asks you do such as raising hands. In normal situations you cannot do this!

Mary, a single lady aged 25-year-old who was a regular patron in the club narrated:

Personally, I am a very reserved person. However, whenever Awilo performs at stage I just find myself on stage dancing. I just lose myself! I think his way of speaking while the song is being performed makes you feel “...” I don’t know how to explain such inner feelings “...” For me what cuts him out with the rest of the band members is his ability to put something real in the song.

Performed songs in live music, especially copyrighted, are decontextualized from social, economic, cultural and political contexts that gave birth to them. As a consequence, members of the audience do not identify with realities they profess. This impacts their participation in the performance. To bridge this gap, the musician used text-parenthetical. Text-parenthetical involved giving in-between narration within a performed song or substitutes common phrases within the song with what the audience can identify with. This does not only situate the song into lived realities of audience members but also (re)created new meanings through social sharing as evidenced in the performance of “Sina Makosa” song by Les Wanyika³:

Original song: Sina Makosa (<i>I have no fault</i>)	Live performance of Sina makosa with *text-Parenthetical
Lelelile lelilo ahh mama (<i>Lelelile lelilo ahh mother</i>)	Lelelile lelilo ahh mama (<i>Lelelile lelilo ahh mother</i>)
Hasira za nini bwana (<i>Why are you angry sir</i>)	Hasira za nini bwana *Onyango ⁴ * (<i>Why are you angry Mr. *Onyango*</i>)
Hasira za ni bwana (<i>Why are your angry sir</i>)	Hasira za nini bwana *Kamau ⁵ * (<i>Why are you angry Mr. *Kamau*</i>)
Wataka kuniua bure baba (<i>You want to kill me for nothing sir</i>)	Wataka kuniua bure bwana*Onyango*(<i>You want to kill me for nothing Mr. *Onyango*</i>)
Wataka kuniua bure baba (<i>You want to kill me for nothing sir</i>)	Wataka kuniua bure bwana *Kamau* (<i>You want to kill me for *Kamau*</i>)
Yule sio wako, na wala sio wangu (<i>She is not yours, and she not mine</i>)	Yule sio wako *Kamua*, na wala sio wangu *Onyango* (<i>She is not yours *Mr. Kamua*, and she not mine- *Onyango*</i>)
Chuki ya nini kati ya mimi na wewe (<i>Why the hatred between me and you</i>)	Chuki ya nini kati ya mimi na wewe (<i>Why the hatred between me *Onyango* and you *Kamau*</i>)
Wewe una wako nyumbani, Nami nina wangu nyumbani (<i>You have your wife at home, and I have mine at home</i>)	Wewe una *Njeri ⁶ * wako *Kapsoya*, Nami nina *Atieno ⁷ * wangu *Langas* (<i>You have your wife *Njeri* at *Kapsoya*, and I have my *Atieno* at *Langas*</i>)

In this song, the musician uses text-parenthetical (Onyango, Kamau, Atieno and Njeri) which are associated with the Luo and the Kikuyu male and female names. The Luo and Kikuyu are two largest ethnic communities in Kenya who for a long time are political rivals. In using these ethnic names, the musician in away reincarnated historical political rivalry on the performance stage by taking advantage of politics of identity which defines the Kenyan state.

In premising this historical political rivalry on competition over a woman, the musician wittingly gives this rivalry new meanings which seem to suggest that power also resides on how they perform their masculinities. By doing this, the musician was able to (re)create a new space for the audience to (re)negotiate and contest their masculinities as a way of affirming their loyalty to their communities and power by participating in performance of the song.

Additionally, the use of two residential places in Eldoret brought in the aspect of social class and performance of masculinity. Kapsoya is middle-class residential area, while Langas is an informal settlement. The fact that there is inherent antagonism between social classes, performance of masculinity became a new site for (re)negotiating and contesting economic power during the performance. Therefore, the use of text-parenthetical in this context made the musician a speaking subject and a subject of discourse of lived experiences of audience.

Live music performance in urban setting is more than entertainment and leisure. It is a site for affirming, (re)negotiating and contesting identity and social belonging as intersected by age, gender, social status and religion and ethnicity. This poses a challenge for musicians, in meeting diverse interests of audience. To deal with this challenge, Mike Otieno “Awilo” used in-between narrations which were drawn from common ethnic

³ Les Wanyika was a prominent band with Tanzanian and Kenyan members and was based in Kenya. It was formed in 1978 by guitarist Omar Shabani and bassist Tom Malanga. Les Wanyika are best remembered for their 1979 classic *Sina Makosa* and *Paulina*. *Sina Makosa* is about conflict of two men over a woman

⁴ Onyango is a male Luo name

⁵ Kamau is a male Kikuyu name

⁶ Njeri is a female Kikuyu name

⁷ Atieno is a female Luo name

stereotypes in Kenya. He ironized the stereotypes in a manner that converted performance into a social game where each social group competed to outdo each other.

In this case, the musician deliberately interrupted on-going performance with in-between narrations which were drawn from various social groups stereotypes. The stereotypes aimed at teasing social groups to demonstrate their “power” in determining how performance would proceed by paying some money. This made social groups to engage in rational strategies, which were mostly sequential, with the sole aim of outdoing each other. A win which was achieved when other social groups were unable to challenge payments made, was momentarily celebrated. This accorded the winning social group enhanced social status in the performance space.

1:23 am: The band is performing their own song “*Am not Sober*⁸”

1: 25am: an individual from the audience moves to performance stage and hands over some money to Awilo.

1:26am: The band stops performing and Awilo starts addressing the audience:

Awilo: My friends Mr. Kip, a Kalenjin from Iten has said performance of this song must stop and want us to perform “*Emily Chepchumba*⁹”. My friends you know these Kalenjin can run away with our instruments as they do with gold. So, we have stopped the performance as we try to think on how to perform “*Emily Chepchumba*”.

Audience: Noo Noooo

Awilo: Eeh... Bwana Wakili (Advocate) who hails from that tribe which is known for their emotions has said “*Am not sober*” should start playing again from the “legs” (meaning from the start).

Audience: Applauds as the band start performing the song.

Awilo: My friend who is also a brother who hails from community reputed for cooks and watchmen has said “*Am not sober*” should start from the “shoulders” (midway). He wants to go home for he does not want to spend more money here.

Audience: Nooooo Noooo

Awilo: Waa Waa! Waa Waa! Wakili has said the song “*Am not sober*” Should start from the “legs”. (*The band start playing the song from the start as there as is no other challenger*)

Audience: Cheers

The conversion of performance into a social game is a replica of everyday life experiences in Kenya where various ethnic groups compete by affirming their identity in urban setting. This explains why the musician used stereotypes in his in-between narration as a way of defining social belonging in the performance stage. By doing so, the musician was able to reconstruct the lived experiences of social belonging which define the construction of the Kenya state as he infused liveliness in the process.

Discussion and Conclusion

Implicit from the foregoing discussion, it is clear that verbal interjections are not mere discourses in live music performance. They are sites for a musician to (re)negotiate and contest power relationship with audience. The fact that live music is interactional and participatory, use of verbal interjection does not change power relationships between the audience and musician which is transactional, symmetrical and not hierarchal. Instead,

⁸ Am not sober is Dhuluo Benga song composed by Mike Otieno “Awilo”. The song is about prodigal use of one’s hard-earned resources

⁹ Emily Chepchumba is a Kalenjin song about two lovebirds separated by long distance and express their desire to meet. The song was composed by Phillip Yegon, popularly known as Bamwai, a Band leader of Moto Moto. The song became popular when Ezekiel Kemboi danced to it in 2011 IAAF Daegu World Champions and in 2012 during London Olympics after winning 3000 metres steeplechase. Kemboi hails from Kalenjin community where most elite athletes in Kenya come from. By associating the song with his win, Kemboi made the song a symbol of “Kalenjin community prowess” and “pride “in athletics.

verbal interjection aids a musician to exercise power at higher level or scale than the audience despite being co-performers in live music.

By doing so, the musician was able to subjugate the audience's preconceived subjectivities by reorienting them to focus on performance as a social event. This was achieved through negotiated and oppositional meanings and interpretations of verbal interjections used by the musician. The constructed meanings and interpretations were then used by the audience to overthrow the power hegemony in the performance space. For example, the use of verbal interjections, "*My brothers and sisters in Christ welcome to today's holy communion*" to reinvented "new institutions" which enhanced social interaction regardless of the audience positionalities in terms of gender, age, level of formal education, marital status and ethnicity.

Verbal interjections are drawn from everyday life experiences of the audience, they represent the collective experiences at a particular time and space. As such, they are infused with the society's everyday experiences which develops and gives them life. When used in live music performance, verbal interjection enabled the musician to situate the performed text into the lived lives of the audience (Moscovici, 2000; Bauer and Gaskell, 1999). In urban setting as observed by Rose (1999), people reenact their repressed identities through pleasure and fantasy. Therefore, by situating performed texts into the lived lives of the audience using verbal interjection, the musician was able to infuse liveness in performance through memory.

Verbal interjections play a role in contextualizing performed texts into lived lives of the audience as well as subjugating preconceived subjectivities by (re)negotiating and contesting musician-audience power relationships. All this makes live music performance a social event. Being part of performance and not performed texts, the use of verbal interjections in collective performance is individualized by the audience. Therefore, the ability of a musician to use verbal interjection to infuse liveliness in live music accounts for his/her popular acceptance. This in turn defines him/her as a social representative of collective performance.

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